

Report on the Components

June 2007

9910/MS/R/07

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 report on the Examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the syllabus content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the Examination.

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

© OCR 2007

Any enquiries about publications should be addressed to:

OCR Publications
PO Box 5050
Annesley
NOTTINGHAM
NG15 0DL

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

CONTENTS

Advanced Extension Awards English (9910)

REPORT ON THE COMPONENT

Unit	Content	Page
9910	Principal Examiner's Report	1
*	Grade Thresholds	13

Advanced Extension Award in English

Summer 2007

Principal Examiner's Report

Examiners felt that the paper enabled candidates to display their full potential. One writes: "I think this was a highly successful paper – the subject obviously appealed: all the candidates have experience of work either first hand – several alluded to their part-time work (and one lamented his current state as a member of the unemployed), or see the effects of work on their parents." Quality of written communication was generally good: in fact some examiners reported a general improvement this year in technical accuracy and organisation of argument. There were very few instances of timing problems or rubric infringement: the format and philosophy of the paper now seem to have been widely assimilated.

Fewer candidates this year explored the passages from the perspective of formal language study, and those who did chose their Section A passages from across the paper, rather than concentrating on the first three texts as has been the case previously. Popular choices for these answers were Passage E (Churchill) as an exchange of workers' jargon, Passage K (Orwell) as an exercise in rhetoric and Passage H (Marshall) as a representation of dialect. Language candidates continue to supply articulate analysis of effects as well as identifying linguistic features: "language" essays are now just as rigorously constructed and tightly argued as are their literary equivalents.

Section A was generally well done with most candidates defining and evaluating their approach. The best answers defined in detail what they hoped to achieve and then sustained that approach. As usual the range of declared perspectives was impressive: Lacan, Marx, feminist, sociological, an outstanding discussion of the degrees of 'economic needs', practical criticism, lexical/syntactical/stylistic analyses, all the way through to 'I am allowing this essay to meander along on its own course.' Candidates still score highly with a close analysis approach. Weaker answers either ignored the define/evaluate requirement of the question or they bore no relation to what they set out to do.

Several candidates wrote that they had enjoyed the paper; one congratulated the setters on including Marx/Engels ("you OCR socialists"); another said how refreshing it was to be able to exercise creativity under exam conditions, and thanked the Board for it.

Most examiners commented very positively on the work they had seen: eg

- Though there continue to be media accounts of falling standards, this paper clearly indicates that at the top end the standard is steadily rising – no one of my generation at 18 could have produced work of the level of the best of this cohort.
- The English AEA attempts and realises something *very* important and worthwhile. The candidates who have taken this Paper have, in the majority of cases, undertaken work that has provided real "stretch and challenge" along with fantastic opportunities for independent study.

Section A

Few chose to write on Passage A and Passage C (the advertisements), possibly because there were not many from a language background, but otherwise every passage received reasonable attention, with the partial exception of Passage P (the Biblical extract) and Passage O (Swift's *Directions to Servants*).

It is quite common now, and sensible, for the candidate to take a phrase/idea from a Section B passage to define an approach and agenda for a Section A answer – eg from Marx/Engels on class relations, Eagleton on literary language, Crystal on occupational language, or Peet and Robinson on reader response. Unless the Section B answer was limited by considering the same passage, this strategy helped the candidate to sustain coherence and direction over the script as a whole.

More candidates than in previous years confined their attention to two or three passages in Section A responses; concentration on two passages produced some detailed and carefully developed argument, though some candidates ran out of things to say about their chosen pair before they ran out of time to write their essay. In some scripts the same two passages were also addressed in Section B answers: this narrowness of focus makes it difficult to avoid repetition or thinness of discussion. Those that did range more widely used the variety of textual descriptions of work to propel some ambitious and interesting comparative analyses. Illustrative material drawn from a candidate's own reading continues to be diverse and well managed.

