

# English Language & Literature

Advanced GCE A2 7829

Advanced Subsidiary GCE AS 3829

## Report on the Units

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**June 2006**

**3829/7829/MS/R/06**

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## **2714 - Linking Language and Literature**

### **General Comments**

Most candidates found a good range of points to make about both passages and candidates seemed to focus particularly well on differences in values and attitudes and generic ingredients. Candidates were able to identify the key features of each context and situation, the kind of conflict and the features at work in each speech situation.

Markers found that candidates were able to compare aspects of fictional speech with those of spontaneous speech efficiently and competently for the most part. At times some candidates focused a little too much on one passage at the expense of another, often a little more on the crafted extract. Terminology seems increasingly secure in nearly all candidates' answers. Centres seem to be encouraging candidates to go beyond feature spotting and there was an encouraging sense that the integration of linguistic and literary study is coming together at the initial stages. There was little rubric infringement and effective time management.

### **Comments on individual questions**

Candidates across the bands were able to identify the relationships between Ellie, Ralph and the mother. What differentiated the responses was the technical accuracy in the answers. The most discriminating answers provided detailed commentaries on the subtle changes in the dynamics in the first passage. They sensed its humorous aspects - for the audience if not the characters in the scenario - and compared this to the ways in which sarcasm and hyperbole were used in the second extract. This was an area where some awareness of politeness strategies or the co-operative principle aided candidates in commenting on the effects of Mrs Chivers' pointed changes of subject. Such answers also commented on the narrator's role and his observer/shrewd commentator role in the face of the mother's overt judgement and emotion. This authorial mediation was explored by many candidates and so were the formality of the language and the associations of class, status and power attached to the choices of vocabulary and address terms in both passages. Indeed, terms of address provided many perceptive comments: from the differences between 'Elspeth' and 'Ellie', 'Mrs Chivers' and 'Mummy' and the effect of labels such as 'mrs negativity'. Such answers had a pleasing balance between focus on A05 and A02i. They made specific references to the passages and employed key textual evidence to support ideas. The strategies employed in the transcription were commented on in detail too.

Successful answers showed awareness of the teasing nature of the presenters' approach; the differences between Christian and Dominic; the colloquial language being used to create a superficial friendliness between the participants; many comparisons were made with the very formal ways in which the characters in the fictional passage spoke to each other. Really perceptive answers noted the almost 'camp' entertainment in the transcription.

Only a few candidates resorted to commenting on generalised differences between crafted and spontaneous speech: most located specific evidence - as required - in the passages themselves. Less effective answers tended to say little about A05 in the second passage, tending to focus too much on non-fluency features and commenting mainly on Rachel's perceived nervousness.

## 2715 - Poetry and Prose (Written Examination)

### General Comments

It is always encouraging when knowledge gained from the combined study of Language and Literature is used genuinely and individually to illuminate understanding of a text. This happened notably in an answer on *Frankenstein*, when it must have occurred to the candidate that the Creature's use of a rhetorical question which he then immediately answers himself ("... and should I feel kindness towards my enemies? No; from that moment ...") could usefully be related to the framework of adjacency pairs and turn-taking. Accordingly, the Creature was described as "seizing the floor", and a perceptive analysis followed of how Shelley's use of variations in sentence structure contributed to the presentation of suffering. This, from a candidate whose work was otherwise rather limited, provides a good example of how the Specification takes students on from GCSE to something more complex.

In general, this summer's paper seems to have performed well in terms of allowing candidates to engage with the texts and to apply relevant linguistic and literary approaches. Relatively few candidates seemed to be struggling to express a simple, basic textual understanding. However, too many are still giving only cursory attention to the specific demands of the question as set; they are ignoring the support and guidance of the bullet prompts and preferring to pursue an agenda apparently dictated either by some features they have been taught to identify in the set passage or poem, or by some themes they have been told are relevant to that text. Such an approach makes an essentially simple paper more difficult than it is designed to be.

Allocation of time between the two questions was hardly ever a problem. Where scripts showed an imbalance, it seemed due either to a lack of textual knowledge or to an unhelpful choice of approach rather than a failure of examination technique.

