GCE

English Language & Literature

Report on the Units

June 2008

CONTENTS

Advanced GCE English Language and Literature - 7829

Advanced Subsidiary GCE English Language and Literature - 3829

REPORT ON THE UNITS

Chief Examiner's Report - GCE English Language & Literature 3829/7829

Principal Examiners reported that there was a solid sense of differentiation across all units. Coursework elements continued to produce some thoughtful and reflective work. Other modules saw candidates producing some effective material which combined thorough preparation with the ability to improvise and respond spontaneously on the day. Perhaps there was a degree of concern on Unit 2719 where some candidates seemed a little under prepared for the directed writing task and tended to show less evidence of planning and some lack of familiarity with analysing other types of text; similarly, there is some concern that on 2718 candidates need to ensure that they select appropriate literary texts and that the nature of spontaneous speech is considered effectively.

On the whole, though, Principal Examiners were convinced that centres and candidates continue to appreciate links between linguistic and literary aspects of study and applied their knowledge and understanding across a range of diverse texts. There was a clear sense that consolidation of previous standards was being maintained; at the same time, there was evidence that fresh approaches – especially in coursework modules – were being put into practice. There was a consensus that both candidates and teachers worked hard and successfully to produce highly competent and proficient material across the modules.

2714 Linking Language and Literature

General Comments

The passages were analysed and compared in a range of interesting ways by the candidates. There seemed to be a solid and informed understanding of the Assessment Objectives underpinning the unit: in particular, the construction of attitudes and values was addressed with some aplomb. Most grasped the nature of the comparative supernatural elements soundly. Occasionally, there was some reliance on feature spotting some learnt terms and techniques, a process which directed attention away from the material itself in the way it was used as a framework to hang things on. Candidates, on the whole, tackled the paper with a fair degree of confidence and used their time well. There was little rubric infringement. Many produced highly focused and fluent responses which showed an appreciation of the integration of linguistic and literary elements. The increased confidence noted in January's report about candidates' approaches towards transcriptions of spontaneous speech was also in evidence here.

Comments on Individual Questions

The passages provided enough contrasts, as well as overlaps, in terms of features to stimulate interesting analyses and discussion. In fact, the level of linguistic analysis in particular was pleasing and reinforced trends noticed in recent examination sessions. Informed answers explored the different voices present in the fiction extract sensitively and commented on the possible different levels of background and class of the speakers. There were some proficient comments on the use of dialect and register, supported by effective use of brief and embedded quotations; such answers also attempted to comment on the qualities and connotations of specific words and phrases and the moods that they evoked. Less secure answers tended to take a more generalised approach and focused on identifying such matters as elision and ellipsis. These answers did not always distinguish the different characters clearly enough before offering comments. Perhaps the use of a little more time for planning might have helped to shape such responses.

The transcription was approached with gusto by a range of candidates. The different attitudes and values of the two speakers were explored well and a number of effective responses looked at the unfolding development and structure of the extract with a solid degree of insight: the mother's increasing exasperation and her change of tone were commented on incisively by a range of responses; the son's contrasting lack of enthusiasm and almost taciturn contributions were also sensed well by the majority of candidates. Some answers also explored sensitively how the mother's increasing frustration with her son was compromised by the context she found herself in - the fact she was being filmed and that she was bound to keep up some polite strategies in front of the cameras whilst trying to keep her temper in check. Less secure answers tended to fall back on approaches which could apply to any transcription: the use of fillers and hesitations were common examples.

Effective answers adopted a clearly comparative approach, usually dealing with each passage in turn and making references to the other extract as the second one was dealt with. Some candidates tended to approach the material with a list of sub-headed paragraphs in mind (such as lexis, punctuation, accent and so on); whilst such an approach can bolster confidence, it can, at times, restrict the candidate in dealing with the passage a little more flexibly.

2715 Language in Literature: Poetry and Prose

General Comments

There was, as always, a wide range of achievement on this paper. The candidates who performed outstandingly well, demonstrating that it is possible to excel in combining literary with linguistic approaches, were those who read the question carefully and did what they were invited to do. As ever, though, some candidates made things difficult for themselves by seeming determined to pursue their own agenda rather than answering the question as set.

The scripts provided plenty of encouraging evidence that candidates had engaged with their chosen texts, that they had enjoyed studying them and that they had gained much from learning to apply combined linguistic and literary approaches.

