

Report on the Components

June 2006

9910/MS/R/06

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Advanced Extension Award in English

Summer 2006

Principal Examiner's Report

The quality of response was generally high this year, with few really weak scripts. An examiner (echoed by many) writes: "Marking this paper is a salutary reminder of the quality of work young people are capable of; there were some stunning answers. Equally, I was reminded of how much good teaching there is, as candidates were well equipped to engage with complex unseen texts and construct essays that were well constructed, closely argued and informed by their wider reading." Availability of a collection of past papers and, perhaps, of more widespread teaching to prepare candidates for the examination seem to have resulted in more general confidence in meeting the demands of the AEA, though it may be at the expense of the occasional startlingly individual, even eccentric, scripts that examiners remember encountering in the early years of the exam. We still feel, however, that candidates seem to enjoy the freedom of choice – of materials and approaches – and the challenge of this paper. An examiner reported: "One candidate wrote at the end, 'Thanks for the best examination I've ever taken.' Curiously touching."

The paper seemed a very hospitable one. In responses to Question 1 few chose to write on Passage I (Dylan Thomas) but otherwise every passage received considerable attention, with no particular one predominating, though the most popular choice seemed to be the opening of *Rebecca* (Passage J). None of the passages contained flaws or traps, though one or two offered good discriminators. Candidates' attention seemed fairly evenly divided between the section B alternatives. A number of candidates commented favourably on the diversity of materials provided in the reading-booklet, which was occasionally seen to confirm the examination's post-modern credentials - applauded by one candidate for presenting "extracts from magazines, song lyrics and a children's story as texts to be analysed alongside more conventional 'literary' material from well-known authors such as Daphne du Maurier or poets, like John Milton." It may be that this summer's paper, with the addition of the child's story, was graphologically more adventurous than those set in previous years; no candidate seemed to be disadvantaged by the choices provided. The Reading Booklet contained rather more passages than in previous years, to ensure proper choice for candidates from the three English examination routes, and candidates seemed to have little difficulty navigating through the booklet to find material appropriate to their interests and approaches. Future papers will be similarly diverse.

According to the paper's single Assessment Objective, "The AEA in English will assess candidates' abilities to apply and communicate effectively their knowledge and understanding of English, some of its methodologies and texts, using the skills of critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis." Almost all scripts in this examination show evidence of the three skills identified here, while discrimination between answers depends upon the confidence and sensitivity with which the skills are "applied" to the questions and passages/texts attempted. Familiarity with technical terminology and procedure is clearly a principal factor, and examiners report that AEA candidates for the most part go well beyond merely *identifying* linguistic/literary patterns/tropes/categories/devices, engaging with ways in which these function in the passage as a whole. Almost all "language" approaches, for example, were properly analytic, not just spotting linguistic features but also demonstrating their significance in terms of the meanings and effects of the passage. Many examiners pointed out that awareness of irony and readiness to explore its varied effects are often key discriminators. "Synthesis" is perhaps the most important of the three skills identified in the AEA Assessment Objective: we take this to relate to the candidate's capacity to construct a coherent, complex argument exploring relations between a range of

materials (passages and texts) deploying critical and evaluative methods and drawing on the knowledge and understanding derived from two years of AS and A2 study in the relevant specification routes. In this relation, an examiner described the most common drawback in answers to Question 1 as follows: "Far too many candidates neglected the importance of the words 'By comparative analysis...' in the question, preferring to juxtapose readings rather than genuinely compare the passages under discussion".

Most candidates are clearly now aware of the requirement to identify the approach to be adopted, and to evaluate its effectiveness. There was a wide variety of declared approaches, from simply a *literary* or *language* approach through *Practical Criticism*, *New Criticism* and *Formalism* to *Feminism*, *Marxism*, *Structuralism* and *Post Structuralism*, and *De-construction*. There were some ambitious and impressive readings clearly based on close familiarity with the language and procedures of the approach selected; in the event, however, many answers abandoned the declared approach, which returned as an issue only in the final paragraph. This is still an area where candidates getting ready for the exam need support and reassurance. An examiner puts it more strongly: "I still feel that there are too many candidates who, when invited to state their critical approach in Question 1, simply 'clear their throats'. (This has become an annual gripe.) I think that properly prepared AEA candidates should be making a better fist of this (important) aspect of the paper." Some of the most successful answers referred to theoretical material in the Reading Booklet when outlining their critical approach.

