International Advanced Level English Literature

Unit 1 WET01
Post 2000 Poetry and Prose
Examiner commentaries on exemplar responses

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International Advanced Level English Literature
Unit 1 WET01: Post-2000 Poetry and Prose

Examiner commentaries on Exemplar responses

This set of exemplar responses with examiner commentaries for Unit 1, Post 2000 Poetry and Prose, has been produced to support teachers teaching and students learning the International Advanced Level English Literature specification.

This pack includes examiner commentaries on exemplar scripts, exemplar scripts and Mark Scheme for ease of reference.

The scripts selected exemplify performance for this component of the June 2016 examination.

This document should be used alongside other IAL English Literature teaching and learning materials available on the website **here**

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Exemplar 1

Question: The Kite Runner – Khaled Hosseini

'At first sight this is a story about men and boys. But look more closely. It has a great deal to say about women.'

In the light of this statement, explore the ways in which Hosseini presents women and what happens to them in the novel.
In your answer, you must consider relevant contextual factors.

(Total for Question = 25 marks)

Exemplar answer:

Khaled Hosseini's The Kite Runner is not only the tale of two boys finding themselves amidst the war torn country of Afghanistan but also an insight into the country's culture and lives of its people. Treatment of women is one of the hot topics explored in the novel, through the eyes of the motherless protagonist Amir we are shown the place of women, the hardships they endure and the hidden strength they p[provide to the male dominated Afghan society.

On the surface the text is mainly dominated by male perspectives yet this is a deliberate attempt by the author in making a statement regarding women's place in Afghan society. There are very few female characters presented in the novel, even fewer of whom are present and voice their views, providing reflective commentary on their thoughts and feelings. Hence it can be said that from the point of gender/feminist criticism that the lack of influence of the female characters on the main events of the novel portray a submissive, voiceless position in society.

The trials of women in society are portrayed mainly through the characters of Soraya, her mother Jamila and Sanaubar. Soraya even after marriage to Amir is tainted with the mask of having eloped this being impure. Through his unconditional love towards Amir, his uncomplaining devotion towards taking care of Baba we see her character to be one of purity and kindness yet according to the culture of her people she has been forever tainted for a single mistake of the heart. However similar behaviour from the men of the society go as far as to "have kids out of wedlock" yet "no one says a goddam thing". This is evidence of the double standards of Afghan society, where the same behaviour by both genders cause different treatment due to their position in society. This inferior position of women is further depicted through the relationship between Amir and Soraya. Amir considers her his "swap meet Princess" yet even with his liberal upbringing fails to transcend the norm of Afghan society and makes the decision of bringing Sohrab to America without consulting her. Amir asks Sohrab to come with him before he phones Soraya to tell her the events of the past. This is also the first time he has called her since his arrival even though he had plenty of opportunity after he recovered. Even when telling her Amir simply states "I'm bringing a little boy with me" instead of asking her permission as it's a big decision affecting both their lives equally, especially considering her past reservations towards adopting. Thus it can be established that Soraya and Amir are not of equal levels, the final decisions fall on the male of the house and not the woman, she is merely allowed an opinion.

Further social expectations and gender roles of women are portrayed through the character of Sanaubar who had given birth and left "just a few days later". She had run off with a group of gypsies, a "fate most Afghans considered worse than death." Through this insightful comment of Amir's Afghan attitudes towards women's role in family is depicted. The idea that

a woman may be happier alone than taking care of her family is a social faux pas. Women were expected to be caretakers of their families even if it made them miserable. Hosseini's support of this role could be seen through Sanaubar's fate, where her alluring appearance is replaced by a cut that "went from cheekbone to hairline" and was simply described as "grotesque". The disfiguration might be symbolic of a punishment for abandoning her family and taking pleasure in her looks and herself. This illustrates the idea that women were confined to the roles of being devoted to her family, personal aspirations were looked down upon.

This belief of women needing to be submissive, dedicated to their families and obedient is also shown through Soraya's infertility which again may have been a punishment for her elopement and having "been with a man" other than her husband.

A closer exploration of a woman's life in Afghan society can be seen through Jamila's life with General Tahiti which may be what passes as a stereotypical marriage in Afghan culture. Jamila Taheri is known to have an "enchanting singing voice" yet it is suppressed by the will of the general whose condition it was that "she never sang in public once married." She was thus forbidden from doing so even at her own daughter's wedding by one of the general's "looks". The fact that a mere "look" could cause the entire matter to be buried so easily especially considering the significance of it to Jamila is a testament to male dominance in Afghanistan. Even something as beloved as singing has to be given up purely due to the prejudice of the male that it should only be done by those with "lesser reputations."