Less encouraging was the mis-use of specialist terminology in many cases. Examiners noted that, for example, "*juxtaposition"* is now used to mean any kind of *contrast* or *difference, "connotation"* is used for any kind of *implication* or *suggestion* and *"shows"* has become a way of saying *suggests.* Candidates are not penalised for this level of casualness *per se.* However, careless AO1 is a self-penalising tendency because it limits the precision with which candidates can make points and develop (AO3i) analysis.

The comments above notwithstanding, it is clear that candidates on the whole are very well prepared for the examination. Once again, centres are to be congratulated on the fact that allocation of time between the two questions was hardly ever a problem. Where scripts showed an imbalance, it was generally due to a lack of textual knowledge rather than a failure of examination technique. And rubric infringement (failing to do one poetry and one prose text, or to include at least one pre-twentieth century text) is unknown on this paper.

There is a great deal of evidence that the teaching of combined language and literature approaches has evolved and improved. This offers significant hope for further progress in the future.

Comments on Individual Questions

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

The question focus was "ways in which Chaucer creates *apparent seriousness*". Most candidates discussed what they saw as elements of the *seriousness* but ignored the *apparent.* Examples of the mock-heroic had their annual outing, and candidates noted the sermonising register of the Nun's Priest. There was some uncertainty over who was the speaker in each of the different sections of the set passage. However, candidates were able to make useful comments on how each of the speakers addressed their listeners (the second bullet prompt). The use of imperatives and terms of address was generally accurately analysed.

Lexis and register (first bullet prompt) received due – if rather general – attention. Candidates noted the precision of the dating in lines 1-11, commenting usefully on the Nun's Priest's display of astrological knowledge. The shift in tone from Chauntecleer's "revel and solas" to the aphorism in line 19 was also appreciated. More complex and subtle touches, such as the significance of the reference to "the book of Launcelot de Lake", caused candidates some difficulty. The weaker responses took refuge in supplying background information or in making assertions about the speaker's supposed misogyny.

Chaucer's, or the Nun's Priest's, or Chauntecleer's, anti-feminist tendencies were also (mostly unhelpfully) detected in the AO4 dimension. Candidates were able to provide plenty of other examples of *seriousness* in elements of the narrative and in the debate between Chauntecleer and Pertelote. Focus on the *apparent* target was less explicit, often being subsumed in reference to the mock-heroic without there necessarily being an understanding of the *heroic* that it must be mocking. Popular passages for AO4 comparison included the initial descriptions of Chauntecleer and the Widow, the appearance of the Fox, Pertelote's attack on Chauntecleer's lack of manliness and the apostrophes to "Destinee … Venus … Gaufred … "

Q 2   CHAUCER*: The Miller's Tale*

Candidates answering on this text are usually well prepared for a question about the conventions of Courtly Love, and keen also to off-load their knowledge of *fabliaux*. Such approaches were not irrelevant, and even the weaker answers maintained a reasonably clear focus on the "comic effects" target. This question elicited lot of useful comments on, and genuine (as opposed to 'parroted') understanding of specific effects of rhythm and rhyme (second bullet prompt). Many candidates produced competent explanations of how the *cole/hole* rhyme adds to the general fun; and this allowed a neat (AO4) cross-reference to the *kisse/pisse* couplet in the passage where Absolon makes his return/revenge visit to the window.

There was some misunderstanding about whose posterior is out of the window at any one time, and confusion over who says "A berd! A berd!" Some answers seemed inhibited by natural modesty in discussing bodily parts; but most joined in readily. Candidates are also becoming more perceptive about how Chaucer manipulates syntax to emphasise particular lexical items.

Clearly many AO4 passages are pre-selected; but still most choices were skilfully adapted to suit the (admittedly broad) requirements of the question. Candidates wrote well about the comedy of the stages in John's deception as well as abut the 'Absolon's Revenge' passage.

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

Overall, this was probably the least successfully-answered question on this summer's paper. In previous sessions, even when they have been struggling with the specifics of the set poem, candidates have still managed to engage fruitfully with the overall focus of the question. This time, however, most ignored the "cycles of nature and life" and tied themselves in knots trying to explicate *The Oven Bird.*

In three successive sessions now, the *Report* has acknowledged that Frost's poems present some difficulties, and has encouraged candidates to build an answer from the details of what they have securely understood. There was once again a sense in many answers of candidates making assertions (about symbolic meaning or poetic effect) which they thought sounded vaguely plausible but with which they had no real engagement. Most disappointingly, candidates seemed thoroughly confused about the sequence of the seasons (at least as referred to in the poem) and ignorant of when, for example, *petal-fall* occurred.

