

English Literature

Advanced GCE A2 7828

Advanced Subsidiary GCE AS 3828

Report on the Units

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Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the Examination.

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2707 Drama: Shakespeare

General Comments

There was a wide range of attainment on this unit with seemingly less work of the highest standard than last summer, but the majority wrote well and approached their set text with genuine intellectual curiosity and enjoyment. Candidates sometimes revealed that they were passionate about the plays and could express their views cogently. Many advertised Shakespeare's contemporary relevance effectively by exploring interesting modern parallels suggested by the plays such as in politics, ecology or sexual relationships. On the other hand there were fewer references to plays in performance this session despite notable exceptions such as Patrick Stewart's recent Prospero for the RSC.

Examiners reported a continued improvement in examination technique. Teaching through the prism of the assessment objectives was clearly effective and even weaker answers showed an awareness of what was expected in the question. Knowledge of alternative interpretations (AO4) and of cultural and historical contexts (AO5i) was strongly in evidence, although hard-working reproduction of memorised snippets from past critics or generalisations about Jacobean royalty, history, colonisation, women, actors or theatre audiences, especially if over-simplified or garbled, could sometimes interfere with the candidates' ability to express personal response and their own critical discrimination.

Where candidates experienced difficulty it was often in the area of response to effects of Shakespeare's language (AO3). Those who could engage with this aspect of the passage-based questions in Section A had a flying start, especially if they understood implications and subtexts rather than simply paraphrasing and summarising. This did not necessarily require use of the vocabulary of English Language studies which appeared increasingly frequent (words such as 'lexis', 'register' and 'semantic field' used to be quite rare) but was more a matter of imaginative appreciation of the effects of the dramatic scene based perhaps upon recollection of experiencing theatre performances, acting, reading aloud and certainly upon memories of lively classroom discussion and debate.

Most batches of scripts contained sadly familiar problems of poor handwriting, grammar, punctuation and spelling but there was no suggestion that this aspect was worse than in previous sessions; in fact some examiners thought the opposite. There were very few unintelligible answers and even fewer rubric infringements.

Antony and Cleopatra and *The Tempest* were overwhelmingly the most frequently chosen texts but there were worthwhile answers on all four set plays.

Comments on Individual Questions

Henry IV (Part 2)

Q.1 was based on a passage from Act 1, Scene 1 in which Morton brings news to Northumberland about the outcome of the Battle of Shrewsbury and the death of Hotspur. Candidates were asked to show how it contributed to their response to the early part of the play, with reference to language, imagery and tone and to some of the play's major concerns. There was perceptive writing about the figure of Rumour, false report and the imagery of battle. Some answers discussed Northumberland's grief and motivation as presented in his defiant speech – was he courageous, self-deceiving or concerned with public effect? Fewer succeeded in fully conveying the poetic and rhetorical effects of Morton's account, with its blend of epic simile and practical, tactical information. There was a useful opportunity to discuss the link provided by the Percy family with the previous play and the anticipation of events in the reference to Lancaster

and Westmoreland. Many candidates were able to exploit themes such as fatherhood and civil war seen here which were to be developed in the subsequent action.

Q.5(a) concerned the importance of the passing of time in the play, how the play presents it and its association with change. Those who chose the question naturally tended to approach the theme via characters, notably Hal, King Henry, Shallow's reminiscences and especially Falstaff, his ageing and eventual rejection. Most agreed that this was a darker play than its predecessors but there was an appreciation that the whirligig of time brought not only its revenges but also fresh horizons with the accession of the new King.

Q.5(b) was about the ways in which women are significant in *Henry IV (Part 2)*, their presentation and their relationship with men. This was chosen more often than (a) and tended to evoke generally more accomplished answers. It was argued that parallels could be drawn between Lady Northumberland and Lady Percy on the one hand and the Hostess and Doll Tearsheet on the other. Although they differed in social class, wealth and setting (country versus city) it was felt that they shared a certain vulnerability and victimisation in the face of masculine conflict and attempted domination. Sometimes the expression of such ideas was seriously flawed (for instance Lady Northumberland was referred to as a 'housewife' and Doll as a 'hateful whore') but there was a promising level of engagement and discussion.

As You Like It

Q.2 concerned the passage from Act 2, Scene 1, the discussion between the First Lord and Duke Senior. The task was to show how it contributed to the candidate's view of Jaques, his role in the play and the language of the extract. Many candidates were able to write effectively about Jaques and in particular his 'melancholy' attributes. It was a pity that he was surprisingly often confused with Touchstone and also that a number of answers ran into difficulties in coping with a dramatic construction in which Jaques does not appear in person but is seen through the eyes of the two aristocrats. Some resorted to generalised character sketches or to consideration of Jaques' meditation on the wounded deer as apt for 'our modern, ecologically-obsessed world'. Some thoughtful responses saw the passage as humorous, ironic or as a metaphor for Jaques' view of himself at the court as he 'moralized this spectacle'. Yet others wrote about the passage in the context of the 'All the world's a stage' and 'Seven ages of man' speeches, usually at the expense of the set passage itself.

Q.6(a) on *As You Like It* as a 'delightful comedy' was phrased so as to attract personal response and the presentation of candidates' experience of the play, rather than technical dissertations on the genre of Comedy, but it was rarely chosen as the alternative to writing about Rosalind in (b). Examiners saw it as a good discriminator, however, with some discussions of the concept of comedy in a narrow sense while others took wing, conveyed enjoyment, saw that the play contained more than humour and sometimes could consider it in the context of other comedies by Shakespeare.

Q.6(b) asked about the role and significance of Rosalind, her presentation and the suggestions of the play about conventional relationships between women and men. This was overwhelmingly popular and one examiner commented that 'the character of Rosalind, like that of Cleopatra, continues to inspire teenage literary sensibilities considerably'. Some less impressive answers chose to provide a narrative-based general character sketch. Better ones took into account the exact terms of the question and used the bullet points for direction and impetus. Gender proved to be an attractive focus with some scripts offering a sophisticated consideration of the roles of men and women in Shakespeare's world and modern society. Overall this question evoked some of the best writing on the paper.

Antony and Cleopatra

Q.3 was based on a passage from Act 2, Scene 6, in which the triumvirs confront Pompey and it asked about the view of Antony when he is away from Egypt, about the language of the scene and Antony's relationship with other powerful men. There were many answers of varying quality of close reading and it may be that this rather less familiar passage exposed gaps in understanding and knowledge of the play. Common errors included the supposition that Caesar says 'there is a change upon' Antony, not Pompey; that Antony is talking about Cleopatra, not Fortune, in lines 26-30; and that when Antony says he is 'well studied for a liberal thanks' he is saying how well educated he is.

Nevertheless there were effective examples of thoughtful commentary and analysis. In particular, candidates responded to the tensions and nuances of Antony's encounter with Pompey: some, for example, saw Pompey as trying to drive a wedge between Antony and his colleagues, referring 'tactlessly' to Julius Caesar, reminding him about Egypt and Cleopatra, or seeking a personal relationship with him only. Antony was seen, for once, as a cool Roman refusing to rise to Pompey's bait. 'The beds i' th' East are soft', however, was generally seen as indicating Cleopatra's continuing influence on him. It was argued that when the triumvirs speak in apparent unison, each is 'actually asserting his power and masculinity over the others'. Some candidates wrote well on the marginalisation of Lepidus, many on the contrast between Antony's clipped tones here and his hyperbole in Egypt.

Q.7(a) was tackled by considerably fewer candidates than the (b) alternative. It asked how far it was agreed that the fate of Cleopatra was shown to be beyond her control, with reference to her presentation in the play and the issue of tragic inevitability. Despite a number of predictable, pre-prepared character sketches, some candidates wrote in a focused way about issues arising. It was argued that Cleopatra can control her own fate but not that of other people; that her love for Antony means that her fate becomes entwined with his; and that her destiny is a function of her character 'and is determined by her jealousy, insecurity and exaggeration'. There was a tendency to narrate and to write predominantly about two favoured passages in the play: the 'barge' speech of Enobarbus and the death scene of Cleopatra. Examiners commented that it was rare for candidates to make much of the concept of tragic inevitability.

In Q.7(b), which was a very frequent choice, the task was to consider how far Cleopatra and Antony embodied the qualities of Egypt and Rome, with reference to the presentation of the characters and the contrasts between the settings. It elicited a wide range of responses. Cleopatra was generally seen as a complete embodiment of Egypt while Antony fluctuated disastrously between Roman and Egyptian values. Caesar was cogently argued to be the real embodiment of Rome: one unusually probing piece suggested that betrayal was as much a characteristic of Rome as bravery or duty. The case was put that in her love for Antony, demonstrated by her longing during his absence and her reaction to his death, Cleopatra breaks free from the decadent Egyptian stereotype and the audience no longer sees her as Rome's 'two-dimensional whore'.

Only occasionally did the answers degenerate into simple character studies without much reference to Egypt and Rome. On occasion, however, the notion of Egypt seemed rather unclear, 'a place for having fun' whose Queen is 'very laid back'. There was some subtle treatment of Antony's indeterminate place in 'a mid-Mediterranean moral location'. Candidates generally used apt, brief and evaluated quotation effectively in this and other answers with the exception of the candidate who mis-quoted memorably (as it happened, food imagery was often picked out in the play) 'these strong Egyptian fritters I must break'.

The Tempest

In Q.4 the passage was from Act 4, Scene 1 and candidates had to discuss the importance of the masque with reference to the language, imagery and tone and what it suggested about Prospero's methods and plans. There was much to explore and examiners were impressed by the widespread knowledge and understanding demonstrated including points such as: Prospero's method of acting through proxies; his progression from anger to creativity of which the masque is a product; the pride and implied warning in his words to Ferdinand; the masque's assertion through its imagery that Ferdinand and Miranda's love is natural; its idyllic qualities compared to Gonzalo's utopian ideals; and its mythological references and their application to the rest of the play, including, for example, ideas about obedience, harmony, plotting and renunciation. It was seen as a 'play within a play' and even compared with *Hamlet*.