However through the first person narrative technique the reader is able to glimpse a more personal view of Amir's life thus see the significant role that Soraya plays. She is his counterpart and without her female presence Amir would not be able to accomplish all that he does. This is symbolised by his obtaining the contact which will finally allow Sohrab to be brought to the States. Further it is through Amir's dead mother Sofia's books that he learns of the Hazara history of discrimination and finds escape from his strained relationship with Baba. Hence it can be argued that though women can be seen as having minor roles their influence and strength is the pillar on which the male Afghan society stands.

The specified gender role of a woman, to be obedient, submissive, maternal is contended against by Hosseini's portrayal of character. All the women in the novel Sofia, Soraya, Hassan's docile wife Farzara and the wilful Sanaubar vary greatly in their personalities, not fitting into the typical mould of what a woman should be.

In conclusion, Hosseini uses the few female characters in the novel and their limited views on life in establishing their inferior and dominated position in life. Through each of the characters he portrays society's expectations of women and their views of women who do not live up to these expectations. Yet through the diverse personalities of the characters and their roles in aiding their male relatives Hosseini makes a significant statement on the importance of women, that though it may not seem so that without the strength and support of these women the male counterparts may have likely fallen by the end.

Soraya's help in bringing Sohrab to the States and allowing him to attain the final peace for redemption, Sanaubar's taking care of Sohrab as a child and supporting Hassan through the loss of her daughters all show women are the secret pillars upon which Afghan society stands. Thus diverse personalities portray that there should not be a set role, that individuality should be encouraged instead of confinement for it is confinement that leads to worse outcomes such as in the case of Sanaubar whose forced marriage caused her to run away.

Assessment Objectives for Section B (novel question) & M/S

AO1: articulate informed, personal and creative responses to literary texts, using associated concepts and terminology, and coherent, accurate written expression
AO2: analyse ways in which meanings are shaped in literary texts
AO3: demonstrate understanding of the significance and influence of the contexts in which literary texts are written and received.
Footnote: AO5, (explore literary texts informed by different interpretations) is not addressed in this unit.

Level 1	1 – 5	**Descriptive** • Makes little reference to texts with limited organisation of ideas. Limited use of appropriate concepts and terminology with frequent errors and lapses of expression. • Uses a narrative or descriptive approach that shows limited knowledge of texts and how meanings are shaped in texts. Shows a lack of understanding of the writer's craft. • Shows limited awareness of contextual factors. • Shows limited awareness of links between texts and contexts.
Level 2	6 – 10	**General understanding / exploration** • Makes general points, identifying some literary techniques with general explanation of effects. Aware of some appropriate concepts and terminology. Organises and expresses ideas with clarity, although still has errors and lapses. • Gives surface readings of texts relating to how meanings are shaped in texts. Shows general understanding by commenting on straightforward elements of the writer's craft. • Has general awareness of the significance and influence of contextual factors. • Makes general links between texts and contexts.
Level 3	11 – 15	**Clear relevant application / exploration** • Offers a clear response using relevant textual examples. Relevant use of terminology and concepts. Creates a logical, clear structure with few errors and lapses in expression. • Demonstrates knowledge of how meanings are shaped in texts with consistent analysis. Shows clear understanding of the writer's craft. • Demonstrates a clear exploration of the significance and influence of contextual factors. • Develops relevant links between texts and contexts.
Level 4	16 – 20	**Discriminating controlled application / exploration** • Constructs a controlled argument with fluently embedded examples. Discriminating use of concepts and terminology. Controls structures with precise cohesive transitions and carefully chosen language. • Demonstrates discriminating understanding of how meanings are shaped in texts. Analyses, in a controlled way, the nuances and subtleties of a writer's craft. • Provides a discriminating analysis of the significance and influence of contextual factors. • Makes detailed links between texts and contexts.
Level 5	21 – 25	**Critical and evaluative** • Presents a critical evaluative argument with sustained textual examples. Evaluates the effects of literary features with sophisticated use of concepts and terminology. Uses sophisticated structure and expression. • Exhibits a critical evaluation of the ways meanings are shaped in texts. Displays a sophisticated understanding of the writer's craft. • Presents a sophisticated evaluation and appreciation of the significance and influence of contextual factors. • Makes sophisticated links between texts and contexts.

Examiner commentary

This is a well written essay that shows a confident understanding of the novel, keeps the question mind throughout (especially the nuances in the assertion – "at first sight... but look more closely") and is particularly good at responding to context.

The essay begins with a clear opening paragraph which is clearly aware of context, and the balance in the given assertion that it is "not only the tale of two boys" but "an insight into the country's culture" and therefore the "hot topic" is the treatment of women. Level 5 answers are expected to present a "critic cal evaluative argument" and level 4 answers present a "controlled argument": it seems from the start that this essay might be going to fit into one of these top two levels.