Examiners felt that fewer candidates this year explored the passages through formal linguistic analysis of the language they contained; interestingly these candidates did not focus only on the obvious language passages and were confident in using literary passages as the basis for their answer, looking closely at choice and effects of language, audience, purpose and tone, though few answers addressed genre-related issues. The child's dream account (Passage C) proved particularly fruitful to candidates approaching from this direction, offering - among other possibilities - a model of a stage in language development, in one case identified as "Kroll's consolidation stage of language acquisition." On the other hand, there seemed to be more candidates from the *Language and Literature* route this year, many of whom confidently incorporated their knowledge of language theory in their introduction to Question 1 and their subsequent discussion of a range of passages and texts.

Technically, candidates' writing was generally accurate, though with some familiar motifs, such as the unwelcome appearance of the apostrophe in plurals. Authors' names were frequently mis-spelled: 'Rossetti' was rendered as 'Rosetti', 'Manderley' as 'Manderlay', 'angels' as 'angles' and 'Caribbean' as 'Carribbean' or 'Carribbean' (all these spelling errors cropping up where the candidate had merely to copy the formulation given on the paper).

Examiners saw one or two more examples of timing problems than in previous years, but we are regularly impressed by how well candidates manage the complex business of apportioning their time and material in this examination.

Almost every candidate made judicious use of the passages in the Booklet, regardless of the angle from which a question was approached. This was not only true of the Section A responses but also on Section B, where (for instance) the wide range of writing by women supplied on the paper was usefully mined for responses to Humm's argument in Passage Q. Most candidates confined their attention to two or three passages in Section A responses; those who ranged more widely tended to produce lively and interesting work - often, at the close of their answers, confessing themselves surprised by the variety of paradigms of dreaming they had been drawn to explore. Some candidates considered in Section B passages already addressed in Section A, where often only two passages had been considered: this is self-limiting, as it reduces the scope of the answer, but is also, as

indicated last year, against the spirit of an examination that provides so rich a range of texts for discussion. Conversely, while some Section B answers decline into lists, the range of illustrative material drawn from candidates' own reading is often impressive in its breadth and for the rigour with which it is managed. As in previous years the favourite author drawn on from outside the booklet is Blake (particularly apposite when the subject is dreams and visions); other favourites included the Brontës, Austen, Dickens and Orwell, with Ian McEwan making regular appearances, especially referring to *Saturday* and the short-story 'Butterflies'. Earlier literature referred to included Shakespeare (Caliban's dream rather than Bottom's) and Webster. An examiner speaks for us all as follows:

There was, as ever, an immensely impressive range of reference to candidates' own wider reading, from Old English to the latest English and American publications, and with a seasoning of major European literature thrown in for good measure. On a number of occasions I had to check out a book I had never heard of and have added some to my holiday reading. Candidates who have clearly followed their own inclinations in their reading and write with huge enthusiasm are the main reason for working on this paper.

Section A

As last year many candidates approached the texts from a Marxist viewpoint, with Georg Lukacs' name regularly cited. The visionary character of many texts led to discussion of religion as "the opium of the people"; aspects of affluence in the grounds at Manderley and in Murdoch's eighteenth century setting were seen as challenged by the workings of history in "societal upheaval"; the victim of capital punishment in 'The Green, Green Grass of Home' was seen as the victim of an oppressive class system, etc. The other theoretical framework widely used was feminism, particularly effective in unravelling the latent and insidious passions of Rossetti's 'Echo', Passage K, and also (very fruitfully) in discussion of the Milton sonnet, Passage L. Many answers were structured around distinctions/ correspondences between different kinds of dream (sleeping/ desiring/ aspiring/ nostalgic/ epiphanic/ frightening/ reassuring/ restorative/ whimsical/ psychologically revealing/ genetically or culturally determined ...). Jung and Freud ("Fraud" as he was entertainingly designated throughout one answer) were fairly often cited, though these references were rarely developed.

The favourite pairings of passages were as follows:

Transcription (B), Murdoch (F) and Du Maurier (J): New Age, Christian and visionary spirituality.