Candidates seemed much more comfortable in their AO4 comparisons. Poems involving leaf-fall (usually *Gathering Leaves, In Hardwood Groves* and/or *A Leaf Treader*) were often at least soundly understood and discussed profitably. However, many are still keen to assert that compared poems must somehow be similar in terms of content and of form. This leads to rather loose assertions of (claimed) effects of metre, which is seldom well understood. Word-order is even less well understood, and very few candidates comment on just how odd Frost's syntax can be.

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

Candidates had no difficulty in engaging with this question at some level. Some interpreted the second element of the *hope and hopelessness* target as meaning that the *persona* was 'hopeless' in her choices – which worked effectively enough.

Candidates are inclined – in this question, and often in others – to make huge claims for the effects of pronoun use, and to see great significance in any personal pronoun. Here the tendency was to interpret the third-person "she" as Cope's attempt to disguise her personal involvement, to 'distance' herself from the failed relationships. Only the subtler readings showed an understanding of the nuances achieved through the shift from "she" to "one".

Similarly, most candidates recognised that the men were types/stereotypes, but struggled to articulate a competent understanding of the connotations of Cope's choices of diction. It may be that candidates don't 'get' Cope's mixture of register: they want to see register as consistently formal or informal, and as a result the shades of meaning are blurred. So candidates noticed usages such as "chinless" and "held forth" but struggled to analyse their effect.

Most wrote soundly about how the repetitive poetic form matched the repetitive nature of the cycle of hope and hopelessness. This focus led naturally and helpfully to (AO4) discussion of *Lonely Hearts. From June to December* also provided fruitful links.

Q 5   EMILY BRONTE: *Wuthering Heights*

The question focus ("intensity of feeling") was sometimes interpreted as meaning "tension". This was of itself not necessarily damaging to an understanding of the passage or a relevant response to the question.

Candidates as always engaged with the relationship between Heathcliff and Cathy, often judging the latter harshly. The opening of the passage was confusing to the many who read the initial utterance as being a pair of interrogatives addressed by Cathy to Nelly. Some candidates were helpfully tentative in their judgements about Cathy's behaviour and state of mind in the first 8 lines, noting that Nelly's descriptions ("a troubled gleam … mournful and questioning eagerness") suggest at least mixed feelings.

The "large dog" (line 9) was invested by some candidates with much significance. Some managed to turn from this rather unhelpful angle to more relevant (AO4) reference to the use of animal images and/or lexis in the rest of the novel.

Once Heathcliff was in the same room as Cathy, mis-readings gave way to much more sound understanding. There was plenty of relevant discussion of Nelly's contribution to the emotional impact, and of the linguistic features of Heathcliff's and Cathy's utterances. Some candidates still struggle to analyse syntax or sentence structure accurately, but there was useful discussion of ways in which Cathy maintained dominance through a mixture of declarative, interrogative (rhetorical) and imperative utterances. Lines 39-45, where Cathy imagines/mimics/parodies what Heathcliff might say "twenty years hence", caused candidates rather more difficulty.

The AO4 comparative element sometimes missed the precise question focus in using passages which did not include both Heathcliff and Cathy, but very few candidates failed to find intensity of feeling and language.

Q 6   MARY SHELLEY: *Frankenstein*

Here the question-focus was the power of Nature and Victor's response to it. Some very impressive answers attempted a conceptualised overview, which integrated understanding of the Romantic perspective as central to the novel with a skilful and detailed analysis of the passage.

However, many answers pursued an agenda of their own, with scant regard for the question or the manifest evidence of the passage. Discussion of Victor's selfishness (or self-centred-ness) was supportable by reference to the set extract; but assertions of his neglectful behaviour as a parent, his fear of sexuality and his 'playing God' or 'self-apotheosis' seldom led to higher marks.

