



General Certificate of Secondary Education

**English/English
Language/English Literature**

Specifications 4700/4705/4710

ENG03_ENL03_47103_47105

Report on the Examination

2012 Examination – June series

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Principal Moderator's Report (ENG03_ENL03_47103_47105)

English/English Language/English Literature Controlled Assessment

Following three comparatively small entries for controlled assessment units in the first three series, summer 2012 saw very large entries in all three specifications as many schools used controlled assessment units to meet the requirements of the 40% rule. Moderation of all four units in the three specifications provided evidence of how well schools – teachers and students – have met the challenges of the change from coursework to Controlled Assessment. In past series, those in January and June 2011 in particular, moderators have reported that in some schools students did not seem to be as aware of or in command of the key skills needed to address the assessment criteria. This series, in the majority of cases, they have reported that students seem to have been better prepared – demonstrating the benefits of greater maturation allowing them to perfect their skills. There has been some outstanding work by students in response to thoughtfully framed tasks.

In the great majority of cases moderators have confirmed centre assessments. Schools where marks have been adjusted will understandably be concerned, but it is hoped that the Moderator's Feedback Report will provide some explanation.

Where centre assessments are confirmed, there is invariably evidence of sound internal standardising often to be seen in additional comments on students' work. Moderators know from leading standardising meetings and from their role as subject advisers that it has become increasingly difficult for English departments to find the time to properly standardise, but there is some clear evidence that a lack of thorough internal standardising can lead to some significant adjustment of centre marks. It seems to be the case, for example, that in some schools different groups of teachers teaching and assess English while others are responsible for the English Language and Literature. Moderators have seen different groups of teachers applying similar mark schemes in very different ways so that there may be a need for adjustment in one specification but not another.

The attention is drawn to the paramount importance of effective; adequate internal standardisation – as required by the GCSE Code of Practice. Schools are reminded that internal standardisation is now required to up to four separate components.

Reliable annotation of students' work is important. Where moderators confirm centre marks they are usually confirming the reliability of centre annotation. Where there is effective internal standardising there is a shared understanding of key terms such as 'analysis' and some appreciation of details from the assessment criteria. Probably the greatest source of disagreement between moderator and centre is the decision of schools to place a response in Bands 4 or 5 and support the mark with marginal annotation which asserts 'sophisticated' or 'assured'. Previous reports have provided some support in explaining these terms but some points are worth repeating. Most disagreement about marking is based on reading skills and in the mark schemes in all four units the same key terms feature in Bands 4 and 5.

In Band 4, the term 'developed' is particularly important. The word does not appear in Band 3. The shift in English Language is from 'clear evidence of understanding significant meanings' to 'confident and developed interpretations of texts'. In English and English Literature the move is from 'clear understanding' to 'sustained and developed' appreciation or interpretation. This means there is evidence of depth, sustained lines of discussion in a Band 4 response. Moderators sometimes find simple evidence of the kinds of understanding found in use of PEE which has been annotated as 'assured' but which should be placed in either band 2 or 3. A

Band 5, 'sophisticated' response – of the kind that will probably equate to high grade A or A* - will display even more depth and perception. A key term in Band 5 is the word 'imaginatively'. It refers to use of textual detail and is important because it suggests the element of independent thought that can sometimes be lacking from well-written, conscientious, but heavily scaffolded responses.

Students identified as being capable of addressing Band 5 criteria must be given tasks and approaches to tasks which allow them to display some imagination and independence of thought. They must be allowed to 'interpret', and they should be given sufficient material to write 'sustained' and 'developed' responses. There has been considerable promotion of the 'write a lot about a little' approach. It is very good advice but it does not mean that Band 4 or 5 responses should be based only on one small part of a text. It means that students should focus on significant parts of whole texts and explore each selected part in some depth and detail. Moderators have, for example, seen some responses to *Frankenstein* which are still based on the old coursework task based on chapter 5 of the novel and the use of 'pathetic fallacy' in the description of the 'bleak' November night. The responses illustrate a kind of 'write a lot about a little' approach based on small sections of the chapter, with every Student using the same textual details to make the same points in the same order. There is little evidence that students have read the rest of the novel because they seem unable to explore the significance of the chapter to the rest of the novel, moderators find it difficult to support centre marking that places some students' responses in Bands 4 or 5. In English Literature a task seen by moderators based on comparison of the balcony scene in *Romeo and Juliet* and a single John Cooper-Clark poem might (if allowance is made for the interpretation of 'literary heritage') be appropriate for students targeting Bands 1 and 2 but it lacks the challenge for students to develop 'assured' or 'sophisticated' interpretations of two whole texts in a single response worth 25% of the entire GCSE.