Murdoch (F) and 'The Dream of the Rood' (M): early and late Christian religious experiences.

Zephaniah (D) and Hornby (E): contrasting aspirations for the postcolonial and sporting worlds.

Hornby (E) & Putnam (H): unexpected combination that worked quite smoothly – feminists explored male attitudes.

Thompson (C), Murdoch (F) and Milton (L): troubled nights, one hectic, one more serene, one ironically consoling.

Zephaniah (D) and Swenson (G): satirical accounts of modern culture/politics.

Murdoch (F) and du Maurier (J) (sometimes with Transcription (B)): dreams reflecting feminine consciousness – in F and J landscape invested with symbolic meanings.

Swenson (F) and Milton (L): patriarchal/ chauvinist views of women.

Du Maurier (J) and Rossetti (K): inconclusive female dream-visions.

Rossetti (K) and Milton (L): lyrical/ elegiac accounts of lost love.

Putnam (H), Dylan Thomas (I) and Milton (L): dreams recalling the dead or the lost.

Thompson (C) and Putnam (H): two lively accounts of dreams shipwrecked by reality.

Notes on the Passages

Passage A: 'Dreamcatcher'

This proved less popular than the Advertisement Feature in previous years. Candidates concentrated on graphological features (especially the orange header and the native Indian logo), on differences of register between the segments of the passage, and on the intriguing cheapness/ value for money of Dr Scott's book (£1.99), but there was little on the suggestive incongruities of the text (Zoie's look of happy complacency is weird when she is dreaming about fire; do dreams and shopping really go together? how easy/reliable can it be to interpret dreams "live by text"?). Many answers observed that the picture of the actress is more about her body than her mind or spirit; others used Dr Scott's analysis as a launch-pad for a proto-Freudian survey of a number of other passages in the booklet. Some commented on the commodification of the inner life.

Passage B: Transcription

There is an abundance of material here, candidates often choosing it as a relatively simple pattern of "transcendence" to compare with the more complex adventures of Murdoch's narrator in Passage F or the speaker in Passage M 'The Dream of the Rood'. Some answers pointed out that Anna's speech is unusually coherent grammatically and syntactically; some were interested in her attempts to "express the inexpressible (eg 'distorted surreal conscious unconsciousness above and beyond just feminine)'). A number of promising suggestions: Anna's testimony vindicates Freud; the transcription reveals just how much the interviewer leads the interviewee; Anna's experience is indicative of female emancipation from patriarchy. The most common use of this passage was to provide a pattern (the transcription conventions) for a re-working of another passage in Question 7.

Passage C: 'The Scary Night'

A fresh departure for the paper, and a very popular passage. The paratactic format was identified and its effects analysed in many scripts. The minimal punctuation and the stamina of the resourceful child-narrator were also noted and there was a frequent pause at the security camera, which was seen as evidence of either Orwellian surveillance or parental safeguard. Candidates seemed quite genuinely to enjoy the passage's unassuming nature and its accessibility: "It always entertains the reader", wrote one. There were a number of diagnoses of the writer's developmental situation: some suggested the writer's style was evidence of the failure of the National Literacy Project, others that it showed the value of primary school emphasis on personal imaginative writing. This was a popular passage for Question 7 transformations.

Passage D: 'I Have a Scheme'

Another very popular passage. Candidates invariably noted the relationship between this text and Martin Luther King's (- sometimes Martin Luther's, or Nelson Mandela's) Washington speech, the substitution of "scheme" for "dream" often a useful starting point for discussion: some saw the poem as endorsing Luther King's vision, some as satirising the speech, some as indicating that the vision has failed or at least yet to be achieved ("... is 'There is a tunnel at the end of the light' optimistic or depressing?"); some thought the poem challenged the whole notion of cultural equality/homogeneity ("What would curry

blended with shepherd's pie taste like?"); some saw nuances in the vision of the future ("good if immigration offices just check that you are all right, but would all black people want to speak Welsh?"). The ironies of "muscular black men on Hampstead Heath walking their poodles" were too dense for almost anyone. In fact the key discriminator was whether the humour and irony of Zephaniah's tone were probed, or even recognised at all. Some answers attempting a de-constructionist analysis pointed out that the visions begin to cancel each other out, and to problematise any reading that might stress cultural, multi-cultural or gender specificities. Many drew useful attention to the complex pun on "black" in the poem's last line. Postcolonial approaches to this poem depended on how subtly they were developed and applied.