The point is developed further in the second stanza by referring to "on the surface" and quickly gets to heart of the response by referring to the "submissive, voiceless position in society" of so many Afghan women as presented in the novel. Levels 4 and 5 required "fluently embedded examples" and level 5 "sustained textual examples" - these criteria are met in the next paragraph. The quotations are appropriate and pithy - "no one says a goddam thing" when men transgress sexually, but the essay goes on to develop this by making an evaluative point (evaluation is a level 5 quality) when we are told that Sohrab never consults Soraya about his decision that they should adopt Sohrab. "She is merely allowed an opinion" the essay states whereas the decision is made by the man.

There is a clear logical progression in this essay as it moves on to explore the fate of Sanaubar. The essay tells us that her disfiguration might be symbolic of a punishment for abandoning her family and taking pleasure in her looks and herself. Here the it could have done more by way of exploring more precisely how the writer operates - "a sophisticated understanding of the writer's craft" as required for level 5. When the essay tells us that "this belief of women needing to be submissive, dedicated to their families and obedient is also shown through Soraya's infertility" there could have been some exploration of how this comes across to the modern (possibly Western?) reader writing this essay and something might have been said about the writer's stance on this (are we being told that this punishment, if that is what it is, is fair, or is it part of the way the books works, drawing the reader in to the expectations of a culture?)

More impressive however is the way the essay moves on to pursue a counter-argument: "without her [Soraya's] female presence Amir would not be able to accomplish all that he does. There is a sound argument here, very much in tune with the assertion provided in the question.

This essay has looked at a number of the novel's characters, without falling into the trap of being merely a collection of character studies. It has related well to the question and given an excellent performance in terms of AO1 and AO3 - a critical evaluative argument is presented, a sophisticated evaluation and appreciation of contextual factors and sophisticated links between texts and context is in evidence. This is sufficient to place the essay at the lower end of level 5. To reach the top end, more on the writer's craft would be expected.

Mark awarded: 21 out of 25

Exemplar 2

Exemplar question

Compare the ways in which poets explore the parent/child relationship in You, Shiva, and My Mum by Ruth Padel and one other poem of your choice from Poems of the Decade: An Anthology of the Forward Books of Poetry 2002–2011.

In your answer, you should consider the following:
- the poets' development of themes
- the poets' use of language and imagery
- the use of other poetic techniques.

(Total for Question = 25 marks)

Exemplar answer

You Shiva and My Mum by Ruth Padel is a poem about parent and child relationships and how parents often make sacrifices for their children without thinking twice. The poem explores human relationships through a series of words, phrases, imagery and descriptions, such as "climbed barefoot to Shiva" and "watched her heels painted scarlet henna without a murmur" to express and convey the physical things that parents do for their children. *Inheritance* by Eavand Boland discusses parent and child relationships in contrasting, yet similar manner. Rather than focusing on the physical actions that parents take for their children, Boland zooms in on the unrecognised acts of parents, and the passing on of traits or characteristics that are ever-present in life.

Both poets explore the theme of relationships between parents and children in contrasting ways, however they both also represent the sacrifices made by parents for their children. Boland representing this through a mother "who stayed awake, alert and afraid, with [her] first child who turned and turned; sick, fretful." "You Shiva and My Mum" on the other hand talks about the sacrifices through presenting the trip an eighty year old mother took to India, "because her last unmarried son was getting married to a girl." Parent/child relationships is a central theme in both poems and has been represented in various ways.

The relationship between a parent and child is an almost sacred one, an everlasting bond which influences people's actions. This view is represented clearly in *You Shiva and My Mum*. India is often seen as a place of holiness and the repetitive use of the words "God" "Shiva" "Tribal" "Hindu" "Atheist" "Christian" emphasises and drives the point that this bond is sacred. Padel seems to understand the "holiness" of the parent/child relationship and her use of India and various religions create a holy atmosphere in the poem. This contrasts with the tone of *Inheritance*. While Boland understands that motherhood involves an unearthly bond she presents it in a different way. *Inheritance* focuses on reality however in a trance like manner, creating tranquillity and serenity in the poem. Just as the mother was able to heal her child's fever by staying awake and taking care to produce peace – turning "fretful" into "absence of fever". At the end of the poem she feels it is the skill of a mother she has inherited and will pass on –
"as if I knew the secrets
Of health and air, and if I understood them
And listened to the silence"

Both poets understand the tenderness of the parent/child relationship and this attributes for the peaceful tone that is underlying the two poems. The poems also seem to have a whole-ness to them, showing contentedness. Ruth Padel and Eavaan Boland have taken aspects of parenthood and added their own versions to the poems, creating effective representations of the parent/child relationships in similar yet contrasting manners.