On the other hand many struggled with productive analysis of the language of the passage. It was described vaguely as 'soft', 'beautiful' or 'exhibiting a sweet, pretty tone'. The presence but not the effect of rhyming couplets was identified – many seemed to think it sufficient to state that they were verse and implied that the rest of the passage was prose. Stronger answers, however, responded aptly to fertility imagery and considered the masque as a benign or sinister demonstration of Prospero's power and its implications for the lovers. Perceptive comments included the following: 'Prospero still manages to keep control of Miranda because the masque acts out his fantasies, not hers'; 'Prospero is finally prepared to let go of his daughter but is procrastinating and keeping Miranda a little longer while calling down these gods and creating something beautiful with his magic'. Some candidates understood the function of masques at court and more were able to discuss the scene as realised in various productions.

Q.8(a) was about dispossession as a major concern of *The Tempest*, the presentation of the issue and the suggestions about authority. It was less popular than the character-focused (b) question but usually Prospero's deposition and the attempt on Alonso were satisfactorily considered. One answer asked pertinently 'whether titled authority bears any significance when no physical power exists to reinforce it'. But it was when dealing with the dispossession of Caliban that candidates became most engaged with the question and the play. On the whole the colonialist aspect was convincingly handled; some, however, evidently found it surprising that Miranda should have objected when Caliban tried to rape her. Some wrote well on Prospero's self-dispossession, his breaking of his staff and giving away of his authority.

Q.8(b), which was the more popular alternative, concerned the significance of the relationship between Miranda and Ferdinand, their presentation and the suggestions in the play about love and courtship. Many found this well within their competence although weaker answers spent too much time narrating the couple's story. Sound answers conveyed a fuller sense of how they are presented in the play and discussed their relationship in its dramatic context by explaining how it is set against a background of betrayal, ambition and suffering and considering to what extent their love was the result of Prospero's manipulation of events. Miranda's forwardness in the relationship was discussed and set against social norms of Shakespeare's time. Deeper essays successfully explored the ramifications of the love which, for example, 'diminishes the potential of *The Tempest* as a revenge play.' Some questioned whether a relationship formed so quickly could endure but others believed that the speed helps to emphasise a new beginning, a break with the older generation.

2708 Poetry and Prose

General Comments from Examiners:

- Generally the standard was satisfactory or better. Weaker answers usually showed some engagement with the tasks despite limitations, while good answers as always offered economic and perceptive expression to complex ideas, and considered writers' choices of form, structure and language to create meaning and effects of writing in the texts.
- Quality of expression ranged from insecurities with structures and spelling to extremely polished and lucid exposition.
- Candidates should be strongly advised to *specify* the passages/poems they propose to explore in (b) option questions. In the absence of such specification, too many answers read like general essays with apparently arbitrary and undeveloped reference to features of the text. Candidates should also be persuaded to enter the numbers of the questions they are answering in the box on the cover sheet as this would be very helpful to examiners.
- Candidates need to be reminded that reference to another reader's view (AO4) is only creditable if it is integrated into the answer's argument; a critical reference which is then ignored has essentially no value in the answer. Similarly, since this is an open book paper, quotation from the text is only creditable if its relevance in developing the argument is clear; where a quotation is included, it's sensible to take the opportunity for critical comment on effects of the writing.
- Contextual material is now generally well handled. It is fairly rare now for answers to be swamped with information barely relevant to the passage/issue under discussion. That said, some answers on Eliot fell into the trap this time ...
- It is always refreshing to see evidence of wider reading in an answer, this year notably on Conrad and Austen. Also enlivening when an answer acknowledges some relation between the texts studied for the paper: Dorigen and Jane Eyre dealing with conflicting imperatives? Thomas and Carver making the reader "do the work"? Harrison and Gaskell on representation of class-inflected language?

The Questions

SECTION A

1 Chaucer: *The Franklin's Tale*

Again a very popular text this session. 1(a) elicited some very well informed and thoughtful answers, commenting on the extensive knowledge of classical examples attributed in turn to Dorigen, the Franklin and Chaucer himself. Answers noted that: this is the second (and even more extended) "compleynt" from Dorigen about her situation, with further evidence of her "melodramatic" nature; unlike the range of maidens and wives she refers to, she has herself brought about her own misfortune, and the examples become less relevant to her own position; and, rather than take the suicidal option to avoid being "defouled", in due course she simply does as her husband instructs her. Answers pointed out that the list of martyred women, functioning as an "exemplum", signals the Franklin's own learning and undermines his self-presentation as "a burel man"; some of these suggested also that the list is Chaucer's way of poking fun at the Franklin himself, "showing off" as he does here. Answers to 1(b) often drew on the 1(a) passage as evidence of the Franklin's actual acquaintance with the colours of rhetoric that in his Prologue he says he knows nothing about, as "a burel man"; lots of other examples of rhetorical devices were identified in some well developed discussion. Answers cited the Franklin's knowledge of courtly love conventions and his management of his narrative as further evidence of his "education" and upwardly mobile social aspirations; others argued

that the Franklin doesn't really understand literary conventions, showing that Chaucer in turn doesn't take this character seriously. On both questions, candidates were able to locate the text in the context of the "marriage group" of *The Canterbury Tales*, with frequent reference also to the condition and expectations of women in the period; in some answers, attention to contextual material diverted discussion from the Tale itself.

2 Shakespeare: *Complete Sonnets*

On 2(a) answers were generally alert to Shakespeare's strategy in Sonnet 76 of converting ostensible shame at the lack of "variation or quick change" in his sonnets into celebration of the constancy of his regard ("And you and love are still my argument"). There was some thoughtful discussion of the effects of sonnet structure and familiar patterns of imagery: eg financial language (cf Sonnet 75) and the sun (cf Sonnet 7). Other sonnets often cited for correspondences and variations were 19, 71, 85, 99, 116 and 130. On 2(b) answers often distinguished between the complimentary sonnets (with nature as a fund of imagery) addressed to the "golden youth" (though here some answers noted darker warnings of age and decay – eg 18) and the more problematic ones addressed to the "Dark Lady". Sonnet 130 was a popular choice to exemplify poetic skill in delivering what a candidate called "back-handed compliments"; 127 and 143 often explored as even more equivocally complimentary examples. Weaker answers on this text tend to work through the selected sonnet(s) in a linear way, explaining meaning (or, often, intention: "Shakespeare is trying to say ...") rather than commenting critically on "the effects of the writing".

3 Byron: *Selected Poems*

'January 22nd 1824. Messalonghi. On this day I complete my thirty sixth year' (3a) elicited a full range of responses, from those that offered explication of the poem stanza by stanza (often not reaching the end, or giving much attention to the martial passion of the second half) to very thoughtful and sensitive discussion of diction, verse form and development of feeling, with some penetrating discussion of effects of the range of imagery within the poem. Some felt this was Byron's "most sincere poem", warranted by the first person delivery and reference to immediate personal experience and exigencies (about which many candidates were well informed); others read the poem as self-dramatising: both these readings were enthusiastically defended, often by reference to the same poems for support and/or contrast, particularly 'I watched thee' and 'Fare Thee Well!'. These were also the poems most frequently cited in 3(b) answers on Byron's exploration of the experience of regret, here often distinguishing between the two: 'I watched thee' seen as expressing personally felt emotion, 'Fare Thee Well!' as exemplifying both Byron's manipulative use of poetic language ("a guilt-trip for his wife") and a sense of his genuine regret at the loss of his daughter. Stanzas in Canto III of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* were also considered in relation to Byron's separation from his daughter. In some answers "regret" at the condition of England was taken to be the spur for satirical writing in eg 'Beppo' and *Don Juan*.

4 Browning: *Poems*

In response to 4(b) there was some lively discussion of 'The Lost Leader'. Most noted the religious emphasis of the diction and imagery ("Just for a handful of silver ...") underlining the sense of loss and betrayal ("One more wrong to man, one more insult to God"), possible redemption in the last two lines, and the tradition of literary radicalism that the poem invokes. Some answers noted the poem's unusual rhythmic quality and explored the effects and variations here of the anapaestic metre. In some answers response to Bullet Point 2 was thin; in many, however, instances of different kinds of betrayal were explored in a range of poems (eg 'Andre del Sarto', 'Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister', 'My Last Duchess', 'Any Wife to Any Husband'). Answers on 4(b) drew on these and other

poems to explore Browning's various ways of representing the experience of love: as ownership (eg 'My Last Duchess'); obsession (eg 'Porphyria's Lover'); natural/spontaneous/anti-repressive (eg 'Fra Lippo Lippi'); compromised/damaging (eg 'Andrea del Sarto'); self-love (eg 'A Bishop Orders His Tomb'); love damaged by time and disagreement (eg 'A Lover's Quarrel'); sense of division in love (eg 'Two in the Campagna'); failed love (eg 'The Last Ride Together'). Answers were particularly impressive that explored poetic effects of eg imagery, colloquial diction, rhyming and rhythmical patterns.