Passage E: *Fever Pitch*

This was invariably accurately summarised/paraphrased, but sometimes proved difficult to compare or contrast with other passages, often seen as standing apart from the other passages in that "dream" was being used here in a different sense: there were some excellent discussions of the meanings of the key word taking this and Passage D as prime examples of difference. The best treatments recognised that this was not simply an account of the futility of dreaming about being a great footballer; it is also testimony to the durability of such dreams, the way they are modified by but also canonised by the experience of later life. Some candidates clearly did not wish football-dreams to be false or ineffectual: "The hunger for professional success has a grandeur of its own, however misplaced hopes of it may be." The dated proper names of the passage caused no trouble. Many candidates took the passage as characteristic of dream as hope or ambition, and juxtaposed it with other texts accordingly. Some feminist readings objected to the gender-exclusive tone of the passage and its imagined world.

Passage F: *Nuns and Soldiers*

A very popular passage, particularly in comparison with Passage J (*Rebecca*); generally taken as representing the relationship between dreaming and the religious imagination. Most were fascinated by the "surreal" contrast between the overtly spiritual theme of the extract ("Jesus Christ came to Anne Cavidge in a vision") and the material solidity of the setting. Many noted the oddity of Anne's being "aware" of a tennis-court and "some flowering bushes" when she does not look at them: this led some candidates to consider the nature of faith ("when you know something is there that you cannot see ...") in the context of Anne's generally serene progress through the extract, from "one 'level' of consciousness" to another. The matter-of-fact depiction of the angels called for comment, as also did Anne's paradoxical "elated sadness" on their departure. For most answers the passage reached an anticipated climax in the mundane sound effect of Christ's footsteps on the gravel: "the onomatopoeic word 'crunch' is highly effective." Some candidates wondered how seriously Murdoch takes her heroine, and better answers were able to explore this possibility of irony. Quite a few Question 7 responses engaged with this passage, one of which was an interview in which Anne attempted to explicate her vision, interrupted continually by a sceptical friend.

Passage G: 'The James Bond Movie'

Some candidates found it hard to fit this passage into the framework of dreaming: while some of these thought the narrator was actually dreaming the experience described, others gave up trying and offered dream-theme-free formal analyses, often critically perceptive though thin on comparative discussion. While only a handful of answers overtly considered cinema as "dream-factory", most were alert to Swenson's presentation of the James Bond movie as a prejudiced, male chauvinist vision, where violence may be

extravagant but sex is "sexless", where women's bodies may be exhibited (but do not "look naked") while the male "crotch, below the waterline" must on no account be revealed. One answer explored the irony that a cinematic sequence designed to appeal to what Laura Mulvey calls the "male gaze" is here subjected to a sceptical woman's scrutiny (though a number thought May Swenson was a man). There was a lot of interest in the relation between the ("29-ft" wide) on-screen action and the spectator's pre-occupation with her tooth-ache and greasy popcorn, with some imaginative interpretations of the final folding of the "2-inch-wide ... little square of paper". There was also some thoughtful analysis of the interaction between the rigid formal structure of the verse and the freer movement of the sense units – sentences, and even individual words, that "spill over between lines and pairs of lines", with some acute comment on local effects of the extraordinary and audacious use of *enjambement* ("nervously pretending to defend/ his modesty") and end-stopping ("but unsubmerged all 28 slick foamy boobs"). There were some appropriately fierce feminist readings, deploring the objectification of women.

Passage H: 'The Green, Green Grass of Home'

A number of weaker answers offered paraphrases of this passage put against equally descriptive accounts of Passage C, 'The Scary Night'; more confident answers also drew in Passage L Milton's sonnet: the link between them all being the return to "reality" on waking up. The best answers on the passage registered that this was a song-lyric, both like and conventionally different from a comparable poem, and highlighted the importance of the chorus and of reiterated lines, such as those about Mary. Most answers described Mary as a "stereotype" and left it at that; those that explored effects of her presentation as "conventional" in the context of the specific genre were able to develop more fruitful discussion. There was some interesting discussion of the parallelisms of Papa and the padre, of "good to touch" and "arm in arm". Although at first sight it appeared one of the simplest of the passages, it was comprehensively mined for any detail that could illuminate the approach adopted by the candidate.