The work of many candidates is limited by their rather imprecise control (AO1) of basic terminology, and their imprecise use of language in general. "Imagery" is often used in a general way to mean anything from atmosphere to visual/pictorial representation; rhyme and rhythm are frequently confused or conflated; failure to capitalise the names of the authors and the texts is rife. This is not of itself damaging to candidates' understanding, but it is symptomatic of a level of carelessness which leads at times to whole paragraphs whose sense is quite obscure.

In the **Comments on Individual Questions** which follow, this aspect of the Specification is explored in particular detail with reference to the question (number 3) on the poetry of Robert Frost. The principles of accurate close reading, using a combination of linguistic and literary analysis, hold good for all texts and questions.

## Comments on Individual Questions

### Q 1 **CHAUCER: *The Nun's Priest's Tale***

The question invited response to how Chaucer “creates and undermines a heroic image for Chauntecleer” and directed candidates (in the first bullet prompt) to “look closely at diction and sentence structure”. As with last year’s question on this text, candidates were strangely reluctant to identify and analyse (AO3i) specific features of language, such as the “fronting” of “Real he was” and the parallel structures of Chauntecleer’s speech in the passage (“For whan I se ... For whan I feele ...”). Once again they seemed more comfortable with the rather less specific demand of the second bullet prompt, to discuss how Chaucer suggests both the serious and the comic.

Candidates were on surer ground with more general appreciation of the Mock-Heroic, and the AO4 dimension was soundly fulfilled with reference to the initial description of Chauntecleer. Other passages used for comparison were less successful, especially when they were those set in recent sessions, since even when they corresponded with the second bullet they were rather less relevant to the overall question-focus.

### Q 2 **CHAUCER: *The Miller's Tale***

Candidates seemed to have been very thoroughly (too thoroughly?) prepared for commentary on the description of Absolon. As a result, all but the best answers were characterised by a tendency to assert that Absolon was effeminate (or “girly”) and over-concerned with this appearance, and to quote a selection of the elements between lines 8 and 32 in illustration of these supposed characteristics. Disappointingly little critical attention (AO3i) was expended on exploring precisely how Chaucer combines diction and syntax (the first bullet prompt) to suggest this, or any other, view of Absolon. The positioning of adjectives and adverbs in each line is a fairly obvious but significant feature of Chaucer’s technique: candidates who asserted that Absolon was unnaturally vain might have pointed to this emphasis as evidence for their contention.

Unfortunately, many candidates started off on the wrong foot by assuming that lines 3 and 4 of the extract referred to Absolon and not to Alisoun. However, there was clearly strong engagement with the characters, with the comic dynamics of the relationships, and with the ways in which elements of the introductions and descriptions of characters hinted at future plot developments. Comparison (AO4) was generally at least sound, with candidates finding plenty to say about the use of similes and animal imagery in the descriptions of Alisoun as well as Absolon, and interesting observations of how details of Nicholas’s personality and appearance took second place to exposition of his abilities.

Q 3 **ROBERT FROST: *Selected Poems***

Candidates were challenged by the set poem "*There are Roughly Zones*" and by the question. Some grappled bravely with ideas of form and structure; others fell back on pointing out whatever features of poetic style (for example, alliteration and onomatopoeia) they recognised. Many began by asserting that the poem was about "boundaries" and man's tendency to push or exceed them. Most candidates were inclined to see poetic form as representative of (even enactive of) mood and tone. So, for example, many answers asserted that line-length and rhyme were irregular because the poem was about man's tendency to push or break boundaries: irregularity of form "mirrored" or "reflected" the irregularity of boundaries/limits/zones. Better answers concentrated on what was in the poem rather than what there ought to be in order to prove a pre-selected thesis.

The question asks candidates to examine how Frost "*introduces and develops a train of thought*"; the first bullet-prompt directs attention to "variations of sentence type and structure". So it would be helpful to note that Frost *begins* with scene-setting declarative utterances. In syntactical/grammatical terms, the first sentence is compound, the third and fourth simple, the second complex (but hardly complicated). The first and fourth begin with the first-person plural pronoun "we"; the second begins with the simple additive conjunction "and"; the third begins with the conjunction "but", which is also used to begin lines 15 and 20.