Attention to Shelley's methods (AO1/AO3i) in terms of the bullet prompts – lexis, register and imagery – was rather flattened and generalised. Close reading was seldom done carefully. So, for example, Victor's reference to "the whirlwind passions of my soul" (line 2) was seen as an example of the Pathetic Fallacy. Throughout the passage – and indeed the whole novel – some candidates were determined to interpret any item of lexis or imagery as being *representative* of something else. The "mighty Alps" (line 23) were seen by some as oppressing Victor – even though he had explicitly stated in line 14 that "the weight on my spirit was *sensibly lightened*"; the "pyramids and domes (which) towered above all … (and) overlooked the valley" were equated with *("just like …")* the Creature watching Victor and following him. And while it is true that such feelings of persecution pervade the narrative, the passage provided clear opportunities

for much more precise and accurate analysis of Shelley's language.

Many candidates wrote a circular argument about how the power of Nature was made evident by lexis which was powerful and imagery which showed how powerful Nature was.

Candidates clearly know the novel well and engage strongly with the situation and characters. This knowledge is, however, not translated into cogent answers which focus on the terms of the question.

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

It is a welcome change not to have to preface comment on this question with a lament about how candidates have tended towards writing a 'default' answer about Paddy's maturation through the novel and the deterioration in his family circumstances.

The question focus (Paddy's relationship with his parents) meant that the choice of (AO4) comparative passage might justifiably be made in this area. Helpful choices included Paddy's Da trying to teach him to ride a bike, the picnic in the car, the formal meeting at the end of the novel where father and son shake hands, and the 'boxing match' passage.

In AO1/AO3i terms, candidates made good use of their knowledge (an overlap with 2714) of features of spoken language to analyse the transactions between Paddy and his Ma, and Paddy and his Da. There was some sensitive reading of family dynamics, supported by accurate reference to the text here and elsewhere.

Q 8   IAN McEWAN: *The Child in Time*

Most candidates who did this question engaged strongly with Stephen's pain but struggled to focus on details of McEwan's methods in presenting the experience of that pain and ways of coping with it.

Many answers launched into exploration of themes: time, re-birth metaphors and (supposed) differences between male and female coping strategies. Any or all of these could be interesting and relevant if related to the bullet prompts, but for the most part candidates were pursuing a prepared agenda that took them away from the question and into doubtful speculation about Stephen's psychological state here and elsewhere in the novel.

Some stunningly good answers actually tackled McEwan's prose style by reading the passage carefully and "look(ing) closely at variations in sentence structure and diction" (first bullet prompt). The mark-scheme suggests relevant examples.

Other answers were much less precise and offered general assertions about sentence length increasing as the passage went on – again not hopelessly irrelevant, but of limited value when not related closely to textual detail.

2716 Styles of Writing (coursework)

After many years of practice, Centres and candidates still show enormous energy and enthusiasm for what this unit offers. Most Centres managed interesting combinations of literary and non-literary creativity. As always, the monologue had many fans, and there were some wonderful examples of how character can be created through both explicit and implicit language use. Non-literary pieces varied widely from speeches to magazine articles, often making very effective use of genre models - Jeremy Clarkson columns being very popular this session. One or two candidates wrote brochures, often for travel or health information, and these tended to be very limited in scope, providing little opportunity for language-based commentary.

On the down side, there was a slight tendency towards pushing at the boundaries of what is acceptable. A made-up transcript of supposedly 'real' speech is in fact a creative piece not a non-literary piece. Similarly, a recorded piece of real speech that is then transcribed tests nothing more than a candidate's ability to use the conventions of speech transcription.

Candidate commentaries were often full of insight, particularly when they were able to talk about how they had used other's writing as a model for their own. At the top end, candidates sometimes let themselves down by assuming that their creative pieces would speak for themselves. It's quite often useful for them to stand back from the work and write commentaries as though they had nothing to do with the original pieces: it gives both distance and perspective on what has actually been achieved. Fortunately, there were very few commentaries which simply focused on the process whereby the writing came into existence. As always, candidates who showed sound awareness of the need to demonstrate a secure grasp of terminology tended to do very well, though there were a few examples of candidates who showed off a lot of terms whilst also demonstrating little grasp of what they actually meant in relation to their work.