As might have been expected from the nature of the topic, many candidates approached the texts as explorations of social/economic and gender relations, with a number citing Marxism (more or less clearly defined) as a guiding model: Passages A, B & C contained plenty of evidence of capitalist activity and principle; Sharon Atkins' anomic dismay, the suffering servant-girls of the Fenland Chronicle (quite directly the victims of the bourgeoisie), Arthur Seaton's jovial/resigned complicity with the system, Orwell's exposé of working conditions for miners and Elizabeth Barrett Browning's indignation against employment of children in factories children, all suited this approach very well. The other approach (again more or less theoretically informed) widely used was feminism. This worked very well when eg *The Woman's Book* was juxtaposed with the Sybil Marshall passage dealing with the lives of the girls who would have actually wielded the lavatory brush; Monica Ali's letter from Hasina in Bangladesh, with its self-empowering view of employment and reminders of patriarchal structures, provided fruitful material, as did Churchill's *Easy Money* (Scilla seems simultaneously a feminist role model and a dangerous warning about successful women having to adopt masculine language and behaviour); from this point of view, many found Studs Terkel's interview with Sharon Atkins resonant and curiously moving, identifying the receptionist's hapless and articulate human voice. There were some promising psycho-analytical readings, Lacan making his first developed AEA intervention. Some answers adopted an "extrinsic", contextual approach, the value of which depended on the degree and kind of contextual knowledge drawn on; the nature of many of the passages led to discussion of literature as an agency involved actively and dialectically in social and cultural process, rather than simply reflecting aspects of its world. Most answers considered, as Question 1 requires, "*ways in which* different views and experiences are presented": there were some interesting comparative explorations of narrative point of view, structure of ideas, imagery and language variation.

The most popular comparisons between passages were as follows:

- Advert (A) / Transcription (B) / Advert (C) / Churchill (E): views of 1980s and contemporary capitalism in operation.

Report on the Units taken in June 2007

- Ali (D) / Churchill (E) / Terkel (F) / Marshall (H) / The Woman's Book (L): feminist perspectives on jobs regarded as appropriate for women.
- Ali (D) / Sillitoe (I) / Orwell (K) / Barrett Browning (M): dystopian visions of the industrial world, with varying degrees of mitigation.
- Merle Travis (J) / Orwell (K): the world of the miner in contrasting voices.
- Barrett Browning (M) / Crabbe (N): a rhetorical (EBB) and realist (Crabbe) view of work.
- Marshall (H) / Swift (O) (less common than expected): harsh and self-empowering views of service.
- Crabbe (H) / Marlowe (Q): a "realistic" and a euphuistic version of pastoral/rural conditions.
- Ali (D) / Churchill (E) / Terkel (F) / Marshall (H) / Sillitoe (I) / The Woman's Book (L) / Orwell (K) / Barrett Browning (M) / Bible (P): discussion of social/economic/gender relations (these texts were combined in a large variety of ways).
- Sillitoe (I) / Orwell (K): novelist's and journalist's takes on the industrial world.

Passage A: Job Advertisement, Marketing Week

The advertisement was less popular than in previous years. Candidates offering linguistic approaches tended to generalise about this passage as representative of the language of advertising, though there were some impressive attempts to deconstruct its rhetoric and its assumptions. As Trader is looking for webworkers there were opportunities to use the passage as a springboard to explore the status of the internet in modern commerce.

Passage B: Transcription

This very lively exchange was regularly contrasted with the formally shaped satirical passage from Churchill's *Serious Money*. Language candidates identified the slang and neologisms as proof of the flexibility of spoken language; more politicised approaches considered the durability of 1980s values (and behaviour) in the modern business world. Much more attention was paid to the actual wording of the extract than to that of the advertisement. Some candidates assumed in at least part of the answer that they were reading an invented exchange which took a negative, satirical view of the businessmen, leading some candidates to consider "the author" and intentions of the passage: eg "Their shortened words, 'entre p', 'lotsa' and 'jus' are presented in a satirical way."

Passage C: Almut Koester, *The Language of Work*

The least popular Section A passage on the paper. Candidates writing on communication in the modern business world considered the letter's layout, the confident minimalism of its tone, and its calibrated presentation of routes to success.

