

English Language & Literature

Advanced GCE A2 7829

Advanced Subsidiary GCE AS 3829

Report on the Units

June 2007

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Chief Examiner's Report – GCE English Language and Literature 3829/7829

Candidates produced some thoughtful and informed work across the components: familiarity with key linguistic and literary features enabled the majority of candidates to produce responses which increasingly explored writers' purposes and the effects they created.

Most candidates engaged with unseen material confidently and also demonstrated that they could draw on their knowledge of other texts to produce secure comparative analyses.

Occasionally some responses tended to rely a little too heavily on feature spotting and on approaches which seemed slightly inflexible.

In terms of directed writing, some candidates may fare better if their accompanying commentaries focus on the choices of vocabulary in both the set extract and the re-creative responses: at times answers seem to rely on spotting rhetorical features rather than exploring choices of words and phrases.

Overall, candidates managed their time efficiently and there were few rubric infringements.

UNIT 2714 – Linking Language and Literature (written paper)

General Comments

Candidates responded to the question paper effectively. The passages set this year encouraged a wide range of literary and linguistic comments, and responses showed candidates getting to grips with the texts, with very few exceptions. There are still occasional candidates who write a prepared generic answer about speech and writing, referring to the texts only in passing. However, on the whole there were many secure and focused responses to the material with candidates working well at exploring comparative literary and linguistic features. On the whole, time was managed effectively and there were few rubric infringements.

Comments on Individual Questions

The best answers were perceptive in commenting on the characters, and enjoyed the contrasts and contradictions in their words and attitudes. They explored the literary extract sensitively, noting the differences between the way the characters spoke and addressed each other and commented on issues of class, status and topic management.

The role of the narrator and the mediating effect it had was also explored skilfully. The development of the passage and its apparent changes in mood were also analysed perceptively. Less secure answers seemed to be less confident in dealing with literary speech and tended to regard it as being the same as spontaneous speech, applying terminology that might be more suitable for comments on transcriptions to the first passage.

In terms of the second passage, the most effective answers were those which explored AO5 in particular, sensing the possible differences in background, values and attitudes and even education between Bonnie and Dorinda; they explored the power struggle for authority between the two speakers very well indeed and noted minute changes in nuance - for example where Bonnie seems to lose control as she is forced to use a filler late in the extract - and the effects these had on the relationship. However, only a few candidates recognised the possible effects of being on "reality television" on the language used by the women in Passage B. Similarly, many seemed not to have read the end of Passage A and ignored the digression about the stereo altogether.

Although most candidates do engage helpfully with the transcription, there is still a tendency in some to focus too much on non fluency features and other surface features of speech and writing (such as paragraphing and graphology). Many candidates analyse texts helpfully to begin with, then resort in the latter half of their answer to more general speech-writing discussion, which tends to lack the focus on the text of their earlier comments. Formal terms for the analysis of rhetoric were seldom usefully used, nor the names of theorists. However, there is a strong sense that candidates are well-taught for this paper and are on the whole well-versed in how to approach this kind of material.

UNIT 2715 – Language in Literature: Poetry and Prose (written paper)

General Comments

As this series of Units nears the end of its life, it seems sensible in considering this year's paper to draw together some of the threads which have run through previous PE Reports for 2715. Such a summary should be of use to Centres considering the new specifications as well as to those working on the existing series.

It will have been noticed that this year's mark-schemes are a little different in format and in the balance of their content, the separate Notes on Task being question-specific and thus more detailed in terms of suggested/indicative content, while the Band Descriptors apply equally to all questions and thus appear only once, at the beginning of the mark-scheme document. The attention of Centres is drawn to these Notes on Task as providing some possible approaches. They are not prescriptive, but they may be especially helpful to new Centres who are unclear about the nature of expectations in a combined Language and Literature paper. Seen in isolation from candidates' work, the mark-scheme content may seem excessively demanding or over-ambitious: it needs to be remembered that the mark-scheme is prepared for examiners and so is addressing experienced professionals, who will apply their considerable expertise to appropriate assessment.

The major weakness in responses to this summer's paper – and thus the sharpest discriminator for assessment – seems to have been the ability of candidates to distinguish significant from less significant textual detail. It might be tempting to answer the AO3i/AO5 elements of a question by simply trawling the set passage for what seem to be interesting features of language. However, the demands of the question need to be borne in mind; and indeed the bullet prompts exist to steer candidates into more fruitful rather than more barren territory.