Centres have done much to dissuade candidates from producing long pieces of creative writing, and this has the advantage that candidates then have more space for incisive and insightful commentary. Centres are reminded that it is possible to submit *part* of a longer piece for assessment if necessary. Unnecessary problems, particularly of rank order, can very easily be caused by the candidate who writes well over 3000 words and has in fact only completed two or three of the four aspects of the unit by the time the limit has been reached. Moderators try to hold the line according to the specification, and these candidates should in fact be marked as 'incomplete' despite the fact that they have written much more than others. It is only fair to the whole cohort that candidates should not try to impress with volume. Indeed, ironically, candidates who compress what they have to say often succeed in doing rather better than those who seek to impress with quantity.

Centres have accumulated a great deal of expertise in the assessment of this unit. Best practice shows teachers annotating the work qualitatively (not just AO1 etc. scribbled in the margin) along the way and then providing overall comments on the summary sheet that are closely allied to phrases culled from the mark scheme. With large Centres it is also important to leave an evidence trail (initials from a couple of teachers usually do the trick) that demonstrates that there has been a moderation process across sets. One of the hardest things for moderators to deal with is a growing awareness that a rightful scaling for the candidates in one set would then penalize a large number of other candidates along the way. A reliable rank order is absolutely central to a moderation process, and failure to do this effectively can lead to a distortion of results.

On the whole, Centres are to be congratulated on the conscientious (and largely accurate) way in which they carry out this work. As always, there were one or two niggles with centres that didn't quite manage to get the mark sheets in on time or the sample sent off within the required three days.

There was much to interest, much to enjoy in this work, and the moderation team felt, as always, that it was a privilege to work with centres on the assessment of their candidates.

2717 Language in Literature: Drama

General Comments

The standards achieved were consistent with those of most previous summer sessions. There were, perhaps, fewer outstanding scripts at the very top of the mark range; equally there were few really limited answers at the lower end. There was, in overall terms, quite a high level of competence, as indicated by the relatively high mean mark attained. As in previous sessions the best answers were characterised by intelligent, well-informed argument, underpinned by close and incisive analysis of relevant linguistic detail and use of appropriate terminology. Candidates had, by and large, prepared well and demonstrated a good understanding both of their set texts and selected passages. There was, it seemed, little reliance on pre-prepared or overly rehearsed discussions and, instead, a readiness to engage with the specific requirements of the questions in fresh and individual ways. Disappointingly, some candidates still adopted wholly literary approaches, perhaps lacking the confidence to engage with linguistic complexity. Written expression was, in general terms, quite accurate and fluent.

Comments on Individual Questions

1   SHAKESPEARE: *Antony and Cleopatra*

(a)   This question was extremely popular and was generally handled well. Candidates deployed a range of appropriate strategies and showed a clear understanding of the need to use detailed textual evidence in support of their views. Many candidates contextualised their answers with respect to the 'public arena' and the play's developing political action. Most rightly considered the Roman perspective and the better answers also took Enobarbus' mediation into account. The best answers examined specific linguistic choices, actions and dramatic contexts/effects, foregrounding both the elevated poetic lexis and equally 'prosaic' choices of the protagonists, for example. Weaker answers tended to present basic narrative accounts of the protagonists' mutual commitment, deceptions or wrong-headedness.

(b)   Another very popular choice, this question was generally answered well. There were some well-focused analyses of the states of mind/ambivalences and actions of a number of characters: Enobarbus and Antony (principally) but also Cleopatra and, occasionally, even Caesar. There was, too, some helpful consideration of broader cultural/political contexts and of personal and political values. Weaker answers tended to focus on a very limited range of textual materials; better answers considered a complex range of ethical issues and matters of conscience, and their expression in language.

2   SHAKESPEARE: *As You Like It*

(a)   Less frequently chosen, this question did, nevertheless, prompt answers that were well-informed and appropriately focused in the main. The best responses demonstrated a very good understanding both of language use and dramatic context. Few candidates confined their answers to a discussion of wit and wordplay in abstract or in un-contextualised ways. Most candidates chose to focus on the language used by Touchstone, Rosalind and Jaques. The best answers elucidated and illustrated dramatic purpose by demonstrating a sensitised appreciation of language choices in relation to aspects of characterisation and the presentation of central themes/ideas: the interrogation of the values of court and country and of idealised love, for example.