Passage D: Monica Ali, *Brick Lane*

A number of candidates had clearly read Ali's novel, which supplied one of the most popular passages on this year's paper. There was some comment on what some saw Hasina's "bad grammar" rather than a representation of a dialectal form of English, but many saw the power of Ali's use of language to generate a range of effects, sharply suggestive and often subtly comic (eg "I am machine woman"). The final sentence, "It make look cheap," generated a wide variety of interpretations. Almost everyone registered Hasina's as an unusually positive voice among the chorus of workplace victims encountered elsewhere on the paper, though many pointed out the ambivalence of her condition – eg her becoming "machine woman" (completing a rite of passage

Report on the Units taken in June 2007

from being "just girl" while also becoming "appendage of the machine", as Marx/Engels put it), the strictly gendered work activities ("men go there") and the intimations of a still heavily patriarchal culture (Aleya's husband was viewed as an unreconstructed male chauvinist and as fuel to feminist debate). A few approached the passage from a post-colonial point of view, exploring the effects of industrialisation/globalisation on culture and consciousness (eg Shahnaz using cosmetics to demonstrate independence of spirit was a fruitful issue to consider). Few noted the thrill and novelty and hope of having new industry to work in.

Passage E: Caryl Churchill, *Easy Money*

There was some perceptive discussion of the effects of rhyme and rhythmic patterning in this passage. Many responses had a strong sense of context: *American Psycho*, *The Bonfire of the Vanities*, Harry Enfield's "Loadsamoney" and even *A Bit of Fry and Laurie* were regularly cited as 1980s cultural reference points, identifying its satirical targets appropriately. Candidates engaged well with the language of the passage, especially the upmarket cars and the social demarcations such as "public schoolboy" and "oiks", though "Sloanes" caused more difficulty. The passage adapted well to inclusion in feminist and Marxist-based essays.

Passage F: Studs Terkel, *Working*

Possibly the most popular passage of all. Almost everyone explored ways in which Atkins' mode of communication and relationships had been modified by her job: answers to Question 4 often regarded her discourse as an example of "occupational English". Others identified "I always have this feeling of interruption" as a sort of existential crisis. Most evident was the level of candidate empathy with Atkins' personality and predicament: the way she is subdued in the function of her machine ("treated like a piece of equipment"); the *frisson* with which she realises she has become a stereotype ("I wasn't worth bothering with"); the grim evasive euphemisms she invents for what she does ("Her alternative job title for herself, 'servomechanism' - probably carrying echoes of 'sado-masochism' - demotes her to a slave."). This passage was read as accurately and penetratingly as perhaps any on the paper. There was some thoughtful discussion of the interview as a way of collecting and recording information, and of the points made by Atkins's testimony in the context of Terkel's activity as a "guerrilla journalist with a tape recorder".

Passage G: Carla Greene, *I want to be a Policeman*

Interestingly, this was a maverick passage, appearing in unexpected places in answers, and used in unexpected ways. Most often it was used to show how, in the sixties, little boys knew what they wanted to be when they grew up, and that career structures were more firmly demarcated; otherwise candidates drew attention to its all-male world and masculinist assumptions. Some answers deconstructed the illustration to striking effect, and there were some shrewd analyses of the anchoring of picture by words and vice versa. There were feminist readings (usually hostile); Marxist readings about the nature of hierarchy; sociological interpretations; psychological readings (the boy's introduction to the inevitability of rejection). One or two alert candidates saw Marx/Engels' "perfect hierarchy of officers and sergeants" (Passage W) represented in this picture. The passage really came into its own as the basis for transformation in Question 8, introducing us to various subversions of Greene's authoritarian assumptions: to cynical policemen crushing schoolboy illusions, and to gleeful journalists making copy of the police minimum height of five foot eight ("They've been accused of being sexist, they've been accused of being institutionally racist but now the Metropolitan Police have taken their discrimination to new lows (or highs as it may be), they are '*heightist*'"); the older sergeant in the background was also given a voice in a number of transformations, grumbling about the young officer who spends his time talking to visitors and

Report on the Units taken in June 2007

throwing bits of paper in the waste bin, while he has spent years on the beat and is heading for low-pensioned retirement.