5 Eliot: Selected Poems

Most answers on 5(a), the closing paragraphs of 'What the thunder said', were alert to the ambivalent tone of the passage, negotiating between reminders of physical, spiritual and emotional desolation and aridity on the one hand, and also redemptive possibilities in listening to "what the thunder said". Fuller answers considered effects of images that recur elsewhere (eg Road to Emmaus, the Chapel, Heironymo's madness) as a kind of recapitulation of the whole Waste Land sequence. Wider references were most frequently to other parts of The Waste Land, though 'Preludes' and 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night' were also quite often cited. In answers on 5(b), exploring Eliot's presentation of "loneliness" these last two poems were also drawn on, though the most popular were 'Prufrock' and 'Portrait of a Lady', with some discussion of 'Gerontion' and some elements of The Waste Land. Various kinds of loneliness were explored: social isolation, psychological dislocation, moral anomie, sexual sterility, cultural erosion, ("Eliot's use of allusion reminds us of our separation from literary tradition"), historical deracination ("the 'Waste Land' says we have lost contact with our past"). There was some incisive discussion of effects of imagery (eg the etherised patient in 'Prufrock', music in 'Portrait'), and suggestions that the fragmentary nature of the poetry represents a distancing effect between reader and text. On both questions the value of contextual information presented depended on its relevance to the poetry and the discussion; some answers were unbalanced by excessively speculative biographical reference; some of these took it for granted that Eliot is unequivocally the "I" of the poetry.

6 Thomas: Selected Poems

Some really engaged responses on Thomas, among the fairly few answers seen. Some suggested that the painful experiences/insecurities/anxieties/ambivalences expressed in other poems are here located in the past, and that the possible meanings of "sleep, / The unfathomable deep / Forest" are to be welcomed, as despair, ambition, even books and love are thankfully left behind. A wide range of poems was evoked for correspondences/variations of method and concern ('And You, Helen', 'The Glory', 'Rain', 'I Never Saw That Land Before'), and relation to the war suggested by the title was well noted in many answers. Where answers considered effects of the stanza form, rhyme scheme and laconic, compressed diction there was some sensitive critical analysis. The more popular 6(b), inviting discussion of "solitude and melancholy", clearly played into a strong hand. Some answers identified elements of "Romantic" self-indulgence in the poems; others perceived courage in Thomas's exploration of his experience and relationships; many noted the paradoxical elements of the poetry and his own disposition ("must I be content with discontent?"). There were some enthusiastic explorations of a range of poems: thwarted attempts to connect with self/others ('The Other'); passing, discomfiting encounters (eg 'May the Twenty-third'); no sense of home (eg 'Home 1', 'Home 2', 'Home 3'); suspicion even of the sublime (eg 'The Glory'); analysis of melancholy ('Melancholy' and *passim*); sense of forgetting/loss (eg 'The Word'); solitude in company (eg 'The Brook'); personal estrangement (eg 'No One So Much As You', 'And You, Helen'). Some answers offered lists of poems with similar concerns; where the effects of language and form were considered in detail, there was some impressive achievement.

7 Harrison: Selected Poems

7(a) on 'the Red Lights Of Plenty' was a minority choice: among these answers were some very lively and well informed responses to this rich and evocative poem, particularly where discussion concentrated on disentangling the implications of imagery – eg the various manifestations of "Plenty" and ironic contrasting reminders of excess ("choked ...") and destruction ("iron wrecking ball"). Many answers concentrated on the persistent tension between American ideals ("Justice, Order, Truth") and daily life (violence, injustice, deprivation, discrimination, crime, "well-built" construction demolished before its time). Implications of the colour red were sometimes thoroughly explored, as were the ironic memorial to Marx and the acknowledgement of classical values in the epigraph. 'Flying Down to Rio' was most often referred to for comparison; there were some references to 'v'. On the more popular 7(b) most answers considered Harrison's "personal relationships" with his family, particularly with his father, and concentrating most frequently on 'Book Ends I,II'; 'Cremation', 'A Good Read' and 'Breaking the Chain' were also popular choices. Some answers offered descriptive accounts of the poems selected, sometimes reductively suggesting that Harrison hated his father and was embarrassed by his class origins; most, however, were alert to the ironies/ paradoxes of these poems, particularly where the implications of the imagery were fully explored. A minority of answers considered Harrison's exploration of tensions between personal relationships and social structures in eg 'Durham' ("Bad weather and the public mess/ drive us to private tenderness"), 'Allotments', and 'v'.

8 Stevenson: *Granny Scarecrow*

Among the few answers on this text, most addressed 8(a), among them some were some superb, highly analytical and comparative readings of 'Suicide' alongside 'The Angel', 'The White Room' or (especially) 'Freeing Lizzie', with close, detailed attention to Stevenson's imagery. These answers considered the nature and expression of her poems' concern with death, its effects on those still living and, here, the mystery of its willed acceptance: inadequate attempts to explain what happened ('A way of playing let's pretend'); contrast/tension between ordinary human statements/actions and unimagined outcomes; significance of lives of eg spiders, snails compared to what young man feels. On 8(b), presentation of animals in Stevenson's poetry, 'Clydie is Dead' was most often cited, exploring this tender evocation of animal behaviour and love (some interesting comparison with 'Freeing Lizzie'); 'Phoenicurus phoenicurus' and 'Invocation and Interruption' were also cited.

SECTION B

9 Austen: *Persuasion*

The episode set for 9(a), Anne's debate with Harville in the White Hart with Wentworth overhearing, provided plenty of material for discussion which most answers dealt with enthusiastically. A range of issues were identified, considered and related to methods and concerns of the novel as a whole. The dramatic effects of the management of action and dialogue – Anne speaking through Harville in a way she never could directly to Wentworth; the explosive, symbolic dropping of his pen – and the scene's significance as the major turning-point of the novel's narrative were thoroughly explored in many lively answers, as were a range of other issues: the debate about relative emotional stability of men/women; Anne's finally gaining a powerful voice ("cried ... eagerly"/ cf silence in early novel) and an active role in discussion; the argument that men write all the books; the proposition that women love "longest when existence or when hope is gone" and its relevance to Anne's relationship with Wentworth; Wentworth's epiphany; the issue of persuasion; the discussion of different kinds of love (modelled in many answers as an Augustan/Romantic debate. A few answers did little more than summarise action and dialogue. On 9(b), to

explore the role and significance of Mr William Elliot, passages most frequently selected were Anne's first glimpse of him at Lyme, their conversation at the concert in Bath, and Mrs Smith's revelation of his history to Anne. His role in the narrative was most often characterised as helping to bring Anne and Wentworth together by offering competition and arousing jealousy. The function of this character was interestingly discussed in various aspects: as contrast/foil to Wentworth in terms of sincerity and integrity and as appropriate partner for Anne; as representing one model of the "gentleman" in terms of birth and "manners" but not integrity/quality of character; as demonstrating Anne's (and Mrs Smith's and narrator's) reliable judgement – compared with Lady Russell who advises Anne to marry him. Some answers discussed the Elliot/Wentworth antithesis as dramatising wider social/historical issues of aristocratic status as apposed to meritocratic achievement. Some candidates misunderstood Mr Elliot's status as Sir Walter's heir, thinking that marrying Anne would enable him to inherit the estate; others were well aware of the associated ironies, some noting the corresponding problems also in *Pride and Prejudice*.

10 **Brontë: *Jane Eyre***

The account of Rochester's party taking coffee, set for 10(a), provoked some vigorous and well informed answers, many noting the effectiveness of Brontë's presentation of the scene: eg its theatrical quality (Jane half-hidden, watching events in "this brilliantly-lit apartment"); the dramatic management of narrative tense (switching from past to present and back, between older Jane's comment and younger Jane's experience); the alternation between dialogue, narrative description and agonised self-analysis ("I know I must conceal my sentiments: I must smother hope; I must remember ..."). Answers were also alert to class issues dramatised in the episode: Jane's position as governess; characterisation of Blanche Ingram and her coterie in their attitudes towards "the whole tribe" of governesses and Jane in particular. There was particularly interesting discussion of Jane here wrestling unsuccessfully with her own passionate responses, modelling a moral/ psychological tension persistently evident throughout the novel. On 10(b) examples of various kinds of injustice were explored: domestic/familial (Jane's incarceration the Red Room was the most popular instance of all); social/hierarchic (eg Helen's and Jane's humiliations at Lowood); moral (eg Rochester's lies about his bigamous situation and proposal of adulterous arrangement; Rivers's proposal and the pressure he exerts on Jane to accept it). Some drew parallels between Jane's experience of injustice and Bertha's condition. Answers were most effective that commented on narrative methods and effects (eg handling of point of view and relation between Jane's functions as narrator and participant).

11 **Gaskell: *Mary Barton***

Very few responses on this text. On 11(a), Mary's meeting with her Aunt Esther, answers explored a range of issues: the significance of the episode in the narrative; relationship here between "pure" and "fallen" women; family as an issue; roles available to women in this society; dramatic irony (reader knowing/understanding more than Mary about Esther's condition); narrative methods (omniscient 3rd person providing access to both characters' thoughts and sententious commentary). On 11(b) – Gaskell's presentation of Manchester – answers most often concentrated on physical conditions (the Davenports' dwelling); some explored social/industrial relations between classes (eg Wilson's visit to the Carson household), potential for revolution (the union meeting). In discussion of narrative point of view and effects and Gaskell's ambivalent attitude to her working-class characters: deeply sympathetic but critical of any violent or subversive thinking or activity; also sense that they are different from writer and (bourgeois) reader, inured to tragedy/ deprivation and so less sensitive to their effects.