Passage I: *Under Milk Wood*

The few attempts at this passage focused upon the details lost and hungered for in the litany of the drowned; some picked up the poignant distinction of Rosie Probert's 'Woman's Voice' (the other dead are simply numbered). Fuller treatments began with its genre/status as radio drama, noting its rhetorical richness – which some described as characteristically Welsh – and explored the humorous effects of the "surreal but moving" catalogue of remembered details. Some began thinking of the experience as nightmare, but eventually found this restoration of community between living and dead comforting. Comparisons were drawn with Passages C, 'The Scary Night', H, 'Green green grass ...', and L, Milton's sonnet.

Passage J: *Rebecca*

This was the most popular passage on the paper. Many clearly knew the novel (or a film/tv derivative) well and were able to link the atmosphere of ruin in the dream-vision with Mrs Danvers's destruction of Manderley at the end of the novel: "Du Maurier uses the dream-sequence for subtle foreshadowing and as a commentary on what is to come, as well as the atmospheric build-up which is all an initial reading of the opening of *Rebecca* communicates." Many candidates found Freudian purchase among the tangled thickets and barred ways of this passage, making links with the "out of body experience" of the transcription, another case of a combination of a freewheeling narrator and dark imaginings. The most popular comparison, however, was with the work of the other modern female novelist, Iris Murdoch, with interesting and worthwhile comments about the contrasting handling of tone, pace and symbolism in the two extracts. Some candidates

went to town on effects of assonance, consonance and alliteration. Among some outstanding answers were a notable psychoanalytical comparison of J and Passage M, 'The Dream of the Rood', and a context-related analysis of the passage as representing England under threat from Nazi Germany - comparing it with the Zephaniah as showing the 1997 optimism of Tony Blair's first election. There is hardly a single line of the extract which was not comprehensively explored somewhere in candidates' work. The passage provided relevant material for any number of widely differing approaches and there were fascinating digressions – eg the blue of the hydrangeas was linked to the use of lapis lazuli in paintings of the Virgin Mary.

Passage K: 'Echo'

This produced an abundance of good work, tackling head-on the recondite nature of the poem's subject and poetic mode. Candidates wrote very well about the effects of oxymoron ('speaking silence'), gentle anaphora, and the poem's elaborate and subtle repetitions and changes of rhythm. Many candidates seemed to recognise that Rossetti's speciality is a lack of fulfilment, and seemed more than ready to explore such satisfaction as a dream, and its echo, can give. Many distinguished delicately between the lover and the echo, the wished-for world and the actual present.

Passage L: 'Methought I saw'

Candidate responded vigorously to the various challenges and opportunities offered by this poem. There was much intelligent discussion of both classical and biblical references, and the interactions between them (characteristic, some pointed out, of Renaissance culture). Candidates, as usual, responded well to the challenge of a Petrarchan sonnet, and were accomplished in discerning rhyme-scheme and the absence of *volta*. Something of a discriminator was whether the headnote was used to explore 'Methought I saw' as a poem about blindness, temporarily alleviated in the only space possible, the dream. Some wrote very feelingly about this aspect: "Here, night is the barrenness of a life without his wife and dawn the blankness of a blind man's surroundings; for in dreaming he may escape blindness, albeit in a temporary and illusory fashion." In another answer "the loss of his sight makes the 'full sight of her' even more poignant." Other answers, taking a feminist line, explored the implications of the Alcestis story (woman iconically sacrifices herself to save her husband and in turn can be rescued only by another man), the "spot of child-bed taint" (seen as symptomatic of the Christian "suspicion of women and disgust about procreation and sex"), and the representation of the revenant figure as purified perfection rather than physical embodiment.