Passage H: Sybil Marshall, *A Fenland Chronicle*

This was a popular, accessible passage. Its view of social hierarchy was useful in politicised essays, and its recovery of a distant historical period (most candidates concluded this was "Victorian") made it a source of helpful social insights. It was often included as part of an answer on women in the workplace, or comparing passages written by women. The unsisterly, woman-on-woman oppression it represents attracted much attention, though the disgusting old shepherd was singled out for attention too, sometimes as if he represented the entire masculine sex. Candidates were interested in the use of dialect, which was invariably seen as a device for greater realism and credibility, and which supplied examples of both occupational language and language change for answers in Section B. Interesting parallels were often set up between Marshall's skivvies and the work defined for middle-class housewives in *The Woman's Book* (Passage L).

Passage I: Alan Sillitoe, *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*

Though Arthur Seaton is not particularly angry in this passage, candidates seemed impressively well informed about the Angries, with a number citing and even dating *Look Back in Anger* as a possible parallel. Other 1950s contexts seemed hazier (much hazier than the eighties or the depression elsewhere on the paper) though one or two placed Arthur's economically equivocal experiences in the context of post-war prosperity and "You've Never Had it so Good". Arthur's settling for an inconspicuous fourteen pounds a week generated interesting contrasts with the conspicuous consumption of *Serious Money* and the businessmen in Passage B; he was also often identified as the kind of worker - disillusioned, escapist, and cynical - who is likely to form Marx's proletariat. Narrative perspective was sometimes interestingly explored - third person narrative drifting into Arthur's language and consciousness ("... you couldn't grumble at four-and-six a hundred ...") and out again ("the rate-checker was an innocuous-looking man") in a way customary (as a candidate pointed out) with Jane Austen: this made an interesting comparison with Orwell's language and position as "a bourgeois observer of the working class at work"; some answers pointed out that both Orwell and Sillitoe seem to be explaining for a middle-class readership what working class occupations are like. Some answers responded to Sillitoe's use of technical language as a kind of industrial archaeology: eg "a 'capstan lathe', a 'starter button' and 'his motor', these however sound fairly archaic so the reader can tell this is a past experience." The passage supplied an abundance of linguistic material for Section B answers.

Passage J: Merle Travis, 'Sixteen Tons'

This moderately popular passage was most often used as a demotic antidote to the more literary view of the miner in Passage K, comparing the men of iron and steel with the "hammered iron statues" of Orwell's passage. Candidates invariably liked 'Sixteen Tons' (an examiner notes that "songs evidently appeal to our candidates"), and were fascinated by its odd mixture of glamour and squalor, though not always sure how Travis had achieved this effect. Some referred to the Faustian pact intimated by "I owe my soul to the company store"; others read this as signalling the Marxist notion of industrial dehumanisation. Most viewed it (as the headnote does) as a piece of popular song-writing, though a few argued that it represented genuine folk-poetry: "about the workers and for the workers and by the workers"; some sense of a specialist interest in occasional references to Woody Guthrie. 'Sixteen Tons' formed the basis of a number of interesting transformations in Question 8, including an excellent version in rap.

Report on the Units taken in June 2007

Passage K: Orwell, 'Down the Mine'

This was a frequently chosen passage, often in juxtaposition with other industrial passages such as D and I. Most situated it accurately in the run-up to World War Two and were able to use some of Orwell's other work, or his reputation, as a landmark. The opening description of the mine as "my own mental picture of hell" elicited an impressive range of literary parallels, including Owen's 'Miners' and 'Strange Meeting', Milton's Pandemonium, Wagner's Nibelheim and the hellfire-sermon from Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*; quite often candidates also cited Dante as a parallel in this context and some drew very apposite parallels with Lawrence's miners. The developing argument of this passage was registered by almost all candidates, with much interested discussion of Orwell's presentation of the miners as heroic and even enviable ("only someone who had never done hard manual work could say this ..."): almost every answer noted the vision of them as "hammered iron statues". The final section, where Orwell points out the dependence of the comfortable classes on conditions they would prefer not to know about, inspired those writing social/political analyses, and reminded others of Orwell's left-wing sympathies. One or two answers noted how effectively Orwell's root/flower image mirrors the base/superstructure model of Marxist theory.