Diction, lexis, register and sentence structure all regularly appear in the prompts for the very good reason that they create 'style', and the focus of this paper (according to the Specification) is how style creates meaning. Candidates must be able to select a few genuinely significant examples of an author's language choices which will form the basis of a relevant response to the question. There were signs this year that the linguistic element of the required 'combined approach' was being interpreted too narrowly and in some cases it boiled down to nothing more than identifying features. Many candidates seem unable to use the insights about spoken language gained from their study of Unit 2714 to inform their responses in 2715. Those candidates who do apply such knowledge invariably do well.

Relatively more candidates this year appeared to be struggling to express a simple, basic textual understanding. This was a feature of performance several years ago, and seemed to have become less of a problem; but this time most examiners reported significant numbers of candidates whose grasp of the text was insecure and who additionally were unable to make simple points clearly. It has been said before that this is essentially a simple paper with straightforward questions which candidates can make much harder for themselves by not doing what they are asked. Many less able candidates seem to have been over-reliant on prepared material which was at best only indirectly relevant to the question and which therefore they struggled to apply in an organised way (AO1).

Some candidates were also struggling to structure a simple, logical argument. Examiners reported great difficulty in following the line of argument (AO1) in some answers. Although candidates will have been used to pursuing some organised method in examinations at Key Stages 3 and 4 (for example the injunction to provide Point – Example – Explanation) their AS-level answers were often difficult to follow. For example, examiners were having to make educated guesses as to what a candidate might be referring to in beginning a sentence with “This technique is also used ... “when no technique had been previously explained and the quotation, if one was provided, did not make clear what technique was intended. It may be that this is an inherent difficulty with an open-text exam: candidates are inclined to think that a point which is clear in their annotated text will be equally clear when they reproduce it in an essay answer. It will be interesting to see whether closed-text papers in the new specification encourage a clearer focus on AO1 skills.

Allocation of time between the two questions was also more of a problem this year than it had been for several years. This is a shortcoming of examination technique, and can usually be traced to inadequate textual knowledge and/or an unhelpful choice of approach.

Comments on Individual Questions

1 CHAUCER: *The Nun’s Priest’s Tale*

The question invited response to “the features of language typical of a character trying to argue persuasively” in the set passage and elsewhere in the *Tale* and directed candidates (in the first bullet prompt) to “look closely at ways in which the argument is structured”. Candidates were secure in placing the passage near the end of Chauntecleer’s series of *exempla*, but rather less secure (despite line 30) in locating details of language which suggested it was the end. As the mark-scheme suggested, the better answers were characterised by how well they made use of their knowledge of literary features such as the biblical and classical examples cited by Chauntecleer. Less developed answers tended to explain the substance of these references – or engaged in lengthy discussion of their significance in relation to religious beliefs of the time – rather than exploring their contribution to the force of the argument.

2 CHAUCER: *The Miller’s Tale*

The question-focus was ‘deception’. Candidates were generally able to apply themselves to this focus in the AO3i/AO5 dimensions, but often chose (AO4) comparative passages which were at best tangentially relevant. Discussion of the second prompt (manipulation) was often better than response to the more technical aspects of the first prompt. Those candidates who began by explaining exactly how the negative interrogative of the first three lines worked on John did rather better than those who provided lengthy discussion of what John might have known of the Mystery Play version of the story of Noah.

3 ROBERT FROST: *Selected Poems*

The question-focus (the significance of an everyday experience) was welcomed by almost all candidates in their opening paragraphs as characteristic of Frost and therefore easy to illustrate from an array of other poems. In the event, answers tended to concentrate on a close reading of various ‘poetic’ features of the set poem “*The Tuft of Flowers*” (AO3i/AO5) and a comparison/contrast (AO4) with just one other, most often “*Mowing*”.

The factual connection (the activity of mowing) was obvious and apparently un-problematic. However, many candidates revealed unfamiliarity with rural life in assuming that Frost was mowing (which he is not) his lawn (!) while seated on a motorised mower (line 25 – the machine which loved the flowers). On the one hand, this misunderstanding may be understandable in sixth form students with little exposure to farm life. On the other hand (on a prepared A level

text), when a mistaken understanding of the basic situation becomes the foundation of an entire reading of form and content, the error is more serious.