Passage M: 'The Dream of the Rood'

This passage tended to be chosen by enterprising candidates who explored the contrast between the presentation of the cross in glory and the savage human drama enacted upon it: "again clad in gold / or again slicked with sweat, / spangled with spilling blood." Many saw this as a poem of conviction, adoration and sorrow to set against the more enigmatic religious experience of the Murdoch Passage F. A minority tried to set the poem in a historical context, some with great skill. Some were familiar with the concept of poetry based on alliterative rather than metrical patterning; almost all, familiar with the mode or not, explored the powerful effects of the writing, some with great sympathetic energy. Occasionally there were those who regretted that it had been translated, while others were thoughtful about the effects that translation had on a modern reader's perception. Almost everyone who wrote about this poem seemed to do so with excitement and purpose.

Section B

Question 2 (Passage N: Crystal, *The Stories of English*)

Most answers followed quite closely the sequence of technological innovation outlined in the passage, the fuller ones exploring the impact of technology rather than merely offloading an account of linguistic history. The weaknesses were often: a shortage of illustrative material (some just repeated the examples in the passage); and a tendency to jump from the printing-press to the text message without intervening stages. There were some polemical attacks on various ways in which the English language has been corrupted: eg "Text messaging is a prime example of this cave-man-like abbreviation of words to save time"; and, again, the effect of "all the technology seems to be dumbing down". On the whole, however, candidates handled this question at least fairly convincingly.

Question 3 (Passage O: Geoff McMaster, 'Making strange in dreams and literature')

This was a very popular choice, producing a variety of responses and a variety of opinions as to the relationship between reading and dreaming. Many of the fullest answers used Coleridge as a starting-off point: either his view of literature as a "rationalised dream" early in the passage, or his later argument that "poetry helps awaken us from the 'lethargy of custom' alerting us to 'truths which have laid bedridden in the dormitory of the soul'". An abundance of "refreshed views" provided by literature were explored, often uncovered by Romantic writers such as Coleridge, Blake and Wordsworth (especially 'Tintern Abbey'), but also more modern political fictions that make the world strange and new, such as *The Handmaid's Tale* and Brian Friel's *Translations*. The other frequent approach was to tackle the question, "how could there be just one way to read?" While many of these answers did not get much beyond a general view that all readers are different and therefore all readings must be, there were many more substantial discussions of how readings of particular texts may vary according to context, information available, personal situation and disposition: evidence here of the effect/value of Assessment Objective 4 in the Literature subject criteria! One remarkable answer took the blank page provided in *Tristram Shandy* for the reader's own drawing of Widow Wadman to demonstrate that every reader has an individual perception of the details of a book – suggesting that authors are aware of this. While many candidates were quite taken with the suggested relations between reading and dreaming, some argued that the relationship between dreams and literature had been exaggerated: "dreams are just the body de-toxing on thoughts and aren't very important."

Question 4 (Passage P: Peter Barry, *Beginning Theory*)

This was the least popular of the Section B questions. It often worked best when chosen by a candidate from a language background who had been versed in the procedures of stylistic analysis and who was able to provide appropriate and detailed examples by identifying features ("lexicity ... syntactic structures and phonological patterns") and analysing their effects in Section A passages, exemplifying Barry's contention that "the language of literature is not a special case". Some candidates, however, were offended by this contention, and by the view that literary texts might be usefully subjected to "commentary which is objective and scientific". These answers often invested in a profoundly reductive view of "linguistic and stylistic analysis" ("... what is the point of counting commas in Hemingway?") and equally simplistic valorisation of metaphor and imagery, but there were also some very carefully considered arguments where other

critics' perspectives in this section were given an airing as counter-claims. The fullest answers used the given passages to very great effect.

Question 5 (Passage Q: Maggie Humm, *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Feminist Criticism*)

