

# Cambridge O Level Literature in English 2010

## Paper 1 Poetry and Prose – Using candidate responses in the classroom

### *Stories of Ourselves* – Writing a response to a prose passage-based question

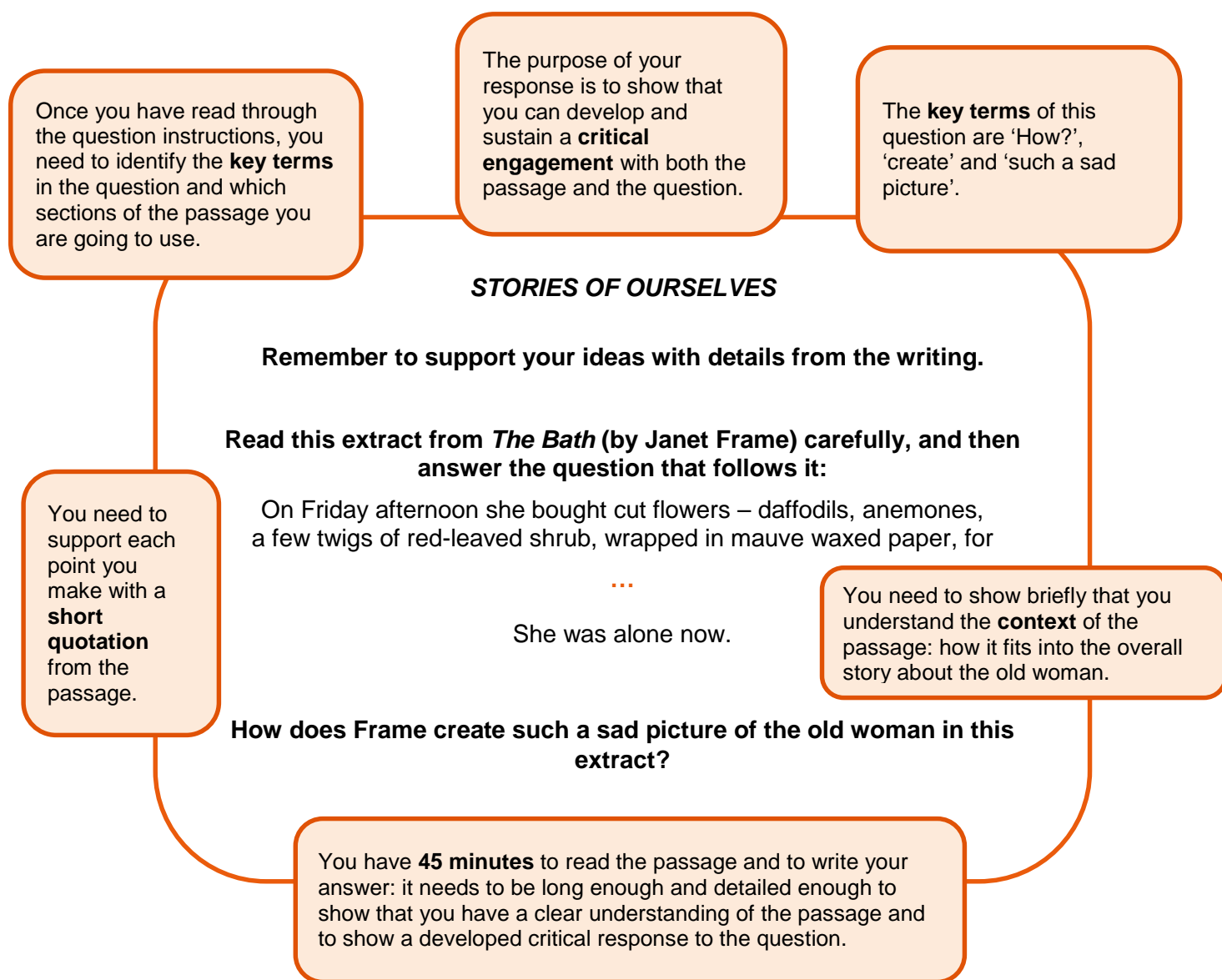
- The purpose of the response is to make a sensitive, informed (AO4) and supported response to the question that shows a detailed knowledge (AO1) and understanding (AO2) of the passage and a critical engagement with the writer's methods (AO3).
- The candidate will use a relevant short quotation from the passage (AO1) as evidence for each point they make.
- The candidate will use the quotations to support an informed personal response to the writer's methods: the ways in which Frame uses language, structure and form (AO3) to create such a sad picture of the old woman in the extract from the short story *The Bath*.