12 **Stoker: *Dracula***

This text is extremely popular with candidates. There were some well informed and animated responses to 12(a), by far the more popular question. Almost all candidates considered Mina's jocular criticism of "the New Woman", for instance (many pointing out the irony that in many ways she clearly embodies the concept herself, with her courage, organisational skills and man-like intelligence); many also explored ways in which she and Lucy represent different projections of Victorian womanhood, accounting for the divergence in Lucy and Mina's respective fates from this crucial point of the narrative forward. Issues discussed in a wide range of answers included: the use of diaries as a narrative device; the contrast between the idyllic first entry here and the harrowing events that follow in the next one; the respective characters and roles in the text of Mina and Lucy and the relationship between them (Mina here characteristically maternal and selfless); female sexuality and its threat to male hegemony, the sinister intervention of Dracula, the initial failure of Mina to understand what had actually happened, let alone its reasons and likely outcome, with the effect of dramatic irony ("we know what's really happening – she doesn't"). There was some sensitive discussion of Gothic elements and their effects. In the fewer answers on 12(b) popular passages for comment were the scenes of Lucy's blood transfusion and her redemptive penetration/decapitation, discussion of both episodes alert to the sexual implications of the writing and to a variety of sinister undercurrents; also popular was the scene of Harker's seduction by the vampire women, usually showing how the masculine model is here subverted. Some answers pitched Van Helsing against Dracula as antithetical in some respects (modern/ancient ... science/superstition ... west/east) but often noting also similarities (both foreign, formidable, largely silent other than through speech refracted in others' reports). One interesting approach was to focus on passages in the asylum representing Renfield's role as an anti-John the Baptist to the Dracula's anti-Christ. The symbolic values of other members of the crew of light were quite often noted (Morris as an action man, Seward as a bookish, blinkered intellectual, Harker effete bourgeois ...). There was also awareness in fuller answers of the complexity and ambiguity of presentation, allowing Stoker to question gender boundaries and the issues associated with the emergence and rise of the 'New Woman'.

13 **Conrad: *Heart of Darkness***

This was quite a popular text. Very purposeful responses on 13(a), by far the more popular question, offered close analysis of the passage where Marlow prepares for his African expedition (especially for its proleptic and foreshadowing qualities) usually allied to strong appreciation of the context of, and attitudes towards, imperialism. Some very good responses likened the character sketches in the passage to those of the white 'emissaries' Marlow meets on his travels, concluding that he is from the beginning portrayed as a deeply 'judgemental' man. There was much comment on the 'guillotine' women, the doctor, the aunt and Marlow's views on women. Some brought out Conrad's/Marlow's characteristic trick of foreshadowing future events through dark hints of the horrors yet to come. Other passages were chosen to show how Marlow's initial suspicions about the Company's agenda and the effects of the jungle on Europeans are later confirmed (Middle and Inner Stations). Useful evidence in some answers of wider reading ('Youth' in particular, but also Conrad's letters). On 13(b) some answers took the "pilgrims" to be representative of the entire colonial enterprise (characterised by eg the needless blasting of the cliff and the grove of death) developing discussion of individual minor characters (eg the manager, the brick maker). On the passage most often selected, answers explored the contrast between the indolence and moral slackness of the "unwholesome" pilgrims on the boat and the "restraint" exercised by the cannibals, associated in their turn "with courage, with strength".

14 Forster: *A Passage to India*

Text not so popular this session. Answers on 14(a) explored the dynamics of relationships between members of the British community, in the scene where Fielding is ejected from the club, having refused to stand up when Ronny enters, and having declared his view that Aziz is innocent. There was some interesting discussion of Forster's methods in this passage, where the narrative voice is particularly active, moving into and out of characters' consciousnesses and motivations (eg the narrator tells us that Fielding was "of course ... a little angry" though he says to himself that he isn't) and even telling us what Fielding does not perceive ("He experienced nothing himself"), in the lyrical description of the Marabar Hills at the end of the chapter. On 12(b), answers on Mrs Moore were often grounded in her meeting with Aziz in the temple, as evidence of her uniquely sympathetic tolerance ("Then you are an Oriental") in contrast with all the other British women. Another fruitful passage for discussion of her function in the novel was the account of her death (Chapter 28) and subsequent entry to myth as "Esmis Esmoor".

15 Barnes: *History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters*

Very much a minority choice. Among the few answers on 15(a), the preliminary account of the wreck of the Medusa, there was some discussion of effects of the cool, "factual", technical language and of motifs recurrent in the text: eg different kinds of shipwreck; collapse of order/intention ("disorder quickly embraced the well-laid plan"); fiction as history (and/or vice versa), with some reference to the Géricault painting and the key question, "How do you turn catastrophe into art?" 15(b) on "separating the clean from the unclean" played into a strong hand with some candidates. Passages from 'The Stowaway' in particular, but also 'The Visitors' and 'The Wars of Religion' were explored to illustrate the dialectic of clean/unclean central in the text. Most noted the use of the motif as a structural device to link different kinds of narrative, and to highlight other themes (survival, self-interest, human fragilities/moral values, History repeating itself, the unreliability of narrators of History, issues of separation, distinction, discrimination, chaos, order). The futility of the clean/unclean division, the ironic tone of the writing as a harsh criticism of mankind and a clear warning against atrocities, featured in richer answers. Some also drew parallels with present day conflicts.

16 Carver: *Short Cuts*

A distinctly minority choice, with some very thoughtful and sensitive responses to 16(a), on the closing passage of 'A Small Good Thing'. Answers explored the passage as the aftermath of Ann's and Howard's personal tragedy, a potentially ugly scene that miraculously transforms into a moment of intimacy/closure/recognition/tenderness unusual in this collection of stories. There was much effective discussion of the baker's confessional outpouring, leading to a breaking of bread that some candidates likened to the last supper. Some answers linked this experience to other kinds of "epiphany" in the text as a whole, though most saw this story as more positive, even more optimistic, than any other in the collection. Answers on 16(b) ranged widely over the collection as a whole. Most responded enthusiastically to the challenge, exploring, often in close textual detail, the nature of the "work" required from the reader to construct meaning in the stories - as a candidate put it, "reading through the descriptions of what characters see and do to deduce what they are feeling". Passages from 'They're Not Your Husband', 'Will You Please Be Quiet, Please' and 'Jerry And Molly And Sam', were most often taken as instances where the reader is particularly active, and 'Neighbours' as a effective instance of Carver's methods of revealing "something but not everything".

2709 and 2711 Coursework Units

It perhaps seems churlish to open this Report with negative comments, particularly when so much good work was submitted by so many candidates, but all Moderators this January have reported some quite significant administrative concerns and difficulties, and it might therefore be helpful to Centres to begin with comment on these.

Coming so soon after the start of the new term, and with the Christmas break so close behind, it is understandable that a few Centres may occasionally find it difficult to meet the January 10th deadline for the submission of marks and work, but this date is exactly the same every year, and for all coursework subjects, so it was especially disappointing this session that so many Centres failed to meet it. The majority were fully on time, but a substantial minority – up to one-third of some Moderators' allocations – submitted their marks very late indeed, sometimes two or even three weeks beyond January 10th. This obviously entailed a lot of unnecessary work for Moderators, telephoning and/or writing to examinations officers, but more seriously this could in extreme cases lead to a delay in the issuing of candidates' results, something that nobody wishes to happen. For some reason it tended more often to be Centres with very small entries, sometimes just single candidates, where unexplained delays occurred; it is essential that the MS1 mark-sheet is sent to both OCR and the Moderator, even where all candidates have withdrawn or have failed to complete their work and so are to be recorded as absent.

Centre Authentication Forms (CCS160) were missing from rather more Centres than usual this time; these must accompany the work submitted, signed by all teachers involved – copies are regularly sent to Examinations Officers, or can be downloaded from the OCR website (www.ocr.org.uk). A surprising number of Centres had made clerical errors in their recording of candidates' marks, with discrepancies between what was stated on the MS1 sheets, and what was written on the candidates' own work. Several Centres failed to send copies of the extract used by candidates in Unit 2709. Over-long work continued to be sent by a handful of Centres, despite reminders about the rule regarding this in previous years' Reports, and despite the clear instructions on the cover-sheets that are attached to each candidate's submission of work.

In all these cases, time had to be unnecessarily spent by both Moderators and teachers – and of course by examinations officers as well – which could be ill-afforded at any time of the year, but especially so when other examinations were being taken and adding pressure within Centres. Moderators are of course always entirely sympathetic where there is a genuine difficulty, but it is clearly essential that they are made aware of such difficulties quickly and early.

Enough negativity! Work this session, as already suggested, continued to be of a good quality, and demonstrated once more how much confidence is continuing to grow within Centres about how to prepare and support candidates as they write their Coursework essays. Understanding of the demands of the five Assessment Objectives grows too, and while there were certainly some continuing concerns in some areas, Moderators again reported that in general the five AOs were addressed with certainty and understanding in both Units 2709 and 2711. Most annotation and summative comments focused upon these, drawing helpful attention to the strengths and weaknesses in relevant parts of candidates' work; marking was in the majority of Centres close to agreed standards; and there were very few cases where there seemed to be a problem with internal moderation and therefore rank-ordering of work, suggesting yet again that a huge amount of careful and professional work continued to be undertaken by teachers. Moderators did of course have to recommend adjustments to some Centres' marks – usually downwards but not invariably so – but where this was done it was rarely because a Centre's teaching staff had misunderstood what the AOs require, and simply because their decisions had been uniformly a little too generous, or more rarely a little too severe.

As always, the texts used in both Units varied considerably, though there was a quite understandable but marked shift in Unit 2711 towards some of those set for the Alternative to Coursework Unit 2712: *Atonement* was a very popular novel, and the success of the recent film version will no doubt encourage this trend. Candidates clearly found this a good text to study, because of the many opportunities it offered for contextual ideas (AO5) relating to social customs and differences and of course to the Second World War, but more importantly for the opportunities it also raised for discussion of how the work is structured, and its deliberate and very conscious relationships with other novels (AO2 and AO3). These three AOs (2, 3 and 5) were well handled by almost all 2711 candidates, and not only with this text of course. *The Great Gatsby* continued to be perhaps the most popular novel in both Units 2709 and 2711, no doubt in part because it is fairly short, but more significantly because it again offers so many chances to address a range of AOs, and because it can be of real help to candidates preparing for the American Prose option in Unit 2713. Other widely and successfully used texts in Unit 2711 included *The Bloody Chamber*, *To the Lighthouse*, *Beloved*, *The Catcher in the Rye*, *1984*, *Open Secrets*, *A Clockwork Orange*, *Rites of Passage*, *An Evil Cradling* and *The Handmaid's Tale*. Fewer Centres than usual appeared to offer candidates a free choice of text, though a range of tasks on a single text was almost the norm, generally enabling both the most and the least confident candidates to show themselves at their best.

