

English Literature

Advanced GCE **A2 7828**

Advanced Subsidiary GCE **AS 3828**

Reports for the Units

June 2006

3828/7828/MS/R/06

OCR (Oxford, Cambridge and RSA Examinations) is a unitary awarding body, established by the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate and the RSA Examinations Board in January 1998. OCR provides a full range of GCSE, A level, GNVQ, Key Skills and other qualifications for schools and colleges in the United Kingdom, including those previously provided by MEG and OCEAC. It is also responsible for developing new syllabuses to meet national requirements and the needs of students and teachers.

This mark scheme is published as an aid to teachers and students, to indicate the requirements of the examination. It shows the basis on which marks were awarded by Examiners. It does not indicate the details of the discussions which took place at an Examiners' meeting before marking commenced.

All Examiners are instructed that alternative correct answers and unexpected approaches in candidates' scripts must be given marks that fairly reflect the relevant knowledge and skills demonstrated.

Mark schemes should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and the Report on the Examination.

OCR will not enter into any discussion or correspondence in connection with this mark scheme.

© OCR 2006

Any enquiries about publications should be addressed to:

OCR Publications
PO Box 5050
Annersley
NOTTINGHAM
NG15 0DL

Telephone: 0870 870 6622
Facsimile: 0870 870 6621
E-mail: publications@ocr.org.uk

CONTENTS

Advanced GCE English Literature - 7828

Advanced Subsidiary GCE English Literature - 3828

REPORT ON THE UNITS

Unit	Content	Page
*	Chief Examiner's Report	5
2707	Drama: Shakespeare	6
2708	Poetry and Prose	9
2710	Poetry and Drama pre- 1900	17
2709/11	Literature Complementary study Prose post- 1914 (Coursework)	25
2712	Prose post- 1914 (Written Paper)	28
2713	Comparative and Contextual Study	32
*	Grade Thresholds	40

Chief Examiner's Report

Reviewing the reports that follow, it was again a pleasure to note the complimentary tone of examiners' comments on candidates' work. It is also clear that teachers and candidates have assimilated the demands and opportunities of this specification, and candidates' writing is for the most part directed towards the specific requirements of the questions addressed.

Some general comments can be elicited from the paper reports, none of them new but all worth reiterating:

- Candidates who do well know the texts intimately: ease of reference to poems/ episodes is a vital element of answers on all texts; so is the ability to blend quotation into the candidate's own discourse, and both of these facilities depend upon the candidates' having full possession of the texts studied.
- As noted last year most candidates took a linear approach to the exercise of critical analysis of a passage/poem set by the paper or self-selected: while this can be a fruitful strategy it can have a number of drawbacks, and in particular examiners were struck once again by how many answers simply did not reach the end of the passage and did not refer substantially to the context of the text as a whole; candidates should be encouraged by example and practice to adopt more systematic critical procedures, focusing on effects of the writing, structural issues and thematic concerns in ways that facilitate movement between passage and text.
- Examiners were asked to focus on candidates' work in relation to Assessment Objective 4 requiring them to "articulate independent opinions and judgements, informed by different interpretations of literary texts by other readers": this AO has various applications and weightings in the different papers, but a common requirement is that reference to views of "other readers" has little value unless the answer does something with them, either by agreement or, usually more helpfully, by challenge, to show how they contribute to the candidate's own reading; it was refreshing when the candidate explored alternative interpretations, acknowledging that texts can be read in different ways.
- Finally, it was unusual this session to find answers that were unbalanced by too much contextual material; candidates invariably referred briefly and helpfully to contexts of various kinds (social/ cultural/ political/ biographical/ literary/ generic/ thematic) to support readings of the texts, bearing in mind, that a little context goes a long way ...

2707 – Drama, Shakespeare

General

Overall performance of the candidates

Examiners reported that there was an impressive improvement in overall performance this session for this Unit. Most candidates appeared to know their chosen play well and were able to present interesting ideas and interpretations. Most also showed a sensible understanding of the demands of the three relevant assessment objectives for each question.

However, there was still a number of knowledgeable candidates who did not approach the Section A passage in a closely analytical way. In Section B the expression of ideas was sometimes a problem but examiners noted that it was very rare to find a general response which was not in some way related to the question.

A notable feature of improvement over recent sessions was the way in which candidates made effective use of the time available to them, with evidence of planning to good effect (often adopting a specific format chosen to suit their particular learning style). It was very rare to see a pair of answers which were unbalanced in relation to each other.

It was also good to note that there was a spread of answers across the available texts, all four of which elicited genuine and spontaneous comment, suggesting that Shakespeare's plays continue to inspire new generations of students.

Comments on individual questions

Henry IV (Part 2)

Question 1: Responses to the passage were often perceptive and imaginative, most often commenting on the hypocrisy and self-denial implicit in Falstaff's attitude. The distinction between dialogue and soliloquy in the passage was often emphasised and some answers delighted in the linguistic inventiveness of Falstaff's account of the 'forked radish shallow'. Rather few, however, explored the language in much detail and some were clearly confused about the character of Shallow, identifying him as one of the Eastcheap low-life characters or confusing him with Silence.

Question 5(a): There were fewer responses than to 5(b) but those who chose this question addressed it confidently. The Lord Chief Justice was seen as 'a relentless foe of disorder who also succeeds in amusing us'. He and Falstaff were studied as rival father-figures. A few candidates gave a rather superficial sketch of the character while better candidates presented a rich exploration of the place of the Justice in the play's wider consideration of the idea of law and order.

Question 5(b): This was a popular question which differentiated well between candidates. Answers in lower bands provided relatively simplistic comparisons of the respective approaches to kingship of Henry IV and Henry V. The question offered better candidates the chance to explore kingship in a wide range of contexts (both within the set play and – often and impressively – in other plays across the tetralogy).

As You Like It

Question 2: The passage offered candidates the chance to explore some of the text's major concerns in some detail, and in relation to other sections of the play. Although many answers confused verse and prose and one even coined the term 'prose verse', attention to other aspects of the language was often profitable. Adam's 'panicked slur of words' or 'stuttered contradiction' at lines 4-6 was often noticed. Some responded to biblical imagery in the passage: its use 'heightens the purity of Adam's friendship.' Friendship and loyalty were often explored in a wide variety of contexts and this spilled over into a consideration of the many manifestations of love in the play.

Question 6(a): This was a popular question. Many candidates responded with great enthusiasm to the opportunity to write about this enigmatic character. As with all questions of this type, weaker responses tended to present mere generalised character sketches, whilst more successful answers addressed the specific terms of the question and the related bullet points. Jaques' celebrated quotation, 'I can suck melancholy out of a song as a weasel sucks eggs' made many appearances – occasionally in parody form ('...as a pigeon sucks feathers').

Question 6(b): The best answers suggested impressive, sophisticated awareness of the text and its issues in relation to this topic and explored role-playing and identity thoroughly. A significant number of answers, however, failed to address the specific terms and requirements of the question adequately.

Antony and Cleopatra

Question 3: Many candidates failed to grasp the immediate context of the extract, and a fair number misunderstood its details. 'Caesarion' was taken as a reference to Caesar and the 'brave Egyptians all' taken, out of context, to be fighting him. Closer readers, however, did good work on the language: 'let's mock the midnight bell', for example, 'reminds us of the lovers' old habits in Alexandria... but the alliteration suggests a hint of desperation as if this time the jollity is slightly forced.' Technical terminology was used effectively ('hyperbole', 'apostrophe', 'natural/cosmic imagery') to explain their views about the passage. There were many interesting variations on Cleopatra and a substantial number of references to the later respective death scenes of the two characters.

Question 7(a): This was the less popular of the two essay questions on this play. Some candidates found it difficult to get to grips with the specific demands of the question, sometimes veering off into the related territory of the love/duty antithesis. Antony provided most examples of faulty judgement, the favourite being his decision to fight by sea. Caesar's judgement was sometimes usefully contrasted with Antony's misjudgement. Cleopatra's false suicide and Enobarbus' desertion were also sometimes cited.

Question 7(b): Responses on Enobarbus' role and significance were, for the most part, confident and convincing. Enobarbus was revealed to be an engaging and generally sympathetic character. The usual pitfalls of generalised character sketches were apparent; but there was plenty of sophistication too. He was seen as 'validating Antony by epitomising loyalty', 'the voice of prophetic irony', the exponent of 'quirky, sarcastic, dry humour', 'a mediator who communicates directly with the audience'. Most answers made mention of the 'barge' speech and attempted to explore the character of Antony as he related to Enobarbus. Less able candidates usually concentrated almost entirely on the desertion and the death.

The Tempest

Question 4: Many candidates apparently relished the opportunity to discuss this revealing episode in one of the play's subplots. The character of Caliban clearly inspires interest in candidates at all levels of ability. He was seen in a variety of lights: most felt he is a victim of abuse by both his companions and by Prospero, repeatedly (and drunkenly) perceived as 'monster', but some argued that he 'selfishly manipulates the drunken Stephano'. Weaker candidates tended to get confused between prose and verse while some of those who identified Caliban's speech as verse were unsure what to say about it beyond 'this shows he is important'. Others, more interestingly, saw it as an indication of his intellectual or imaginative superiority to the coarse prose-speaking Stephano and Trinculo. Many candidates on this question, as sometimes on the other plays, added a general statement at the end about Caliban's role in the play, failing to link this with anything just considered in the passage.

Question 8(a): This was a less popular question than 8(b) but it did elicit some impressive answers. The best candidates tended not only to list the unanswered questions in the various plot strands at the end of the play, but also to construct a theory about the open-ended, questioning nature of the play. Prospero's forgiving of Antonio was one of the main topics considered; it was regarded either as part of the process of completion or as raising unanswered questions about Antonio's state of mind and the genuineness of the forgiveness. Many candidates made use of contextual information about the place of the play in Shakespeare's writing career and some were aware of genre considerations: the lack of complete resolution suggests romance rather than comedy.

Question 8(b): This was a very popular question. Ariel's tasks and relationship with Prospero were often narrated as much as analysed. Some candidates were under the impression that Ariel's service of Prospero is voluntary, based solely on respect. But those who knew the text better provided many interesting perspectives on Ariel's role: he is 'a force which makes the impossible possible' or which brings harmony out of disorder; he is Prospero's super-ego where Caliban is the id. Linked examples of the theme of servitude included 'Prospero's servitude to magic or his 'project', Shakespeare's to his writing.' Some weaker answers seemed to be influenced by filmed versions of the play (sometimes failing to distinguish these from the original text); others made very successful specific reference to details of directorial interpretation in stage productions.

2708 - Poetry and Prose

General

The majority of candidates showed a secure grounding in the texts and attempted systematically to address issues raised in questions and bullet points. Inevitably levels of critical understanding and command of literary discourse varied widely, but even quite limited work showed a basic awareness of what was required by the specification and the question paper. The best work revealed levels of sophisticated literary insight, concision and focus that would have scored highly at A2. Across most of the mark range it was clear that candidates were prepared for the demands of the question paper and had engaged actively in studying their texts.

However, that said, there remain areas of work at AS level where the performance of candidates could be strengthened. There was again a tendency, by no means confined to the more limited answers, to adopt a linear approach to (a) option questions, working through passages almost at times on a line-by-line basis. While this approach does not preclude relevant and perceptive comment, it makes it more difficult for candidates confidently to locate passages in the context of the work as a whole. They should be encouraged by example and practice to adopt more systematic critical procedures, focusing on effects of the writing, structural issues and thematic concerns in ways that facilitate movement between passage and text.

In (b) option answers there was again a tendency for candidates to gesture rather vaguely in the direction of passages to be considered in detail. As a result answers sometimes took the form of general essays on the text, with specific references so widely scattered across it that it was hard to see any particular part/parts as the focus of analysis. The most effective (b) option answers generally began by clearly identifying the passage/ passages selected for close critical exploration.

Finally most candidates are to be commended for the standard of written communication in these scripts. Of course, errors of spelling, punctuation and syntax were again evident, but there was very little confused writing. Many candidates would have benefited from planning the structure of their answers before beginning to write.