Following an increasing tendency over the last few years to read all aspects of poetic form as automatically representative of something, candidates readily saw the couplet form as a representation of the to-and-fro striped pattern created on a sports field or lawn by the action of the motor mower. Taking to an extreme, this tendency can lead to treating all poems as concrete poetry; "*Mending Wall*" is particularly tempting. Similarly, but less naively, the butterfly was seen as emblematic of Frost's ("tremulous") thoughts. There was a marked reluctance to engage, as the first bullet-prompt invited, with the interaction of sentence structure and the couplet form.

There were also careful, proficient readings of the poem in the context of Frost's poetry as a whole, especially by those who traced evidence of the 'everyday'. However, as has sometimes been the case previously with Frost, some candidates were challenged beyond the limits of their AO1/AO3i capabilities by the poem and 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. Candidates were more comfortable with ideas of Frost's attitudes to work and nature than with his "brotherly speech / With one whose thought I had not hoped to reach."

4 WENDY COPE: *Making Cocoa for Kingsley Amis*

A number of candidates made this question more difficult than necessary by not reading it carefully enough. Many commented on how the poem resembled a children's nursery rhyme, and compared it unhelpfully with the Wordsworth and Eliot pastiches in the collection. There were some interesting readings of the situation, but little evidence of understanding of how Cope's methods made the poem work. It seemed there was limited understanding of what a reading scheme might be, and consequent difficulty in 'placing' the voice of the text.

Bearing in mind how sexualised popular culture is, candidates have been surprisingly reluctant to explain the sexual innuendo in Cope and Chaucer. They did, however, understand that "bun" and "fun" had connotations beyond the culinary and the playful, and better answers included a subtler appreciation of how Cope plays with the stereotypes of the milkman and the cosy nuclear family. It may be that these and other cultural references in Cope are now sufficiently dated to require more explanation to the average student.

5 EMILY BRONTE: *Wuthering Heights*

Candidates engaged readily with the comparatively undemanding notions of Nelly as narrator in the set passage and elsewhere in the novel. They were less secure in their ability to interpret details of language used by Bronte to present Nelly's viewpoint, being inclined to over-state Nelly's 'grown-up' attitude here and to see it as distress at Isabella's death or anger/resentment at Cathy. The contrast between Nelly's and Cathy's behaviour and implied attitudes in the first 25 lines was soundly-enough understood in general terms; but although this was one question in which candidates were usually able to distinguish the most significant details of language, the judgements on attitudes were often questionable. Many candidates were making basic errors of identification of characters, seeing the reference to "my master's return" as meaning Heathcliff, confusing the first and second generation Catherines and making frequent errors of attribution in AO4 comparative passages.

6 MARY SHELLEY: *Frankenstein*

AO4 choices were a notable weakness in answering this question, which was about Victor's thoughts and feelings. Many tried to compare passages in which the Creature's thoughts were presented. However, most candidates engaged sensitively with Shelley's presentation of Victor's train of thought. Most commented on how Victor is considering possibilities; the better answers saw how modality of verbs and the structure of sentences conveyed these thoughts.

7 RODDY DOYLE: *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha*

A sentence from the Report on the January 2005 session is worth repeating for a fourth time: "*Some candidates are still tending to write an answer to some Ur-Question about Paddy's maturation through the novel.*" Some candidates – and by no means only the least able – find it very difficult not to do this; and ideas of Paddy's maturity are never wholly irrelevant to the task. However, answers which depend on generalisations about the *bildungsroman* and the frequency of digression and *non sequitur* inevitably limit themselves, and are at constant risk of misreading what Doyle wrote.

The question as it stands is clear enough, with an overall focus on the presentation of strong emotion, and an invitation in the first bullet-prompt to look closely at the effects of sentence structure. This latter is one of the features candidates routinely have most difficulty with, and so it proved here. A few made impressive attempts to theorise that Doyle generally used short sentences for emotional revelation and longer sentences for factual recount, adducing some good (AO4) evidence to support that theory. But it doesn't quite work like that in the set passage; and, in any case, the question as set is easier.

The best answers read what was in front of them and explored how emotion was being conveyed by Doyle's choices of language. Quite a number of candidates sensed the difficulty Paddy was having in expressing his emotion, and the better ones avoided discussing his level of maturation, concentrating instead on how (for example) the repetitions, qualifications, elaborations and hesitations of the first seven lines combine to imply what is never directly stated. There were some sensitive readings of the Sunday afternoon section of the passage. A notable strength of many answers was the AO4 comparison, often another passage in which Paddy observes (or rather overhears) his parents fighting.