Unit 2709 texts were similarly varied, though with the now customary emphasis firmly on prose, with drama a fairly distant second and poetry a remote third. As has been said before, it would be good to see more poetry in Unit 2709, partly, though not solely, because of the relative ease with which a selected passage can be chosen.

A good deal has been made in previous Reports about what each AO demands, and about how candidates have responded to these demands, so there is no need to reiterate here. Just a few thoughts about AO2i and AO4 might be helpful, however. AO2i is dominant in Unit 2709, and as such carries more weight than any other single AO; given that it is to be addressed in the selected-passage piece, it remained disappointing that so many candidates again failed to do fully what they needed to do – to explore ways in which their chosen passage/poem related to the text as a *whole*. There was plenty of good, and often excellent, close critical reading of the passage (response to AO3 was frequently very strong indeed), but there was often a very limited amount of reference to the rest of the text. AO2 certainly also requires discussion of genre and period, but the relationship of part to whole was too often skimpily addressed, or at times entirely ignored. This was a particular concern with poetry, where candidates frequently appeared to find it hard to relate to the whole text, whereas brief, apt, references to a number of other poems often added real authority and weight to an answer.

AO4 remained an area of some concern, though more candidates did seem to be aware of what this requires than has sometimes been the case in the past. There was no difficulty in identifying personal response in what candidates wrote – it is perhaps almost impossible to address any literary task without showing that you have responded to it in some personal way – but the Band Descriptions make it absolutely clear that these responses must be based at least in part upon other possible or actual critical views and interpretations. More should be expected of all candidates, even the least confident, than a bland comment such as “It could be argued that . . .”, “Some critics say that . . .” or “It is possible that . . .”. Such comments are perhaps better than nothing at all, suggesting that a candidate has at least acknowledged that his/her ideas are not the only ones, but AO4 does look for more than this. One way to encourage it is to set a task that takes the form of a provocative statement about the text, or about some aspect of it, and then to ask candidates to discuss this; the question format used in Unit 2710, where AO4 is the dominant AO, is a useful model to consider. The blurb on the back of most paperback editions will also suggest ideas, and for all but the most very recent texts there is almost certain to be material that can be found in critical texts, articles, or on the internet that can be used by candidates as part of their developing arguments. AO4 is only one of five AOs, but if it is not fully addressed in the terms of the Band Descriptions then a lower placement within a Band must be considered.

QWC was quite frequently a continuing concern. Virtually all coursework is now word-processed, so a quick run-through with a spell-checker should remove most errors, and this tool will also spot at least some syntactical errors or awkwardnesses; in too many folders this kind of check had clearly not been carried out, leaving trivial errors of spelling, punctuation, grammar and syntax. Two further concerns follow: firstly, that many errors this session were simply not marked or corrected by teachers, and secondly that even where they were noted they did not necessarily appear to have been a factor in influencing the final mark. A Band Five piece, for example, really should have virtually no technical errors at all.

Mention has already been made of over-long work; anything beyond 3000 words, for Units 2709 and 2711, should not be submitted; if it is, then it must be marked in accordance with the instructions, or it will be returned to the Centre by the Moderator for re-marking.

Candidates perhaps need a further reminder that plagiarism, while still a relatively rare matter, will be spotted and will almost certainly lead to severe penalty. All borrowing or quoting from any secondary source *must* be properly acknowledged – quotation marks and a footnote are very simple means of doing this, and can be recognised as partially fulfilling AO4 requirements too.

In conclusion, and as said earlier, there was much very good work, and much very good assessment by Centres. As one Moderator said, “taking part in the process has confirmed yet again what I have always felt as a teacher – AS coursework is not an easy challenge; it makes rigorous intellectual demands on candidates, but the quality of many of the pieces that I saw by 16/17 year old students is quite superb.” And, at A2, another Moderator commented that “as ever, there was some really impressive writing, indicative of ever-increasing sophistication in the approaches and critical thought of the most able candidates; less confident candidates too seemed to have a clearer sense than in previous sessions of what the Unit requires.”

Coursework, then, is very alive and very successful, and as Centres begin preparation for the new specification there is a great deal to be pleased and optimistic about.

2710 Poetry and Drama pre- 1900

General Comments

This January saw a larger entry than in previous sessions, and of those entries more than in previous years showed signs that candidates were not quite ready for the task – often second essays (usually on the drama and often on Shakespeare) were thin, rushed, or incomplete as answers to the question.

While Assessment Objective 4 is dominant on this paper, it is becoming increasingly clear that ability to substantiate argument by specific and detailed use of selected quotation, with detailed comment on the means by which writers achieve their effects, (AO3) is very important in defining high level performance. If answers are to reach the higher bands, generalised statements must be substantiated by evidence.

Too much writing this January was weakened by inaccurate or generalised historical assertions which either overwhelmed argument, or failed to substitute for real textual proof. Indeed, some answers (especially on Blake) looked more like insecure history essays than answers to questions about literature. AO5ii is an Assessment Objective which has been taught with increasing skill and appropriateness over the life of this specification, but some of the historical generalisations offered in answer to Blake questions surprised examiners: Blake was represented as a Marxist, as influenced by his reading of Freud, and as an active revolutionary.

A substantial number of answers in this session were from candidates who had been shown so much critical material that it completely overwhelmed their own responses. This paper asks questions which expect an answer, and some candidates unfortunately offer a catalogue of borrowed views without ever reaching their own.

Comments on Individual Questions

1 Chaucer

In the much more popular (a) option, power and powerlessness were identified by candidates. Most candidates dealt with the topic on a character by character basis, with better answers noting shifts of power throughout or using cultural contexts such as courtly love in perceptive and illuminating ways. Damyan, struck by Venus's brand, is rendered lovesick and hence disempowered: May, quietly disposing of her letter down the privy, is often seen as far more calculating. Usually Januarie was found seemingly or initially powerful and May actually or later so – later as suggested by the fact that she does not speak for so long. Damyan was sometimes said to be powerless (Januarie's man, then May's). Some answers failed to notice that Januarie's power was ironically presented by Chaucer.

There were some perceptive treatments of genre: Damyan as a parody of the courtly lover, performing no deeds and having his letter cast in the privy; fabliau rendering the characters powerless, dictating the cuckolding of Januarie; the mixture of fabliau and romance allowing some more serious consideration of power and powerlessness. On the whole relatively little attention was paid to Pluto and Proserpyne.

Some answers offered (with obvious passion and commitment) a highly theoretical discussion of the identity (Merchant or Cleric) of the narrator, but unfortunately spent so long on this issue that they lost sight of the set task.

The second question – on the ‘appropriately cynical ending’ was attempted by relatively few candidates but – when the end of the Tale was looked at in detail – generally very successfully. The best answers focussed on ‘appropriate’ and realised some discussion of what led up to the ending was needed. Cynicism was seen in the Merchant himself and the transactional language describing marriage, the presentation of Jauarie as an old fool, a *senex amans*. May’s freshness came in for debate and the way she was presented as manipulative was seen as cynical. Many saw poetic justice in the way Januarie was treated, candidates choosing different details in the ending. May climbing on the Januarie’s back was seen as an appropriate revenge for his proprietary treatment of her, Januarie’s delusion as to a potential heir was seen as appropriate for a man who thought he was wise and all-knowing about marriage. The tone of the ending was seen as appropriate for the genre of fabliau.

2 Herbert

Relatively few answers on the first option ‘order and compression’ were seen, but some knowledge of the metaphysical conceit was used effectively in terms of compression, and Examiners saw some useful discussion of form as a way of ordering thought. Some candidates struggled with order, with naïve views of what it might mean in this context.

Answers on the second option, looking at Herbert’s ‘painful journey towards acceptance’ showed a pleasing general level of engagement with the poems’ drama and language, and some useful contextual knowledge.

3 Milton

The first question – ‘the best of times, the worst of times’ – was most successfully discussed in terms of the fortunate fall, the worst of times leading to the best. For Satan the process is reversed as his return in triumph dissolves amid hissing. Not having experienced Eden, readers most easily identify with the worst. Only a few answers saw ambiguity in Eden and Adam as insecure and in doubt before the fall: Eve too has a restless curiosity that Adam seems unable to quell suggesting Eden paradoxically is not the best of times. Others perhaps predictably examined Satan and his suffering as the worst of times. The best answers had a clear idea of context and Milton’s theological perspective.

The second question invited discussion of ‘whether our sympathies lie more with the deceiver than the deceived’. Most were able to focus on the question, perhaps missing the subtleties implied in the phrasing ‘deceiver and deceived’, but readily identifying who these were. Stronger answers saw how Eve deceives herself as she deceives Adam and then is deceived by the serpent. They also saw Adam as twice deceived, but as sympathetically human. The best also included Satan as deceiver and self-deceived. Some answers were based on detailed analysis of the temptation scene, or at least referred to it. The main problem with others was lengthy rambling about God and theological speculation, with no grounding in the detail of the poem.

On Milton generally there was a pleasing range of critical references and, often, detailed analysis of language (especially Satan’s linguistic wiles). Contextual knowledge tended to be less secure. Some writers were well informed about Milton’s politics but many became confused in attempts to make Charles I and Cromwell fit neatly with his characters. Some seemed to believe that Milton was a Roman Catholic.

4 Dryden

There were very few answers on Dryden: the few seen were very competently done.