(b)   One of the least frequently chosen questions, this was nevertheless answered very well. Candidates demonstrated an impressive knowledge and understanding of their selected passages and of the play as a whole. Impressive too was the sustained and convincing focus on the specific demands of the question. The majority of candidates chose to concentrate on the conversion / mode of conversion of 'the villains' and thereby, the transformation of corrupt/bullying personages and the values of the court. The importance of the environment of the Forest of Arden was sometimes considered, as was the use and significance of biblical/religious language. Some candidates helpfully brought the agency of Adam and Orlando into focus and/or the development of both Touchstone and Phebe as characters. 'Significant effects' were almost invariably interpreted as reconciliation, marriage and renewal/regeneration within the genre of pastoral/festive comedy. There were few weak answers, either in response to 2a or 2b.

3   SHAKESPEARE: *The Tempest*

(a)   Relatively popular, this question was answered quite well. Candidates were comfortable with the concepts of 'dramatic voices' and 'variety'. Discerning candidates did not automatically equate variety with range, and were able to construct interesting and convincing answers based on the close scrutiny of two or three passages. The favoured strategy was to compare the voices of dualistic pairings; these usually included Prospero and one other: Prospero/Miranda; Prospero/Ariel and Prospero/Caliban, for example. Some candidates successfully linked voice to theme (social order in the play's opening scene, for example). Some candidates very successfully chose to anchor their interpretations of 'striking' and 'dramatic' in discussions of moments of particular dramatic/emotional intensity in the play. Some candidates successfully identified variety within the voice(s) of individual characters: Caliban, most notably.

(b)   Another very popular choice, this question prompted answers that were a little more variable in quality. Weaker answers conflated forgiveness and reconciliation in fairly simplistic and, at times, reductive ways. Better responses offered some close analysis of a range of passages from Act 5, focusing (appropriately) on changes in Prospero's judgements and changing attitudes. The best answers were able to identify and engage with complexity, ambivalence and negotiated closure/open-endedness ('I will tell no tales'), both in terms of linguistic features and dramatic effects: the language of rationality, clarification and purification; of penitence, providence and mercy, for example. The ritualistic/symbolic dimensions of magic robes/books/staff/music were considered by some, as were the more recalcitrant elements embodied in the discourse of Sebastian and Caliban.

4   BECKETT: *Waiting for Godot*

(a)   A reasonably popular choice, this question prompted mainly competent answers. Candidates tended to ground their responses both generically (discussing the implications of the 'Theatre of the Absurd') and in an examination of relevant details of language and dramatic effects. Weaker answers tended to be characterised by generalised (and sometimes quite nebulous) over-assertion. Better answers focused on the dramatic effects of 'episodes' that they foregrounded as being in some way 'ironic' or 'meaningless'. The best answers focused on the dialogic (in Lucky's case monologic) content of passages that self-consciously subverted logic, purpose, direction, orientation and expectation/certainty, managing to integrate their analyses with intelligent consideration of the play's title/ central preoccupations.

(b)   Less frequently chosen, this question was answered less well. Candidates tended to have fairly limited ideas as to how to approach the question, or how to exploit

Churchill's comment fruitfully. Weaker answers tended to affirm, in somewhat literal or pedestrian fashion, that the play presents some unanswered questions (who or what is Godot? What happens to the boy? Will things get better? for example). Better answers attempted to examine the play's engagement with deeper questions of a metaphysical nature: How far does the play reflect the human condition? for example. Surprisingly few candidates attempted to get to grips with the play's methods – the *ways* in which it asks questions: through its setting, structure/development, presentation of relationships, 'patterns' of language use and action, use of symbol/allusion, for example. The best answers were rigorously grounded in an analysis of the characters' questioning processes themselves.

5   FRIEL: *Translations*

(a)   A popular choice, this question was generally answered very well. The majority of answers demonstrated a good knowledge and understanding and were appropriately focused. Most candidates chose not to defend Hugh's claim and were more comfortable to affirm the weight carried by the views, attitudes and values of (for example) Maire. Weaker answers tended to cite fairly obvious instances of material impoverishment and/or decline. Better answers attempted to use a wider range of evidence, and (although this was by no means a requirement) produced more substantially 'balanced' arguments. The best responses engaged successfully with the play's different levels of characterisation, especially the 'ironic' treatment of the spiritual/intellectual life embodied by Hugh and Jimmy Jack and ambivalences/ambiguities in the presentation of Owen, Yolland and Manus.