### Tips for learners

- Read the question and highlight the **key terms** that you need to focus on.
- Read the passage carefully and **highlight relevant parts** that you might use in your answer. Do not highlight too much as you should use short quotations to address precisely the points you make.
- Remember you cannot write about everything in 45 minutes. **Be selective**, but make sure you have comments to make about the beginning and ending of the passage as well as key points in between.
- Keep **focused on the question**. You are not expected to show everything you know about the story.
- **Contextualise** the passage, showing briefly how the passage fits into the overall story.
- **Support your points** with **quotations** from the passage given in the paper.
- **Comment precisely** on the ways in which the writer achieves her effects in creating such a sad picture of the old woman.
- Aim to make at least **10 points** so that you can develop a convincing response to the question.
- Try to **address all the assessment objectives in each point** you make rather than deal with them separately as this will make your argument more convincing and less likely that you will repeat yourself.

## Examination question

We have annotated the question below with some **guidance** for learners to help them prepare their answer and encourage them to focus on what the question is asking for. This information is not given to candidates in the examination.



This question is from the Cambridge IGCSE Literature (English) 0486 past paper March 2019 Paper 12 Question 21. For the passage, go to the [School Support Hub](#)

## Suggested lesson activities

### Assessment objectives

**AO1:** Show detailed knowledge of the content of literary prose texts, supported by reference to the text.

**AO2:** Understand the meanings of literary texts and their contexts, and explore texts beyond surface meanings to show deeper awareness of ideas and attitudes.

**AO3:** Recognise and appreciate ways in which writers use language, structure and form to create and shape meanings and effects.

**AO4:** Communicate a sensitive and informed personal response to literary texts.

### Learning objectives

- To explore the deeper implications of texts, going beyond surface meanings
- To develop informed personal responses to prose fiction
- To develop confidence in analysing the ways in which prose writers achieve their effects

#### Starter:

Project an image of an old woman such as David Hockney's photograph 'My mother'.

Ask learners to note down individually what they *see*, *think* and *wonder*. Then take answers from as many individuals as possible in this starter activity.

#### Development:

Put the exam question on the board and ask for a volunteer to identify the key words of the question. Ask for volunteers to read the passage, and learners annotate words and phrases which create a sad picture of the old woman.

Read the candidate response and focus on examiner comments six and seven. Ask your learners to consider what made the candidate response 'critical' and 'sustained'? Encourage your learners to consider the use of terminology, the judicious quotation, the developed interpretation and the focus on the question.

Learners choose one of their possible quotations and comment precisely on the effects Frame creates by her use of language. How do the words create 'such a sad picture' of the woman?

Using the candidate response as a model, learners should analyse their own quote making sure that they use the same structure to ensure that their paragraph is critical and sustained.

Ask for examples, pointing out the need for concise quotation and precise analysis of specific effects.

#### Main task:

Read, as a class, the section which focuses on how the candidate could improve the answer.

Ask learners what 'form' looks like in prose fiction texts (e.g. description, dialogue, narrative viewpoint), with learners identifying quick examples in the extract.

In pairs, learners explore the effect of:

- the narrative viewpoint, looking for those moments where the reader is taken inside the woman's thoughts (exploring how Frame uses a mixture of direct and indirect thoughts)
- the sequence of the events of the day: 'On Friday afternoon she bought cut flowers...'; 'That evening she filled the coal bucket...'