The most widely subscribed texts were Harrison's *Selected Poems*, *Persuasion* and *Dracula*. On the next level of popularity were *The Franklin's Tale*, *Jane Eyre*, *Heart of Darkness* and *A Passage to India*. Shakespeare's sonnets, the poems of Browning, Eliot and Thomas, Byron and Carver's *Short Cuts* were in the next level. There were very few answers on Stevenson, Gaskell and Barnes. With the marked exception of Harrison's poems, there was a strong preference across the ability range for (a) option questions. There were, however, some very good answers to (b)-type questions, clearly and critically focused on appropriate passages, which were confidently related to methods and concerns of the texts. The opportunity to deal with two passages suited some candidates very well, who managed comparative discussion with aplomb.

Comments on individual questions

SECTION A

Geoffrey Chaucer: *Franklin's Tale*

Question 1(a) was the more popular option. The fullest answers explored the passage in close detail, teasing out its ironies, ambiguities and paradoxes in relation to the text as a whole, and often showing impressive awareness of generic convention, with some interesting comment on what the writing suggests about the personality and motivation of the Franklin; while some answers attributed intention to Chaucer, forgetting the mediation of the Franklin, there was also some well-informed discussion of the *Tale's* place in *The Canterbury Tales* more widely. Work in the sound/competent range tended to concentrate on the 'character' of Dorigen, her love for her husband and the outcomes of their eccentric relationship; almost all noted the "melodramatic", "over-the-top" excesses of Dorigen's behaviour in this passage.

On question 1(b) most candidates considered the passage recounting the brothers' trip to 'Orliens', the meeting with the young scholar and the evening of entertainment and magic shows that ensued. There were some well-focused and perceptive analyses of the 'magic' on offer, the narrator's equivocal attitude to it, the multi-layered ironies and ambiguities that Chaucer invests in tale and teller. Some interesting discussions discriminated between "natural" and "unnatural" magic, explored relations between "pagan" and "Christian" values, and the contribution of magic to the *Tale's* concern with "illusion/reality".

Shakespeare: *Complete Sonnets*

Question 2(a) was the more popular option: responses ranged over a number of relevant sonnets. The fullest answers showed detailed knowledge of the collection as a whole and its complex emotional structure, as well as of the micro-structure and imagery patterns of specific sonnets, with sensitive, even, at times, moving comment on Shakespeare's treatment of the ageing process, with its attendant frustrations and ironies, in particular the supreme irony that only in art can love remain young and untarnished. Some answers on this question did little more than explanatory paraphrase of the set sonnet: here the limitations of the line-by-line approach were particularly apparent.

On question 2(b) most answers, following the suggestion of the question's lead quotation, explored ways in which sonnets offer the immortality of verse (eg a selection from 15, 17, 18, 19, 63, 65); while the occasional answer turned into a catalogue without much discussion, there was a good deal of sensitive analysis of variations on this common theme. Some answers took a different tack, exploring ways in which sonnets exemplified, thereby implicitly "celebrating" the power of poetry: this approach again led to some thoughtful discussion of the range and variety of poetic expression in the collection, though again some answers simply listed favourite examples without much reflection on the effects of the writing. Some particularly interesting answers included discussion of Sonnet 76, where Shakespeare apparently bemoans his own lack of "variation" and "invention" as a sonneteer, noting that nevertheless this is extremely powerful as a love poem and example of the sonnet form. On both options, the fullest answers considered effects of structure (cited specifically in bullet point 2) as well as imagery.

Lord Byron: *Selected Poems*

Relatively few answers were submitted on Byron, mostly on the (b) option. On both options many answers were heavily freighted with contextual material relating Byron's personal life and/or (less frequently) historical circumstances.

On question 3(a) this generalised discussion sometimes distracted from close attention to the passage. Those answers which explored the effects of the writing commented sensitively on the internal contrasts in the set passage, from the early social activity, through suspense, the details of battle to the reflections on Napoleon (some interesting discussion on ways in which Napoleon relates to the concept of the "Byronic hero"); the variety of these effects, within a rigorously sustained stanzaic form, was well noted by candidates.

Answers on question 3(b) often selected 'Fare Thee Well', 'Sonnet on Chillon' and 'I watched thee', though there was some thoughtful discussion of other kinds of "intensity of emotion", such as the passionate evocation of nature in *Childe Harold* and the fierce political animosity evident in stanzas from *Don Juan*. Some candidates had clearly responded to this poetry enthusiastically.

Robert Browning: *Poems*

The two options were about equally chosen. While some answers on question 4(a) resorted to simplifying explication, others traced sensitively the poem's representation of the elusive experience of love as the poet characteristically constructs it in this text, commenting thoughtfully on the relations between history, landscape and emotion; some candidates were evidently intrigued by Browning's directness and delicacy in expressing feeling, and the philosophical nature of the ending. Biographical material was often relevantly adduced, and the poem compared with various others (eg 'A Lovers' Quarrel', 'A Woman's Last Word', 'Any Wife to any Husband', 'The Last Ride Together', 'One Way of Love') to illustrate the range of emotional experience that Browning's poems address.

On question 4(b) there was sometimes the sense that candidates had a limited range of poems at their disposal: 'My Last Duchess' was once again the most popular choice, though many candidates found it difficult to adapt their material to the opportunities of the particular question; 'Porphyria's Lover' was the next most popular, usually more easily related to the question. 'Andrea del Sarto' and 'Fra Lippo Lippi' were usually treated appropriately, and the ironies/paradoxes of eg 'The Bishop Orders his Tomb ... ' were thoroughly explored in some vigorous answers. Where the question's key terms were directly addressed, "Complexity" and "important" were generally well handled, and the writing revealed some interesting personal responses – almost as if the candidates surprised themselves by the effects.

TS Eliot: *Selected Poems*

Question 5(a) was the more popular option, though many of these answers explored issues inevitably relevant to 5(b), often referring to the other question in passing. Answers that looked closely at language, imagery and form explored ways in which London and its inhabitants together construct a view of contemporary conditions and experience. There was some excellent anatomising of the (non) relationship between clerk and typist, relating it tellingly to 20th (and 21st) century attitudes to casual sex and its aftermath, of which there is other evidence in the set passage. Elizabeth and Leicester were seen as either reminders of a more civilised/romantic era or signs that London has always been the setting for illicit sexual relationships ("twas ever thus" as a candidate remarked). Candidates who knew about the Fire Sermon noted that the reference represented a mode of spirituality/redemption seriously absent in the London of the poem; others were able to make something of fire as both a destructive and a purifying agent; however, the candidate who wrote "the ending doesn't seem to make much sense" was not alone in finding the poetry difficult. Most answers linked the passage to others in *The Waste Land*, but there were some telling allusions to 'Prufrock', 'Preludes', 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night', among others.

Among the fewer answers on question 5(b) there was some thoughtful discussion of the double-edged irony of Eliot's exploration of relations between past and present: some considered personal aspects of this issue, taking 'Gerontion', 'Prufrock' and 'Portrait of a Lady' as evidences of personal loss and decline; some explored the historical landscape of *The Waste Land* for evidence of the decay of civilised values and behaviour; there was some very interesting discussion of the effects of Eliot's literary quotations/allusions in bringing together past and present in a particularly vivid way to illustrate decline of love/faith/culture. Interestingly, on both options there was less biography than was the case with Shakespeare and Browning, and more sustained focus on the ills of the modern world.

Edward Thomas: *Selected Poems*

Most candidates opted for question 6(a), and a poem which seemed to be very familiar to most of them. The fullest answers demonstrated a pleasing ability to engage with the elusive quality of Thomas' writing, intimating feelings, sensations, thoughts but refusing/unable to address them more directly: most saw 'Old Man' as embodying the poet's centrally characteristic qualities. More limited responses focused on the poet's fascination with names and their functions and the ever presence of a 'dark' element in even his lightest seeming pieces. 'The Unknown Bird' and 'The Other' were popular choices for wider discussion.

Among the fewer answers on question 6(b) these last two poems, together with 'Old Man', were the most frequently presented, though some went to 'Liberty' to get a purchase on the question. Most answers agreed fairly straightforwardly that Thomas's poems are generally melancholy affairs, though a few explored the implications of "half in love with ..." to suggest that the poet's characteristic sense of regret/lack of fulfilment is at least partly self-willed ("he does choose to pursue the Other, somebody else might choose not to ..."), and that his poems stop short of resolution. Some found this strategy unsatisfying; some seemed to find it profoundly sympathetic.

Tony Harrison: *Selected Poems*

Few candidates selected the (a) option. Answers on this passage that adopted a linear approach often did badly, offering little more than notes on points that seemed important, and while there were also some vigorous reviews of methods and concerns. All recognised that the skinhead is another "self" of the poet and that the sustained aggression throughout is a skirmish in the writer's long war with himself. Most took a shot at the contrasting registers of language and found relevant links with other poems in which the poet engages with the "divisions" in his history and sense of himself (indeed, in which ones does he not?). However, there were very few really effective accounts of the passage as a "conclusion", in drawing together the concerns of family, class, the urban context, personal identity, language registers and the pre-occupation with the nature and functions of poetry.

Question 7(b) played into a strong hand with most candidates. The fullest answers explored their chosen poems with confident literary awareness, sharply aware of the social, domestic and psychological dimensions of Harrison's constructions of "class", drawing on a wide range of reference to, among others, 'Allotments', 'Durham', 'National Trust', 'Working', 'A Good Read', 'Breaking the Chain', 'Stately Home'.

Anne Stevenson: *Granny Scarecrow*

Very few answers were submitted on Anne Stevenson, most of them on question 8(b). Among the few answers on question 8(a) there were some very impressive analyses of 'An Angel', superbly moving between explication and commentary, considering language, imagery and structure very easily and neatly; the poem's sharpness of observation and expression, its impressionistic imagery and movement between modes of consciousness were enthusiastically

explored. On the other hand, some candidates seemed rather at a loss for a way in to the discussion of the poem.

On question 8(b), similarly, some energetic answers took 'Arioso Dolente' as a fruitful point of departure, with wider reference to e.g. 'for my grandchildren when they become grandparents' and 'Freeing Lizzie'. Weaker answers offered lists of titles with summarising comment, but little analysis of the effects of the writing.

Section B

Jane Austen: *Persuasion*

Question 9(a) proved slightly the more popular option. Most candidates sensibly realised that the question 9(a) passage provided ample opportunity for detailed discussion of all the principal concerns and methods of the novel and many seized on it with relish: there was much well directed commentary on class/property-based values, vanity, self-regarding presumption, imagined suffering and emotional aridity on the one hand; and on the other, values based on human worth, selflessness, sincerity, genuine suffering, stoicism and resilience. Most answers were at least sound and thorough, addressing the task set and making relevant links with the wider text. The fullest answers were among the best seen this session, alert to the (often ironic) effects of the writing and, particularly, to the eloquent patterning of characterisation in the novel as a whole ("each character shows us something about others – for example, compare Mrs Smith with Mrs Clay ...").

Answers on question 9(b) divided fairly sharply. On the one hand answers concentrated on Wentworth as the "romantic lead", appropriate partner for Anne in his consideration, steadfastness of disposition, wealth and social position and (less often) readiness to learn from experience; the fuller of these drew attention to his pragmatic readiness to modify his values in the light of experience, particularly in the Lyme episode, foregrounding the thin line between strength of character and waywardness. Other answers went on to discuss the character's symbolic value in the novel, in the context of the changing early 19th century British society, exemplifying (with Admiral and Mrs Croft) the values and experience of an alternative social order, contrasting in centrally significant ways with Sir Walter and with Mr William Elliot.

Charlotte Bronte: *Jane Eyre*

Question 10(a) was by far the more popular option. Candidates of all levels of ability engaged fully with both the passage and the issues it raises. Many links were forged with the Red Room episode and Thornfield Hall's destruction ("foreshadowing" was used especially well as a term and analysed as a technique). Rochester was mainly critically considered here, his motives in lying to Jane almost universally interpreted as pure deception (rather than an "act of love" intended to protect Jane from a truth he offers to reveal in a year and a day). The passage's gothic qualities were well recognised and this insight often led to fruitful responses. There was well informed and interesting discussion of Bertha's role and significance in the novel – as Jane's mirror image/ alter ego, as embodiment of the dangerous element of passion, as signalling the damage inherent in colonial/ patriarchal relationships (some thoughtful references here to *Wide Sargasso Sea*). Jane's role as both narrator and participant was evaluated infrequently, but very perceptively when the issue was addressed.