The tight definition of four issues in feminist criticism produced tightly argued and clearly structured answers at every level of attainment. The Reading Booklet provided a good deal of fruitful material; in fact, almost every passage was drawn in for forensic investigation. Candidates re-visited male texts by examining realist novels that dealt with patriarchal structures (usually Dickens) or (more commonly) exploring Shakespeare's presentation of women. *King Lear* and *Much Ado About Nothing* were the favourite texts, with Cordelia's patience and Beatrice's feistiness both seen as antidotes to male chauvinism; *Hamlet* also featured in many answers, with Gertrude and (especially) Ophelia seen as challenging or embodying gender stereotypes. A minority wrote with great vigour and discernment about Chaucer's heroines, the Wife of Bath most often, and others such as wily May and the would-be-self-determining, melodramatic sensibility of Dorigen. Those who appealed to earlier male texts to show female subjugation in action picked Desdemona and the Duchess of Malfi (often managed very well). Invisible women writers were invariably addressed at secondhand, with reference to the silencing of Shakespeare's Sister in Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (popular and useful wider reading for AEA candidates). Many pointed out that the Brontes and George Eliot were obliged to use pseudonyms, not always aware (in George Eliot's case, anyway) of the actual reason for their doing so. The model of the "feminist reader" was demonstrated mainly with reference to nineteenth century novels, to hidden histories such as Jane Fairfax's inner life in Austen's *Emma*, or Bertha Mason's in *Jane Eyre* (much reference to *Wide Sargasso Sea* as a "recovery text" here). Maggie Tulliver was the favourite choice to illustrate more forthright rebellion against a woman's lot, with the elder Catherine in *Wuthering Heights* second favourite. Some weaker answers lacked subtlety, assuming all female visions were "dismissed and rejected" until the twentieth century, but the majority clearly find the feminist view of literary history stimulating and sympathetic.

Question 6 (Passage R: Helen Gardner, *The Business of Criticism*)

This question invited candidates to write about approaches to literary study in a way familiar from previous papers. Some remembered Eaglestone's distinction between "intrinsic" and "extrinsic" approaches to the text from last year's paper as parallel to Gardner's argument that literary texts are unquestionably "historical objects" but that each is also "ultimately irreducible into anything but itself". Most candidates argued unexceptionably that both study approaches are fruitful; most also agreed with Gardner's view that the "primary concern is with the work itself". Familiar "contexts" adduced included the Jacobean Court, which both is (the king's learning, racial attitudes) and is not (the transcendent quality of *Othello*) important in assessing Shakespeare's Great Tragedies. Other candidates pointed out the importance of the Jazz Age in understanding *The Great Gatsby*, of the First World War in appreciating the Trench Poets, and of Revolutionary thinking, politics and the Industrial Revolution in exploring the art of William Blake. Only a couple of candidates argued that we all read for different purposes ("... to prepare for an exam or a lesson/lecture, to pass the time on a train, to follow up a personal interest ...") and therefore deal with texts in different ways, each appropriate to purpose.

Question 7

On many scripts there was an unfortunate disparity in length between the two parts of the answer: too many candidates, having written an enterprising transformation, offered mere paraphrase as commentary when analysis of the task was required. On the other hand a

number of candidates wrote magnificent commentaries – sometimes to rather prosaic transformations. A number of answers psychoanalysed Leo Thompson, sometimes as an adult, or interviewed or excoriated his parents. Many sensibly managed transformations employed transcription format, often with excellently modulated dialogue. Zephaniah's poem (or a poetry-reading incorporating it) featured as a leading magazine article (as suggested in the question paper); the other suggested re-creative task, *Rebecca* as a poem, was also very popular, as were poems (including a villanelle) based upon the Iris Murdoch passage. Milton's sonnet produced more exotic fare: a bizarre interview with the poet (for some reason called Ralph rather than Milton) on Richard and Judy's daytime television show, and a rollicking re-working of the sonnet as a ballad. The transcription Passage B was re-written in the style of Homer's *Odyssey*. An inventive candidate re-presented the love-lorn speaker of Rossetti's 'Echo' in the style of Jane Austen. 'Green, Green Grass of Home' was perhaps the most popular text for re-working, producing chiefly diary entries and plays (often including execution), but also a breathless memoir from Mary, who had become a successful property developer and, having sold off the land with "that old oak tree", could offer Mama and Papa only a spot of waste ground for the burial. The vision of 'The Dream of the Rood' was re-presented as a drug-induced fantasy, the imagery particularly lurid and glowing in this context. As in previous years the inventiveness and quality of re-creative work produced under examination conditions at its best continues to impress and delight. Examiners do suggest, however, that the question should include the health warning that candidates attempting this question should really have done such an exercise before, and that this is far from being an easy option.

**Advanced Extension Award
English (9910)
June 2006 Assessment Series**

Specification Results

Overall threshold marks:

	Maximum Mark	D	M	U
9910	60	44	33	0

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

	D	M	U	Total Number of Candidates
9910	30.8	66.1	100.00	2336

Statistics are correct at the time of publication.

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