You Shiva and My Mum revolves around the various themes of family, sacrifice, motherhood, relationships and culture. Padel has expressed these themes in a manner of fluidity and rhythm in the poem, and through the use of various language and imagery as well as poetic techniques. The themes of families and relationships, and the sacrifices that are made "without a murmur" are all presented through words and phrases such as "she went to India at the age of eighty … was getting married to a girl with a mask of yellow turmeric" and "how she who hates all frills, watched her feet painted scarlet henna". Padel repeatedly emphasises the lengths one goes to for their children, all without a single complaint or talk of anguish, and in this way she has presented motherhood in a clear and effective way. *Inheritance* on the other hand rather than focusing on the sacrifices mothers make for their children focuses on the way parents impact on their children's lives and actions. The poem starts with a mother voicing her concerns about what she has to "leave behind to give [her] daughters". She does not have the traditional skills associated with people in rural Ireland in the past. Although she loves the natural beauty of her country it is not something that can be passed on in a will. The poet seems anxious about this, then realises she does have something she can pass on – the inherited skill of being a successful mother The ability to nurture and care for your child, amongst other teachings, is what a parent gives their child. *Inheritance* represents a relationship that lasts even beyond years, a relationship that holds for generations to come. Ruth Padel and Eavan Boland both successfully represent relationships between a parent and child through the use of tones and themes to portray their own views of parenthood.

Inheritance and *You Shiva* discuss parenthood in highly contrasting yet similar ways. *Inheritance*, as the title suggests, focuses on inherited traits and characteristics of a person, and shows the deeper impact and bond between parents and their children. It draws to light what makes a person's child their own, and these are the characteristics embedded in their DNA. *You Shiva* on the other hand explores the parent and child relationship which is formed over the years and one that requires more actions, for example the sacrifices a mother makes for her child. However although they both have contrasts there is one underlying factor present in both poems: the fact that the parent/child relationship is stronger than any other.

The poets successfully use structure, themes, tones, language and imagery to convey and express their emotions and views, and although they have vast differences, it is clear that both represent motherhood in an almost sacred way. They also have something to say about the strength of women, especially women as mothers.

Assessment Objectives for Section A (anthology question) & M/S

AO1: articulate informed, personal and creative responses to literary texts, using associated concepts and terminology, and coherent, accurate written expression
AO2: analyse ways in which meanings are shaped in literary texts
AO4: explore connections across literary texts

Level 1	1 – 5	**Descriptive** • Makes little reference to texts with limited organisation of ideas. Limited use of appropriate concepts and terminology with frequent errors and lapses of expression. • Uses a narrative or descriptive approach that shows limited knowledge of texts and how meanings are shaped in texts. Shows a lack of understanding of the writer's craft. • Demonstrates limited awareness of connections between texts. • Describes the texts as separate entities.
Level 2	6 – 10	**General understanding / exploration** • Makes general points, identifying some literary techniques with general explanation of effects. Aware of some appropriate concepts and terminology. Organises and expresses ideas with clarity, although still has errors and lapses. • Gives surface readings of texts relating to how meanings are shaped in texts. Shows general understanding by commenting on straightforward elements of the writer's craft. • Identifies general connections between texts • Makes general cross-references between texts.
Level 3	11 – 15	**Clear relevant application / exploration** • Offers a clear response using relevant textual examples. Relevant use of terminology and concepts. Creates a logical, clear structure with few errors and lapses in expression. • Demonstrates knowledge of how meanings are shaped in texts with consistent analysis. Shows clear understanding of the writer's craft. • Makes relevant connections between texts. • Develops an integrated approach with clear examples.
Level 4	16 – 20	**Discriminating controlled application / exploration** • Constructs a controlled argument with fluently embedded examples. Discriminating use of concepts and terminology. Controls structures with precise cohesive transitions and carefully chosen language. • Demonstrates discriminating understanding of how meanings are shaped in texts. Analyses, in a controlled way, the nuances and subtleties of the writer's craft. • Analyses connections between texts. • Takes a controlled discriminating approach to integration with detailed examples.
Level 5	21 – 25	**Critical and evaluative** • Presents a critical evaluative argument with sustained textual examples. Evaluates the effects of literary features with sophisticated use of concepts and terminology. Uses sophisticated structure and expression. • Exhibits a critical evaluation of the ways meanings are shaped in texts. Displays a sophisticated understanding of the writer's craft. • Evaluates connections between texts. • Exhibits a sophisticated connective approach with sophisticated use of examples.