A number of lines are self-contained declarative sentences (1, 6, 18 and 19). Lines 6-7 and 11-13 are interrogatives, questions of the kind usually called rhetorical. Candidates almost invariably pointed this out, and went on to assert that they "involve the reader". It would be much more relevant to the question ("train of thought") to see how these interrogatives function within a series of declaratives, some of which are statements of opinion-that-look-like-fact about the external setting, and others of which are modified by the *future tense* (line 5) or *modality* (line 9 – "would"; line 14 – "can"; line 15 – "can't"; line 18 – "may"; lines 13 and 19 – "must") or the *conditional* (line 4 – "if it never again has leaves"; line 20 – "if it is destined never again to grow"). The *grammatical subject* shifts from (mostly) "we" in the first 6 lines to "you" in line 9 then back to "we" for lines 14-17 and 19. The interrogatives/rhetorical questions are, respectively, "*What comes over a man ...?*" and "*Why is his nature forever so hard to teach ...?*" In short, Frost signals throughout, often with the first word of a line, and always through the sentence structure, the direction his train of thought is taking.

Clearly, any answer which tackled the question in the kind of detail above would be very good (Band 1). Less assured candidates can, however, address technical features and achieve sound results by getting the basics right. And, in this respect, it was disappointing that AO1/AO3i skills of analysis were often seriously weakened by inaccuracy. "Sentences" and "lines" were used as perfectly inter-changeable terms; rhyme and rhythm were confused and wrongly characterised; syllables were mis-counted. While it is not necessarily easy to explain variations of metre, it should be seen as important to locate rhyme accurately and to identify stressed or unstressed syllables.

The final bullet-prompt, as usual, invited comparison (AO4) of the set poem with at least one other. Popular choices included "*The Most of It*", "*Two Look at Two*", "*Stopping by Woods*", "*The Wood-Pile*" and "*Mending Wall*". The better answers were those which took account of form as much as content. .



**Q 4 WENDY COPE: *Making Cocoa for Kingsley Amis***

The combination of humour and seriousness, which was the question-focus, is central to the selection of poems by Cope. Candidates had little trouble in finding elements of both in “*Tich Miller*” and other poems. There was obvious identification with the characters and situation: both were sometimes seen as stock or stereotypical. Interestingly, it was almost invariably assumed that Tich and Tubby were the victims of bullying, and that Cope was inviting sympathy for them and condemnation for their oppressors. Perhaps the second bullet prompt (“discuss ways in which emotions are suggested here”) encouraged such a view; perhaps contemporary teenagers are more educated and enlightened about the forms of bullying (and more inclined to see it where a more robust school population might have accepted it as part of growing up).

Candidates were confident in identifying significant details of diction, and imaginative in discussing how they suggested emotions (AO3/AO5). They responded to the impact of the single-line final stanza, and noticed how each line in the first stanza added incongruous (and potentially humorous) detail to the description of Tich. Enjambment between stanzas three and four was well-observed as mimicking the “flight of some unfortunate bird” and thus suggesting the girls’ desire to be somewhere else. Few candidates, however, understood the meanings of “lolloped” or “the lesser dud”.

In the AO4 dimension, fruitful comparison was made, in terms of surface humour and underlying seriousness, with “*Reading Scheme*”, “*Lonely Hearts*”. “*On Finding an Old Photograph*”, “*Rondeau Redouble*” and “*From June to December*”. Candidates who tried to use extracts from the *Strugnell* poems were less successful.

**Q 5 EMILY BRONTE: *Wuthering Heights***

Candidates engaged readily with the dynamics of conflict in the set passage and elsewhere in the novel. They were less secure in their ability to locate details of language used by Bronte to present that conflict. Where these details were successfully identified and quoted, it tended to be as a list of what many candidates loosely call “negative lexis” or “the semantic field of violence.” The concept of register (with diction, the first bullet-prompt) continues to cause some difficulty when candidates attempt to generalise, seeing Edgar’s as high (formal) and Heathcliff’s and Nelly’s as low. But focus on details of register also evoked some subtle (AO3i/AO5) reading when combined with the second bullet-prompt (correct social behaviour). Candidates also made some astute observations about paralinguistic features, such as Heathcliff’s ‘body language’ (he hangs his head, “somewhat cowed” by Catherine; he “measured the height and breadth of the speaker with an eye full of derision”).