Passage L: *The Woman's Book*

This passage was incorporated skilfully into Section A essays usually offering feminist analyses of the world of work. The high-handed tone was commented on by many (who supposed the author to be female), as was the strict vision of hierarchy among wives/housekeepers and servants: all in all the top-down vision of social structures to be expected in what was almost a "Victorian" text, though some thoughtful answers noted that the world taken for granted in the passage ("Young servants should always be warned ...") was to be transformed by the Great War and related upheavals: a number of perceptive answers pointed out that the passage was contemporary with the Suffragette movement, remembering that it was "The Bathroom and Lavatory" (or something like it) that Pankhurst was fighting against. The language of the passage was explored in detail less frequently than that of some others, though a number picked up the frequent "product placement" advertising, the moral emphasis on hygiene, the patronising effects of the language - especially the intensifiers such as "very" and "well" - and the apparent casualness of the "scary" warnings: "Care must be taken that the mixture does not touch the hands, as it is very poisonous and liable to burn." Some candidates were taken aback by the time required to keep just this part of the house under control; some wondered what instructions a contemporary and equivalent *Man's Book* would contain.

Passage M: Barrett Browning, 'The Cry of the Children'

This was another very popular passage. Candidates seemed reasonably confident about early-Victorian industrial contexts (especially factory legislation) and many tied the "parliamentary reports" Barrett Browning had been consulting to the pressure for reform. Many assumed (not unreasonably) that Barrett Browning had been strongly influenced by Romanticism, and demonstrated that the attitudes to nature, ecology and childhood in the poem were congruent with Romantic views. The image of the children's spirits "turning" like the factory wheels impressed many, and the poem's vaguely apocalyptic atmosphere reminded them of Blake. Fuller answers tended to point out the poem's strongly rhetorical devices, its insistent rhythm, and its public, declamatory voice. Interestingly a sizeable minority chose to take issue with Barrett Browning (one of the few authors with whom they did, this year – Orwell was another): some thought her anti-capitalist drive sentimental or impractical ("after all, the children still have to earn money"). Others assumed that as Barrett Browning had got her copy out of parliamentary blue-books she had had no personal experience of the processes she deplored, leading some to compare her unfavourably with

Report on the Units taken in June 2007

the more hands-on Orwell and Crabbe; for a typical candidate "her experience of the work these people do isn't her own and therefore her perspective is fantastical." Barrett Browning's passion and literariness seem to have worked against her with some of our candidates this year.

Passage N: Crabbe, *The Village*

Since Crabbe might not have been familiar to most of our candidates, the attentive and accurate readings reported by examiners reflect close-reading skills and good examination technique, exploring the passage for evidence of accurate depiction of nature, "the real picture of the poor" and its declared anti-pastoral project. Almost every account of this extract was effective and clear. A proportion of answers identified the heroic couplet as its basic metre, and some were aware of the form's history and associations. A number identified Crabbe's as an "enlightenment" sensibility. Almost invariably the poem was contrasted with Marlowe's literary conventionalism (some detailed and perceptive comparative analysis here) though a few set it up against Barrett Browning, pointing out that Crabbe really knew about suffering and nature (based on speculation about Crabbe's upbringing) whereas Barrett Browning's performance was a literary construct.

Passage O: Swift, *Directions to Servants*

Though not a popular passage, this was sometimes confidently explored, with thoughtful attention given to Swift's irony. The most fruitful comparisons were with Sillitoe's representation of a worker playing the system to his own advantage, and with Marshall's picture of servanthood where this was impossible. A gratifying number of candidates knew their Swift, especially *A Modest Proposal*, whose rhetorical techniques they were able to compare with the present passage.

Passage P: St Matthew 20:1-16

Less popular than other passages, this was generally used in Section B as an illustration of a Biblical text when dealing with issues of interpretation (Question 5), or as a demonstration of the otherworldliness or impracticality of Christian values when juxtaposed with Marxism (Question 7). When it figured in Section A it was usually contrasted with one of the modern "industrialised" visions of labour, with the saintly children in Passage M, the uncomplaining, hard-working miners in Passage K, or with Arthur's hairsbreadth calculations in Passage I. Some contrasted the abundant opportunities of the hardcore capitalist passages (A, B and C) with Matthew's luckless workers, standing idle, having to content themselves with wine-making jobs. Most saw the parable as suggestive and ambiguous. "This is a statement of equality under God's eyes," wrote one candidate, "or we can read it as a handy tool to quieten down unhappy Christians"; some pointed out that it authorises autocratic employers' practices and discourages agitating employees. Many of those who treated this text in detail were able to see radically different interpretations.