Examiner commentary

This essay starts with a neat comparison point: *You Shiva* is about the physical things parents do for their children whereas *Inheritance* is about passing on traits or characteristics. Similarities are observed through talking about sacrifices parents make – the eighty year old going to India and, in the Boland poem, the mother who stayed awake, alert and afraid, when her child was ill.

The answer runs into difficulties when trying to establish something about tone, and the fact that there is "an almost sacred link" between parent and child in *You Shiva* and that there is a "trance like manner" in *Inheritance*. These statements are too vague as they stand to be very useful, although, if the essay had been able to follow them through with clearer explanation, some good points would no doubt have emerged. A useful point is made about the mother in *Inheritance* turning "fretful" into "absence of fever". There are appropriate comments on the end of the poem where she feels is the skills of her mother she has inherited and will pass on
"as if I knew the secrets
Of health and air, and if I understood them
And listened to the silence"

A link is made between the two poems: "Both poets understand the tenderness of the parent/child relationship". The point which follows, that "this attributes for the peaceful tone that is underlying the two poems" is not very clear when it comes to considering *You Shiva*, nor is it ever explained. In fact the comments on Padel's poem tend to emphasise the element of "sacrifice" the mother makes in going to India and being adventurous at eighty; nothing is said about the way the poem celebrates the eccentricity and courage of the mother, which could have been a part of the essay on the parent /child relationship covering the way the child sees and admires the mother.

Despite some weaknesses (which include a poorly structured essay which is repetitive, lacks comment on imagery which is one of the bullet points in the question, and the use of some very general phrases which seem almost as if they have been learned to reproduce in any essay on poetry) the essay has strengths: it sustains comparisons throughout, meets the requirements of a level 3 essay with clarity and explanation, and at its best is beginning to address the requirements of level 4 with analysis (rather than just "demonstrating knowledge") and "discrimination".

Mark awarded: The bottom of level 4 with 16 out of 25.

Exemplar 3

Question: The White Tiger – Aravind Adiga

'The novel's strength lies in using humour – not to make the readers laugh but to make them think.'
In the light of this statement, explore Adiga's use of humour in the novel.
In your answer, you must consider relevant contextual factors.

(Total for Question = 25 marks)

Exemplar answer

The White Tiger is a witty, sarcastic novel about life and prejudices in India, as told by a man called Balram. The novel highlights the ever-present yet unacknowledged injustices in modern day India through the perspective of "a thinking man" and "an entrepreneur". *The White Tiger*'s strength lies in using humour. However rather than to simply entertain the reader, the humour has an alternative purpose: to make the reader think. Aravind Adiga uses humour in the novel in a way that emphasises the corruption, and contrasts the "dark" with the "light", allowing the readers to see India through his perspective as a country which benefits the rich and powerful and leaves those living in "the rooster coop" to suffer at the hands of the rich. The novel's stark contrasts, paired with the blunt and crude language of its narrator create a sense of dark humour which pushes the reader to think about human concepts such as morality, virtues and reality while still providing the thrill of reading a fictional book. Aravind Adiga has successfully combined various themes and expressed them in a humorous way to create a slightly exaggerated yet still life like version of India, a version of India usually hidden from the public eye.

The novel begins with a criticism of the influential leaders in India, more specifically "the prime minister and his distinguished side-kicks." Balram Halwai, the narrator of the story, writes about the "truth of Bangalore" and how it lies with him rather than the decision makers of the country. While this is, in a way, a play of humour, it also underlines the fact that the people in charge of India are the ones who know it the least, as they are the ones who have only ever seen the "light". This perspective makes the reader think. This view is emphasised throughout the novel, with Balram's criticism of the "entitled" elite in India. Aravind Adiga creates a division between the "light and the dark" between hell and heaven in the novel. This division refers to those living in the "rooster coop" or those living in abject poverty compared to those born in money. While this concept is expressed a number of times throughout the novel in a seemingly humorous tone, the aim and intention of the mention of "dark" and "light" is evident: to bring to light the injustice in India. Balram uses phrases such as "men with big bellies and men with small bellies" to present the concept of injustice in a humorous way, however the main purpose of this representation is clear: to make people think. *The White Tiger* uses the disparities in India to create a humorous tone and express contrasts in such a way that the reader cannot help but get hooked. The novel's gruesome yet humorous descriptions keep the reader entertained, while at the same time forcing them to recognise prejudices and injustice in India.