8 IAN McEWAN: *The Child in Time*

Considering how prone candidates are to locate (or to believe they have identified) particular semantic or lexical fields, they were surprisingly disinclined to do so in the set passage. However, many answers revealed engagement with Stephen's situation and an ability to make accurate inferences about Stephen's thought-processes from their reading of the diction and imagery. The birthday-present passage was the most common, and generally the most successful, AO4 choice.

UNIT 2716 – Styles of Writing (coursework)

General Comments

For most centres, task setting is almost faultless. Candidates are given a wide brief, and then they manage to write in a range of genres, with literary, non-literary and speech represented. However, there are one or two centres where blurring of task makes for confusion. If a candidate submits, for example, a monologue and then an extract from the diary of a sports person, the second is plainly fictionalised and therefore does not count as a non-literary piece. Similarly, candidates who invent a piece of transcript fall into the same category.

The best tasks work within the particular constraints of an established genre: emulation helps to frame both candidates' writing and their commentaries. Candidates plainly study a variety of material and are then able to imitate or innovate with these sources clearly in mind. Alan Bennett's monologues remain a popular choice for the unit, in part because they so clearly pretend to be what they are patently not: unpremeditated spontaneous speech. Thankfully, there are fewer and fewer short stories that fail to recognise that any piece of writing should acknowledge audience, purpose and context. Nonetheless, there is often useful focus on crafted speech which is then picked up in commentaries.

The balance between writing and commentary is usually good, but there are still a few candidates who plainly find themselves squeezed by time into adding commentaries as a brief afterthought and thus fail to reflect properly on what they have attempted in their work. One or two centres are not rigorous enough about the word limit (3000 words at the very most) and this can act against candidates' best interests.

The best commentaries are technically adept and made good use of genre models as a means of measuring what has been achieved. The level of competence with AO1 has improved immensely in the last couple of years, particularly in relation to appropriate language for talking about spoken language. Comparative commentaries are often rather weak unless the two other pieces are clearly linked thematically. The best approach seems to be to ask candidates to stand back from their own work and write about it as though they are seeing it for the first time through an educated reader's eyes.

Most centres make good use of the mark band descriptors as a means of formulating their cover sheets assessments. There are still, however, moments where annotation in the margin would be welcome: it would help the moderators to see precisely where particular qualities were exhibited.

Large centres had carried out an internal moderation procedure with considerable care, and there was little concern from the moderation team about standards across teaching sets. However, there is a slight tendency towards meanness towards candidates in the lower bands. At the other end, an increasing number of centres are pushing at the edge of tolerance for the unit and have been warned that they need to pull in their understandable generosity in Band 1 and the top of Band 2

UNIT 2717 – Language in Literature: Drama (written paper)

General Comments

The standards achieved were very similar to those of the June 2006 session. More candidates achieved marks at the very top end; conversely, whilst increasing numbers of candidates manage to produce at least an adequate performance at the lower end, a few more were seriously adrift on this occasion. There were some exceptionally well-organised and intelligent responses this session: ideas were fresh and cogent argument was supported with careful analysis of relevant linguistic detail. Some candidates still produced what might be regarded as straightforward 'literary' responses, integrating relevant quotations into their arguments but neglecting to examine specific lexical, grammatical semantic and phonological elements more fully. Other candidates, adept at identifying specific features, did not discuss their effects and implications to any significant extent. The quality of written expression was comparable to that of previous sessions.

Comments on Individual Questions

1 SHAKESPEARE: *Antony and Cleopatra*

- (a) This question was chosen frequently and was often handled with sensitivity and personal engagement. There were some rewarding and diverse approaches to the dimension of 'presentation', with the perspectives of 'minor' characters (e.g. Eros and Charmian) being given fruitful consideration in this regard. Most candidates chose to focus on the actions and states of mind of Antony and Cleopatra, although some - disappointingly - did not foreground their use of language. The best answers examined specific linguistic choices and poetic and dramatic effects. Weaker candidates tended to overstate what they construed to be the 'comical' (rather than bathetic) elements of Antony's death.
- (b) Less popular, this question was answered reasonably well. There were some incisive commentaries on appositely chosen passages which focused on political/linguistic strategies deployed by chosen characters. There were some perceptive explorations of perceived complexities of intention and outcome and sensitised acknowledgements of the importance of cultural/political/gender factors. Weaker answers tended merely to offer narrative/biographical accounts of the central characters' decision-making. The best answers were excellent, focusing on relevant linguistic subtleties.