Passage Q: Christopher Marlowe, 'Come live with me ...'

A very popular passage and an accessible vision of a pastoral world to contrast with tougher representations elsewhere on the paper. Candidates registered the tone of Marlowe's poem usually confidently, but had more difficulty engaging with the details of its metre and language. Many supplied useful potted histories of the pastoral tradition, with references to Virgil and Horace, Pope's 'Windsor Forest', and frequently to Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, wherein the form is "so wittily questioned and satirised," as one candidate put it. A few answers referred to a "witty reply by Sir Walter Raleigh". The best managed Section A answers achieved a balance between exploring the poem as a literary exercise and considering what it has to say about work. On the whole, effort on

this text was vigorous and committed, suggesting that highly literary selections are attractive to our candidates.

Section B

Candidates' attention was fairly evenly divided between the Section B alternatives. Those whose performance on Section A suggested a literary background frequently selected a "language" question from Section B – eg Question 2 (language change) or Question 4 (occupational language). These wrote with discrimination, authority and effective examples, particularly of the "jargon" associated with work, or by making selection from the paper's wealth of opportunity to write about occupational language. As in previous years most candidates seemed happy with the diversity of materials provided and were good at moving from one genre to another.

Almost every candidate made substantial use of the passages in the Reading Booklet as illustrative material, regardless of the angle from which a question was approached. For example, Passage Q (Marlowe) was regularly exhibited as an example of archaic language (in Question 2) or "literary language" (in Question 6), and a range of "industrial" texts (D, F, K and M) were used to test Marx and Engels' analysis in Question 7. As in previous years the favourite author drawn on from outside the booklet was Blake, whose anti-industrial vision and sensibility preoccupied many (it was interesting to see for how many the default opponent of "industrialisation" is "Romanticism"); other frequent choices included Swift's 'Modest Proposal', often but not always included in a discussion of *Directions to Servants* (Passage O); the War Poets (especially in connection with the various industrial "hells" included on the paper); Dickens (frequently cited but never explored in much textual detail); Camus (*The Plague* as a novel that compels and resists allegoric analysis); Orwell's *Animal Farm* and *1984* (not applied just to 'Down the Mine' but often occurring in discussions of the Marx/Engels passage). Earlier literature referred to included Chaucer (usually the Wife of Bath but often, suiting the *work* topic, the Merchant) and Shakespeare. *Hamlet* was regularly cited as a play that supports Peet and Robinson's proposition that "variant readings of the same text are equally valid"; *Othello*, and its presentation of women, was also a popular choice. A number of candidates introduced material from their studies or knowledge of *Dr Faustus*, often comparing the play with Passage Q to demonstrate Marlowe's almost alarming literary versatility. Some candidates had good ideas and theoretical understanding but struggled to support these with reference to helpful examples.

Question 2 (Passage R: Melvyn Bragg, *The Adventure of English*)

Most candidates used the information in the passage extensively, some exhaustively. Some answers offered lists of words whose meaning had changed with time; a good deal of illustration was gathered from the Reading Booklet, especially from Passages A, B and C, citing language from the eighties and the present day, and from Sybil Marshall's passage in dialect. Candidates answering this question often made intelligent use of Wittgenstein's language games and Friel's *Translations*. Though there were relatively few scripts, these tended to be well argued.

Question 3 (Passage S: Richard Jacobs, *A Beginner's Guide to Critical Reading*)

Candidates usually agreed wholeheartedly with the passage's proposition that context and text are indelibly interlinked. As in previous years this was often proved by personal witness as to how much was missed before the context was explained to/explored by the student reader. Much use was made of AS/A2 texts and study materials, with popular choices including Orwell (the representation of the Russian Revolution in *Animal Farm*) and the major women novelists of the nineteenth century (eg the value of biographical materials in studying George Eliot and the Brontës;

Report on the Units taken in June 2007

the navy and Napoleonic wars in reading *Persuasion*). Some answers were occupied in essentially illustrating possible positions, rather than - like the best ones - synthesising a range of material into a coherent argument. Some candidates agreed with Jacobs's view that "dominant schools" of literary theory are coming together now (some even trying out a couple of approaches in Section A answers); while some were quite indignant at the idea that (as a candidate put it) you might "mix and match" theoretical approaches to textual analysis. An examiner writes: "Most AEA candidates arrive prepared to write an essay about reader response and/or text and context. The ability and willingness to consider examples in some detail, rather than make cursory reference to them, would pay dividends."