5 Blake

In both Blake questions the most successful candidates knew the poems in detail, and used close focus to argue a point of view. Less successful answers offered a range of titles and summaries of content, but did not know the poems in sufficient detail to develop their points.

Centres teaching Blake need to think hard about their use of critical material. Excessive use of criticism on Blake is considered by Examiners to hamper candidates in responding to the actual language and ambiguity of the poems. It is precisely the ambiguity and vitality of Blake which make him so potentially rewarding for all candidates: but in the hands of less confident candidates, reliance on criticism tends to produce prescriptive, assertive statements irrespective of what the poems themselves say. As one Examiner commented 'Candidates should be encouraged to write about the poems for themselves. AO4 does not require reference to critics – the demands of AO4 are met in answering the question. Too many able candidates simply summed up what critics felt about the poems.'

Question 5(a) on 'lyrical expressions of human longing' was less popular than 5(b) on 'poems of vision, rather than social reform.' Most answers on the first option ignored the word 'lyrical' - few candidates seemed to be aware that the term refers to short, rhythmic poetry with formal rhyme scheme often possessing songlike qualities and expressive of emotion, usually in the first person. Some candidates dropped the word in hoping it would not be noticed that there was little evidence of an understanding of the word. 'Longing' was more effectively addressed and answers which offered a range of longings did best, looking at longing for freedom, better social conditions, and honesty. Weaker candidates dwelt on notions of sexuality, relevant but sometimes to the exclusion of other topics.

On 5(b) the most successful responses were usually those which in some way combined 'vision' and 'social reform', finding in Blake social vision or a desire to reform the lack of vision in society. Blake's theory of fourfold vision was used aptly. The poems most often discussed were 'London', 'Holy Thursday', 'The Sick Rose', 'The Lamb' and 'The Tyger': few answers moved outside *Songs of Innocence and Experience*. There was some fairly effective analysis of language and tone. The most successful answers ranged throughout the poetry but there was still too much irrelevant contextual material and some very thin or broad responses. Many candidates gave sweepingly generalised accounts of Blake as Social radical, representing him as a rabble-rousing Marxist.

6 Hopkins

In 6(a), a wide range of poems was successfully considered, with many of the candidates knowing the poems in sufficient detail to develop answers based on close analysis. 'Nature comforts' was profitably examined while 'man disturbs' was sometimes ignored or at least implicitly considered. Some answers used 'Binsey Poplars' well in the 'man' context. There were some prepared pieces on Hopkins and Nature or Hopkins, Nature and God. The Terrible Sonnets were dealt with effectively as examples of man *being* disturbed. There was much perceptive analysis of Hopkins' language, especially of the ways in which word-patterns and rhythms imitate the falcon's flight in 'The Windhover'. This approach also featured in the handful of essays seen on 6(b), which provoked some excellent close examination of texts. As one examiner wrote, 'Hopkins seems to get the best out of the candidates – they have to know it well, and the teacher must be engaged to deliver it! As so much of Hopkins is about form, AO2/3 were well served, which allowed the candidates to deliver grounded comments.'

7 Shakespeare: *Hamlet*

7(a) Many answers to this question, about the story of Polonius's family being 'a tragedy within a tragedy' were character studies of Polonius, Laertes and Ophelia without much reference to 'a tragedy within a tragedy.' 'Tragedy' was usually understood to mean simply misfortune. There were some more interesting accounts, however. One saw the downfall of the Polonius family as not tragic in the classical sense because it is brought about by outside factors. Another looked at their story as 'a tragedy of repression and missed opportunities.'

Stronger answers focused on audience response, and this was a much more successful tactic. They were able to deal with the potential tragedy of Ophelia, and what was suggested about her when she gives the flowers away. Some were able to point out that Laertes is thoroughly corrupted when he agrees to cheat. Many fuller answers defined tragedy with reference to Aristotle, Arthur Miller, Greek, and Senecan models. The sharper the sense of tragedy, the better the response seemed to be as a result. The word 'within' became a key discriminator, and candidates who saw the play structurally - even comparing the subplot to the *Mousetrap* - scored highly.

7(b) There was a wide range of responses to this question on 'corruption'. A surprisingly large number of candidates had difficulty defining 'corruption' - it was anything vaguely bad, or synonymous with 'deception' - but many found the concept useful, particularly in terms of the corruption of good intentions caused by the pursuit of revenge. Some answers aptly observed the contrast between the complexity of revenge in *Hamlet* and the 'simple imperatives' of *The Spanish Tragedy*. Madness, real or feigned, was seen in a similar light e.g. the corruption of Ophelia's innocence.

Weaker answers were not sufficiently secure in knowledge of the play, and tended to offer narrative with the occasional glance at the question. Some candidates implied that Hamlet was more corrupt than Claudius. Unfortunately this was simply asserted then used as a comment on some of the scenes; it was not argued with evidence.

Confident answers focused on imagery of corruption, and developed accounts of Hamlet himself, as well as Claudius. Language was seen as evoking a sense of corruption in the many images of death and disease. The language of Hamlet's speeches was related to the cynical sense of corruption in the Jacobean malcontent. 'Something is rotten' was rightly much referred to; corruption has an effect on almost everyone from the usurper who violates divine right to 'the very guard who is "sick at heart".' Many critics were used aptly, especially Kermode on language.

8 Shakespeare: *Measure for Measure*

8(a), on the clarity of the play's moral dilemmas, was undertaken by a minority of the *Measure for Measure* candidates. Most felt strongly that dilemmas were presented, but not resolved, clearly. Some wrote well on the lack of resolution as a generic feature of tragicomedy or 'problem play'; many noted the contrast between the ending here and in more conventional comedy. Attention was distributed fairly evenly between the Duke, Isabella and Angelo. There was debate over whether the Duke was wisely omniscient or a culpable manipulator of the dilemmas of others. 'Isabella's dilemma is not resolved but neatly pushed aside by the Duke when he introduces Mariana to the plot'; Angelo, asking for death at the end, remains as extreme, as unresolved, as ever, and in general 'the play ends much where it began.' Some perceptive answers argued that the lack of resolution is intentional: it is designed to 'open questions up, not deliver a verdict on the morality of any course of action.' Many had seen film versions, including Komar's 2007 version, and used this experience relevantly.

8(b), on Angelo, elicited confident responses which usually found Angelo to be complex and were interestingly divided on whether he deserves sympathy. Some found elements in him of the tragic hero. Many argued that the Duke's dereliction of duty, manipulation, or failure to intervene – or Isabella's sexually loaded language - create some feeling for Angelo. Few answers, however, went so far as to excuse him entirely; most felt that the revelation of his treatment of Mariana was the final damning evidence against him. A few thoughtful answers suggested that Angelo is not in fact complex but 'all too mundanely human' – someone who, the Mariana business shows, loves money and has a tendency to deceive.

9 **Middleton: *The Changeling***

On (a) 'A play of class, rather than sexual revenge', some candidates found class a difficult notion to approach in terms of the context of the play. Stronger answers came down on the side of sexual revenge and not only looked not only at De Flores and Beatrice but the other characters too, including Diaphanta and Tomazo. The subplot was explored fruitfully in some answers and Isabella was seen to have the moral high ground by not taking sexual revenge on her husband and not cuckolding him, often the fate of jealous husbands in comedy.

Option (b) on De Flores was generally more confidently done: a good grasp of the malcontent anti-hero was shown and many agreed with the statement. Others felt Beatrice was the source of much of the stronger audience reactions, as in the moment when she realises the price she will have to pay for De Flores' services as assassin, or in her shifting response to De Flores.

10 **Behn: *The Rover***

There were some very pleasing answers on this play which not only used the text very closely, analysing for example the significance of stage placing to suggest meaning, but also referring to actual performances to develop points. Background knowledge about the Restoration theatre, Behn's theatrical career and the position of women was used to support different readings of this play.

Answers to the most popular question, 10(a), on whether despite its comic elements the play is depressing, managed to focus on the violence underlying an apparently comic play, and focused in detail upon Willmore, and Blunt. Candidates seemed well aware of the dark side of the play and showed a good sense of Restoration Comedy conventions. Attitudes to women, and the fate of women characters, particularly Angellica Bianca were cited as evidence of a cynical world view. But the need for a happy ending to qualify as comedy was discussed. The female characters also came in for some close analysis and criticism.

10(b) on the liberating effects of carnival, was not so well done – candidates tended to retell the story, and did not always focus on the words 'liberate' and 'truth' which are keys to this question. While some argued it was more liberating others felt it made the women particularly more vulnerable. Perhaps some faced the truth but some hid behind disguise. They found it interesting that Angellica Bianca (who was not disguised) was the most deeply affected.

11 Gay: *The Beggar's Opera*

This text, chosen by few centres, was generally very well done, with real understanding of context and irony, and a keen sense of enjoyment. 11(a) was chosen by most, and done well, though some weaker answers managed not to mention Polly or Lucy. The best answers pointed out the different moments and incidents where men manage and when women manage. Women outside of marriage were seen to have more control, but women were also seen as falling victim to their own feelings. Overall men were seen to be in financial control and to be dominant in relationships as fathers and lovers. Answers often showed good sense of the parodic and of the satirical element, and there was good use of the text by nearly all.

11(b), on 'playing with the idea of being a play' was done by few: but those few answers were excellent, with a keen sense of dramatic voice and technique.

12 Shaw: *Mrs Warren's Profession*

12(a) This question – on the difficulty of sympathising with Vivie or her mother – was well done by most candidates, with close comment and quotation indicating where we sympathise or not. Answers offered lot of useful contemporary critical commentary (including Shaw's own comments), and less generalised 'social' history than in the past.

The second question, 12(b), on 'the conflict between the real world and the world of moral ideals' was popular, though not all defined the terms of the question. Most saw opportunities in the question but did not really get to grips with issues of hypocrisy and pragmatism.

