



MAJLIS PEPERIKSAAN MALAYSIA
Malaysian Examinations Council



2024

LAPORAN
PEPERIKSAAN

STPM

Literature in English
(920)

OVERALL PERFORMANCE

In Semester 1 2024, 76 candidates sat for the examination of this subject and 78.95% of them obtained a full pass.

The percentage of each grade is as follows:

Grade	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	F
Percentage	5.41	2.70	10.81	21.62	8.11	22.97	7.33	11.77	1.35	1.35	6.58

PAPER 920/1 (POEMS AND MALAYSIAN SHORT STORIES)

RESPONSES OF CANDIDATES

General comments

This paper is based on selected poems prescribed in the syllabus, as well as short stories taken from the Malaysian Short Stories collection. There are a total of four questions divided into three sections. Section A: Critical Appreciation provides candidates with the choice of answering a question based on either the poems or the short stories. Sections B (Poems) and C (Short Stories) do not provide options, and candidates must attempt the question set accordingly.

Overall, students tended to fall within the average range. Those who performed particularly poorly were those who did not answer all three questions or who clearly had not been taught the subject. There were more students who could be considered excellent compared to last year. In general, students need to spend more time contemplating what the question actually asks for and perhaps sketching out a focused plan on how to respond to that demand. The candidates' use of English varies widely, with some on the lowest end having trouble constructing grammatical and idiomatic sentences, while those on the higher end are able to write fluently and confidently with minimal errors.

Comments on individual questions

SECTION A: *Critical Appreciation*

Question 1

This question requires candidates to examine different aspects of nature and the human response to it in relation to Emily Dickinson's poem *A Bird came down the Walk*. Candidates should analyse Dickinson's description of the bird's wild habits such as eating the worm, drinking from a blade of grass, hopping around, being cautious and alert, and showing fear and suspicion of the human being nearby. They can also note that the poet observes its beauty and grace. They might also note that the bird switches from being the predator, to feeling cautious as potential 'prey' for the human. In relation

to the human response, candidates can focus on the poet's fascination with the bird's actions (shown by her close observation), her appreciation of the bird's beauty (shown by her use of imagery), and her lack of understanding of the relationship between her and the bird (she tries to be 'friendly', but the bird can only see her as a threat). So, to a small extent, the poet doesn't quite understand the human/nature relationship. This is perhaps also shown by her insistence on using the pronouns 'he' and 'him' to refer to the bird.

One of the excellent answers demonstrated a quite complex thought process which grappled with the key part of the question – the human response to nature. The candidate notes that “The personification applied, especially to the bird, is noteworthy as it feels like a human attempt at familiarising the wild animal to be a creature that can be better understood, however foreign it may be”. This indicates an understanding of personification, and a good attempt at linking to the main point of the question. On the whole, most of the candidates were able to at least attempt analysis, rather than just stopping at summary. One example of a good response shows that the student understands both the poem and the question. The average answer shows that the student has some ideas, but is unable to get into a meaningful analysis, or to argue their point clearly. The weak answer shows an attempt to answer, but it is vague and too brief. It also demonstrates a lack of logic in the response.

Question 2

Question 2 is very straightforward. It asks for a discussion of the relationship between the narrator and his father. Candidates should be able to pick up on the fact that the speaker is recounting some of the encounters he has had with his father over the years, starting from when he was very young, to when he went away to school, to when he is a young adult. Candidates should note that the relationship between the two grows and changes over the years but remains positive and supportive throughout. As a child, the speaker feels comfortable enough with his father to show vulnerability by crying in front of him; he is also unafraid of discussing his mistake with his father. The father, meanwhile, demonstrates a deep understanding of his son by knowing what is wrong without being told. As an older child, the speaker notes that the father doesn't seem to have changed. And finally, as a young adult, he and his father acknowledge each other as individuals and friends. Overall, candidates should pick up on the generally positive relationship, and how both father and son grow and change.

Generally, candidates find it easier to respond to questions about prose texts. The excellent answers are able to draw connections beyond just basic analysis. For example: “Endearingly, the father and narrator are able to come to an understanding that the yearning is mutual”. This highlights the idea that both are looking for continued closeness, despite the changes that have taken place in their lives. An example of a good answer shows a very concise answer which nonetheless highlights some key points in the father-son relationship. Average answers make some of the same points, but generally with much poorer writing, and an inability to really focus on the question. For example, one candidate discusses the childhood incident by talking about how the father and son work together and understand the son's grammar mistake. This is not really the point – the point is that the father immediately understands why the son is upset, and calmly addresses the problem in a way which comforts the child. An example of a weak answer shows that the student is unable to analyse what is in the given text. Instead, the candidate goes outside the text to talk briefly about the “denial of the reality of the narrator's father”; they also say that “Through flashback the relationship between narrator and his father is highlighted”, but never explains what that relationship is like. The answer is also extremely brief. In the case of the poor students – they either did not answer or showed no understanding of question or text.