Question 4 (Passage T: David Crystal, *Cambridge Encyclopaedia of the English Language*)

A very popular question, possibly because the reading booklet provided abundant illustrative material. The question was confidently answered: essays were well illustrated, their arguments satisfyingly developed, with useful differentiation between the use of slang and jargon and of more technical vocabulary. Answers often noted that – as Foucault argues - occupational dialects impart power, by inclusion and exclusion, to those who are acquainted with them. Sillitoe supplied a good deal of material, but so did the "yuppie" passages early in the booklet. Some tried to illustrate Crystal's point about Dickens's characters linguistic absorption in their work. Some really interesting answers drew on candidates' own experience of work: eg a splendid response from a modern Orwell, who had done his research working in a supermarket, listed some of the "occupational" varieties of English with which he was confronted - how the "Cleaning Sheet" graduated to being called the "Signing Off Sheet" because no one ever admitted to leaving anything dirty and the "Daily Rumble" (turning all the products round so their "best face" is shown to the shopper) became a "chat-up line".

Question 5 (Passage U: Peet and Robinson, *Leading Questions*)

This passage clearly appealed to candidates: it was probably (though not by much) the most popular of the Section B options this year. They found the arguments lively and hospitable (the textbook is aimed at A-Level students) and tended to pick up on one or two of the suggestions in the passage, notably to be "jolly clever, and write a number of different critiques of the same work from different ideological points-of-view." The favourite text for this treatment, as noted above, was *Hamlet*, viewed as a play about a Romantic, a procrastinator, a shrewd manipulator and/or a candidate for Freudian/Lacanian analysis ("with the appearance of the Ghost, Hamlet enters his 'mirror stage'"). Other popular texts to receive multiple interpretations included *Measure for Measure* and *Frankenstein*. As elsewhere this year, however, many candidates preferred to take their examples from the reading-booklet: when Peet and Robinson suggested a text might be scrutinized through the lens of "Christian Ideology" Passage P was examined, and the writers' suggestion of a "Socialist ideology" prompted 'Down the Mine'. It was clear that most candidates had thoroughly embraced the concept of multiple readings of a text, and the related idea of the reader as "an active creator of the meaning of the texts". However, many acknowledged they preferred to think that texts had discrete interpretations, and that they liked to have them explained to them. Authorial intention weighed heavily with some. Some candidates were offended by the "patronising tone" of the writing in this passage, the redundant, childish cartoon drawings, and the "impertinent" suggestion that the reader can do whatever s/he likes with much-respected texts.

Question 6 (Passage V: Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction*)

This challenging but popular passage was resourcefully tackled by candidates exploring passages from the reading-booklet and texts from AS/A2 and wider reading. Some candidates relished the

Report on the Units taken in June 2007

idea that literature "represents 'an organized violence on ordinary speech'" and tested this against a range of writers, agreeing on Hopkins and, interestingly, Dylan Thomas. Many argued, however, that in other cases it is more appropriate to say that in literature ordinary language is *intensified*, the favourite exemplars being Wordsworth and Pinter, and that this recognition threw into question the notion of a specifically "literary language". Answers on this topic were well illustrated and on the whole well sustained; some were brilliant. Others followed up the idea that in the experience of literature language is "made strange ... and because of this estrangement, the everyday world was suddenly made unfamiliar", some with testimony of how texts had changed readers' ways of thinking and seeing (Blake again, also Camus and *The Great Gatsby*). It was good to see a candidate remembering Browning's Lippo Lippi ("... don't you mark? we're made so that we love / First when we see them painted, things we have passed / Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see"); also exhilarating, particularly in relation to this question, to watch answers pursuing a complex idea in what, for some candidates, was clearly the excitement of discovery - "shock of recognition", in Edmund Wilson's words. As examiners often point out, this experience is a chief delight in working on this paper.