## Suggested lesson activities

Learners should list examples of the ways in which Frame uses form and structure to create a sad picture of the old woman.

Using the candidate response as a model, learners should add their own paragraph to follow on from paragraph two of the candidate response focusing on narrative viewpoint.

### Plenary:

Select examples from learners' work which show an informed (i.e. supported) personal response to Frame's use of form and structure.

### Extension (optional homework activity):

Research ways in which artists have depicted ageing.

Read and compare poems that explore getting older (e.g. Liz Lochhead's *For My Grandmother Knitting*, Norman Nicholson's *Rising Five*). Exploring poems independently could be useful for learners following the Coursework or Unseen options. However, the main aim is to get learners to read and enjoy poetry and the ways in which poets communicate universal experiences such as getting old.

## Example candidate response and examiner comments

Example Candidate Response – high	Examiner comments
<p>At the beginning of this extract Frame paints the impression of a sad, old woman as she mentions how it was the 'seventeenth anniversary of her husband's death'. Immediately, this evokes a sense of sadness as we learn that the old woman is alone as her husband is no longer with her, which creates a sense of sympathy for her circumstances. <b>1</b> The description of how the old woman 'forces herself to make the journey that each year became more hazardous' and the 'bitterness of the winds' blow across 'unsheltered rows of tombstones' evokes pity for the old woman as she is so fragile and old, <b>2</b> yet pushes and exposes herself to the harsh journey just so she can attend to her dead husband's grave. Although the husband does not get impacted by it, it is clear that even despite this the woman needs to retain some sense of attachment. The fact that she 'longed' to lie in the soft grass besides the grave further creates an impression of the suffering experienced by the old lady and her desperation for relief. <b>3</b></p> <p>The description of her 'slow and arduous movements' and how with each step she experienced 'so much pain' really paints the picture of</p>	<p><b>1</b> The first two sentences engage immediately with the key words of the question. The textual reference to the anniversary of the husband's death 'evokes a sense of sadness'. (AO1)</p> <p><b>2</b> The well-selected references support the judgement that the woman, though fragile and old, 'pushes and exposes herself to the harsh journey'. (AO1, AO4)</p> <p><b>3</b> Informed and sensitive comments about the old woman's need to 'retain some sense of attachment' and 'her desperation for relief'. (AO2, AO4)</p>

**Example Candidate Response – high**

the intense physical pain the woman endures and the description of her movement makes the reader feel pity for her. **4**

Also, what makes her suffering more heart wrenching is when Frame writes the line 'though she knew that she was gradually losing power', and it adds another layer of sadness to the depiction of this women's character because it shows us of how even she is aware of the gradual decline in her ability which would only add to her disappointment and sadness. **5**

Frame's use of the simile comparing the bath to 'like the edge of a cliff with a deep drop below the sea' gives the reader an insight into this old lady's thoughts and how something so harmless and non-threatening appears to her like almost a life-or-death situation and how terrifying it is for her to have **6** to confront that. The fact that the old lady also has a large towel in order to have 'some way to rescue herself' creates an image of how helpless and vulnerable the old woman is, that she has to prepare to be able to rescue herself, just to get out of the bath. **7**

Furthermore, in the paragraph where she enters the bath Frame describes to us the struggle the old woman has in that she has to reassure herself every time she has a bath, and has to surprise her limbs and 'powerless wrists' to do something they 'rebel against'. **8** This demonstrates to the reader that even parts of her own body will not comply with her and consequently restrict her to enjoy something like a relaxing bath because she does not dare to lean back or lie down out of fear of not being able to get out. **9** The way she looks for excuses and procrastinates getting out of the bath really reinforces just how much the old woman struggles and fears what most of us take for granted. **10** The helplessness that Frame depicts through the image of 'all the strength and support' ebbing from her as she desperately struggles makes us feel sad for the old woman's circumstances.