2 SHAKESPEARE: *As You Like It*

- (a) One of the less frequently chosen questions, this did, nevertheless, prompt responses that were securely grounded in confident, knowledgeable arguments. The best answers demonstrated sensitivity the ways in which ideological positions, attitudes and values are couched in specific linguistic and dramatic forms. The best answers were able to synthesise and integrate a range of relevant textual details in this connection. Weaker responses offered somewhat generalised critiques of 'pastoral' or 'Arcadian' models of contentment or simplistic judgements about lifestyle, considering relevant textual evidence fairly cursorily.
- (b) One of the less frequently chosen questions, this was answered variably. The better candidates made focused use of selected passages in examining both the role and significance of selected characters, basing their discussions on shrewdly sensitised readings of the court/country dichotomy and a range of attendant ambivalences/ironies. The wider implications of form, genre and pastoral/courtly conventions were also given appropriate consideration in the best answers. Weaker answers tended to offer superficial sketches of character or type.

3 SHAKESPEARE: *The Tempest*

- (a) This question was very popular, and was answered well on the whole. Most candidates chose to centre their answers on the perceived ways of seeing (often antithetical) of specific characters. This often located 'the island' as the central object of perception and was most successfully accomplished when the focus was on ways in which aesthetic, cultural and moral predispositions and changing outlooks are embodied in a range of linguistic and dramatic forms. Weaker answers tended to limit themselves to simplistic consideration of perceptual dichotomies (e.g. Prospero's viewpoint versus Caliban's); the best answers began to explore the question's wider (sometimes quite abstract) philosophical and thematic implications: the nature of magic, redemption and Shakespearean 'Romance' for example.
- (b) Also very popular, this question was generally answered well. Stronger answers foregrounded/exploited the semantic possibilities of both 'unwilling' and 'servants' in the prompt quotation, and offered some very rewarding analysis of the stylistic features of both Ariel's and Caliban's' use of language. The best elucidated differences in background and cultural heritage; mythological lineage; rational/instinctual/emotional predispositions. Weaker answers tended focus almost exclusively on the nature and use of *Prospero's* authority and power.

BECKETT: *Waiting for Godot*

- (a) One of the less frequently chosen questions, this was answered slightly disappointingly. Candidates selected relevant textual materials but - a little surprisingly - tended to find themselves on difficult conceptual terrain. Better answers focused (in quite a disciplined fashion) on particular talking points and the discourse/conversational patterns of uncertain recollection (along with the efforts of Vladimir and Estragon to arrive at a working 'agreement'). Few candidates were comfortable developing their responses through discussion of relevant themes/concerns: waiting, habit and the passing of time; existential doubt/disorientation; the construction of meaning; the nature of consciousness; physical and psychological deterioration for example.
- (b) Though not a popular choice, this question was answered quite well. Candidates tended to focus successfully on the range of linguistic details and dramatic effects suggested by the question, and some engaged very thoughtfully and incisively with aspects of formality and register. Better answers considered issues of companionship and relationships within the play. The best answers examined disjunctive effects and their implications: irony; flouting of cooperative and politeness principles; use of insults; role-play. There were few very weak responses to this question.

FRIEL: *Translations*

- (a) A very popular choice, this question was answered very well. Most candidates were comfortable with the requirements of the question if they were able to adduce appropriate textual materials. The best answers demonstrated a penetrating understanding both of the nature of humour and its local/wider uses and effects. Hugh, Doalty, Jimmy Jack and the relationship between Yolland and Maire all provided fruitful points of focus. There were some very sophisticated responses, which demonstrated an impressive understanding both of the psycho-semantic content and the verbal/dramatic mechanics of humour. The darker, more sinister resonances were also explored by a good number of candidates. Relatively few very weak answers were noted; these occurred when candidates were not in possession of a sufficient knowledge base.

- (b) Again, very popular, this question prompted some excellent answers, with most candidates being able to identify ready centres of personal/emotional, cultural and political reaction and to focus on relevant linguistic and dramatic aspects of presentation. Arguments advanced were often tightly coherent and appropriately developed. Weaker answers tended to demonstrate unevenness or imbalance, with one character only receiving almost undivided attention.