Question 7 (Passage W: Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*)

This was a very popular question, and candidates engaged with almost all aspects of the passage, which had proved very useful in terms of focusing discussion in Section A answers. Candidates wrote on the way characters in the reading-booklet (Sharon Atkins, Hasina, Elizabeth Barrett Browning's children and, to an extent, Arthur Seaton) become "appendages of the machine". They considered the functioning of hierarchies in capitalist societies (examining the voices of the businessmen in Passage B, and the class relations described by Sybil Marshall). With particular enthusiasm, they explored the importance of gender issues in the world of work, and implications of the view that "the labour of men is superseded by that of women"; indeed it may be that Marx was most interesting to our candidates this year as a predictor of feminist upheaval in the workplace. Candidates were more interested in Marxism as an applied literary theory than as an active political/economic philosophy. The fullest answers were excellent, drawing on a remarkable range of texts. Angela Carter's *Bloody Chamber* was a particularly effective source of support for the Marxist/feminist view. Very few offered purely political or socio-economic discussion.

Question 8

As last year the re-creative question continues to be popular. While many were excellent, attempts often ran into problems, most commonly disparity in length and cogency between the transformation and the commentary: some candidates offered mere paraphrase rather than the required critical analysis of the relation between the original and their own work. Conversely, as in previous years, the very best responses to this question shone in the precision of the commentary. The most interesting answers were those that involved crossing genre boundaries, like those mentioned here, particularly where the generic definition of the transformation was precise (eg "... an article for *Hello* magazine", rather than merely "a magazine article").

The most popular passage for rewriting was 'Sixteen Tons' (Passage J), but most of the passages in Section A were encountered at some point:

- Passage L produced some of the wittiest work, such as a bawdy housewife's song and a spoof learned exposition of a poem based on *The Woman's Book* (in this latter case the commentary was the most interesting feature: it seemed a kind of parodic response to Peet and Robinson - "In the poem 'To the Bathroom'," wrote the candidate, "the baths are 'metaphorical' but there is no consensus as to what they represent")

Report on the Units taken in June 2007

- An astonishing sermon, in pastiche Elizabethan, was based on Passage P "changed to suit the agenda of the sixteenth century Church Establishment". Here the "sins of laziness and greed displayed by the labourers of the parable" were preached upon by an itinerant preacher accompanied by actors personifying the Vices in proper late-medieval fashion
- Passage K became a sonnet, and - perhaps most notably - a passage by Chaucer
- Passage O turned into a playscript - which in part made up for the lack of responses in Section A
- Passage F was transformed into a script for 'Hustle'
- Passage H was converted into an advertisement in the style of Passage A, with an outstanding commentary

Examiners often report on the effectiveness of re-creative work: for example, "the ingenuity and variety of responses to this question, produced under examination conditions, continue to surprise and delight ... it seems that a good deal of useful teaching and preparation has taken place in this regard."

However, some examiners sound warning notes: for example, "In my allocation almost exactly 50% of candidates opted for Question 8. Some candidates clearly see this as the easier option. It is certainly difficult to use the Reading Booklet fully, or demonstrate much wider reading – though the very best answers do satisfy this element of the rubric in the commentary. It can be a high-risk strategy to answer this question. The best are extraordinary, while the weakest produce transformations of extreme banality and have little to say to justify their choice. Far too many opt for a simple story – sometimes transforming/paraphrasing prose into prose. Increasing numbers are electing to transform a passage that they have discussed in Section A. This suggests a certain limitation in aspiration."

Report on the Units taken in June 2007

Report on the Units taken in June 2007

**Advanced Extension Award English 9910
June 2007 Assessment Series**

Component Threshold Marks

Component	Max Mark	Distinction	Merit	Ungraded
9910	60	46	35	0

Overall

	Distinction	Merit	Ungraded
Percentage in Grade	30.81	35.98	33.21
Cumulative Percentage in Grade	30.81	66.79	100.00

The total entry for the examination was 2595

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

OCR Customer Contact Centre

(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 2007