AO4 work revealed the expected engagement with the novel’s emotional dimensions. There was some secure, and some ingenious, discussion of a range of aspects of conflict, verbal and physical. Once again, candidates were more comfortable writing about and analysing relationships than language; but features such as the slighting references to characters as animals or by the impersonal pronoun “it” (as in line 40 of the passage) were well-observed and explored.

**Q 6 MARY SHELLEY: *Frankenstein***

Candidates once again engaged powerfully with Shelley's presentation of the creature, As with last year, many were exceptionally well-prepared to discuss how sympathy is created at word-, sentence- and whole-text-levels. Unfortunately, the question did not exactly ask for this, but for an exploration of "*ways in which Shelley presents suffering*". And again, as last year, some answers were side-tracked into exploration of the monster-as-helpless-child with Frankenstein as neglectful-abandoning-parent. But even these less well-focused responses adhered to the prompting of the bullets to pay attention to sentence structure and imagery.

The opening exclamation and pair of (rhetorical) questions launched most candidates into sound (AO3i) attention to how Shelley presents the creature's emotions. Attention to suffering *per se* tended to be indirect/implicit in all but the strongest and best-focused answers. Similarly, reference to the whole novel in the AO4 dimension tended to comparison of the kinds and degrees of suffering presented, with many candidates commenting on how Victor's utterances reveal self-absorption. This allowed some more wayward answers to become re-focused on more linguistic issues.

Textual understanding was often a little short of secure, with many candidates making no distinction between what the creature says he "could with pleasure have (done)" and what he actually did ("destroying the objects that obstructed me"). However, the natural imagery ("cold stars shone in mockery") was mostly well understood and helpfully compared with the use of pathetic fallacy elsewhere in the novel.

**Q 7 RODDY DOYLE: *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha***

A sentence from the Report on the January 2005 session is worth repeating again: "Some candidates are still tending to write an answer to some Ur-Question about Paddy's maturation through the novel." Candidates find it very difficult not to do this; and, indeed, the issue of Paddy's maturity is not wholly irrelevant to the task. Nonetheless, the question as it stands is clear enough; and there is a wealth of material in the passage and elsewhere in the novel. A close reading of only lines 9-15 of the passage would have yielded enough examples to do full justice to the first bullet prompt ("types and structures of sentences").

The better answers were those where discussion focused closely on details of language, for example the compound sentence in lines 10-11. Here, the simple conjunction "but", which usually signals a reversal ("but I didn't believe in him ") which can undermine an initial declarative ("I put that in my letter to Santy"), actually works to achieve the opposite effect: it is the second clause whose perception is undermined in advance by the first. (A more sophisticated narrator might have structured the clauses in the opposite order, introduced by the subordinating conjunction "Although".) Less good answers noted the implicit and explicit contradictions in meaning but failed to explore how the style creates the meaning. AO5 (attitudes and values) awareness was often better than technical (AO3i) analysis, but on this paper the weighting on the latter is three times that on the former.

Work in the AO4 dimension showed the usual qualities of engagement with characters and situation, but again tended to selection of passages which were thought to exemplify a maturing (and more complex) narrative style developing in tandem with a maturing personality in the narrator. This is very difficult to demonstrate convincingly. Even in the final passage of the novel, often chosen in the hope of establishing a contrast with the less mature earlier Paddy, the sentences are predominantly simple. Candidates need to analyse what is on the page, and to avoid making generalisations (which they will be unable to support) about “simplistic” (*sic*) sentence structure and the tendency to *non sequitur*. In this respect, discussion of Doyle’s use of dialogue (the second bullet prompt) was more secure and accurate than attention to narrative style.

**Q 8 IAN McEWAN: *The Child in Time***

As with Doyle, candidates struggled to deal with the focus (“*language* McEwan uses to create a particular *setting*”) of this question. They were keen to see everything in terms of what it told them about the protagonist’s state of mind. This led to some unhelpful emphasis on Stephen’s childhood and on perceived themes (journeys, loss, time) at the expense of discussion of how McEwan’s style works. Some subtleties in the passage might have been difficult to tease out – the allusion to “representations of pastoral” in line 6, for example – but even candidates with only moderate AO1/AO3i skills could have made something of the adjectives “interminable” and “surreptitious” to describe, respectively, privets and geraniums in the first four lines.