WILLIAMS: *A Streetcar Named Desire*

- 6a Moderately popular, this question prompted some competent and confident responses. Candidates demonstrated some awareness of the texture and development of the play and of relevant (American) contexts. They produced an array of well-informed, knowledgeable and appropriately illustrated arguments. The best answers explored aspects of characterisation and showed a clear awareness of the play's developing action. Selected characters' relationships with Blanche, Stella, Eunice, New Orleans, Poker, work, along with the plays' central gender issues were also fruitfully the points of linguistic/dramatic focus. Weaker answers tended to offer under-developed portraits of chosen characters and faint adumbrations of their wider significance.
- 6b Very popular, this question prompted some highly engaged, insightful and sensitive responses. Many candidates made some attempt to explore a *range* of presentations and also managed to demonstrate some critical depth in their answers. Successful answers tended to be wide-ranging in their interpretations, examining the experiences of a number of characters at various levels. There were, however, some excellent in-depth psychoanalytical studies of Blanche's language and actions, which were much narrower in scope. The best answers tended to make use of the 'triggers' of the prompt quotation, focusing on the presentation of Stella's relationship with Stanley and its wider implications. Candidates were also able to refer helpfully to the presentation of Mitch and other characters; to the cultural/economic context of the New Orleans environment and to the New America/Old America dynamic. Weaker candidates tended not to be alert to the potential richness of the topic and offered superficial or one-dimensional summaries of a narrow range of aspirations.

2718 – Issues in Language and Literature (coursework)

General Comments

The centre cohort for this unit is now very stable, and this means that centres have built up a great deal of practical experience in both the selection of texts and the framing of questions. Occasionally, centres play safe and insist on all candidates doing exactly the same task and responding to the same questions: this is not outside the rules, but it does tend to lead to a feeling of conformity to the letter rather than to the spirit of the unit since it does not allow candidates to explore their own interests or define their own topics for discussion. It can also lead to a squeezing of the marks: the best candidates find it hard to say something exceptional and individual; those at the bottom end at least have something to say that pushes them into band four or five. Where centres did encourage individual choice, the range of topics chosen was diverse and interesting.

Just occasionally, a candidate failed to recognize that the topic areas listed in the specification are requirements, not recommendations, and in these instances it was not easy to see how the candidate could link their eventual product with the over-arching themes. An area of weakness can lie in the setting of questions: candidates should be very clear about the exact task they are embarking upon and broad, very general, titles tend to lead to a lack of focus on language matters. Similarly, essays that range widely over lengthy texts tend to lack specificity. Candidates are usually at their best when the material they consider is little more than 3-5000 words: centres perhaps need reminding that extracts from texts are perfectly acceptable.

Engagement with language is often very good, and candidates are usually confident about terminology. However, too many candidates still tend to write three distinct pieces, one on each text, and then link them towards the end. The best candidates keep all three in view throughout so that the specification requirement for linking, comparison and contrast is clearly in view at all times. It is absolutely crucial that candidates demonstrate an ability to argue through an issue with close, detailed reference to all their texts if they are to move into the Band 1 and 2 areas. Some centres could do more to encourage their candidates to give their work a final proof read. All too often candidates for whom the highest marks are claimed have been over-marked because the quality of written communication has not been taken fully into account. At the highest levels, the work should be faultlessly presented.

One or two centres (or their candidates) slipped up with specification requirements. There has to be a language text, a literature text and some consideration of spoken language in order to fulfil the rubric. Centres that allow candidates to spread themselves widely over many texts often find that the eventual outcome remains rather superficial.

Marking was generally really detailed, and in some cases exceptional, with many centres using the AOs purposefully, both as a formative guide to their students and for summative purposes. A front cover sheet that links the tasks to the specific AOs – as used by a few centres – was a really good idea that really focused teacher attention onto the particular strengths of a student's work.