In addition to the contrast of the light and the dark, Balram also uses a contrast in the novel in a slightly gruesome yet humorous way. The contrast between the servant and the master to create irony is repeated more than once in the novel. Balram first addresses this while he is driving as he notices that in a way he is the master as he controls where Ashok is going. This view is repeated at the end of the novel, when Balram states that "I'll never say I made a mistake that night in Delhi when I slit my master's throat… what it means to not be a

servant." This view is ironic and creates a sort of twisted humour, however not without purpose. This irony is what leads readers to think and question their preconceived notions about masters and servants. One would be inclined to think that if a master is paying his servant to do a task, then the said servant would happily oblige, however Balram makes us question this view and understand a different perspective. The use of irony is seen more than once in the novel, for example when Ashok reprimands Balram for giving a beggar money by saying that he should "work for it". The White Tiger explores ironies and contrasts repeatedly and thus creates a sense of humour while also forcing the reader to challenge his or her own views.

The White Tiger is "a tale of two Indias" and its very theme prevents it from being just another fictional book. While the backstory is fictional the recurring problems and injustices dealt with in the novel are not in fact fictional. Adiga has used humour in the novel solely to draw attention to the abject poverty and disparities faced by Indian people every day. The author's use of humour keeps the reader hooked, as it creates an air of surprise. It is clear that Adiga has used humour simply to draw light to the fact that India is not as perfect as it is made out to be and the fact that the entire novel consists of dark humour emphasises this point.

Section B (Assessment Objectives for Section B, the novel question) & M/S

AO1: articulate informed, personal and creative responses to literary texts, using associated concepts and terminology, and coherent, accurate written expression
AO2: analyse ways in which meanings are shaped in literary texts
AO3: demonstrate understanding of the significance and influence of the contexts in which literary texts are written and received.
Footnote: AO5 (explore literary texts informed by different interpretations) is not addressed in this unit.

Level 1	1 – 5	**Descriptive** • Makes little reference to texts with limited organisation of ideas. Limited use of appropriate concepts and terminology with frequent errors and lapses of expression. • Uses a narrative or descriptive approach that shows limited knowledge of texts and how meanings are shaped in texts. Shows a lack of understanding of the writer's craft. • Shows limited awareness of contextual factors. • Shows limited awareness of links between texts and contexts.
Level 2	6 – 10	**General understanding / exploration** • Makes general points, identifying some literary techniques with general explanation of effects. Aware of some appropriate concepts and terminology. Organises and expresses ideas with clarity, although still has errors and lapses. • Gives surface readings of texts relating to how meanings are shaped in texts. Shows general understanding by commenting on straightforward elements of the writer's craft. • Has general awareness of the significance and influence of contextual factors. • Makes general links between texts and contexts.
Level 3	11 – 15	**Clear relevant application / exploration** • Offers a clear response using relevant textual examples. Relevant use of terminology and concepts. Creates a logical, clear structure with few errors and lapses in expression. • Demonstrates knowledge of how meanings are shaped in texts with consistent analysis. Shows clear understanding of the writer's craft. • Demonstrates a clear exploration of the significance and influence of contextual factors. • Develops relevant links between texts and contexts.
Level 4	16 – 20	**Discriminating controlled application / exploration** • Constructs a controlled argument with fluently embedded examples. Discriminating use of concepts and terminology. Controls structures with precise cohesive transitions and carefully chosen language. • Demonstrates discriminating understanding of how meanings are shaped in texts. Analyses, in a controlled way, the nuances and subtleties of a writer's craft. • Provides a discriminating analysis of the significance and influence of contextual factors. • Makes detailed links between texts and contexts.
Level 5	21 – 25	**Critical and evaluative** • Presents a critical evaluative argument with sustained textual examples. Evaluates the effects of literary features with sophisticated use of concepts and terminology. Uses sophisticated structure and expression. • Exhibits a critical evaluation of the ways meanings are shaped in texts. Displays a sophisticated understanding of the writer's craft. • Presents a sophisticated evaluation and appreciation of the significance and influence of contextual factors. • Makes sophisticated links between texts and contexts.

Examiner commentary

This essay is certainly clear. The opening paragraph sets out the argument well, reminding us that the book is "a witty, sarcastic novel about life and prejudices in India" and relates to the question – "the humour has an alternative purpose – to make the reader think".

What follows is disappointing however, because the general overview (which at times reads rather like a book review) continues rather too long. The division of dark and light is mentioned, as is the idea of the rooster coop, but there is no close scrutiny of the humour and how it actually works. We are told this concept (the rooster coop) is expressed a number of times throughout the novel in a seemingly humorous tone, but no quotation and, more importantly, no comment on the quotation, is supplied.

It would have been good if the essay could have explored the way the novel works through making Balram say things, such as his rooster coop analogy, which on the surface seem right and well reasoned and might almost seduce the reader into agreeing with him; it could be said Balram's wit and articulacy almost win the reader over to his way of thinking, before the readers realise they are listening to a murderer who has sacrificed his family for his own gain. Readers are forced, it might be said, to question what they are laughing about. In turn this kind of argument could lead to a more thorough consideration of context and, importantly, consideration of context is lacking here.