Most candidates did understand that there was a contrast or a change of gear between the first two paragraphs and the third. Some reference to the (elsewhere much-abused) framework of semantic fields might have helped in discussing the language of orderliness in lines 20-32. Similarly, many answers picked up the emphasis on heat and its effects, and began to explore the contrast between the depressing dry reality and the dreams of “open seas” suggested by “porthole” and “bridge” (lines 12-14).

There were some interesting and fruitful choices (AO4) of comparative passages, including Stephen’s walk through the woods in search of Charles and his journeys to Julie’s cottage. Again there was some tendency to drift away from attention to McEwan’s methods of creating setting and towards thematic concerns of the novel and what might be going on in Stephen’s mind. None of this is irrelevant, and it might all be interesting and engaging; but it is not a direct response to what the question asked for.

### **2716/01 - Styles of Writing**

It is pleasing to see that the quality of task setting improves year on year. Most centres understand how to fulfil the requirements of the specification whilst providing interesting challenges for their students. The best work is often located within a specific genre such as political speeches or gothic horror: this then opens up issues of genre comparison for candidates when they come to write their commentaries. On the down side, one or two centres use genre models without candidates then making stylistic connections between their own work and the originals. Alan Bennett remains a popular choice, and study of the monologue is undoubtedly a good choice for the unit given the need to focus on different aspects of speech. It would be interesting to see centres exploring other exponents of this genre (Liz Lochhead springs to mind) or other less obvious aspects of created personality such as the character that comes over from a stand up comedian like Billy Connolly. One centre (to our great amusement) asked candidates to produce 'Creature Comfort' type monologues that were enormously successful.

There are now fewer amorphous short stories that fail to acknowledge the audience, purpose and context of the piece. When fiction is used there is often a useful link made in commentaries between the conventions of spontaneous spoken language and its transposition into fictional speech. Centres are plainly much more confident nowadays about the technical terms and understanding needed by candidates. The only real problem is the odd literary task posing as non-literary. Centres should note that fake interviews and transcripts are undoubtedly literary in inspiration and should be avoided.

Non-literary pieces range widely, but there are often unaddressed issues of audience. Some speeches could perfectly well be presented as written articles, and subsequent discussions in commentaries make little of the calculated use of spontaneous speech characteristics and pre-meditated rhetoric that most speechmakers use. News and magazine articles are often effective, as are reviews; but the candidates need to have a good sense of journalistic style and a very clear sense of audience if they are to be rewarded highly. As with the literary pieces, it is important that the candidates work with genre models.

In general, the balance between 'creative' writing and commentaries is good, though candidates at the bottom end continue to struggle when they reflect on their own writing. Centres are reminded that folders should not exceed 3000 words, and that they are often better when limited to the specification's instruction for 2000 words. In most cases commentaries are technically adept and gain candidates a lot of credit against AO1. It is particularly important that candidates don't get carried away with writing too much in their creative pieces, because it is only really in the commentaries that they can really hit home with AOs 4 and 6. Careful use of models gives candidates something to work on, particularly at the bottom end, and it undoubtedly encourages them to move from description to analysis in their commentaries.

Significant numbers of candidates could do themselves some good by taking seriously the injunction in the specification about Quality of Written Communication. It is often most significant when a candidate is on the cusp of the next band up. Fairly obviously at this level, it is reasonable to expect that candidates will write with attention to spelling, punctuation and grammar unless, of course, they are making a specific stylistic point; commentaries should, of course, be word perfect. And yet many pay little attention to this, despite the fact that it is also an obvious contributory factor in AO6, where 'accuracy' is particularly mentioned. AO1, too, talks about the need to communicate 'clearly.' In many cases, a simple proofreading job is all that is required. These are the easy marks to hold onto, particularly when a candidate is performing in the top three bands; and yet very often part of a moderator's decision to shade down a centre's marking can depend on an impression that such matters have not been properly considered.

*Report on the Units taken in June 2006*

In terms of assessment, most centres now consistently use the language of the mark band descriptors in summative comments, though at times it would be useful to have reference to specific Assessment Objectives marked on the work itself. The fuller the annotation, the easier it is for moderators to see the work through a centre's eyes. Specific reference to the Band Descriptors has the very particular effect of ensuring consistency across sets within a centre whilst at the same time making judgements more reliable.