In some centres with large numbers of teaching groups there were slight concerns about consistency. It is vital that the moderator should be able to see evidence of an internal moderation process having taken place. Crucially, centres need to remember that a moderator takes only a sample, and therefore it is vital that the conclusion reached by a moderator should be exactly the same no matter how the candidate group is 'sliced'. Centres also need to be aware that some of them are pushing at the boundaries of tolerance in assessing the unit. A warning about this on the feedback sheet should be taken seriously and acted upon in future sessions if a scaling is to be avoided. At the very bottom end we were aware that there are one or two candidates (possibly the ones who handed in the work at the last moment) whose work had been rather harshly judged. Teacher irritation, though justified on occasion, is not a criterion

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for judgement, and teachers need to be careful to pitch marks correctly in order not to over-penalise, which could have a knock on effect in relation to UMS and overall aggregation.

As always, the moderation team was impressed by both the work – much of which was a sheer pleasure to read – and the obvious effort that had gone into assessment in order to ensure that it was properly carried out in relation to the published standard. This makes our job much easier, so for that, we thank you.

2719 - Experience into Words (written paper)

General Comments

There was a good range of abilities and the paper offered a secure differentiation between candidates. The different AOs were addressed securely for the most part and there were few rubric infringements. Some candidates seemed a little less than familiar with poetic formats and tended to see only prose, referring to paragraphs, for example, rather than stanzas. There was some highly effective comparative analysis with candidates using appropriate literary and linguistic terminology maturely and perceptively. At the lower end of the range, some candidates still seem to rely on a rather feature-spotting approach without quite turning their knowledge around to suit the context of the material. The second question produced some lively and imaginative directed writing, with some relishing the opportunity to take on the role of the writer. Commentaries were competent and proficient but quite a number relied on commenting on rather mechanical features such as the use of repetition, lists of three and so on: they did not always take the opportunity to comment on diction and imagery and this is perhaps an area they could work on.

Comments on Individual Questions

- 1 Candidates on the whole responded well to the Hardy poem. They sensed the mood of the narrator and commented well on the repeated use of questions, the use of specific examples of alliteration, choices of imagery [such as the comparison of Emma to a swan] and the contrasts evoked between past and present. A number of candidates argued that the narrator seemed to come to terms with his situation at the close, perhaps not quite intuiting the sense that he is still alive and still conscious of his actions in the final line: he is far from being a 'dead' man and very much in limbo still, it seems. Some candidates seemed unsure of how to address the material and slightly insecure about commenting on poetry in terms that are apposite for dealing with such material. Such answers tended to avoid focusing on the poem and spent most of the essay producing material about their chosen third monologue. The transcription was handled well for the most part. Candidates found the speaker's attitudes and values quite provocative for this day and age and analysed her use of language effectively, noting, for example, the ways in which she seemed to see her husband as some 'divine' being, a figure as powerful as a 'prime minister'. Some explored the possible psychological reasons for her views and wondered whether she was repressed by her partner or whether her views were formed independently of him.
- 2a The directed writing task was carried out effectively by the majority of candidates. There were some strong but controlled replies which turned the material from the original extract back against the writer, not only in terms of content but in terms of tone and attitude. Some embellished the material with anecdotes of his private self and offered revelations about what he was really like in his own marriage: this ranged from him being a passive figure who offered no resistance to anything his partner said or did to a man who, in spite of the bluff and seemingly jovial nature of his sales pitch, was in fact a drunken and violent bully. Less secure answers tended to lose a degree of control, tending to rant rather than keep a focus on purpose and audience.

- 2b** Effective commentaries dealt with the choices of vocabulary and imagery of the original extract - such as the focus on references to war and fighting; they also explored the haranguing tone and upbeat sales pitch of the material. At the same time they explained how and why they had adapted or opposed such choices of language and tone in their own creative pieces. Less effective commentaries tended to be rather vague and distant, not dealing with both passages equally; they tended to rely on some rather obvious features such as the use of personal pronouns and repetition. Candidates are advised to spend little time on matters of graphology and layout: it is more effective to focus on register and tone and how these are shaped by syntax, imagery and lexis.

**Advanced GCE (Subject) (Aggregation Code(s))
June 2007 Assessment Series**

Unit Threshold Marks

Unit		Maximum Mark	a	b	c	d	e	u
2714	Raw	60	44	39	34	29	24	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2715	Raw	60	42	37	32	27	23	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	44	39	35	31	27	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
3829	300	240	210	180	150	120	0
7829	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
3829	13.8	35.9	62.5	83.3	95.4	100	1176
7829	17.2	45.3	74.2	92.2	98.6	100	1089

For a description of how UMS marks are calculated see;
http://www.ocr.org.uk/exam_system/understand_ums.html

Statistics are correct at the time of publication.

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