It is almost impossible to write about this novel without making some incidental contextual reference, and this happens here, but because it is an important assessment objective the essay needs to address context more directly.

The essay concludes by saying "it is clear that Adiga has used humour simply to draw light to the fact that India is not as perfect as it is made out to be" but as it stands this is simply an assertion. Some further development of the point would address the question of how this works as a political novel: does it inspire change or is it simply laughing at the way things are, and in terms of the descriptor for AO3 "what is the significance and influence of the context in which the text is *received*"? Consideration could be made of the hostile reception the novel has received, especially in Adiga's own birthplace, and how much of this is because the humour is not necessarily making people think, but annoying them because of its flippancy.

This essay was placed in the middle of level 3, with 13 marks out of 25. It offers a clear response and gives some textual examples; the writing style is error free and can be quite sophisticated; it is better than a "surface reading" which is a feature of level 2 but clearly falls short of the "controlled analysis" required for band 4.

Mark awarded: 13 out of 25

Exemplar 4

Question: Compare the ways in which poets explore the parent/child relationship in You, Shiva, and My Mum by Ruth Padel and one other poem of your choice from Poems of the Decade: An Anthology of the Forward Books of Poetry 2002–2011.

In your answer, you should consider the following:
- the poets' development of themes
- the poets' use of language and imagery
- the use of other poetic techniques.

(Total for Question 1 = 25 marks)

Exemplar answer

In *You Shiva and My Mum* by Ruth Padel and *Effects* by Alan Jenkins the parent/child relationships are very different in nature, this is displayed by the language and techniques the poets use. In *You Shiva* the relationship between the two major characters is healthy and holds mutual respect and pride. In *Effects* however it is an opposite relationship, a sad and sorrowful one that changes throughout the poem.

Ruth Padel talks about her mom in relation to Shiva, who is someone with high god-like attributes and power. From the beginning of the poem, Ruth establishes that the mother is highly regarded who Ruth sees somewhat similar to someone like Shiva. In turn the relationship is found to be strong by the reader. Moreover Ruth indicates the pride she feels towards her by mentioning many of mum's adventures, how she "rode a motorbike to the forest where Orissa's last recorded human sacrifice took place."

Ruth acknowledges the braveness of her mother especially at an old age of eighty.
In contrast to *Effects* the child/mother relationship has a significantly different tone and nature. Alan portrays the relationship to be unappreciated and weak, however he only realises this after she had died, thus reaching regret. In *Effects* Alan highlights the emotional pain he feels in the relationship by describing his mother in a sorrowful tone and sympathising with it. He says her hands have been "scarred from chopping, slicing" the food she prepared for the family. From the beginning of the poem he highlights his mother's actions which were for the betterment of his family and the consequences she faced because of that. He never appreciated this before she had passed away; he never showed love and pride towards his mother when she was alive, unlike Ruth.

Both poets express their mother's relationship using very different poetic language and techniques. Ruth's poem has different layout, with each second stanza indented to the right. This has a major effect on the reader as it indicates a different voice and character. With this Ruth successfully hints that she shows appreciation towards her mother and that she is a highly significant person in her life. In *Effects* Alan writes a one stanza poem, where the enjambment he uses is highlighted. With this, he manages to reflect his past relationship with his mother – one sided, lonely and lacking gratitude.

Moreover, this unorganised structure parallels Alan's mind and suggests his rush of emotion and regret he now feels towards his mother. In Ruth's poem the stanzas are organised, each one with three lines each showing the stability of their relationship. In addition, her poem is in the form of a question which is an uncommon way of phrasing in poetry, thus establishing that

Ruth's relationship is uncommon as well and one of a kind and in contrast, opposite to Alan's relationship.

The rhyming nature of the poems is also different. In *Effects* there is no regular rhyme scheme to symbolise the instability of the relationship, he uses simple rhyming words such as "stew" and "knew" "sat" and "at" or "touch" and "scotch" - the irregularity of these rhymes add an additional layer to the regretful tone of the poem as at the end of the poem he uses a different rhyme scheme. In the last 13 lines, the reader notices a major alteration to the flow, rhythm and rhyme of the poem, to indicate the new relationship he feels towards his mother. Most notably, the last 3 lines rhyme ("she" "see" and "me").

Throughout the poem he uses rhyming couplets only, and this sudden shift stresses on how different his relationship with his mother has become and how he is now affected by it. In contrast to *You Shiva and My Mum* Ruth uses no rhymes to hint at how natural her relationship with mum feels.