(b)   Also popular, this question prompted some impressive answers. Most candidates were comfortable (as demonstrated either explicitly or implicitly) with the idea of 'distinctive voices', and chose to focus on tone, attitudes and values. Some interpreted 'distinctive' to mean strategically/dramatically/politically important. Weaker answers offered narrative outlines of the importance of specific characters: Hugh, in particular. Surprisingly few candidates chose to focus on Lancey's voice. Some of the more interesting answers examined the voices of Doalty and Sarah within specific dramatic/ political contexts. The best answers tended to offer incisive and technically assured explorations of Owen's distinctive voice(s) in the pivotal role of translation.

6   WILLIAMS: *A Streetcar Named Desire*

(a)   Very popular, this question prompted some knowledgeable and carefully constructed responses. Candidates demonstrated close familiarity with relevant textual materials and produced some probing, convincingly illustrated arguments. Most candidates chose to focus their attentions on Blanche's psychological/emotional state(s) and her past experiences at Belle Reve and with Allan Grey. The best answers explored the articulation of these experiences with an incisive focus both on the complexity of her psychological strategies and the rhetorical/expressive features of her language. Weaker answers tended to ignore or gloss the matter of 'preoccupation'; stronger responses sustained their engagement with the theme(s), and deepened their argument through discussion of Stella, Mitch, biographical influences and expressionistic levels of presentation.

(b)   Equally popular, this question was also answered well in the main. Candidates expressed a range of opinions, with the majority endorsing the view expressed in the prefatory quotation. Weaker answers tended to offer strong judgements based on superficial consideration of limited evidence. The majority of candidates, however, gave close, careful consideration to a range of relevant textual materials and the

best examined the complexities of Williams's construction and presentation of Stanley, within the contexts of America, New Orleans and social/economic change.

2718 Issues in Language and Literature (coursework)

As in past years, it is clear that both candidates and centres have enjoyed the opportunities provided by this unit for further in-depth work on issues that really engage personal interests. On the down side of this, there is a slight problem that candidates can forget that they need to make it clear exactly how their projects fit into the announced topic areas. On the whole, subjects were wisely chosen, though a couple of centres chose to have all candidates write about the same area, often using the same texts, and this seemed against the spirit of individual exploration. As in the past there was excellent work on all a suggested areas, with Language and Identity perhaps being the most popular and most successful area, probably because it allows such a wide range of possibility.

When planning their essays, some candidates need, perhaps, to be more aware of the specification's injunction to compare and contrast the passages chosen. All too often, candidates produce pieces that are in effect three essays loosely conjoined, then a short conclusion where comparison is made. Ideally, comparisons are made tellingly throughout, with all passages in view throughout. Similarly, there seems to have been a growth in the amount of background information provided early on in order to provide context. Much of this often turns out to be unnecessary, and it often puts candidates unnecessarily under the pressure of the word limit. So the rule for candidates is simple: get on with the argument and the comparisons as soon as you can. Don't waste time justifying the choice: the comparison will do that for you.

A further point might be that some candidates spend a lot of time justifying the theoretical background to their work; again, this is something best done during the course of the work, not as a separate section at the beginning. Candidates often focus on quite small extracts from texts and this kind of focus promotes close reading. It is to be encouraged. Sometimes the most ambitious work, coupled with a wide range and volume of texts is the most likely to fall apart and disappoint, so centres are encouraged to ensure that candidates do not attempt more than is reasonably achievable within the word limit. Interestingly, many candidates who write under the word limit have greater success than those who wish they could have written more. This is probably because they ensure that every word, sentence, paragraph, really counts towards the thrust of the argument.

Two reminders for future sessions:
• Firstly, candidates should be advised to make sure that the 'literary' text they are using is suitable: by definition, this means that the text must be equivalent to the sort of text studied in an A level Literature examination. Unfortunately, a number of candidates this year were stretching the boundaries too far by using pop song lyrics or other unsuitable texts.
• Secondly, when selecting their texts, candidates need to be absolutely sure that they have chosen spoken texts which will engage them in discussion of spoken language and/ or its presentation in written forms. All too often candidates take a speech and then discuss its techniques with little or no reference to the mixture of spontaneous forms (even if engineered) and pre-meditated rhetorical techniques that are central to its impact.

For the most part, centre administration was excellent this year. In particular, there were few problems with internal moderation, where different sets have not been properly co-ordinated to produce a whole centre rank order. Centres that provided qualitative remarks on the work itself, combined with overall justification closely related to Assessment Objectives on the cover sheet, tended to be those most likely to have their marks confirmed and not scaled.