Centres need to remember that even if they have work for 2718 that is going to the same moderator, they should treat the units as separate and send the work separately. A number of centres produce work in over-elaborate folders or sealed in envelopes. This is not necessary. A simple staple or treasury tag will do, as long as pages can be easily turned.

## 2717 – Language in Literature: Drama

### General Comments

The standards achieved were not markedly dissimilar from the June 2005 session. There were, rewardingly, some notably impressive individual performances at the very top end, although not quite as many lower Band 1 responses on this occasion. The best answers tended to be characterised by sharpness of focus, intelligent, well-informed argument, sophisticated expression and - the key discriminator at this level - by close and careful analysis of relevant linguistic detail and use of appropriate terminology. There was, overall, a slightly greater proportion of candidates whose responses were not adequate to the task. Whilst it was evident that in general terms candidates had prepared well, as reflected in their sensible management of materials selected for discussion, there was in some cases an over-reliance on 'taught', overly rehearsed annotation, which was not always sufficiently adapted to meet the precise terms of specific questions. Whilst in most technical respects written expression was at least as accurate as in previous sessions, high levels of awareness and understanding were not always expressed as felicitously as the quality of thought might have suggested.

### Comments on Individual Questions

- 1) (a) This question was chosen quite frequently and was handled fairly judiciously. There were some intelligent responses, which demonstrated a clear understanding of the importance of specific scenes in terms of the play's developing political/tragic action, and some interesting interpretations of the term 'battle'. Most candidates chose to focus on the contrasting behaviour and states of mind of Antony and Caesar, although a pleasing range of characters was also considered. The best answers examined specific linguistic choices, actions and dramatic effects. Weaker candidates tended to present basic narrative accounts of Antony's wrong-headedness, or superficial explanations of differences between Egypt and Rome.  
  
(b) Another quite popular choice, this question was answered reasonably well. There were some shrewd analyses of the states of mind and political/linguistic strategies deployed by both characters. There were, too, some helpful appreciations of perceived ambivalences on both sides; of broader cultural/political contexts and power structures and of respective personal and cultural values. Weaker answers failed to engage with the linguistic dimension of the question, and some candidates confused Octavius with Julius Caesar.
- 2) (a) Less frequently chosen, this question prompted answers that were variable in quality. The best responses demonstrated sensitivity to language use and constructed their arguments and analyses on a sensitive and informed appreciation of stylistic variety. Some candidates arrived at ready, overly assertive conclusions on the basis of fairly scant consideration of relevant textual evidence.  
  
(b) One of the less frequently chosen questions, this was generally answered well. The better candidates made intelligent use of selected passages in exploring both relevant linguistic detail and some of the wider thematic and dramatic implications. The majority of candidates chose to focus their attentions on the relationship between Rosalind and Orlando and the importance of roles and role-play in this regard. The wider implications of the environment of the Forest of Arden were sometimes considered - though usually quite perfunctorily. Weaker answers tended to be very restricted in scope, focusing almost exclusively and centripetally on the contents of Jaques's monologue.
- 3) (a) This question was chosen frequently, and was answered well on the whole; examiners commented on having read some 'delightful' responses. The majority of candidates

focused their attention appropriately on the uses and effects of particular linguistic choices and forms. Candidates were often able to engage in close careful analysis of selected passages and, through this, demonstrate their often impressive grasp of the importance and effects of sound and music, and of the play's wider thematic concerns: magic, power, sleep/dreams, truth/illusion and transformation, for example.