Judicious selection of relevant passages was a key to success in the fewer answers on question 10(b). Blanche Ingram and Rochester were frequently examined in their relation to Jane at crucial moments of her development; the presentation of the Brocklehurst family offered the opportunity to consider class issues in relation to other concerns. Bertha's "position" in the novel's social hierarchy was surprisingly very infrequently commented on (perhaps she is deemed too far outside society to be worthy of consideration?).

Elizabeth Gaskell: *Mary Barton*

Few answers were submitted on this text; question 11(a) was the more popular option. The passage set in 11(a) provided all candidates with plenty to discuss in its presentation of contrasting life styles and attitudes between workers and masters. Answers explored Gaskell's methods in describing the conditions of working class living, noting the energy and anger implicit in the writing; describing the master's house through the eyes of a worker was seen as effective manipulation of narrative point of view. The contrast between the supportive relations between workers and Carson's relative indifference to individuals and their circumstances was also fully explored. The fullest answers considered the effects of the fairly blunt exposition and the consciously didactic progress of the narrative, without losing sight of the force of the novel.

The fewer answers on question 11(b) found helpful passages to illustrate the "condition of England" issue, some concentrating on accounts of living conditions, some discussing the presentation of relations between employers and workers, some addressing wider political issues, referring to historical developments – some well-informed on the Chartists' experience. While some answers were weighed down by contextual material, in general this aspect of study was well handled. Fuller answers – on both options - considered the effect of the narrative voice on the direction and tone of the narrative: as on other novels: this aspect of the novel would be a fruitful one for candidates to consider more fully.

Bram Stoker: *Dracula*

This was a very popular text; with question 12(a) the more popular option. The question 12(a) passage gave every opportunity for candidates to consider the development of the novel's main concerns and methods. There was detailed discussion of all the Gothic tropes, with particular emphasis on gender relations, fear and loathing of the unknown and of foreigners, the limited efficacy of science and rationalism, the need for understanding of and sympathy with deep and dark sources of ancient wisdom not found in university extension lecture handbooks; the sexual under-/over-tones of the passage were thoroughly considered, together with the testimony to Dracula's power ("... four men cannot replace what he has taken..."). While some answers used the passage as a launch-pad for general discussion of issues and concerns (often well done but lacking grounding in critical analysis) most were alert to effects of the writing. Some interesting answers put this passage against the later episode when the crew of light gather again round Lucy's body to carry out a different kind of procedure, noting the parallels between them.

Most answers on question 12(b) showed awareness of the variety of narrative modes and strategies in the text and the ways in which they work to involve the readers and shape their responses. The deeper reader-involvement invited by first person narrative was most often exemplified by discussion of Harker's encounter with the three vampire women, exploring the intense contradictions in Harker's responses. The two accounts of Dracula's attack on Mina were sometimes interestingly compared. Many candidates noted that Dracula is allowed no direct voice in the narrative; fewer that Van Helsing's voice is also indirectly represented.

Joseph Conrad: *Heart of Darkness*

This text was of middling popularity and generated some enthusiastic, engaged answers on both options, though most candidates chose question 13(a). Most candidates were aware of the profound ambivalence in Marlow's attitude - both to what he sees and reports in the 13(a) passage, and also to the entire imperialist project in Africa; directly or indirectly, many answers acknowledged Conrad's presentation of his narrator as part of the problem rather than its solution. All were aware of Achebe's notorious charge of racism against Conrad, which most answers challenged intelligently. Linear discussions of the passage often did not reach the second part,

missing therefore the effects of the elaborately ironic description of the white agent, Marlow's response to whom intensifies the ironies of the passage and the text as a whole. Some answers tested Marlow's language scrupulously; a few noted the eloquent suggestiveness of the cotton twisted round the native's neck – "a reminder of Britain, as the ivory dominoes on the Nelly are a reminder of Africa".

Among the comparatively few answers on question 13(b) there was some sensitive discussion of the effects of the "Chinese boxes" complexity of the narrative (a tale within a tale within a tale). Refreshingly few claimed that "Marlow is the voice of Conrad"; on the contrary, most saw Marlow's failures of perception, his retreat into the security of practicalities ('rivets'), his inadequate conceptualisation of women, as subtly crafted aspects of a complex characterisation rather than an unconscious revelation of the writer's own views. Many chose the exchange with the Intended as the episode revealing the most about Marlow and his (lack of?) development in the novel as a whole.

EM Forster: *A Passage to India*

Question 14(a) was by far the more popular option. In a number of probing explorations, various narrative and thematic strands of a complex text were seen as coming together in the given passage. Fuller answers considered the effects of dialogue as well as the narrative in the passage, ascribing the apparently inconsequential changes of direction in the conversation to covert uneasiness, different conceptions of 'conversation' and good manners. Some particularly perceptive answers explored the shifts of point of view between the consciousnesses of the two characters and the third person narrative voice: "we hear each of them is thinking, and then we hear what it means"; "Forster presents each of them as a representative figure of his own community".

Among the fewer answers on question 14(b) there was some effective insights into the nature of "muddles" and "mysteries" in the novel and the ways in which the readers' not knowing (indeed never knowing) certain things enhances the impact of the writing. The fullest responses showed impressive understanding of the distinction between a muddle and a mystery and the subtle ways in which Forster uses a preference for one or the other as a key factor in his characterisation of the principal figures in the book. The expedition to the Marabar caves provided most of the passages selected for consideration.

Julian Barnes: *A History of the World in 10½ Chapters*

This was very much a minority text. Question 15(a) was the more popular option: the passage set served as a very good springboard to a host of appropriate issues for candidates whose knowledge of the text was very secure: class and generational relationships; expectations confounded; relations between catastrophe and its various forms of representation ("can echoes prove the truth of the thing being echoed?"); "survival of the fittest ... merely the most cunning"; "history repeats itself"; even a reference to woodworm.

Among the few answers on question 15(b) "connections" of various kinds were explored, both thematic and narrative: eg shipwrecks and other kinds of catastrophe. There were a few very well informed and critically alert answers also considering stylistic echoes and parallels.

Raymond Carver: *Short Cuts*

More centres choose this text each examination season, a pleasing development since candidates have so obviously enjoyed it and found much in its concerns and methods to identify with. Answers were about evenly divided between the two options.

In question 16(a) the best responses explored the construction of Al as a characteristic Carver male, an inadequate and frightened man at the end of his tether and looking, like others in this text, in all the wrong places for a solution ("I'll find the dog and then things will be all right..."). Comments on the effects of the writing concentrated on the pared down, emptied out style, seen as inseparable from the concerns of the story and the text as a whole, resisting coherence and closure ("No epiphanies here," a candidate wrote).

On both options, perhaps in response to these qualities of the writing, some answers resorted to basic narrative rehearsal. *Jerry and Molly and Sam*, along with *They're Not Your Husband*, *Vitamins* and *Tell the Women We're Going*, were also a favoured choice for discussion in answers on question 16(b). Absence of love, or the neglect, even abuse of it, was seen as a recurring theme in Carver's stories, which, bleakly, offer no happy endings. Candidates saw Carver's refusal to soothe the reader as his great strength. Carver, candidates opined in various ways, writes it like it is. There was some interesting discussion of contextual factors on this text, relating to a sense of betrayal, in Reagan's America, of the interests of the working class – "blue-collar tragedy" was how one candidate described the characteristic Carver narrative.

2710 - Poetry and Drama pre- 1900

General comments

Examiners saw some excellent performances this summer. The general standard of response was high: candidates clearly enjoyed the texts and had showed good analytical skills. Good coverage of all the Assessment Objectives was seen, with many candidates offering engaged personal opinion. Most were able to write with relevance and articulacy. Most candidates used a range of relevant quotations, of various lengths, both from the texts but also from major literary critics.

Candidates seemed confident in stating what they thought; a variety of possible interpretations were considered and other critics were often deployed in positive ways. In this Unit Candidates are required 'to articulate an independent opinion and judgement in the light of the question's proposition' (Assessment Objective 4). The better candidates did indeed assess and judge their own opinions as the essay was progressing. When used successfully, other opinions and interpretations were not just props, but were used either to support candidates' own ideas or challenged and dismissed. Humour and wit often accentuated the individuality of candidates' ideas. Many candidates understood the need to explore alternative possibilities and better candidates confidently challenged the prompt questions or argued confidently, exploring ambiguity and complexity.

There was less evidence this year of candidates paraphrasing narrative or offering a pre-prepared answer re-moulded to fit the question. Answers were considered and compelling, often punchy in their refutation of major critical theories with which many showed real familiarity. Centres are advised to be aware that there is a fine balance between the study of critics as an aid to determining a personal view, and drilling. A personal response is preferable: it is best if the candidates have read the criticism in context themselves and made their own choice of quotation. The tactic of opening each essay with a prepared quotation often inhibited a genuinely open response to the question: all too often the quotation was irrelevant to the question set, and the candidate manipulated the argument to make it relevant to the task.

Centres are also advised to make candidates aware of the important AO3 requirement for evidence for opinions. Generalisation will not do: AO3 analysis is essential and in the poetry section the ability to give detailed illustrations is vital.

This year there seemed to be fewer Band Four answers (sound but limited by broad assertions and generalisations, insufficiently supported by text). Evidence of background knowledge of genre (AO2) and historical parallels (AO5ii) or differing audience reaction was used more aptly. Many candidates had seen productions of the plays and were able to approve or reject directors' interpretations.

Responses at the lower range were often simply assertive with limited acknowledgement or analysis of AO3. There was often too much historical (and biographical, philosophical, religious, socio-economic) information at the expense of argument. (AO5ii). The question paper is about the study of literature; therefore, the text needs to be the focus of a good answer.

Comments on individual questions

Section A

Chaucer: *The Merchant's Prologue and Tale*

Question 1

Both questions were tackled with enthusiasm.

Question 1(a) A range of answers was seen here, some going for amusing and some for disturbing, and some for a mixture. There was almost always some sense of genre; 'fabliau' and the parody of courtly love was practically always mentioned. Wide-ranging views were represented. Personal horror or distaste was sometimes in evidence though this often seemed overstated and unconvincing. With some, the term 'disturbing' caused some problems; they were not sure on what level to work with the concept. Too many thought it just meant 'shocking'. In particular the 'slakke neck' and other grotesque physical details of character and action caused alarm. Strong answers usually showed an awareness of the layered structure of the Tale: the Merchant as misogynist narrator, Chaucer exposing him as such. There was much sensitive response to readers' changing reactions and sympathies during the course of the Prologue and Tale - as we learn more about May, for instance, or as we become more aware of the Merchant's agenda. Many of the best answers explored the narrative framework of *The Canterbury Tales* as a whole - how the Merchant has personal and social agenda, both as a disgruntled husband refuting a tale of a patient wife, and as a competitor in a storytelling competition who wants to get the vote. Some of the most interesting answers argued that the Tale was simultaneously amusing and disturbing, that laughter gave way to shock when 'in he throng', or that shock changed to laughter thanks to the gods' intervention.

Question 1(b) This question often elicited, as question 1(a) sometimes did, useful coverage of 'fabliau' and courtly love. They were seen either as explanations of the lovers' stereotypical conduct or - particularly in the case of courtly love - to be contrasted with their individually human, non-stereotypical conduct. An interesting answer argued that at first sight May and Damyan seem simply to be acting out the courtly stereotype, which is 'based essentially on deceit'; soon, however, it becomes clear that courtly love is being parodied - the lovers act more according to the dictates of fabliau - and so they cannot so easily be exculpated from the charge of coldness and scheming. Damyan's role was sometimes seen as too insignificant to excite sufficient love or hate to make us see him as cold or scheming; May reacting not coldly but humanly to such a drastically unsuitable marriage. Many good answers considered the narrative framework, while the weaker answers produced simple character studies.

Herbert: *Selected Poems*

Question 2

Some outstanding essays were seen; scholarly, informed and thoroughly engaged with the question. Excellent AO3 analysis was often present to support a lively argument. However, less successful answers tended to deal with too small a range of poems and these answers also seemed to have little grasp of what religious faith meant to Herbert. Consequently, these essays had a surface quality. Some quite uncertain answers mistook complex expression of simple faith for the view that Herbert's faith was merely simple.