In *You Shiva* Ruth displays a variety of images that involve her mum and her adventures. This creates a variety of positive emotions felt by the reader towards this relationship. In *Effects* Alan set the present scene in a hospital room which creates an overall pitiful central image in the reader's mind.

The two relationships are very different, Ruth's relationship is a regular, positive and unchanging, this is displayed by her language and structure, unlike Alan, whose relationship is opposite to that as well as his language, tone and structure.

Assessment Objectives for Section A (anthology question) & M/S

AO1: articulate informed, personal and creative responses to literary texts, using associated concepts and terminology, and coherent, accurate written expression
AO2: analyse ways in which meanings are shaped in literary texts
AO4: explore connections across literary texts

Level 1	1 – 5	**Descriptive** • Makes little reference to texts with limited organisation of ideas. Limited use of appropriate concepts and terminology with frequent errors and lapses of expression. • Uses a narrative or descriptive approach that shows limited knowledge of texts and how meanings are shaped in texts. Shows a lack of understanding of the writer's craft. • Demonstrates limited awareness of connections between texts. • Describes the texts as separate entities.
Level 2	6 – 10	**General understanding / exploration** • Makes general points, identifying some literary techniques with general explanation of effects. Aware of some appropriate concepts and terminology. Organises and expresses ideas with clarity, although still has errors and lapses. • Gives surface readings of texts relating to how meanings are shaped in texts. Shows general understanding by commenting on straightforward elements of the writer's craft. • Identifies general connections between texts • Makes general cross-references between texts.
Level 3	11 – 15	**Clear relevant application / exploration** • Offers a clear response using relevant textual examples. Relevant use of terminology and concepts. Creates a logical, clear structure with few errors and lapses in expression. • Demonstrates knowledge of how meanings are shaped in texts with consistent analysis. Shows clear understanding of the writer's craft. • Makes relevant connections between texts. • Develops an integrated approach with clear examples.
Level 4	16 – 20	**Discriminating controlled application / exploration** • Constructs a controlled argument with fluently embedded examples. Discriminating use of concepts and terminology. Controls structures with precise cohesive transitions and carefully chosen language. • Demonstrates discriminating understanding of how meanings are shaped in texts. Analyses, in a controlled way, the nuances and subtleties of the writer's craft. • Analyses connections between texts. • Takes a controlled discriminating approach to integration with detailed examples.
Level 5	21 – 25	**Critical and evaluative** • Presents a critical evaluative argument with sustained textual examples. Evaluates the effects of literary features with sophisticated use of concepts and terminology. Uses sophisticated structure and expression. • Exhibits a critical evaluation of the ways meanings are shaped in texts. Displays a sophisticated understanding of the writer's craft. • Evaluates connections between texts. • Exhibits a sophisticated connective approach with sophisticated use of examples.

Examiner commentary

This is an essay that shows a general understanding. It is clear from the opening paragraph that the poems have been understood in so far as *You Shiva* presents a "healthy" relationship with mutual respect and pride and that in *Effects* "it is an opposite relationship."

There is some oversimplification here however. The essay moves on to say that "Ruth [full name or surname would be better here; after all, we would not refer to Shakespeare as William] sees the mother similar to someone like Shiva" but there is nothing to follow this up or explain the point and quotation is used only to tell us what is happening in the poem – "she rode a motorbike to the forest where Orissa's last recorded human sacrifice took place". Detail is missed – the mother rode *on* a motorbike (she was a pillion passenger); this ride was at full moon, not at the wedding itself, and no further use is made of this line beyond establishing the mother had this adventure at eighty years old.

The essay is more ambitious when addressing form and structure. The essay is always concerned to point out contrasts as starkly as possible: conclusions can therefore be over simplified as a result. So the lack of rhyme in *You Shiva* shows "how natural her relationship with her mum feels" whereas in *Effects* the rhyme changes and with the rhyme in the last three lines "this sudden shift stresses on how different his relationship with his mother has become and how he is affected by it."

The essay is working towards the level 3 attributes of demonstrating "knowledge of how meanings are shaped in texts with consistent analysis" but it is not there yet; "general understanding, commenting on straightforward aspects of a writer's craft" (level 2) would be a more appropriate description.

One of the bullet points in the question requires candidates to look at imagery. This essay comments on the mother's hands in *Effects*: the scarred hands are seen as highlighting the fact that the mother's actions were "for the betterment of the family". There is no further exploration however: the essay might have explored imagery by considering the symbolism here and the way those hands appear again later in the poem.

The essay was placed at the top end of level 2 with a mark of 10 out of 25.

Mark awarded: 10 out of 25