- (b) Also popular, responses to this question were a little more variable in quality. Stronger answers selected appropriate monologues and offered some close analysis of salient formal, structural and stylistic features. The best engaged - in quite independent and sensitive ways - with the specific focus and demands of the question. Their discussions often brought out valuable elements of comparison or contrast and encompassed a range of relevant relationships: between characters; between performers/characters and audience and between 'author' and audience. Weaker answers tended to be quite pedestrian or formulaic, and went little beyond paraphrasing the content of chosen passages.
- 4) (a) A moderately popular choice, this question prompted responses of mixed quality. Candidates generally explored relevant linguistic, psychological and philosophical territory in their chosen passages, especially when drawing on dialogic sections. Most candidates were comfortable anchoring their responses in discussions of character traits/propensities, or linking their observations to other relevant 'concerns': waiting; certainty/uncertainty; consequentiality/inconsequentiality, for example. Relatively few candidates explored the play's longer speeches.
- (b) This was slightly less frequently chosen but was answered quite well. Candidates tended to focus appropriately on the range of dialogic strategies and effects suggested by the question, and some successfully challenged/qualified the analogy offered. Weaker responses either missed suggested areas of focus or became unremittingly attached to its literal dimension!
- 5) (a) A less popular choice than 5(b), this was answered very well. Most candidates were comfortable with the requirement that they focus on aspects of presentation, and the best answers demonstrated a precise understanding of the range of presentational methods used. Candidates looked too, at different levels of characterisation and, importantly, at relevant changes/developments during the course of the play. There were some very knowledgeable responses, which demonstrated an impressive understanding of broader political implications. Few very weak answers were noted.
- (b) Very popular, this question prompted some excellent answers, with the majority of candidates being able to identify/discuss/question the emotional centres of the play, focussing on relevant linguistic and dramatic elements. Arguments advanced, moreover, were often probing, coherent and perceptive. The wider linguistic, philosophical and political possibilities were explored impressively in many cases.
- 6) (a) Frequently chosen, this question prompted some highly engaged, knowledgeable and well-developed responses. Candidates demonstrated a close knowledge of the text and produced a range of well-informed, interesting, appropriately illustrated arguments. Most candidates chose to focus on the psychological/dramatic logic offered in the quotation and the presentation of dilemmas experienced by Blanche/decisions 'actioned' by Stanley. The best answers explored these with a sharp focus on the language used by these and other characters. Weaker answers neglected to engage with the development over time/historical dimension implied by the quotation.
- (b) Less popular than 6(a), this question was not answered quite as convincingly in the main. Candidates made some attempt to engage with and further explore the precise terms of the question, mostly anchoring their responses in a discussion of

perceptions of Blanche's expressed dilemmas and Stanley's actions/reactions. Most candidates were able to examine relevant stylistic variation, according to these 'worlds' and - in the best answers - symbolic elements of the corresponding new world/old world antithesis. Candidates were also able to refer helpfully to the presentation of Mitch and other characters, and to the 'public' domain of the New Orleans environment. Weaker candidates approached the inner world/ private world dichotomy in overly simplistic terms.

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## 2718/01 - Issues in Language and Literature

Centres should keep AO5 as the central focus of their task setting and assessment as it is the dominant objective. It is therefore vital that candidates make constant reference to the creation and conveying of attitudes and values in the texts that they have studied. A number of centres fail to notice that the AO insists on candidates identifying and considering attitudes in both writing *and in speech*. They must not, therefore, simply ignore spoken language or simply refer to it as an aside. Assignments should be set up so that candidates must consider this aspect of communication in detail and at length. Candidates could do this quite straightforwardly by including passages of speech in their selection of texts or by making explicit comments on how the transcription of speech in written texts often mimics speech rules whilst at the same time eliminating the more tedious 'tics' of spontaneous language such as repetition and hedging.

Selection of texts for study was generally better this year. Many centres chose more demanding material but made sure that passages for discussion were suitably brief. Wisely, centres have advised candidates against using lyrics of pop songs as literary pieces. On the whole centres confined candidates to three brief-ish texts, and this ensured the degree of analysis, integration and continuing comparison that has sometimes been missing in the past. Just occasionally it was not easy to see exactly how a candidate's work actually related to the topics laid down in the specification: this can be a consequence of a centre not being sufficiently explicit when task setting or working with a candidate to define an area of study.

Centres have got much better at encouraging candidates to dive straight in without doing too much contextualization of the chosen passages. Similarly, the rather tedious opening justifications of methods used have all but disappeared. These are both good developments. In a desire to guide and help, one or two centres have decided that they should lay down precisely which passages are to be studied. Whilst not outside the rules, this does lead to a degree of sameness about the folders and something of a feeling that judgements made may reflect teacher input rather than candidate understanding.

Many candidates could usefully be reminded to do a proofreading job on their folder in order to fulfil the injunction in AO1 to 'communicate clearly' and also the specification's instructions about candidate's Quality of Written Communication. Too often at the very top end of the mark scale, it is this that lets a candidate down.

Most centres did an excellent job of annotating the work with judicious reference to the Assessment Objectives. Most cover sheets paid close attention to the Band Descriptors, and this has the advantage that a moderator is therefore able to see instantly why judgements have been made. In turn, this makes it harder to disagree with a centre's overall judgement, even if individual candidates are judged to have been under or over marked.