SECTION B: *Poems*

Question 3

The question asks how the sonnet form is used to express meaning. Because it specifies sonnet form, candidates must start by explaining what the sonnet form is – 14 lines, either Petrarchan (octave/sestet structure) or Shakespearean (3 quatrains + rhyming couplet). A discussion of rhyme scheme might also be helpful. Once they have set out the form of the sonnet, they can pick their two sonnets to discuss – most likely Shakespeare’s *Sonnet 73* and Spenser’s *Sonnet 75*.

They should then discuss the main theme or idea of the poem and show how the form of the sonnet helps to bring out or support that idea. For example, for *Sonnet 73*, the candidate can show how each quatrain is a metaphor for death and moves from a very broad example (time of year) to narrower, smaller examples (a time of day, or a fire that is almost burnt out). Thus, the 3 quatrains set out the main idea (death), in an argument that moves from general to specific. The final couplet functions as a way of tying up the argument – in this case, telling the lover to prepare for this parting/death, and to strengthen his own feelings for the speaker. candidates can support their discussion of themes and ideas by bringing in rhyme scheme, imagery, and so on. But the focus must be on form.

Candidates should be familiar with Petrarchan and Shakespearean sonnets, and the way in which the 8/6 or 4/4/4/2 form works. The poor showing might indicate that candidates are not getting the instruction they need, or it might reflect a kind of fear of anything that seems technical. One excellent answer showed how the quatrains were used – “it shows the contrast between the speaker’s insistence on immortalising his beloved while the second quatrain switches to the dialogue of his beloved”; “However the 3rd quatrain of the sonnet continues the back and forth of the conversation while also introducing a new tone and idea”. This candidate demonstrates an understanding of both form and content. For the average answer, the candidate mentioned the sonnet form, but did not follow through with analysis. The remaining discussion is about things like imagery and ideas, without reference to form. The main issue with the weak answers is that candidates do not explain the sonnet form, and do not show how the argument within the sonnet is built up using that form. The weak answers were often quite poor on analysis as well, tending more towards summary. Other issues are that they might get the sonnet form wrong, such as the candidate who describes the Shakespearean sonnet form as consisting of couplets instead of quatrains.

SECTION C: *Malaysian Short Stories*

Question 4

Question 4 asks how the traditional practice of culture is depicted in any two of the Malaysian short stories. The phrasing of the question allows the candidates to answer in a quite simple way, by describing what the various traditional practices are – such as Muni’s playing of the *udukku* in *Ratnamuni*, the frog-catching and slaughter of the goat in *A Certain Cry*, the burning of paper money and offerings in *A Love of the Past*, and so on. There are quite a few examples that candidates can choose from. Better candidates will be able to add a critique of the portrayal – for example, commenting that in *A Certain Cry*, the slaughter of the goat seems acceptable, while Mick’s way of killing the frogs is seen as cruel. Or commenting on how women are shown to be oppressed by cultural beliefs and practices in *Ratnamuni*, or *Through the Wall*, or (in a way) *Birthday*. This kind of comment shows a level of critical engagement with the text that goes beyond just a summary or description of the content of the story.

The excellent answers are able to see some of the subtleties in the practice of culture. For example, a candidate was able to note that the “seemingly brutal killing of a goat [...] is not seen as cruel”, but the killing of frogs is seen as cruel. The candidate notes perceptively that there is “irony” in Mick’s father’s differing responses to the sacrifice of the goat, and the way his son kills frogs. A good answer has some of this insight, for example noting that Muniandy’s *udukku* is not just an expression of culture, but also a practice that yearns for divine purity and truthfulness. However, there is also too much storytelling in relation to analysis. One example of an average answer shows that while the candidate makes some valid points, he or she also gets sidetracked to something largely irrelevant to the question. A weak answer completely missed the point of the question, and instead began to moralise about ‘kids today’. Poor answers tend to be extremely brief, never getting into any kind of discussion of the question.

OVERALL PERFORMANCE

In Semester 2 2024, 67 candidates sat for the examination of this subject and 85.07% of them obtained a full pass.