It is always a pleasure for the moderation team to read such a wide variety of work, covering so many disparate interests and concerns. It is clear that the unit enables candidates to show how much they have benefited from the integrated study of both Language and Literature.

The moderation team was, as in the past, deeply impressed by the professionalism of the teachers who see through such vast amounts of course work from inception to success. To them, our thanks for all the hard work they do to ensure their candidates' success.

2719 Experience into Words

General Comments

The paper was sufficiently demanding to allow differentiation of ability; able candidates demonstrated their linguistic and literary skills while, even lower down the range, others managed to make some comparative analytical comments across both questions. Indeed, most candidates managed a satisfactory or better performance, especially those who planned their answers.

Examiners felt that, on the whole, candidates seemed better prepared for and more confident in their responses to the first question. The quality of wider reading texts varied but there was uneven use of supportive quotation within discussion of such texts; some candidates tended to include such texts whether they were relevant or not. However, at the top of the range candidates referred briefly to a range of other texts which compared appropriately with the first two set passages.

Some responses to the second question were highly focused and informed, showing a strong awareness of purpose and audience, offering commentaries which clearly compared the original extract with the re-creative piece. However, some candidates seemed less familiar with styles and audiences of a range of newspapers and this limited some of their opportunities to replicate and comment on newspaper article styles and audiences.

There was little rubric infringement and candidates seemed to manage their time satisfactorily. Awareness of linguistic and literary approaches seemed to be more focused and assured in the first response and slightly less so in the second one.

Comments on Individual Questions

Question 1

This was answered fairly well on the whole. Effective answers considered the imagery of the first passage in detail, sensing the contrast between the protagonist's feeling that he had been 'godded' by another but ironically that he himself was a 'molehill' compared to the Olympian stature of his own mother; his contrasting use of aggressive vocabulary compared to the more gentle strains when his family enter (such as his reference to his wife's eyes) was explored in detail by such responses. Indeed, such responses also commented on the structure and development of the passage, its contrasting choices of lexis, its blend of declaratives and questions, with success. Less secure answers tended to be overwhelmed with the need to identify semantic fields without commenting on their nature precisely.

The transcription allowed candidates to compare the passages effectively, many focusing on the ways in which a public figure is engaged with suppressing more private thoughts in order to maintain some kind of persona or performance. The contrasting language used by the figures in the transcription - their more neutral public utterances combined with the less polite and even taboo choices of expression in private - elicited many perceptive comments and analyses. Some effective answers also picked up on the assured management of Prince William in the situation and drew comparisons with Coriolanus's less controlled manner in the first passage. Some experiences of wider reading seemed a bit limited at times, a few a little contrived - such as a letter from a friend or advice from parents. However, some answers drew on selective, relevant and precise wider references very well indeed and used brief and effective quotations from it.

Question 2

The quality of the responses to the first part of the question varied. Some candidates demonstrated a clear awareness of audience, genre and purpose: others felt obliged to use the original too closely and proved limited in their re-creative skills. In response to the second part of the question most candidates sensed the mocking and sarcastic attitudes on display but sometimes missed where the article came from and, therefore, opportunities to comment on journalese. Secure answers tended to explore the negativity of the original, its blend of formal lexis combined with more down to earth and even crude expression; they saw it as an attack on the cult of personality at both royal and show business levels. In turn, effective answers often chose a tabloid format for the directed writing and adopted a patriotic and complimentary approach to the subject. Occasionally, some candidates needed to note what the precise writing task was: some tended to offer a preview or promotion of the concert rather than a review of the whole programme.

There were some fluent and sophisticated responses on the whole but also some which seemed to lack detailed and careful consideration of genre and audience.

Grade Thresholds

Advanced GCE English Language & Literature 3829 / 7829
June 2008 Examination Series

Unit Threshold Marks

Unit		Maximum Mark	a	b	c	d	e	u
2714	Raw	60	45	39	33	28	23	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2715	Raw	60	42	37	32	28	24	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	46	41	36	32	28	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	41	37	33	29	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
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	12.8	32.8	59.7	81.5	95.4	100	1167
7829	15.7	42.5	73.0	93.1	99.1	100	1022

For a description of how UMS marks are calculated see:
http://www.ocr.org.uk/learners/ums_results.html

Statistics are correct at the time of publication.