Centres need to remember that even if they have work for 2716 that is going to the same moderator, they should treat the units as separate and send the work separately. A number of centres produce work in over-elaborate folders or sealed in envelopes. This is not necessary. A simple staple or treasury tag will do, as long as pages can be easily turned.

## **2719 - Experience to Words - June 2006**

### **General Comments**

Most candidates responded appropriately to the questions. There was, on the whole, a competent level of engagement and, at best, sustained and perceptive understanding and comment. There was, perhaps, the impression that candidates were well-grounded in responding to the first question but not always as confident in addressing the directed writing task, especially on ensuring they commented on the original extract. Terminology was certainly in evidence but some markers felt that on occasions it seemed rehearsed and was used as a means to impress rather than as an effective form for comment. When it was employed with a focus on effects, it produced many informed insights. A further issue that emerged was a sense that at this level candidates should be able to use terms like 'verb', 'adverb', 'noun' and 'adjective' correctly: quite a number of responses were rather careless in this aspect.

Time management was sound and rubric infringement was limited - although some candidates did not always offer an opposing view to Ackroyd's in the second question.

### **Comments on individual questions**

#### **Q1**

Most candidates explored the poem by Blake with a good degree of focused enthusiasm. While some answers argued that the poem was written in blank verse and paragraphs, there was a strong sense of its form, its use of repetition and imagery; some candidates offered thoughtful explorations of its context and purpose, especially the role of royalty and religion at the time. The more effective answers made direct comparisons between the texts A and B, focusing on attitude towards community and children and comparing the contexts of time and situation. They noted the speaker's changing tone in the transcription and her sense of loss. Some candidates, though, might free more time up if they spent a little less space commenting on rather obvious features such as fillers and pauses. Markers noted that references to a third text were sometimes a bit tenuous or laboured: some answers spent too long on this third text at the expense of dealing with the set extracts. On the whole, there were many competent and proficient responses to this question and many secured clear and comparative material.

#### **Q2**

The responses to this question, on the whole, varied in performance. Candidates are advised to explore and analyse the linguistic and literary features of the extract first and then to write their creative pieces in the light of that analysis so that their commentaries are sketched out in advance because of the pre-planning. There were some lively and thoughtful directed writing responses, enlivened by a strong contrast to the original piece. Some, however, were too easily satisfied by 'borrowing' words and phrases from the original in quite solid amounts. While this can be justified in small amounts in order to create a clear difference and a point of note in the accompanying commentary, an excessive use of this approach stifles creativity, limiting insights that can be made. Some candidates were also happy to offer the same view as Ackroyd, a self-limiting approach. The commentaries varied in depth and insight: quite a few failed to engage with any aspects of the original at all. Matters of tone and use of descriptive language were avoided. Candidates can not in the time allowed be expected to comment on every feature of the extract but the intention is that there is plenty of material available for some analysis.

**Advanced GCE English language & Literature 3829 / 7829**

**June 2006 Assessment Series**

**Unit Threshold Marks**

Unit		Maximum Mark	a	b	c	d	e	u
2714	Raw	60	47	41	36	31	26	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2715	Raw	60	41	36	31	26	22	0
	UMS	120	96	84	72	60	48	0
2716	Raw	60	49	43	38	33	28	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2717	Raw	60	45	40	35	31	27	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2718	Raw	60	51	45	39	33	28	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2719	Raw	60	42	37	33	29	25	0
	UMS	120	96	84	72	60	48	0

**Specification Aggregation Results**

Overall threshold marks in UMS (i.e. after conversion of raw marks to uniform marks)

	Maximum Mark	A	B	C	D	E	U
<b>3829</b>	300	240	210	180	150	120	0
<b>7829</b>	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
<b>3829</b>	15.11	38.11	63.86	82.49	94.94	100	1254
<b>7829</b>	13.95	42.34	73.24	93.72	99.62	100	1004

For a description of how UMS marks are calculated see;  
[www.ocr.org.uk/OCR/WebSite/docroot/understand/ums.jsp](http://www.ocr.org.uk/OCR/WebSite/docroot/understand/ums.jsp)

Statistics are correct at the time of publication



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