The percentage of each grade is as follows:

Grade	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	F
Percentage	16.42	10.45	14.93	11.94	13.43	8.96	8.94	7.46	1.49	2.99	2.99

PAPER 920/2 (PLAYS)

RESPONSES OF CANDIDATES

General comments

This paper is based on two plays i.e. Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* and Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*. Each play contributed two questions for a total of four questions in three sections. Section A: Critical Appreciation provides a candidate with the choice of answering a question based either on *Twelfth Night* or *A Raisin in the Sun*. Sections B (*Twelfth Night*) and C (*A Raisin in the Sun*) do not provide options and candidates have to answer the question set.

For this paper, in terms of the quality of answers, the candidates performed better in the close analysis questions in Section A compared to the essay questions in Sections B and C. There was a range of marks which suggests that the examination could distinguish between the weaker and more able candidates. In general, the quality of the answer scripts ranged from well-written to average, with a minority of weak answers. In addition, most of the candidates could provide answers to the three questions required in the time allocated. However, some candidates appeared to have struggled to complete all three questions in the time allocated, resulting in these candidates giving unsatisfactory or incomplete answers for Sections A, B or C questions: or submitting only two answers from the three sections.

Comments on individual questions

SECTION A: *Critical Appreciation*

Question 1

The question requires candidates to explain the different ways in which Viola and Orsino speak of love. This is seen through their choice of words as they exchange thoughts and ideas. Orsino is full of himself and dominates the conversation, while Viola/Cesario is more hesitant and careful in her choice of words when she replies to Orsino's questions or thoughts. She appears to agree with what Orsino says, yet there is a second unsaid layer of meaning that the audience is aware of.

About half of the candidates who submitted answers were able to provide a satisfactory answer. The question required the candidate to pick out and differentiate between Orsino's and Viola/Cesario's ideas and perceptions regarding love; the candidates also had to utilise the correct quotes from the excerpt to back up their argument. For example, Orsino argues that women are not able to love as deeply as men. Yet he contradicts himself when he later says that men's passions are less stable than women's, inferring that men can be fickle.

The weaker candidates were not able to satisfactorily deconstruct and analyse the excerpt to differentiate between what Orsino and Viola/Cesario say about love. Weaker candidates tend to focus on a descriptive summary or superficial reading of the excerpt and/or not use examples from the excerpt to back up their line of argument. Those who did not have the time to study the text in detail resorted to a cursory discussion of themes that are related to love.

Question 2

The question requires the candidates to discuss the details of Walter's dream of the future, after he makes "a business transaction that is going to change our lives". He describes his dream to Travis, as if it were being presented before his eyes. He speaks in the future tense, using "will" throughout. He also jumps 17 years into the future, presenting a picture of the success he thinks he would have achieved, and the nice things he could provide for his family.

Most candidates did well, as they could identify and provide relevant details from the excerpt about the dreams Walter had for himself, his wife Ruth, and his son Travis. For example, when good candidates wrote about the material things that Walter wants for his family, they also commented that it shows how Walter measures success by how many expensive, material things he can provide for his family. Instead of just describing the dream, these candidates' additional comments and analysis of the description enabled him/her to score more marks. Some candidates also pointed out that Walter's dream is closely connected to the white American Dream, and others wrote that Walter hopes to elevate his social status and be respected by society.

Some average and weaker candidates spent a lot of time summarising the excerpt yet provided little or no analysis. The weaker students were also not able to use the excerpt to explain Walter's dream. Some weak candidates relied on a superficial reading of the excerpt and/or not using examples from the excerpt to back up their line of argument. A small minority resorted to a cursory discussion of the main themes of the play.

SECTION B: William Shakespeare: *Twelfth Night*

Question 3

The question requires candidates to closely examine how reconciliations between characters occur in *Twelfth Nights*. Reconciliations focus on the restoration of friendly relations after a disagreement. With this in mind, the question requires the candidate to identify the pair of characters and their disagreement or misunderstanding, and then show how the reconciliation came about. There are several pairs the candidates could choose to include in their answers. Candidates should include at least two pairings in their answers.

Many candidates had problems answering the question. Firstly, it is disheartening to note that many candidates did not know the meaning of reconciliation i.e., the restoration of friendly relations after a

disagreement. In the case of *Twelfth Night* the play is centered around disguise, mistaken identities, and the confusion and misunderstandings it created among the characters. Many of the answers submitted showed that most candidates thought that the term referred to “how a character tries to accept that has (sic) happened and tries to make the best out of the situation”, which only partially fulfills the question’s requirement. Secondly, there are several major and minor characters in the play. Many candidates choose to focus on minor characters like Antonio or Malvolio to include in their answers.