Question 2(a) Good answers mentioned Herbert's career from secular to religious life and analysed his use of imagery drawn from the former to illustrate the latter. Some gave an account of Anglicanism and how the poetry served its purposes. Some responses were disappointing because they did not consider the literary context of coterie poetry and the tradition of baroque wit. Even the best answers seemed to consider the poetry not as poetry but as prayer or sermon.

That said, there was a wide range of reference that showed genuine engagement with poetic technique.

Question 2(b) Most candidates tackled this well. It needed subtlety to grasp the tension between faith and doubt but many used this to discuss the characteristic structure of many of Herbert's poems, moving from chaos and doubt to order and certainty. One perceptive candidate argued that Herbert's aim is in fact, on the contrary, 'to simplify and try to comprehend a complex faith'. This he achieves 'through lucid presentation of his inner turmoil' illustrated by 'accessible imagery and metaphors'. Another wrote that Jordan 1 and 2 both 'convey the tension between poetic urges and linguistic humility'.

Milton: *Paradise Lost* Books 9 and 10

Question 3

Many sophisticated commentaries were seen, as well as good solid answers and at every level. Both answers were popular; in question 3(a) the best answers went beyond a study of Satan to analyse metafiction: Question 3(b) elicited a variety of responses. Strong answers had in mind a clear definition of 'heroic'. Such candidates were often able to see Books 9 and 10 in the context of the whole text and brought in references to Books 1 and 2 and Book 4, examining Milton's use of the epic and his intentions in writing *Paradise Lost*.

Question 3(a) Most candidates realised that the thesis of this question had to be countered with the redemption and optimism at the end of Book 10. In other words, they saw destruction as an aspect of God's providence, one candidate describing destruction as having a 'domino effect'. The best answers considered Milton's claimed purpose and gave an account of the role played by each of the five major figures in the narrative, and the ways in which the various kinds of destruction were carried out. Some answers were sometimes rather unfocused, with a tendency to narrative. But there were perceptive pieces looking at destruction and self-destruction (particularly in Satan, 'the quintessence of destruction'). Many argued perceptively that, although the very title of '*Paradise Lost*' suggests destruction, hope remains in the notion of the '*felix culpa*' and in the workable relationship established between Adam and Eve by the end of Book 10.

Question 3(b) Most candidates engaged closely with this question. The changing relationship between Adam and Eve - which of them seems stronger or more heroic, more human or more interesting - was studied, often in close detail. An impressive amount of biblical, classical and historical knowledge was well integrated with argument. 'In his anxiety to portray women as the 'informer sex' Milton has created an unrealistically righteous Adam - he unwittingly alienates the reader from the character he wishes most to endorse.' 'Ironically, Adam is the first man but he is not human at the beginning of the Books, whereas we relate to Eve, find her more interesting, because she is more like us.' A good number wrote persuasively about the theological implications of her closeness to the post-lapsarian reader. There was some interesting consideration of the 'heroic' aspect of the question: Adam as a rather bland Christian hero at the beginning, Eve (and Satan) showing a hero's traditional more 'adventurous' epic side, and eventually Adam and Eve achieving true heroism by humbly admitting their mistakes. One candidate wrote '...the active choice to succumb to God (the etymology of humiliation, humus, implies a return to the ground, to the will of God) is enhanced in typical epic form, with Homeric repetition. Whilst the physical fall to the ground is suggested, ironically it is through such humility that Adam and Eve become close to God.'

The least successful answers did not consider the whole text, some essays focusing on Book Nine alone, and one or two candidates seemed to confuse 'interesting' with 'naughty'.

Dryden: Selected Poems

Question 4

A few excellent answers to question 4(a) were seen: close attention to language, good understanding of satire and cultural context, awareness that a portrait like Zimri's can at once amuse and disgust. The answers were for the most part scholarly and engaged. Candidates understood the political and social world in which Dryden lived and they also understood the satirical conventions and style.

Blake: Selected Poems

Question 5

Blake was the most popular text in Section A. The range of achievement on both questions was enormous: good answers looked at the context, but did not allow it to outweigh the poetry, and some excellent AO3 literary analysis was noted. Less successful candidates confined themselves to biographical and historical context material and only one or two poems, listing examples with reference to children and conflict. It was good to see that more answers this session drew on writing outside the two 'Songs' although the basic material of both Blake questions (especially the 'child' one) tended to come from Innocence and Experience, often discussed in considerable detail.

Question 5(a) Examiners saw a very wide range of responses to this question. The most assured referred to a wide range of poems and used the concept of childish innocence as a secure platform to discuss Blake's concern with freedom, justice, corruption, cruelty and hypocrisy. There was some perceptive use of 'Introduction' to Innocence with the child as the poet's muse. One answer suggested that the reader 'must become as a little child' in order to respond fully to the poems' simple language, rhymes and message. But often hints of a darker element were traced. 'As Blake demonstrates in his art-work, the child will always be reaching for those grapes of experience that change a human from love to terror.' Examples were drawn most often from the Chimney Sweep and Holy Thursday poems and 'London', but there was also some interesting writing about 'The Book of Thel' and Thel's 'complicated journey into adulthood'. In less secure answers, some of the many answers on 'the child' simply listed instances of children in the poems. A surprising number also moved rapidly away from the topic to 'other things Blake was interested in'. Sadly, often these answers missed the links between 'the child' and 'other things' - especially nature - which could have kept them more clearly focused. The very weakest answers offered a brief discussion of two or three poems featuring children, and some discussion of child labour, etc. - often described as 'Victorian' social evils - and sentimental responses about chimney sweeps.

Question 5(b) 'This was handled well with a wide range of references. Many wrote interestingly about various conflicts: between innocence and experience, reason and energy; in 'The Lamb' and 'The Tyger'; between 'different perceptions of the nature of deity'; in the background at least, between the 'liberty, equality, fraternity and innocence' of 1789 and the Reign of Terror and experience which followed. In 'Songs of Innocence' 'by assuming an innocent and child-like manner Blake forces the reader into conflict.' Some essays looked closely at the heart of Blake's moral, social and political philosophy, and how he used his poems didactically, the best ones noting the paradox inherent in formally preaching liberation - Blake as a rebellious child of neo-Classicism and 18th century piety. Good answers ranged widely through the text, referring to the Marriage of Heaven and Hell and showed Blake's rebellion against the establishment without suggesting that he was permanently in trouble with the authorities. Less secure candidates talked rather generally about the poems with occasional references to 'conflict' which sometimes meant only 'contrast', which in turn was weakened by the failure to see that 'innocence' and

'experience' are often not diametrically opposed. Context all too often got in the way here and conflict seemed to draw responses almost like history essays on the French revolution, the American war of Independence, and the industrial revolution.

Hopkins: *Selected Poems*

Question 6

Relatively few answers on Hopkins were submitted. Candidates communicated their enthusiasm for Hopkins' work in scholarly, perceptive and engaged answers (with excellent AO3). Several tried to answer either option by giving the content of one or two poems and mentioning key words from the question. There were valiant attempts to engage with difficult concepts like 'inscape' and 'instress'.

Question 6(a) Biographical material was often put to good use but on many occasions received more attention than the poetry. 'The Wreck of the Deutschland' was one of the poems most often seen as relevant to the question.

Question 6(b) This was a little more popular than question 6(a). There was some good close reading of a wide range of poems. Many answers were structured around the contrast between the uncertainty of the 'Terrible Sonnets' and the certainty of the 'Spring Sonnets', showing order and certainty in a world in which God is immanent. But the division was frequently felt to be less simple: the lover of 'dappled things' is not unambiguously looking for order and certainty; the sheer variety of subject explored in the poems also counts against a simple love of order.

Section B

Shakespeare: *Hamlet*

Question 7

This was much the most popular text chosen and it was very often a delight to see it being treated with freshness. Question 7(a) was the more frequently answered. Weaker candidates were able to structure their responses, dealing with the two women separately but making occasional comparisons to unify the essay. Good answers of course managed to form a view and support it from text and context with a masterly grasp of the play. Question 7(b) produced very interesting answers, especially in the upper bands. Again it was their ability to use their grasp of the whole text which gave their answers authority.

Question 7(a) Many candidates were able to submit good answers to this question. Most chose to consider the characters separately, and most agreed with the assertion but qualified it in Gertrude's case, although almost all recognised that as a beleaguered widow she might have had little option in her choice of life. Some explored the idea that the women are victims of the playwright's (society-imposed) prejudice against women - making them 'frail' and not giving them many lines - while others studied them as victims of themselves, Hamlet, Claudius, or the requirements of tragedy: 'Gertrude and Ophelia's lives are scripted by the men.'. Most distinguished between Gertrude and Ophelia and expressed strong, often coherent views about which is more victimised. There was informed and energetic discussion of Gertrude's innocence or foolishness and her complicity, or lack of it, in Claudius' deeds; Shakespeare allows, some decided, for different interpretations in different productions. Ophelia's treatment by Polonius, Laertes and Hamlet was sympathetically considered. Only madness at last gives the oppressed and repressed Ophelia a voice. She is victimised even by Gertrude's idealised account of her death. She is 'a victim of her femininity, just as her garments drag her down when she drowns'. Another candidate countered this by writing that 'Gertrude stays afloat in the choppy seas of testosterone by clinging to the source of power.' Very few essays dealt with the two characters comparatively, for example contrasting their stations in life, their types of discourse, their complex

relationship with the protagonist and so on, although almost all managed to elucidate the dramatic trick of having the mother poetically announcing the death of the lover. Some essays concentrated too much on Hamlet's behaviour towards the two women. Ophelia's madness gave rise to some debate about her innocence following Rebecca West's arguments that her songs hint that she and Hamlet were lovers, Branagh's film version was also used to further this debate and many candidates picked up on the Oedipal interpretation of Gertrude and Hamlet.

Question 7(b) Strong answers often showed an impressive level of consideration of the philosophical issues (AO5ii) suggested by the question - emotion, reflection and action. Most candidates felt there was a shift from reflection to fatalistic surrender to action in the mood of the play. Though a number of answers became embroiled in plot-dominated explanation of how it is that Hamlet finally comes to take action, most found the emotion/reflection debate a profitable one. 'Emotion and reflection are the stuff of the play and particularly its soliloquies'. Laertes contrastingly acts on emotion only. An alert writer noted the importance of 'reflection in a more literal sense - Hamlet's comparison of himself with other young men: Horatio, Laertes and Fortinbras'. It was pointed out that Horatio is 'the perfect balance between reason and emotion'. Many wrote well on the difficulty of separating emotion and reflection - of distinguishing, for example, between his general reflections on women and his particular emotions about his mother. One candidate challenged an accepted reading of the end by observing that 'whilst some critics believe Hamlet has entrusted himself to a newfound 'divinity that shapes our ends' his nihilistic tone in fact suggests a resignation to fate which is complemented by the lack of soliloquies.'

Shakespeare: *Measure for Measure*

Question 8

'Measure for Measure' was also quite popular, and, as with 'Hamlet', students who had seen productions often referred to them very intelligently. The minority who chose Question 8(a) could find corruption in many of the characters, but often did not make much of the *differences*. The Duke came in for much opprobrium, often argued very cogently. Question 8(b) enabled candidates to point to how the events were unsettling and sometimes discuss why this was 'suitable'.

Question 8(a) The best essays – and some were excellent – looked at both the movers and shakers and the low-lives, but many focused too much on Angelo and the Duke without considering Lucio et al. It was refreshing to read how many could ably critique Isabella's severity while pitying her enforced hypocrisy and silence at the end. Corruption was sometimes rather loosely understood as any kind of sin or wrongdoing. In the attempt to list different sorts of corruption some candidates fell into paraphrase, and there was a tendency to assert rather than demonstrate points: sometimes, for instance, it was stated too baldly that for the Duke to disguise himself as a friar is in itself unequivocally corrupt. There was some useful and interesting material on various interpretations of the play in production. Occasionally, however, this was substituted for - rather than supplementing - argument based on textual reference.