2712 Prose post-1914 (Written Paper)

General comments

As ever, this report should be read in conjunction with previous 2712 reports, all of which are available from OCR.

In this session there were some very good answers, but in general there were fewer of these than in previous January sessions, and more scripts falling within Bands 2 and 3. Candidates need to be reminded that AO1 is an over-arching assessment objective for this unit, and an important aspect of that is that knowledge must be directed towards the question asked (see comments below under *To the Lighthouse*).

Section A

A significant number of candidates still do not offer enough close textual analysis (AO3) in Section A, and a handful still fail to identify their chosen passages, which usually leads on to the writing of a Section B type general essay. Sometimes much effort is spent injecting contextual material into this Section: occasionally a small amount can illuminate, but AO5ii is not specifically targeted in Section A, and the result can be that candidates often repeat material in Section B.

Section B

In Section B answers more than description and/or listing in Section B is required. Sometimes answers tackled only part of the question: for instance, 'How far, and in what ways...' means consider both of these elements, even if one carries more weight than the other in the answer. Occasionally key words in a question were ignored (see comments below under *Cold Comfort Farm*, *Atonement* and *To the Lighthouse*).

It would be a great help if candidates could put question numbers in the boxes provided on the front sheet of the answer book. Examiners waste time rectifying this omission.

Cold Comfort Farm

In Section A, there were responses to all four options on the presentation of one of: religious sects, the London set, the country set or Freudian psychology. 'The country set' was sometimes interpreted as alluding to the Starkadders, and this was accepted provided that the relevant AOs were addressed. Less acceptable were various vaguer interpretations of 'set', such as 'setting', although care was taken to reward creditable material. When writing on religious sects, some answers focused exclusively on the presentation of Amos who, while important, is not the entire issue. There were some well-structured, knowledgeable answers on the Section B question on men and women as stereotypes, but some tended to list characters or categorise them without much subtlety or evidence. Sudden changes in circumstances were often taken as proof of non-stereotypical character development; examiners were open-minded here provided that the cases were well argued. On the alternative question about the tension between order and chaos there were some clear, well-argued responses, but sometimes the key word 'tension' was not addressed, and this reduced the value of some otherwise promising answers.

Atonement

In the Section A question on Cecilia the words 'presentation of', as ever, acted as the discriminator. There was some very subtle analysis of how a sense of different authorial 'levels' was sustained in chosen passages and many responses were well informed and so tended to score well under AO2ii. On the other hand some answers showed no apparent awareness at any point in their answer that Briony is the controlling mind behind what we know of Cecilia, and too many focused on the aspects of character revealed rather than methods of characterisation. There was a range of answers on the Section B question on the relationship between the different 'Parts' of Atonement, some of modest achievement, others engaging readily with the implications of the question. The alternative, on class, yielded some good responses, but some candidates resorted to a listing of instances of class rather than considering the novel as being 'about social class', and candidates need to beware that in a question such as this A05ii related references to 'life and times' does not become excessive and unbalance the answer.

Rites of Passage

This text has proved popular in the past, but in this session there were no answers upon it.

Open Secrets

There were too few responses on this text for meaningful comment here.

To the Lighthouse

In the Section A question on Mrs Ramsay, middle to low band candidates often ignored 'different views of', and some candidates were unable to resist the temptation to display their wide range of knowledge of Mrs Ramsay to the detriment of a strict focus upon the task in hand (AO1). The Section B question suggesting that 'The optimism of the ending is at odds with what has gone before it' produced some wonderfully wrought answers, with opinion divided as to the validity of the proposition. In the alternative question, on symbolism, a tendency to list symbols limited the achievement of some very well informed answers. The best gave at least some attention to the 'effects' (key word in the title) of symbolism in the novel as a whole – a little of this could go quite a long way.

A Thousand Acres

There was evidence of very good teaching of candidates who answered on this text. The Section A question on landscape produced some excellent answers, as did both of the Section B questions on the presentation of Larry and on the presentation of family relationships in the light of the comment about the failure of family love - although in the latter case otherwise thorough responses ignored the instruction 'In the light of this comment...'.

Letter to Daniel

Unlike previous sessions, there were no answers upon this text.

An Evil Cradling

The Section A question on the way Keenan presents his relationships with his fellow prisoners was generally well-informed, but A03 analysis was sometimes limited. All the candidates who studied this text answered the Section B question on Keenan's relationship with his fellow prisoners, and they offered sensitive, well-informed answers. In weaker responses there was a tendency for the material to outrun candidates' ability to control it, perhaps a problem of over-annotated texts.

2713 Comparative and Contextual Study

General Comments

The number of candidates entering for the synoptic unit in the January examination session was, again, very small compared with the summer cohort. The core focal points of AO3 (close analysis of language tone and structure) and AO2ii (comparison) in sections A and B respectively are now well understood, even if the former is still overlooked, in weaker answers in favour of AO5ii discussion. Nonetheless, the profile of performance was broadly encouraging with many excellent answers to be seen.

This was particularly the case in respect of 'The Gothic Tradition' and 'Writing of the Romantic Era', where many candidates displayed the pleasing ability to balance the requirement for close critical and evaluative analysis of specific texts with a broader placing of that knowledge within the context of the topic. On these two topics, in broad terms, candidates displayed the most impressive scholarship, in the sense that many wrote incisive, perceptive answers grounded in extensive comparative textual detail. It is not uncommon for candidates writing on these topics to cite four or more texts or authors in the course of their answers, and do so appositely and with acuity. It must be reiterated that two texts suffice for comparison, but more, self-evidently, allow for greater flexibility of response.

By contrast, questions on the two topics 'Twentieth Century American Prose' and 'Post-1945 Drama' were less well answered, often because of the way candidates handled AO5ii contextualisation. Whilst there were, of course, several very strong responses in these areas, a large number of candidates made very sweeping comments and judgements about their topic which served to dilute the validity of their argument. It is quite common to read that, for example, 'women were second class citizens in America in the twentieth century' or that 'after World War 2 drama became absurd in order to show people's fears and to show real life'. Alternatively, one can read that in America the west is an area of freedom, the south is poor and the north is industrialised, whilst black people are oppressed and downtrodden. Moreover, Americans are said to be chasing the American dream, which *is* (stated as a fact) 'life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness'. Equally, in theatre, characters are said to express their angst through violence, or seek solace through alcohol (particularly in American plays), and there are a lot of angry young men – and women – discussing the new, modern world, usually in living rooms or kitchens (which makes such plays different from the 'well made plays' of before the war).

Such propositions have obvious elements of validity, but they are wholly lacking in precision, balance or nuance: they clearly need to be teased out, explored and, importantly, related to the texts being discussed. The issue of AO5ii over-simplification is most damaging in Section A answers in which candidates set out to search the passage for recognisable tropes or thematic issues to expand on their knowledge of topic, rather than focus on the passage primarily as a piece of literature in its own right and analyse it as such. Those candidates who adopt the latter approach invariably do best.

It is hard to make observations about Post-Colonial Literature in respect of this session since so few answers were seen by examiners. No candidates wrote on Satire in this January session.

One last general observation made by examiners is that there seems to be a growing trend by some candidates to refer to, and cite, in Section B answers, Section A passages offered in earlier exams. This can be valid, if a specific point or idea is precisely exemplified in a previous textual extract, but such a brief point of reference can in no sense qualify as a whole text for the purposes of comparison. Whilst no candidates go to that extreme, there are a noticeable number

who refer to these earlier passages, as if to imply they knew the original texts in their entirety. This is not good, or efficacious, practice.

Comments on individual topic areas

Satire

Examiners saw no answers on Satire in this session.

The Gothic Tradition

A large majority of candidates found plenty to discuss in the passage from Chetwynd-Hayes's *The Ghouls*, with many making valuable comparison to *Frankenstein* and *Dracula* in particular. The place of the supernatural in the Gothic was often discussed, as well as issues of transgression and crossing the border between life and death. In that regard, the passage proved a useful link to the (b) question for some. The one disappointing feature of very many responses was candidates' inability to recognise, or comment upon, the humour of the passage. Whilst one acknowledges that exams are stressful, it should not follow that academic students of literature cannot spot something that is funny when they see it! The broader point is that candidates must stay alert to the tone of what they read – whichever topic category they are studying.

Answers on *The Dead School* were very few, so it is not possible to comment on the performance of the (b) question ('Gothic writing is characterised by a pervasive air of melancholy.') However both (a) and (c) were answered extensively. On the former ('Gothic writing blurs the boundaries between the living and the dead') there were many good responses discussing the metaphysical aspects of this question as well as the more prosaic. Clearly, Frankenstein's creature, created from dead bodies, was the starting point for many, as was Dracula's liminal 'undead' status, but much was made of spiritual death-in-life, with Victor Frankenstein being the focus for cogent discussion in this regard. Other texts discussed in relation to this question were *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. This proved the best answered of the three options on The Gothic Tradition.

The last question ('Heroes in Gothic writing are more notable for their weaknesses than their strengths') proved problematic for some candidates to the extent that they often overlooked the second half of the equation. Identified weaknesses abounded - for example, over-arching ambition, arrogance, Promethean hubris, short-sightedness, physical and intellectual vanity - and Victor Frankenstein in particular received a terrible collective judgement from this session's candidates! (As did Walton, too.) However 'strengths' were little considered by many. Some candidates opined that Victor Frankenstein's aim, to conquer death, was laudable in some respects, whilst others sought to find moral courage in the texts they had read: few found it. Ultimately, concept of 'hero' was often ill-defined, such that the parameters of a given argument would prove hazy. A common conclusion was that heroes had tragic flaws, in Aristotelian vein, and they were cursed with their lot to struggle on. A few superb answers offered balanced and sophisticated arguments, with impressive insights into the topic area as a whole, often supplying mature and thoughtful material related to political, historical and literary context.