This was a mistake as their misunderstandings were minor and easily resolved. They would have done better by choosing a pairing from the play’s major characters e.g., Viola and Orsino, or Olivia and Cesario. This would have given them more marks as their answers would include how the misunderstandings of the minor characters contributed to the reconciliation between the major characters. Another mistake many candidates made was when they included the prank played on Malvolio by Maria, Toby, Andrew, and Fabian in their answers. This was an unfortunate choice as this prank did not result in an amicable reconciliation among the minor characters. Finally, many good and weak candidates did not provide enough details and explanations regarding how the reconciliation came about.

SECTION C: Lorraine Hansberry: *A Raisin in the Sun*

Question 4

For question 4, candidates are required to compare and contrast how Walter and Beneatha respond to and handle the issue of racism in the play. In a compare and contrast essay, you start by first stating the similarities between Walter and Beneatha. In general, both Walter and Beneatha are conscious of their disadvantaged position as African Americans. They both want to improve their lot in life but feel oppressed by white society and norms. However, the way they respond to and handle the issue of race is different.

The good and strong candidates correctly identified that Walter tends to see himself as a disadvantaged victim of the system, often comparing himself to successful white men and using white standards of success as his basis for comparison. He also tends to blame others for his shortcomings e.g., when his mother did not allow him to manage the insurance money. Beneatha on the other hand, focuses on self-improvement through education to overcome racial stereotyping and discrimination. She also learns to appreciate and be proud of her African heritage and eventually decides to refuse to assimilate into the white majority culture.

The average to weak candidates often began their answer by using the incident when Mr. Lindner tried to dissuade the Youngers from moving to *Clyburn Park* as an example of how Walter and Beneatha felt “anger and wounded pride” when faced with housing segregation. However, the same point would make a better impact if the candidates used this incident as an example of how Walter was initially willing to remain servile by going along with Mr. Lindner’s proposal before getting a backbone and refusing the offer. This makes it a more compelling argument for how Walter handled the proposal, and this in turn becomes a good example of Walter’s awakening sense of self-pride as an African American man. Other candidates correctly mentioned that racial discrimination is not limited to whites against blacks. It can also come from other blacks like Mrs. Johnson who is probably jealous and warned of dire consequences if they moved. Unfortunately, it is not relevant to the question with no marks gained, as neither Walter nor Beneatha was present during the conversation between Mrs. Johnson, Mama Lena, and Ruth.

OVERALL PERFORMANCE

In Semester 3 2024, 68 candidates sat for the examination of this subject and 72.06% of them obtained a full pass.

The percentage of each grade is as follows:

Grade	A	A–	B+	B	B–	C+	C	C–	D+	D	F
Percentage	14.71	5.88	11.76	10.29	13.24	10.29	5.59	10.30	5.88	2.94	8.82

PAPER 920/3 (NOVELS)

RESPONSES OF CANDIDATES

General comments

This paper is based on selected novels prescribed in the syllabus: *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen and *The Joy Luck Club* by Amy Tan. There are a total of four questions divided into three sections. Section A: Critical Appreciation provides a candidate with the choice of answering a question based on the excerpts from the two novels. Sections B (*Pride and Prejudice*) and C (*The Joy Luck Club*) do not provide options, and candidates have to attempt the question set accordingly.

The questions allow for demonstrations of different levels of competency, being sufficient enough for average candidates to respond to while having room for more competent candidates to respond to the best of their ability. The questions also focus on key and important aspects of each text which should help candidates' responses. The questions are succinct and clear, each highlighting key words and concepts that are necessary for candidates to consider in framing their responses.

Comments on individual questions

SECTION A: *Critical Appreciation*

Question 1

Question 1 presents arguably one of the most popular excerpts from Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* coupled with instruction to focus on different views of marriage so candidates should be capable of responding adequately to the question. A few aspects are key to this question. The first is that it requires candidates to identify the views of both Mrs. Bennet as well as her husband, Mr. Bennet. Each character must be given adequate attention and while Mr. Bennet does not explicitly comment on marriage in the excerpt, his view of it can be discerned through the dialogue and his behaviour (or lack thereof). It is important to note here that "view" is specific. For instance, Mrs. Bennet views marriage as a means of social advancement (there is a personal opinion regarding what marriage is) whereas merely stating that Mrs. Bennet is excited about marriage provides little specificity of the

character's thoughts and/or views regarding marriage. Candidates should be able to discern views of marriage through what Mrs. Bennet is fixated on, the way Mr. Bingley is described as a suitor and so on. Mr. Bennet, on the other hand, does not view marriage as a priority in life or as a foundation for social relationships.