Question 8(b) This was the less popular option. About half of those who answered it offered brilliant analyses of the final scene, treating it synecdochically as an index for the whole play, but many discussed events elsewhere in too much detail. Nevertheless, candidates showed an awareness of the author's deliberate complication of everything, and got into the spirit of the crucial term 'suitably'. Problem play elements were identified, including 'the failure to provide the easy certainties of comedy or tragedy', and such elements were seen as particularly evident at the end. Here 'the audience is left with a sense that although the situation has been diffused, the problems of justice and mercy and relationships remain unresolved'. For some candidates this was deliberate: 'a 'happy' rounded ending would detract from the play's message that there are problems and questions in life that are simply unanswerable'. Isabella's apparent lack of response to the Duke's proposal was a favourite topic for consideration, including some useful material on the way different productions have interpreted it. 'Silencing any response in his proposal with "But

fitter time for that,” Isabella is rendered into verbal helplessness, not uttering a single other line for the rest of the play’. Less secure answers tended to narrate the play, showing how it reaches its ending rather than discussing the suitability of that ending. As in other sessions, there was a fairly widespread belief that Lucio is actually to be executed.

Middleton: *The Changeling*

Question 9

Again, experience of productions was helpful. Some enthusiastic responses were seen, engaging candidates with macabre interpretations and structural appreciation. This text was answered by only a few candidates: most produced fluent, detailed answers.

Question 9(a) The burden of most answers was that ‘Isabella remains the sanest character, even though she lives in a madhouse and is surrounded by mad people’. ‘She has power whereas Beatrice thinks she has power’. There was no doubt that the sub-plot is ‘crucial’, although the inclusion of critical comments robustly opposed to this view gave several essays an incisive opening. Examples from production were also well used. Many (of the few who answered) knew about the play’s history in production and that sometimes the subplot has been omitted. They argued well for its importance, but could often have made better use of Isabella.

Question 9(b) Candidates found plenty to write about. Sensitive, well-rooted accounts of pity for the dead characters emerged. There was some evidence of personal empathy for Beatrice Joanna who seen as a prisoner of parental duty and social inhibitions, although some felt that Beatrice deserves no pity because she shows so little remorse. Such a conclusion was reached only after balanced debate about how far she is inexperienced and innocent and how far selfish, immoral or conniving. Where De Flores is concerned ‘it is not pity that the audience feel for his death, because his actions and general outlook on life have made it inevitable. It is more regret that such an interesting, complex and amusing character is lost’. One or two made a strong case for having no pity for Vermandero either, and some discriminated carefully between Beatrice Joanna (either excused because she was clearly insane, or pitied less because she was of the ruling class) and De Flores who gained supporters as the ugly outcast, rather as Edmund and Heathcliff do. There was generally more straightforward sympathy for Diaphanta, although it was acknowledged that a Jacobean audience might have been less tolerant.

Behn: *The Rover*

Question 10

All but the weakest scripts on this text showed an impressive grasp of text and ability to quote aptly. ‘The Rover’ was obviously popular with those few who studied it, some referring to a production they had seen on video.

Question 10(a) Most responses seemed to have some concept of carnival, and showed awareness of its attractions and pitfalls for the female characters particularly. The darker side of carnival was well explored through plot and character but more attention could have been paid to the very nature of carnival itself, for instance, it gives both freedom and inhibition, violence and sexual opportunity

Question 10(b) This was the more popular option and candidates argued persuasively for different degrees of victimhood. Opinions about Angelica Bianca contrasted strongly. For some, she aroused pity, others admiration and other disapproval. Personal empathy was supported by lively text. No candidates referred to the irony of her name.

Gay: *The Beggar's Opera*

Question 11

Few answers were seen. Question 11(a) was chosen by very few. Question 11(b) was more successfully answered with some lively modern parallels to Macheath and a strong sense of context shaping response. Better answers defined the word hero in literary terms. Weaker answers went down the line of 'attractive' but there were some good answers which looked at the role of the rake hero in other kinds of comedy: Restoration comedy or the anti hero or even the idea of the hero as a central figure were all helpful. Many candidates did seem to be floundering under contextual and political issues and wrote essays discussing who exactly Gay was satirising in an unfocussed way.

Shaw: *Mrs Warren's Profession*

Question 12

Both questions were chosen equally. This is an accessible text with plenty of issues for discussion. Those who answered were able to use the whole play and show real engagement. There was some lively, and not overpowering, discussion of the historical context.

Question 12(a) Gentleness not weakness amongst the men was carefully argued, often in intelligent lists, with critical opinions considered to support their own opinions. There was not always agreement on what constituted weakness and gentleness, but most defined their own terms and considered the characters thoughtfully, allowing them some development. For the most part Praed was seen as gentle, not weak, and Crofts as his opposite. Opinion was more divided on Frank, but one convincing account argued that 'under the facade of his 'agreeably disrespectful manners' he has a moral code which, in the end, supports Vivie: a true gentleness hidden for much of the play'.

Question 12(b) This again required candidates to define 'real life', and most did, coming to often very different and interesting conclusions. Some felt that Vivie was fleeing 'real life': the life responsible for the dress on her back, her financial and social position. Few, however, developed this point further by debating whether Vivie's new life in London could be felt to be equally real. Those who did think this through, however, came to the conclusion that the play deliberately fails to provide an unambiguous decision about which life is 'real', thus forcing the audience to go on thinking about the issues raised earlier. There was some relevant awareness of Ibsen's influence on Shaw, but more often contextual material consisted of rather generalised statements about the position of Victorian women. Most approved of Vivie's final choice 'to reject real life' but a few lively minds were less sympathetic about her rejection of her mother and the untidy complexity of real life for the safe, dry world of finance and mathematics. Some good candidates extended discussion of Shaw and his opinions and made intelligent use of the prologue to the play. Others revealed apt knowledge of the contemporary social world of working girls, prostitutes and feckless aristocracy.

2709 And 2711 - Coursework

This was in many respects a good session, with moderators consistently reporting that they had seen work of a high standard, together with evidence of greater accuracy in Centres' assessments. It was clear that overall teachers have become much more familiar with the requirements of both Units, and of the demands of the Assessment Objectives; there are still areas of concern, some quite significant, but there were also many occasions when moderators expressed real pleasure at what they were reading. Many Centres were to be congratulated on the accuracy of the assessments and the efficiency of their administration.

Whilst moderators generally commented upon the increasing confidence with which Centres are clearly approaching the two Units, there were certainly areas of concern, and there were Centres whose judgements were less confident or secure, and a few where the Specification requirements, or the demands of the five Assessment Objectives, were ignored or misunderstood, but it is important to appreciate that these concerns were significantly in the minority – the great majority of work was good, and often very good.

Administration was, in most instances, excellent; a quite significant number of Centres, however, did not adhere to the published deadline of 15 May for submission of marks and/or work, which is the same every year. Centres should be aware that delay in submission of marks and coursework may ultimately result in a delay in the issue of results.

Mark sheets (MS1), or the electronic equivalents, were in most cases properly and carefully completed, but there were again a few where moderators had to question an entry, either because the copy was illegible or because the mark entered was not the same as that on the candidate's work.

Cover sheets were generally invariably properly and helpfully completed, though a surprisingly large number of Centres failed to put candidate numbers, or even occasionally candidate names, on these sheets; more failed to write useful comments, and sometimes wrote nothing at all, in the box headed "Summative Comments".

Annotation was again generally full and helpful, and in most instances made very clear to the moderator how and why marks had been awarded, usually in reference to the Assessment Objectives and/or the Band Descriptions. A few Centres, however, made no annotations at all, and sometimes no summative comments either, which made moderation very hard indeed, and may even have disadvantaged candidates. A few Centres used the old mark scheme. A similarly very small number of Centres used a numerical score for each Assessment Objective, rather than adopting a more general weighting.

Length of work was, like last year, a generally minor concern; the overwhelming majority of folders (2709) or essays (2711) remained well within the 3000-word limit – and an increasing number of candidates helpfully (and in most instances honestly) indicated the total number of words. A few, however, did exceed the limit, despite the instructions on the reverse of the cover-sheet. It must be stressed that work which exceeds the word limit does not meet the requirements of the Specification and moderators are required to return it to the Centre for re-marking.

Centre assessments were in general this session in accordance with the mark scheme. There was again some tendency to be optimistic or generous, and a few Centres where marks were too severe. Centres did seem, though, to be rather more consistently secure in the way that they interpreted the demands of the Band Descriptions, and there were very few indeed where the marking was seriously out of line with agreed standards.

Assessment Objectives: again, in most instances it was very evident that Centres had used the Band Descriptions appropriately.

AO1 is dominant in Unit 2711, and as such carries greater assessment weight than any other single AO. What is required is an essay that is consistently well focused and cogently, tightly, argued; there must be more than just a sequence of ideas, no matter how good each one is – there must be a seamlessly controlled and structured argument. One moderator reported: “A few Centres confuse a close focus on the task with a clear structure to an essay. Even in some good essays a sustained focus upon the task did not necessarily mean that the candidates were presenting a coherently argued essay They may have a good number of key issues that they wish to include in an essay, but do not always perceive how to organise them into a structure.” This is something that must be taken into account by Centres marking a Unit 2711 essay. This is obviously not to say that structure and argument are unimportant at AS, but AO1 is of slightly less importance in Unit 2709 than in Unit 2711.

What was worrying, especially when almost every piece of work was word-processed, was the surprisingly high level of sheer *inaccuracy* of some candidates’ work, which contained simple and basic errors – spelling, punctuation, syntax – and these were very often unmarked by the Centre. Candidates’ skills in relation to Quality of Written Communication must be taken into account in reaching a final mark, but often they appeared not to have been.

AO2 has the same dominance in 2709 as does AO1 in 2711, carrying more weight than any other single assessment objective; this was occasionally an area of significant weakness, and one quite frequent reason why moderators had to recommend adjustments to marks. Candidates often wrote very good critical discussions of their selected passage, with close and detailed focus on the writer’s choice of language, form and structure, but then made little or even no attempt to link these matters to the text under study as a whole; this is a crucial element of AO2i, and where it was not attempted it led inevitably to weaker work; excellent AO3 writing (see below) cannot override the fact that AO2i is dominant. Candidates submitting 2711 work tended to manage this aspect of AO2 rather more successfully, showing and discussing ways in which selected parts or moments in their texts reflected or echoed what was written elsewhere.

The other part of AO2 relates to “*genre and period*”, and these aspects are similarly crucial, but again were not always addressed successfully in 2709; for higher-band marks they must be. The discussion need not be long or detailed, but there must be some indication that critical notice has been taken of the influences that the text’s *period* has had upon it – this will of course overlap with AO5 – and there must at the same time be at least some exploration of the *kind* of text that it is. In the case of 2709 this may be straightforward, in that poetry and drama lead immediately and unavoidably into genre areas, but for 2711, and for prose texts in 2709, candidates must demonstrate at least an awareness, and for higher marks a properly critical awareness, of the effects that different kinds of prose will have: for example, is it journalism, or (auto)biography? Is it Gothic? Is it Romantic? Does it have a first-person narrator? A third-person narrator? Multiple narrators? Is the narrator reliable (many candidates write on *The Great Gatsby*, *The Catcher in the Rye* or *Atonement*)? Is it post-modern? The list goes on, and necessarily so.

AO3 is relatively straightforward; most candidates, especially in 2709, address it well, though not always with quite enough emphasis upon its “*form and structure*” requirement. 2711 candidates, curiously perhaps, were often a little less confident in their handling of close reading, especially if they were presenting a single essay. There are various ways to manage it: some will begin with a detailed exploration of a short passage and move outwards from that to more general whole-text concerns; some will “break off” their argument at some point and look closely at a short extract; others, more confidently, will integrate this passage and its exploration into the flow of their argument; others, perhaps most confidently, will look at a number of brief extracts at various relevant points in their essay, and show how their stylistic and technical features can be seen to echo and resonate throughout the text. Whatever the approach, it is important to stress, particularly to those marking and annotating essays, that simple quotation is emphatically not

sufficient for AO3; moderators commonly reported that some Centres had noted “AO3” in the margin alongside each and every quotation, regardless of whether the candidate had actually done anything more than simply illustrating a point. One moderator noted, “Centres often reward with a tick and marginal annotation whenever a quotation is inserted, clearly thinking that that is enough to address AO3, and thus do not encourage candidates to engage closely with language or technique.”