I would reiterate here that for all the relative weaknesses noted above, students of this topic broadly knew their material. Whilst argument may not always have been complex or sophisticated, what was said tended to be well founded in detailed textual knowledge.

Writing of the Romantic Era

As noted in the general introduction, there was some outstanding work here. Candidates responded alertly and proficiently (or better) to the *Peter Grimes* extract, confidently observing ways in which it was both typical and, for some, paradoxically atypical as a Romantic text. The figure of Peter Grimes himself was recognised as the isolated loner, the common man, contextualised in the framework of the Wordsworthian project of *Lyrical Ballads*. Equally, Crabbe's powerfully sensual evocation of a natural landscape was discussed, with several candidates expanding on how it was atypical of much Romantic writing in the way that Nature in the passage is bleak and threatening, rather than a glorious pastoral idyll as can often be found elsewhere in Romantic writing. The discordant sound of the birds was contrasted with that of 'joyous' nightingale song (Keats, Coleridge), and many answers also discussed gothic elements which evoked, for some, the Ancient Mariner. Some candidates grappled with the difficult notion that Peter Grimes perhaps enjoyed the pain his landscape caused him. It was pleasing, too, that many candidates discussed the manner in which mood and tone were created by the metrical and lexical choices of Crabbe: much was made of assonance, sibilance, plosives, iambic pentameter and other technical devices, but importantly their effects and *how* they are achieved were under the microscope.

The (a) question, asking candidates to consider how far the idea that a 'painful awareness that happiness is fleeting' lies at the heart of Romantic writing, was tackled confidently by many. Keats's Odes were much to the fore, and candidates discussed the concept of negative capability with insight and purpose. The frozen love scene on the Grecian urn became the central focus for many, as a counter example of permanent, eternal happiness (albeit unfulfilled), whilst many others accepted the thesis for Keats but contrasted his sensibility with that of Wordsworth, and his notion that happiness can be recalled and created permanently in the imagination through memory: 'Tintern Abbey' was a useful reference point in this regard.

Candidates were even more confident in tackling the (b) question, centred on the notion that Romantic writers sought to 'look at and comprehend the world in a new way'. The Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* was well known and understood by most and was the starting point for many answers, which thoughtfully, and in detail, outlined Wordsworth and Coleridge's project to write poetry about ordinary life and people in the language of ordinary people. The social context (post-Enlightenment, post French Revolution, amidst industrial revolution) was well acknowledged, and candidates also drew on the visionary work of Blake and the radical philosophy of Shelley to underpin their arguments. Yet others returned to Keats's world of negative capability as an example of seeing the world in a new way, noting that it was 'new' because it was grounded in sense, feeling, imagination and, significantly, the acceptance of unreason.

The (c) question was least often chosen on this topic (the "perpetual struggle to reconcile the real with the ideal"). Though there were relatively few responses, candidates approached it from a number of angles, ranging from disillusion with the French Revolution to the less political idea that Romantic sensibility was a real hardship, a struggle of the mind. A few perceptive answers noted that a paradox exists in the sense that Romantic poetry is *not* a spontaneous overflow of feeling, but a careful, literary delineation of feeling and as such is an expression of intellect as much as feeling.

20th Century American Prose

The more successful responses to this passage recognised it as an example of Southern Gothic, and provided contextual comment accordingly; there were a number of successful comparisons drawn from the work of William Faulkner. All answers commented on the description of the 'dreary' town and moved on to the 'very old' house at the centre, most recognising its symbolic significance, and some offering perceptive ideas about the face at the window. Weaker answers tended to lack reading stamina, however: some missed the account of the 'success and gaiety'

of the café's past and the intriguing hints about Cousin Lymon and Miss Amelia's husband; such answers also overlooked Miss Amelia's crossed eyes, thereby failing to identify her with the face at the window. The conclusion of the passage, with its focus on money and lawsuits, saw candidates on firmer ground, although some of the related contextual writing about the American Dream was too broad and general to be of very much value.

The essay question on masculinity and masculine values was popular and on the whole well-handled. Most candidates considered Dick Diver's decline and identified ways in which he falls short as a man: he was criticised for his shortcomings as a husband, a lover and a psychiatrist, and compared unfavourably with other characters from *Tender is the Night* and from other novels. Tommy Barban was often presented as a more successful 'alpha male', some suggesting he was akin to Tom Buchanan in *The Great Gatsby*. *Postcards* was a fairly frequent comparative text, as was Steinbeck's *East of Eden*; *The Great Gatsby*, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and *The Color Purple* also appeared quite frequently. Some better answers took the view that strength, often defined as a masculine signifier, was frequently to be found more often in female characters than their male counterparts.

The (b) question, 'What people are ashamed of usually makes a good story', was less successful on the whole: candidates could find shameful episodes with ease (the killing of Billy at the beginning of *Postcards*, Gatsby's murky past, the incest from *Tender is the Night*), but the 'good story' part of the quotation often remained unexamined, so that essays were in danger of becoming a list of examples rather than sustaining and illustrating an argument.

Answers to the final question, about the 'persistent struggle to preserve idealism in the face of a hostile world', again needed to register all of the question's terms to be successful. All wrote about idealism (often in terms of the American Dream), but some forgot to deal with the 'hostile world' and only the best answers considered the 'persistent struggle'. Equally, many candidates treated the terms ideal and idealism as interchangeable: this caused problems of precision in argument where it occurred. Many students of this topic like to see their texts in relation to ideas about 'illusion and reality': while such an approach can often be very helpful, candidates do need to ensure that it is completely adapted to the demands of the question set.

Post-1945 Drama

All candidates had heard of *Look Back in Anger* (occasionally named *Don't Look Back in Anger*), John Osborne or *Angry Young Men*, so that discussion of the context for this passage was often detailed and apposite. Many candidates also had some knowledge of the text, and most of these successfully resisted the temptation to write a general essay about the play rather than a detailed commentary of the set passage. Answers generally focused on the characters' moods and relationships, usually offering a successful analysis; comments on gender politics and social class were often uncertain and less successful, although several candidates cogently discussed Jimmy's implicit misogyny (as it was perceived). The best answers handled all of these elements effectively and also commented on the extract as a piece of theatre, noting the physical movement of characters on and off stage, even, and the effects this allowed.

The first essay question, on 'unrest and distress', was probably the most popular option and usually handled effectively. All candidates found many examples of unrest and distress in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, and others in plays such as *Waiting for Godot* and *The Homecoming*; better answers arranged these examples in a way which allowed detailed comparison. One or two excellent responses pointed out that the dramatic power of unrest and distress is increased where there are contrasting moments of calm or happiness, and suggested that moments of hope – such as that which may be found at the end of the Albee – are the most powerful.

The second question, on 'what is left unsaid', was a less popular option. Some candidates challenged the statement in the question, reasonably concluding that, despite the power of silence and subtext, the spoken word is ultimately the most important part of a drama. There

was some discussion of Pinter's pauses and an impressive amount of thought about the visual impact the play has on stage, including dramatic action and symbolism. The most popular second text was *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, and here discussion centred on subtext – the way that the spoken word conceals, or sets out to conceal, what the characters' true concerns are. The success of answers again depended on the extent to which candidates managed to compare and contrast their chosen plays: some essays still consider the texts separately and then offer a brief comparison by way of a conclusion.

The final question, on confounding the audience's expectations, was the least popular option. Again, there was a tendency here for weaker answers to arrive at a list of examples, but better responses considered what the contemporary audience's expectations might be, making good use of contextual material, and developed an argument about the contrasting ways their chosen texts worked with or against those expectations. The two set plays were the most popular texts, with *Waiting for Godot* also frequently cited.

Post-Colonial Literature

Too few candidates wrote on this topic in January to make a summative judgement on responses, other than to observe that candidates found the Naipaul passage very accessible, and that the 12(b) option, on the importance of history to Post-Colonial writing, was particularly successful. The passage allowed candidates to explore the ideas of hybridity and alienation – both well understood concepts by students of this topic – and many noted how Indar was, and is now, an outsider in each environment, London and Africa. Useful comment was made about the time-juxtaposition within the passage. Candidates also thoughtfully explored the way in which Indar perceived his own status as the 'token' non-European, and the irony that he was 'Indian' (or not!). In Section B very few candidates discussed Walcott; *White Teeth* was much the more popular text. By far the most frequent comparative text was Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*. As noted above, the 'history' question dominated responses, with candidates proficiently discussing Samad's role in the novel in particular, and his place as an inter-generational fulcrum. History's role in defining personal identity was a common thematic focus.

Grade Thresholds

Advanced GCE English Literature 3828/7828
January 2008 Examination Series

Unit Threshold Marks

Unit		Maximum Mark	A	B	C	D	E	U
2707	Raw	60	46	41	36	31	26	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2708	Raw	60	49	44	39	34	29	0
	UMS	120	96	84	72	60	48	0
2709	Raw	60	51	45	39	33	28	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2710	Raw	60	48	42	36	31	26	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2711	Raw	60	52	46	41	36	31	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2712	Raw	60	48	43	38	34	30	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2713	Raw	60	48	42	36	31	26	0
	UMS	120	96	84	72	60	48	0

Specification Aggregation Results

Overall threshold marks in UMS (ie after conversion of raw marks to uniform marks)

	Maximum Mark	A	B	C	D	E	U
3828	300	240	210	180	150	120	0
7828	600	480	420	360	300	240	0

The cumulative percentage of candidates awarded each grade was as follows:

	A	B	C	D	E	U	Total Number of Candidates
3828	13.78	40.06	68.91	88.14	98.08	100.00	312
7828	19.28	60.24	85.54	95.18	98.08	100.00	83

83 candidates aggregated this series

For a description of how UMS marks are calculated see:

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