**Examiner comments**

**4** Continued and sustained engagement with the effects of the language Frame uses. (AO3)

**5** A clear focus on the question throughout the response, with the perceptive comment that the woman's awareness of her gradual decline 'adds another layer of sadness'. (AO2, AO4)

**6** Developed critical analysis of the effect created by the simile of 'the edge of a cliff'. (AO3)

**7** Sustained focus on the question, with the candidate's comment on the 'image of how helpless and vulnerable the old woman is'. (AO4)

**8** Typical of the candidate's response is the use of neatly-embedded concise quotations as an integral part of the analysis. (AO1, AO3)

**9** Sustains a clear critical response to Frame's writing. (AO4).

**10** Sustains an informed personal response to the passage and question. (AO4)

Example Candidate Response – high	Examiner comments
<p><i>The last line of the extract ‘She was alone now.’ is short but very cleverly used by Frame 11 as it links back to how she has no one with her to support her with her husband gone and no one to witness and comfort her in her struggle. The shortness of the line also creates the impression of giving up and not wanting to continue which the reader then feels an immense amount of sorrow and pity for the old woman as vividly portrayed by Frame and her words. 12</i></p>	<p><b>11</b> A developed comment on Frame’s use of structure: the impact of the short final line of the extract. (AO3)</p> <p><b>12</b> A clear final response to the question.</p>

### How the candidate could improve the answer

The candidate shows a clear understanding of the bleakness of the woman’s life, and sustains a critical engagement with the language that conveys among other things the hostile environment and her consciousness of her own declining physical powers.

There is some comment on Frame’s use of structure, for example, the impact of the final short line. However, the answer could be improved with slightly more comment on both Frame’s use of structure and also form. For example, the candidate could explore the way in which the sequence of the old woman’s daily routine is presented in the second paragraph and how this creates a sad picture of the old woman’s life. The way Frame uses narrative viewpoint is another area worthy of comment: for example, how the narrative viewpoint is presented, the way in which the third-person narration takes the reader inside the woman’s thoughts.

The question asks for an exploration of how Frame creates such a sad picture of the old woman ‘in this extract’. It is worthwhile providing some *brief* context about how this extract fits into the overall story. After all, how the woman is presented before this extract will have some bearing on how she is presented within the extract.

### Common mistakes

The most common mistakes in answering this question are:

- writing general introductions instead of addressing the key words of the question ‘How?’ and ‘create such a sad picture’ from the start
- working through the whole passage from start to finish, instead of selecting the best material to answer the question
- retelling the story rather than directly addressing the question
- writing a character sketch of the old woman as if she were a real-life person rather than a fictional character
- writing mainly about the content of the passage rather than the ways in which Frame uses language, structure and form to ‘create such a sad picture’ of the woman
- using lengthy quotations that do not (cannot) lead to precise analysis
- including background material about Frame’s life without commenting on relevant details of the poem.

## Examination preparation (advice for learners)

Learners have found some or all of the following advice useful in preparing for prose passage-based questions:

- Know the text well so that you can see where the passage fits into the overall text.
- Make and learn the following notes on the text: plot summary; timeline; characters; themes; settings.
- Select key extracts from the text and devise your own examination-style questions on them (use past papers to help you with the wording of questions).
- Annotate copies of these extracts to show how the writer uses language, structure and form to convey ideas, portray characters and/or depict settings.
- Practise combining short quotations and analytical comment in your written responses to prose extracts.
- Mark your own draft answers, identifying and editing out:
  - unsupported assertions
  - lengthy quotations
  - irrelevant points that do not address the question
  - irrelevant background material.

## Useful resources

- You can find the **syllabus** and the most recent **past papers** at the Cambridge International public website
- A list of **endorsed textbooks** and digital resources can be found in the Published resources section
- The [School Support Hub](#) provides teachers with a wide range of practical resources, detailed guidance and innovative training and professional development so that you can give your learners the best possible preparation for Cambridge O Level.
- Look out for the [Introduction to Learner Guides](#) and [Learner Revision Guide](#) videos.

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