Much more of a problem for many Centres was **AO4**, though there were more good examples of how to address this AO this year than last. It has to be stressed that personal opinion, no matter how well and sophisticatedly argued, is in itself insufficient for a high mark. The generic AO4 states that candidates must “*articulate independent opinions and judgements, **informed by different interpretations of literary texts by other readers***”. The Band Descriptions require that for any mark above Band One, in both Units 2709 and 2711, there must be clear evidence that a candidate is at the very least aware that other opinions than his/her own do exist, and for a Band Four or Five mark there must be a real “*engagement*” with such alternative opinions, in the form of clearly and fluently using them as a means of evolving a final personal view. As one moderator stated, “AO4 was well addressed with respect to individual interpretation, but many, many candidates failed entirely to consider or engage with other possible interpretations.” Sometimes essays had bibliographies but there was no sense in the essays of that material informing the argument or of specifics being engaged with; a bibliography is very helpful, but it does need to be both accurate and relevant.

As with AO3, **AO5** seemed to be handled with at least reasonable, and often very good, skill by the great majority of candidates and Centres; there was a general understanding that while there is no need for lengthy introductory paragraphs outlining relevant biographical or historical matters, these concerns might be helpful as part of later arguments. Most essays contained sufficient brief comments and references to make it clear that notice was being taken of contextual matters, whether relating to the time when the text was written or to the way in which it is being read now, years later. Unit 2709 candidates offering drama texts of course had the opportunity to consider the theatre as a context, with very many influences – audience reaction, individual actor or producer interpretation, management of stage and staging crafts, and so on, but candidates writing on one of the other genres should be made aware that some contextual reference is required.

Centres are reminded that where there is insufficient evidence of AO4 (or indeed any other AO), the quality of the work as a whole cannot override this particular requirement: all AOs must be clearly and addressed.

Plagiarism: moderators again found essays where it was apparent that candidates had overused secondary source material, unintentionally or otherwise; where this happens moderators pass the work on to OCR for investigation. Where secondary material is used – and to address AO4 properly it almost certainly must be used – then candidates need only to insert quotation marks where appropriate, and acknowledge the use by a footnote and/or bibliography, and thus very easily not only avoid any suggestion of plagiarism, but at the same time add authority to their own ideas.

Some of the best work that Moderators saw resulted from unusual or unconventional texts. Overall, Moderators reported that there was much pleasing work submitted this year, with the vast majority of candidates showing commitment to the tasks and enjoyment of the texts. Further, there was some work that it was a joy to read: insightful, probing and illuminating.

2712 - Prose post- 1914 (Written Paper)

General comments

This report should be read in conjunction with previous 2712 reports.

All questions seemed to differentiate well between candidates, only a few of whom seemed to have problems in dividing their time between the two sections of the paper.

In general terms, the overall performance of candidates was good in that the more able candidates wrote highly sophisticated answers, producing answers that were informed, intelligent and elegantly written. Most showed enthusiasm for the text and a personal response to the reading of it. In the lower bands candidates on the whole achieved creditable responses but there was evidence of the tendency to narrate without specific question focus. Candidates would do well to bear in mind the adage 'Don't tell, show'. Examiners noted that the quality of written communication was a little better than in previous sessions: very few answers were incomprehensible, syntax was more fluent and accurate, essays had a better basic structure and handwriting was generally legible.

It was clear that candidates who had been carefully briefed about the examination – but not drilled in a method of analysis of prepared passages – tended to perform better. Candidates should pay close attention to the exact wording of a question, to ensure that they respond to all aspects of a question (e.g. in the Section A *Atonement* question on '*destruction and its consequences*'). They also need to define terms where this is necessary, especially with more abstract questions (for instance, what might be meant by 'cultures' in the Section B *An Evil Cradling* question).

Section A

Centres are advised to prepare candidates to follow the instructions in the rubric box at the head of Section A which specifies two things: 'each chosen passage should be no longer than two sides of text and must be clearly identified'. Failure to comply with this not only means that AO1 suffers, but candidates often failed to focus in effective AO2 and AO3 detail. A Section A answer should commence something like this: 'My chosen passages from 'Cold Comfort Farm' are from Chapter 3, pages 37-39 (Penguin edition), beginning "A strange film passed over Adam's eyes..." and ending "The porridge boiled over."; and Chapter 7, pages 77-78, beginning "...The man's big body" to "...in a bright, interested voice."'

A crisp start, clearly defining the passages, often led on to a crisp, relevant response.

The most noticeable improvement from previous years was in the application of AO3: even weaker candidates offered some close analysis of the selected passages, and used basic literary terms with some confidence. However, a few candidates again produced quite general answers (more like Section B responses), failing to provide the necessary close textual reference and analysis to meet AO3. Sometimes candidates found it difficult to strike a satisfactory balance between the AO3 and AO2ii requirements: it may help to remember that the AO2 interconnection of passages and their relationship with the whole text is an aspect of structure and thus also a part of AO3.

Section B

A few responses were essentially passage-based and read more like Section A responses. Some candidates did not address AO5ii contextual requirements, even implicitly. Others appeared to think that AO5ii means reference to other texts, and whilst that might illuminate (for instance with *Atonement* and *A Thousand Acres*), such references usually did little to improve answers.

Gibbons: *Cold Comfort Farm*

The Section A question on different kinds of obsession was generally well answered, but not many wrote about tone.

The Section B question on the role and significance of Mr Mybug was usually well answered, most candidates showing at least knowledge of the AO5 connections with Lawrence and so forth, and some evaluating them with sophistication. Less able candidates found it difficult to explain various aspects of comedy, parody and satire. There were some very good answers on the rejection of the past in favour of an enlightened present, although some saw it as no more than an opportunity to write about town versus country; and others did not address 'past' and/or 'enlightened', clear parts of the question.

McEwan: *Atonement*

The Section A question on destruction and its consequences was generally well answered. Many chose the vase scene, but some got bogged down in narration without focusing on '*destruction and its consequences*'.

The Section B question on Briony proved popular but candidates appeared to find it more challenging than might have been expected, either limiting themselves to a narrative-based character study or contradicting themselves during the course of their essays – perhaps the very nature of the novel invites ambivalence in the reader, but that was often not well conveyed in answers. Some neglected to consider whether / in what ways Briony may be seen as 'spoilt and self-indulgent', focusing only on the matter of 'sympathy'. Some candidates ignored the final section of the book and had difficulty in conveying Briony's exact relationship with the 'novel'. Often, even in otherwise well-expressed and interesting answers, there was little or no effort made to consider the social/historical contexts within which Briony was raised, and against which she sought atonement for her 'crime'. The potentially wide-ranging alternative question on the difficulties of uncovering the truth was often very knowledgeably answered, but some candidates overlooked the metafictional nature of the novel in relation to this question, which made their responses seem over-simplified.

Golding: *Rites of Passage*

The Section A question on Captain Anderson was generally well handled, although there was sometimes a frustrating lack of really close analysis of Golding's techniques. There were few, but usually effective, answers on the Section B question on the nautical setting. The alternative on understanding produced some very good responses, the best doing more than just demonstrating how a range of characters learn useful lessons on the voyage: they evaluated 'understanding' as a key theme, rather than just a frequent feature of the plot.

Munro: *Open Secrets*

There were some intriguing, well-prepared answers on this text. Much good AO3 was in evidence in Section A answers, although some stretched 'the town of Carstairs' well out into open landscape. Some answers effectively used their chosen passages to show Carstairs as an embodiment of the small-minded superficiality within which Munro's central characters find themselves. There were few but clear and well-informed responses to the Section B question on risk-taking. The alternative on the aptness of the title of the collection was popular but often answered as if it was self-evident that the title is appropriate. Many were keen to point to the oxymoronic nature of the title, the more successful going on to use this observation as a springboard to explore the importance of gossip (another term for an 'open secret'?) and rumour in the stories.

Woolf: *To the Lighthouse*

There were many appreciative and analytical answers on the Section A question on two male characters: they showed a good grasp of the novel's structure, of multiple voice and stream of (often misspelt) consciousness, and imagery. Some missed the tone of Mr Ramsey's 'A splendid mind' and took him at face value. Some turned the question into one on the relationship between men and women in the novel, sometimes spending more time on Mrs Ramsey than the males. Some answers were narrowly 'feminist' in approach (female = good; male = bad). A few, in despite of the question, chose two passages on the same male. As indicated in the General Comments, there were instances where candidates resorted to narrative.

Both the Section B essays were often excellently answered with confident awareness of alternative AO4 readings. There was little in the way of mere character study in answers on Lily. In response to the question on the longing for order / permanence, candidates produced some equally detailed, well-supported work, the best displaying recognition of the emotional charge in the word 'longing'. There was an apt awareness of the period, but sometimes biographical knowledge was dragged in semi-relevantly.

Smiley: *A Thousand Acres*

The Section A question on Caroline produced much good close reading, some candidates in particular handling technical terms aptly and with confidence, and producing very appreciative personal responses.

In answers to the Section B question on the place of women in a male-dominated society there was much equating of women with the land and a tendency to list female situations rather than consider the nature of male dominance as presented / not presented in the novel. The alternative on Ginny's narrative voice was generally well treated. There were some apt links made to *King Lear* (an illumination, but not a mark scheme requirement).

Keane: *Letter to Daniel*

A variety of passages / dispatches were chosen and generally well dealt with in response to the Section A question on Keane's perceived personal address to the individual reader.

The Section B essays proved to be equally popular. The question on how hopeful a picture Keane presents of the future of Africa tended to produce balanced responses with generally appreciative AO5ii on African issues and history. There were some highly successful answers on the alternative question on the centrality of concerns about identity, some commenting to effect on how Keane presents his own identity as the context within which other articles / issues / people are seen.

Keenan: *An Evil Cradling*

All questions drew some clear, well considered answers. In general the Section A question on fear was capably done. There were some excellent answers on the Section B question on the need to understand cultures, although some struggled to say much about what Keenan and McCarthy learnt about the beliefs and cultures of their guards, which tended to weaken the AO5ii response. The alternative question on the pessimistic nature of the book was generally well answered, with candidates agreeing and disagreeing with the prompt quotation in seemingly equal numbers; and it was clear that many had been well-briefed on relevant AO5 contexts. That said, AO5ii response amongst some candidates was limited – surprisingly so, given the circumstances of the memoir. As with Section A, many of the Section B essays on this text were personal and heartfelt, yet detailed and focused.

2713 - Comparative and Contextual Study

General Comments

The paper performed in line with recent years. Rubric infringements (such as Sections A and B on different topics) were very rare and there were few instances where candidates appeared to have run out of time. The established patterns of popularity continued, with very many scripts submitted on The Gothic Tradition, 20th Century American Prose and Post-1945 Drama, and a reasonable number on Writing of the Romantic Era and Satire. Post-Colonial Literature was again a distinct minority option – for all that students usually tackled it with enthusiasm. The ‘new’ authors - Barnes, McCabe, Albee and Walcott – were all in evidence, but of these authors’ work only *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* was written about in volume.

Examiners’ reports for the June 2006 session commented with pleasure that the high standard of work produced by the most able candidates in recent years had continued this year. Equally, there was a high level of general proficiency and competency in the cohort as a whole, reflected in secure, coherent and engaged discussion by candidates who seemed clearly to understand what was required of them. Indeed, examiners commented further that there were very few candidates who were unable to cope with the demands of the paper. That said, poor or weak performance can often be traced to deficiencies of approach rather than any evident academic or intellectual weakness. The main problems are outlined below; and certain of them are now almost ‘standards’, in that they crop up session after session.

In Section A the most frequent problem was insufficient attention to AO3. Despite the reminder on the paper that “A critical appreciation should include detailed reference to language, form and tone” a significant number of students again used the set passage as a springboard to launch into discussion of other things. This was commonly either an AO2 digression (“This links to...” text x or text y which they have also been studying) or an AO5 digression (“This links to the theme of...” whatever it might be). In the latter case the links were often extremely tenuous or very forced. In essence, candidates who react to, and respond from, the passage tended to outperform those who appeared to have a mental checklist of issues or tropes in an inflexible fashion.