Good candidates clearly identified how Mr. and Mrs. Bennet view marriage, supported by detailed evidence from the excerpt. Some insightful interpretations included a comment on how the number of servants Mr. Bingley had is viewed as an important detail by Mrs. Bennet, emphasising again that marriage is viewed as a means of financial security where the more servants Mr. Bingley had, the higher the possibility that his future wife will be well taken care of. Another candidate linked Mrs. Bennet's views of marriage to societal expectations and norms, as evidenced from the topic of gossip among ladies in the village. Poor candidates failed to deal with both Mr. and Mrs. Bennet adequately or misunderstood 'views' and replaced it with descriptions of Mr. and Mrs. Bennet's feelings instead. Comments on Mr. Bennet also proved to be a challenge, some stating that he was an uncaring father because he was not as excited as Mrs. Bennet about Mr. Bingley's arrival. Another misinterpretation was an odd assumption among some candidates that the first sentence of the excerpt is attributed to Mrs. Bennet, which unfortunately skewed their responses.

Question 2

Question 2 focuses on an excerpt that contains rich descriptions of the environment that Waverly grew up in. The question requires candidates to focus on appeal of the senses – sight, smell, taste and so on, which then have to be discussed in terms of what and how they represent regarding Chinese culture. This question is not simple as mere descriptions would be inadequate. Likewise, comments of Chinese culture have to be based on what is available within the excerpt and not rely on candidates' background knowledge.

Among candidates who selected Question 2, there was one very strong response. The candidate showed clear focus on different senses, drawing suitable evidence from throughout the excerpt. The candidate was also careful to consistently link aspects such as food, norms, and behaviour to Chinese culture. Unfortunately, most responses were weak, bordering on average. Weak responses either completely ignored the appeal to the senses or failed to connect different aspects back to Chinese culture. Such responses seemed to draw on background knowledge which meant that responses went beyond the scope of the excerpt.

SECTION B: *Pride and Prejudice*

Question 3

Question 3 on *Pride and Prejudice* consists of two key phrases, 'significance' and 'first impressions'. Candidates have to deal with both phrases in order to fully respond to the question. While it may be common to discuss the idea of first impressions of the novel, the vital point of this question is to comment on its significance, which could relate to conflict, plot development, character development and so on. Therefore, merely describing the first impressions of different characters will not be enough.

On average, candidates performed at an average bordering on weak level for Question 3. Weak responses remained at a descriptive level, recounting the first impressions certain characters had of each other. Average candidates could, at least, address the importance of 'significance' though comments were rather general, stating for instance, 'it helped Elizabeth's character development' but

failed to provide details regarding what these developments were. Some candidates seemed to try to shoehorn points and elaboration based on the themes or traits of prejudice and pride into their essay which resulted in candidates not fully addressing the question. Prejudice and pride did influence first impressions but the significance of these impressions should remain the focus of the response, and not details of how each character exhibited pride or prejudice. Accomplished candidates focused on explaining why first impressions were significant, usually with a focus on how these first impressions contributed to the plot, suspense and even as social commentary.

SECTION C: *The Joy Luck Club*

Question 4

Question 4 requires candidates to select two daughters and to discuss their resistance to Chinese identity. The selection of characters is vital and naming them accurately is the basis of this response. The key points are ‘resistance’ where there is an intentional effort or choice to deny their Chinese identity. Resistance has to be a conscious so responses that explanations such as ‘the character did not know’, ‘never realised’ and so on are considered lacking. Likewise, merely describing resistance or struggles is not enough as candidates must also focus on Chinese identity. Though identity is related to heritage, norms and values, the focus of the question remains on identity so if students do not explicitly link those aspects to identity, the question is not fully addressed.

While seemingly straightforward, most candidates still had a tendency to retell the stories of different characters for Question 4. Some poor responses even failed to select two appropriate characters with quite a number of candidates providing very brief responses, likely due to time constraints. Some candidates attempted to use the stories of the mothers’ past as daughters themselves which, within the scope of the question, is acceptable. However, such choices tended to have difficulty addressing the focus of the question which is about resistance towards Chinese identity. Weak, and at best, average responses lacked a focus of Chinese identity as well as resistance. Unfortunately, some candidates tended to skew towards discussions of mother-daughter relationships instead of resistance which resulted in essays that were out of point. As a key focus of the question, resistance had to be clearly defined. For instance, a few candidates tried to justify how ignorance is a form of resistance but without demonstrating that there was a conscious decision to turn away from or ignore something key to Chinese identity, such attempts to address resistance were inadequate. Accomplished candidates were also mindful of linking ideas of heritage, values, and customs back to Chinese identity. This link is vital to ensure that the candidate addresses the requirements of the question.

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