Candidates are expected to link their reading of the passage to their wider reading, but such reference should be brief and to the point, highlighting a corollary or a comparison in so far as it illuminates the candidate’s exploration of the passage within the context of the topic being studied. The skill tested in Section A is that of being an independent critic of a literary text. It is not enough simply to note an image, or a metaphor or a simile, or to observe that there is a pause in the dramatic action, or to state that a passage is written in the third person: competency requires consideration of the *effects* of such literary qualities.

In Section B the primary weakness was again an inability by candidates to compare texts in a meaningful fashion. Many examiners reported this as a particular problem in this session, for example: “Candidates become so involved in their discussion of the primary text that they omit mention of any others or introduce them only in the concluding lines. Some answers give about equal weight to two, sometimes three texts, but treat them to all intents and purposes as discrete entities, leaving comparative comment to a note at the end.” Another examiner observed: “In general good answers in B moved smoothly from text to text and back again, cross-referencing on subtopics/themes with well balanced focus on second (and other) texts while weaker answers dealt with one text in full and only then turned to the other, sometimes very briefly.”

A related weakness was that quite often candidates' only evidence of the AO2 requirement was to compare simply by using the word 'similarly' or 'similar', without any sense of precision or discrimination. For instance, this session, Victor Frankenstein has been 'similar' to just about every other character in *Frankenstein*, presumably because he, too, is a victim; Martha (in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*) is 'similar' to Blanche, Stella, Ruth (*The Homecoming*) or any other female figure. Such simplistic linkages are unhelpful because they avoid engagement with the terms of the question. If a candidate wishes to argue that "Victor is similar to his creation in the way that...", then the point should be argued and discussed: it is not enough simply to assert or to claim a comparison.

Relatively weak performance in Section B is often linked to candidates' failure to tackle questions within the terms asked. It is not uncommon for candidates only to spot the key or topic term in a question and overlook the nuancing phrase associated with it. This was notably the case in three or four popular questions this session. Thus death (Question 8c), failure (10a), family (11b) and power (11c) were all successfully discussed by many candidates in broad terms, but the focusing prisms of "fascination with", "heroic", "no escape from" and "use and abuse of" respectively were often not addressed.

Moreover, as a discriminator of performance, it was observed that where a candidate attempted to get into the heart of a question by trying to define its parameters, it almost always paid off because it meant that they were thinking freshly on the day and were writing with an individual voice. As such, they tended to avoid regurgitation of rote learning, particularly in respect of AO5ii. Equally, candidates were best able to argue with precision when they had textual knowledge and detail at their fingertips. Those that knew most tended to answer best.

In Section A, examiners noted that stronger performance tended to be associated with answers that avoided linear, sequential responses to text. This is a broad generalisation, since there are outstanding responses that adopt such an approach, but the pattern across the cohort suggested this conclusion. One examiner put it: "Candidates still need to be advised to read the passage the first time just for itself, and not be tempted into motif-spotting until the second or third reading. If the motifs are there, there is no danger of their getting away – they can wait, and they will play a more illuminating role in the answer by being approached with relevance and tact." A common problem for weaker candidates that arises from a linear approach is that they can decline into paraphrase, and as such their exploration of the text becomes thin and diffuse.

A number of examiners reported that some candidates' responses contained sweepingly general assertions about whole texts which had been the source of passages set in previous question papers, and which did not necessarily have any direct link to the question being tackled. In particular, *Top Girls* and *Cannery Row* (June 2005) were much cited this session, with seemingly little knowledge of their overall shape or scope. Also, many candidates writing about 'suffering' (for question 11a) in fact wrote predominantly about 'conflict', which was a popular Post-1945 Drama question in the January 2006 paper. Few made the simple link between the two issues, which would have eliminated the problem.

A majority of examiners noted the declining quality of candidates' writing, not only in respect of handwriting, but in grammatical and syntactical accuracy, as well as their general level of spelling. AO1 requires candidates to "communicate clearly the knowledge, understanding and insight appropriate to literary study, using appropriate terminology and accurate and coherent written expression." In this session it seems that more candidates than before struggled to paragraph satisfactorily, or build to a valid conclusion. A further technical weakness was an increased inability to integrate quotation appropriately. It was not uncommon to have the names of texts or authors spelt incorrectly (*Whose Afraid...*, Frankenstine/stein, Anny Proo, Mary Shelly and so on). The assessment objective also refers to the issue of writing in a manner "appropriate to literary study" which, in a GCE examination, has to entail a certain degree of formality of style. Consequently, it is inappropriate to refer to authors by their first names e.g. Harold (Pinter), Mary (Shelley), Truman (Capote), John (Keats), William (Wordsworth).

Comments on individual topic areas

Satire

Betjeman's poem *Executive* proved accessible and many candidates wrote about it with insight and acuity. Candidates wore their green eco-friendly credentials openly and castigated the executive for his environmental vandalism. More subtly, candidates noted that he was a proleptic example of a Thatcherite yuppie, and placed him squarely within a context of a hypocritical, predatory corporate world. More, though, decided he was 'Thatcherite', showing a lack of awareness of Harold Wilson. Either way, he was not liked! As well as the sharp thematic grasp, though, it was pleasing that this was one of the passages (together with that from *The Wasp Factory* for the Gothic topic) where candidates got to grips with AO3 successfully. The executive's glib, meaningless jargon, his pseudo-management speak and his neologisms were dissected, demolishing his pretensions and unctuous nastiness. Few, though, noted or commented upon the presence of the 'listener' who, in effect, the reader becomes. Comment on verse form, rhyme and metrical effects was at times thin or non-existent.

Of the three options for Satire the question 7(a) ('Effective Satire is built on a foundation of irony') proved the most popular, although examiners noted that there was a degree of overlap with 7(c) ('Methods and effects of humour as a technique of satire'). A large majority of candidates confined their comments to *The Rape of the Lock* and compared it with Swift in the main, although some excellent responses were seen on Dryden. Other of Pope's poetry seen included *The Dunciad* and the *Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot*. Many answers appeared to incorporate prepared material on irony and failed properly to consider the notion of 'effective'. A number of candidates took the view that the foundation of satire was a desire to bring about a reform of morals, and argued that as a *technique* it was a function of satire not its foundation. This was sharp argument. Few addressed the aspect of tone (light/bitter; Horatian/Juvenalian) although those who argued that satire built on anger or a desire to protest found useful ways into the question.

The question 7(c) was little attempted, and relatively few tackled its core, namely the focus upon 'methods and effects'. There was some attempt to argue that Pope was trying to 'amuse' people into a reconciliation in the *Rape of the Lock*, but there was little exploration of quite why mock heroic was amusing, or any particular attempt to distinguish between types of humour – wry, sardonic, black, slapstick or whatever. Curiously, some candidates cited Huxley, Orwell and Atwood as examples of satirists who did not use humour, particularly. Although a powerful case can be made in that vein, the question was specifically on the methods and effects of humour, thus making such commentary redundant for all that it was not wrong per se.

There were very few answers in this session drawing upon *England, England* in response to the Question 7(b) ('Satire stems from a cynical view of the world'), even though Barnes's text is accessible to a modern media-savvy readership, and its focus on such issues as hype and spin and the commodification of modern life is a sharp and relevant satirical perspective. Most candidates wrote about the figure of Martha as "appointed cynic". One centre's candidates usefully compared *England, England* with *A Handful of Dust*, commenting thoughtfully on how the juxtaposition of dual settings in texts threw the question into relief.

The Gothic Tradition

The extract from *The Wasp Factory* proved very successful. Some candidates knew the ambivalent nature of the gender of the narrator but that in itself gave no beneficial insight. Indeed, many candidates commented thoughtfully and intelligently on the reliability of the narrator specifically because the extract was written in the first person, with a good number arguing that the “I” seemed both male, in its obsession with scientific paraphernalia, and female in its thoroughness and carefulness. Leaving aside any considerations of gender stereotyping, it was pleasing to see how subtly responsive candidates were to the passage.

Examiners commented that, although it is modern, candidates had few if any problems locating the passage within the Gothic tradition: indeed, a few found a way into it from the wording of the quotation to question 8(b) – “Hell is decidedly on earth, located within the vaults and chambers of our own minds.” It was a common view that the narrator was insane, had a death fixation, and pursued horror for pleasure. Many students found parallels between the narrator and Victor Frankenstein in the way they both possess an overriding desire to control life and death. Overall, AO3 focus was good, with much thoughtful analysis of the effects of lexis relating to death, darkness, entrapment and so on, relating it aptly to AO5 concepts such as transgression.

Candidates found much to say for Question 8(a). The best candidates addressed ‘importance’ directly or implicitly, and the different and overlapping kinds of victims – villain-victims, victims of society, victims of external attack, victims of themselves – were often interestingly analysed and explored. *Frankenstein* was, obviously, dissected (sic) in detail with every character, plausibly, being offered as a victim. The range of reading adduced for comparison was wide and diverse: *Dracula* was a favourite, but Walpole, Radcliffe, Lewis, Beckford, Poe, Stevenson, Hawthorne, Austen (as parody), Hill, Carter and many others were to the fore. Interestingly, several candidates mentioned *Hamlet* and such flexibility of approach is to be welcomed – so long as such references are used wisely. Here, they largely were, with candidates arguing that the play contained proto-gothic elements in the form of the ghost and the play’s sinister undertones, as well as its sense of madness.

If there was a weakness in responses overall, it was that relatively few discussed the concept of ‘victim’ as a “figure”, a literary construct. Characters – victims – were nearly always real people whom readers had to sympathise with. The exception would appear to be Victor Frankenstein, whom hardly a candidate in the land had much time for, even though they acknowledge that he too is a victim (of fate and/or hubris). The main victims in Gothic writing it would seem are women, and most sympathy was reserved for Justine. That said, those who had studied Angela Carter tended to argue powerfully that she created female figures who bucked the trend. In this question and in 8(c), there was occasional useful reference to the recent Gothic exhibition at Tate Britain which centred on Fuseli’s painting of ‘The Nightmare’, with its iconic image of the stricken female victim.

There were very few responses on question 8(b). Candidates wrote about the development of the Gothic genre over time which has led to the notion of modern Gothic or, apparently in McCabe’s case, “Bog” Gothic which is marked by the idea of internalised horror, as implied by the question’s quotation; beyond that, most students who wrote on McCabe tackled 8(c) (‘The Gothic is characterised by a fascination with death’). As noted above, candidates were very happy to tackle the issue of death, but the idea of “fascination with...” disappeared largely into the background. Those who did broach the full breadth of the question found it profitable to consider the concept from scientific and religious perspectives, and many argued persuasively that Victor Frankenstein’s obsession with death was just that, an obsession, not a ‘fascination’. Moreover, he was immoral in usurping either God’s role in the universe or, more commonly, woman’s role, in becoming a male surrogate mother. To most, though, the question became a discussion of a range of deaths in Gothic literature, and many also argued that the threat of death is the source of tension in all or most texts, the *sine qua non* for a text to be Gothic. It was disappointing that few candidates sought to distinguish between characters’ fascination with death intra-textually with

that of texts' creators, the authors: after all, why write about death if there is not some degree of fascination with it? Given that so many wrote about Mary Shelley's biographical background, this was perhaps a surprising omission.

Writing of the Romantic Era

This was the fourth most popular of the six topics, and it would seem fewer submitted answers on it than in 2005. In broad terms, answers tended to fall into the extremes of being very good or relatively weak. The poem by John Clare prompted some candidates to write astonishingly erudite and controlled analyses, placing the poem within the context of the time in which it was written, as well as dissecting the persona's darkly ambivalent state of mind. Moreover, several good responses picked up on its inter-textual echoes, alluding to its Biblical undertones (valley of the shadow of death) as well as to Hamlet's (again) brooding, alienated depression, "at once to be and not to be", linking it to the starkly depressive state of mind of the poem's persona. At the other extreme, some candidates only picked up on key words – "flooding streams", "mountains" – and said that these were 'natural' and that this therefore made the poem Wordsworthian. In such instances there was often little to reward beyond AO5 awareness of Romantic motifs at the most basic level.

Question 9(a) ('Romantic writing is characterised by a heightened intensity of emotion') proved the most popular option. Examiners reported that candidates approached it thoughtfully and with engagement, although there was a sense that many wrote imbalanced responses, focusing disproportionately on Keats at the expense of full comparison with other work. It was pleasing, though, to observe more reference to Keats's *Letters* in this session, with his letter to Bailey ("Oh for a life of sensations") being cited commonly. Most candidates wrote of Keats as a cerebral aesthete who would lose himself in heightened states of contemplation, referring commonly to his *Odes*, although many observed saliently that much of his writing was coolly calculated in its execution. Elsewhere, the concept of negative capability was discussed to good purpose. Wordsworth proved the most common comparator, and he was commonly held to be emotionally intense too, but in a quite different way from Keats. Instead, his work was not "heightened", because he was more a man of the people passionately concerned with ordinary people's lives.

Question 9(b) ('ways in which the natural world is a source of inspiration') was popular also, and candidates wrote in great numbers about Tintern Abbey and daffodils. More generally, aspects of Romantic pantheistic reverence for Nature, as well as the concept of Nature as a teacher and healer were discussed cogently and at length although, surprisingly, there was not much discussion of the Sublime. Similarly to 9(a), but obversely, Keats was the main comparator, and the most common argument was that Keats used Nature as a catalyst or signifier for escape from reality (*Ode to a Nightingale*; *To Autumn*). Less successful was commentary about Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* to the effect that it was a nature poem because it contained an albatross.

Question 9(c) attracted few answers. What little was seen tended to focus more on 'wonder' than 'sense of mystery'. In so far as any trends of argument were discernible, some candidates attempted to build an argument along the lines that imagination was a key Romantic concept which in turn fed into an idea of wonder.

Although these comments refer almost solely to Keats and Wordsworth, it should be noted that the Romantic topic produced a gratifying breadth of reading in many candidates. Clearly, a good number had studied Blake for 2708, but reference was widely made to Coleridge, Byron, Clare, and Shelley (PB), and to wider AO5 influences, notably Rousseau. It is a topic that seems to work successfully for many because it is one that is approached through its ideas, and candidates cite text widely in support and do not get overly rooted in specific textual analysis in the format required for 2710.

20th Century American Prose

The extract from Truman Capote's *Other Voices, Other Rooms* proved accessible to candidates but was sometimes approached so simply that answers did not rise above 'basic' or 'generally sound' qualities. Most candidates were responsive to the desolate atmosphere of the landscape described in the passage as well as to a pervading sense of isolation. Place-names, 'long-gone Indian tribes' and advertising signs all attracted comment, with some informed sense of context in better scripts, although many made an automatic link to the Valley of Ashes and the image of Dr T J Eckleburg in *The Great Gatsby* and from there into an exposition on American consumerism and capitalism and the failure (always the failure) of the American Dream. This was valid where the commentary was apposite and focused in relation to specific elements of the passage but less so when it remained a generalised AO5 thesis.

The discussion of character and dialogue in the second half of the passage was often less successful. Sam Radclif was seen at times with no clear justification as a poor man and a failure; for many candidates, his 'gulping a beer' at the café on a hot June day was a sure sign of alcoholism, and could be related to other examples of drink problems they had encountered in their reading. The contrast between Radclif and Joel Harrison Knox was usually clearly recognized, and better answers picked up on the intriguing mixture of qualities that go to make up the description of the boy. Some candidates used their knowledge of Truman Capote effectively, locating the description in the South and considering its autobiographical possibilities; others were less successful, offering tangential discussion of *Breakfast at Tiffany's* or *In Cold Blood*.

Question 10(a) ('explore the theme of heroic failure') was by far the most popular of the essay questions for this topic. All candidates wrote on failure and a good many on heroism, but few managed to get the two ideas working together as 'heroic failure'. It was frequently the case that candidates made an assumption that the main protagonist(s) in texts were 'heroes' or 'heroic' by default, precisely because of their status as protagonist: defining the concept of hero was rarely attempted. Once again, comparing *Tender is the Night* with *The Great Gatsby* was a popular option, but many other texts were brought into discussion, for example Toni Morrison's *Jazz* and Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood*. Candidates were very confident discussing Dick Diver from *Tender is the Night* in relation to the essay topic, but sometimes allowed this discussion to dominate their answer to too great an extent, limiting the possibility for comparison with another text. Elsewhere there was some comment about Loyal Blood being a tenacious, rather than heroic, failure.

Postcards remains a less popular choice for this topic area, but a number of candidates wrote successfully on the 10(b) option relating to the 'purpose and value of work', often comparing the novel usefully with Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*. Most constructed a thoughtful essay which engaged all the key terms of the question; a number struggled to develop an effective argument, however, when their choice of comparative text offered relatively few points of contact with the set text. For example, *The Great Gatsby* was not always successfully incorporated into the answer. More generally, candidates wrote intelligently about how work gives people a sense of independence, affords them a sense of relationship with the land (notably in relation to *Postcards*) and gives an all-round feeling of self-worth and empowerment. Interestingly, several candidates explored Dick Diver's decline in *Tender is the Night* in the light of his moving away from his career into becoming nothing more than a socialite.

Question 10(c) ('consider the importance of the outsider') seemed well adapted to most of the texts which candidates had prepared for this topic, and it was surprising at times that candidates who struggled with the (a) or (b) options did not consider this question instead. Loyal Blood and Dick Diver were both considered in some detail as outsiders, but candidates also made successful cases for whole groups of characters fitting this category: for example, the expatriate community in *Tender is the Night*, or the African Americans in *Jazz*. Other popular individual outsiders were George and Lennie in *Of Mice and Men* and Holden Caulfield in *The Catcher in the Rye*.

the Rye. There was a tendency for essays to fall into a list-like structure, offering examples of outsiders; only very good answers considered why 'outsiders' might be especially significant in American literature and culture.

Drama Post-1945

Most candidates followed the action of the passage from *Twelve Angry Men* accurately, but relatively few focused effectively on the dramatic techniques being employed. The majority of answers noted that the characters are referred to by number rather than name, and some suggested that there was a sinister undertone to this style of naming; relatively few seemed aware that the numbers are only perceptible to the reader of the play, not to the audience in the theatre. A number of good answers did demonstrate the way that some characters begin to emerge and establish themselves in this extract, and also noted that some of the jurors remain silent. The themes of conformity, justice and responsibility were often discussed, and most readings were complimentary to the 8th Juror: his courage, and the aggression of the 7th and 10th Jurors, was usually noted and exemplified. Only better answers looked carefully at the stage directions and noted, for example, the dramatic tension as the hands go up to vote, and the intimidating body language of the 10th Juror. Treatment of context was more successful where it focused on American culture of the 1950s; discussion of theatrical traditions and techniques was often too generalised to be very useful. In passing it should be noted that many candidates believed there were thirteen people in the room, namely the twelve jurors plus the Foreman.

Question 11(a) ('presentation of suffering') was very popular, and many candidates chose to answer it with an American Dream slant, showing how suffering is often the result of disappointment, and using texts like *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *Death of a Salesman* for comparison. Essays remained relevant to the theme of suffering, but many candidates ignored the focus on the ways in which it is presented offered by the question, and thereby limited their opportunities to write about dramatic technique in their answers. Popular approaches to the question involved exploration of such issues as childlessness (or not wanting to have a child in Honey's case) and failure to live up to expectation or desire – much sympathy for George, here. Psychological torment and suffering was examined by many, and useful comparison was made with *The Homecoming* in this regard. Clearly, too, in respect of the latter play, physical suffering was discussed in the way pain is inflicted, and there was wide reference to Stanley's beating of Stella and rape of Blanche in *Streetcar*.

Question 11(b) ('no escape from family: explore family relationships in the light of this idea') was less popular than the other two. However, there was successful focus on the many dysfunctional relationships presented in *The Homecoming* and there was much dissection of the relationships between George and Martha, and Nick and Honey, in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, as well as thoughtful analysis of the overbearing weight of Martha's father in the background. Some candidates wrote thoughtfully about the fact that few characters actually wanted to escape from family, for all that families caused profound difficulties and hardships.

Question 11(c) Many candidates found substantial opportunities in this question to discuss a range of dramatic texts, and all seemed to have considered the importance of power on a number of different levels in their chosen plays: power struggles in both the set texts for this topic area were thoroughly discussed. Very few candidates focused the terms of the question precisely, however: almost all wrote about the exercise of power without considering the distinction between 'use' and 'misuse': the latter term was redundant for many.

The breadth of plays for this topic area studied across the cohort as a whole was gratifyingly wide, particularly in respect of drama written on this side of the Atlantic. However, it was observed that quite a lot of Centres were preparing candidates with just two texts which, whilst sufficient to fulfil the requirements of the paper, has the potential to leave students at a disadvantage when comparing, if questions do not sit easily with their alternative to the set text.

Post-Colonial Literature

The extract from *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* proved highly popular and successful with those that answered on this topic. Candidates quickly saw that it was centrally concerned with key Post-Colonial concepts associated with identity and hybridity, and they wrote purposefully in this regard. 'Man' was thoughtfully discussed with regard to his passion to retain his identity, together with that of his family, whilst other candidates argued with clarity about his sense of confusion and fear. By contrast, the figure of Buntu was explored as a streetwise, sharp, cynical individual who had the confidence to subvert the colonialist system to his – their – advantage. The dialectic of idealism set against pragmatism was sensibly outlined (if not always in such terms), and notions of rootlessness and the concept of diaspora were also discussed by some. Significantly, too, many candidates focused in detail on AO3 issues, discussing the use of language and dialect, as well as noting the development of the scene as a piece of theatre, observing ways in which Fugard builds the tension between the two men as the scene progresses.

In question 12(a) ('Political identity, rather than individual identity, is the primary focus for Post-Colonial writing') candidates were more comfortable with the latter notion than the former. Often candidates would make Walcott's poetry the lesser element of their writing, preferring to write about individual characters from other areas of their reading. This was acceptable – candidates are not obliged to make the set text or author the main element of an answer – but in this case it meant that the richness of ideas in Walcott's poetry to do with societal influences upon peoples, rather than people, was largely under-developed.

White Teeth was the text which candidates wrote about most in this session, and a majority attempted question 12(c) ('Post-Colonial writing is characterised by the "transcultural", by the blurring of boundaries') rather than 12(b) ('emotions of anger and frustration'). The latter was often disappointingly done, in so far as few students went beyond listing various characters who were angry and frustrated. By contrast, 12(c) proved rich and fertile territory, with candidates adopting a variety of approaches to the assertion. Some argued that Post-Colonial writing was a response to the need for parallel communities, the colonisers and the colonised, to accommodate one another, and was thus a reaction to colonial times, whilst others tackled the question from the perspective of language. Indeed, some ingeniously brought in the Section A extract in this regard, usually to good effect. Beyond the set texts, Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Ondaatje's *The English Patient* remained popular texts.

Advanced GCE (English Literature) (3828/7828)

June 2006 Assessment Series

Unit Threshold Marks

Unit		Maximum Mark	a	b	c	d	e	u
2707	Raw	60	46	41	36	31	27	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2708	Raw	60	44	39	34	29	24	0
	UMS	120	96	84	72	60	48	0
2709	Raw	60	51	45	39	33	28	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2710	Raw	60	48	42	36	30	25	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2712	Raw	60	49	43	38	33	28	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2713	Raw	60	46	40	35	30	25	0
	UMS	120	96	84	72	60	48	0
	UMS							

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
3828	300	240	210	180	150	120	0
7828	600	480	420	360	300	240	0

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

	A	B	C	D	E	U	Total Number of Candidates
3828	29.46	52.32	73.76	88.97	96.58	100	8111
7828	36.73	64.28	84.59	95.37	99.02	100	8045

8045 candidates aggregated this session

For a description of how UMS marks are calculated see;
www.ocr.org.uk/OCR/WebSite/docroot/understand/ums.jsp

Statistics are correct at the time of publication

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations)
1 Hills Road
Cambridge
CB1 2EU

OCR Information Bureau

(General Qualifications)

Telephone: 01223 553998

Facsimile: 01223 552627

Email: helpdesk@ocr.org.uk

www.ocr.org.uk

For staff training purposes and as part of our quality assurance programme your call may be recorded or monitored

Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations
is a Company Limited by Guarantee
Registered in England
Registered Office; 1 Hills Road, Cambridge, CB1 2EU
Registered Company Number: 3484466
OCR is an exempt Charity

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations)
Head office
Telephone: 01223 552552
Facsimile: 01223 552553

© OCR 2006