Moderators have noted inconsistent use of annotation in schools between teacher groups, schools are strongly advised to develop a consistent approach to annotation of all folders. Some approaches should be discouraged. It is very unhelpful to write terms such as 'language' or 'context' in the margin. These words appear in every band of mark schemes so serve no purpose in placing a response in a band. Some schools have used an abbreviation of an assessment objective in the margin, this is only helpful if it is accompanied by a band number. Summative comments which are clearly meant to encourage students are often unhelpful to the Moderator: the purpose of annotation of GCSE Controlled Assessment is to explain the award of the mark. The best approach is based on a kind of running commentary in which brief remarks are placed next to parts of the Student's response in which there is evidence of meeting a particular criterion at a particular level. The most re-assuring annotation recognises that in most responses there will be evidence of a Student meeting different criteria in different bands at different stages of a response. A point made in a previous report is worth repeating: when moderators find a comment such as 'sophisticated interpretation' next to the opening three or four lines of a response they will invariably find an over-rewarded response. The early use of 'sophisticated' before any line of thought has been developed is usually an indication that the marker's mind has already been made up that this particular response will be Band 5.

In most schools there is some superb annotation: brief, insightful marginal comments and concise, well focused summative comments. The best annotation is also very well balanced with the marker recognising that some criteria have not been met as well as others. There has to be this balance when applying the mark schemes in all four units. Moderators have seen some reading responses in, for example, English awarded a mark of 9 at the top of band 3 with a supporting comments along the lines of 'clear evidence of understanding of ideas'. The Moderator could support the comment concerning the 'writer's ideas' criterion. However, the student response provided limited evidence of engagement with the criteria concerning

language/structure or the contexts. This should preclude the possibility of a mark at the top of the band. Marking needs to take all the criteria into consideration.

When responses lack engagement with some of the criteria it may, of course, reflect the ability of the student. Sometimes, however, the task could be more helpfully framed. A task seen in English Literature Unit 3 was,

“‘We are always responsible for the choices we make.’ Discuss this statement in relation to the choices made by Birling in *An Inspector Calls* and Macbeth in *Macbeth*.’”

This focuses correctly on ‘choices’, but the way the task is worded is not particularly helpful to students. It links the texts logically, brings a focus on ideas and interpretation, and could easily lead to engagement with the contexts of the two plays, but it does nothing to direct students towards the assessment criterion concerning writers’ craft. Students being prepared for this task may well have understood ‘Discuss this statement...’ to include a discussion of how the two writers used language and structure to present ideas about choice, but it may have been better to make this explicit in the task.

A task seen this summer in English reading was based on the poetry Anthology, *Moon on the Tides*. The task was, “ ‘It is better to be a mother than a father.’ Discuss. “The task imaginatively focuses on the ‘family relationships’ task from the 2012 task bank, giving the students an opportunity to engage with ‘writers’ ideas’. It could also encourage students to engage with the significance of the ‘social, cultural context’. However, it does not seem to direct students towards engagement with the strand concerning writers’ use of language and structure. Of course that could be implicit in the centre’s teaching of the poems and preparation of students for the controlled assessment but it may have been better to word the task in a way that explicitly focused on all the important criteria:

“ ‘It is better to be a mother than a father.’ Write about the ways poets in the Anthology present ideas about mothers and fathers. In your response you should:

- explore poets’ ideas about parenthood
- show your understanding of the poems
- explore the ways poets have used language and structure
- comment on the significance of the social / cultural / historical contexts

This use of bullet points could be of particular help to students expected to meet lower band criteria.

Student notes could often be of more use to students if there was a clearer recognition of the different strands of the mark scheme. Many schools have an excellent approach to notes: students’ notes are individual, brief and based upon assessment criteria. Students should use the notes page as an aide memoire and it is particularly important that they do not forget to address all the assessment criteria reflecting different weightings of AOs.

Defining appropriate notes has not been easy but the vast majority of schools have used a common sense approach to determine what is ‘brief’ and have advised students to make simple notes consisting of a few key points and page references / quotations. In most schools notes consist of things like bullet points or spider diagrams and students avoid full sentences or pre-prepared drafts. The issue of pre-prepared drafts was raised at Standardising meetings last Autumn and it was made clear that **under no circumstances should notes consist of the skeleton of something previously written with some words missed out**. Such notes are, by no stretch of the imagination, ‘brief’; they also mean that what students are writing in ‘controlled’ assessment is not ‘controlled’ because students are copying something out that was written

before the control was applied. For the first time moderators have reported the work of students to the Irregularities department of AQA. They have found some examples of notes consisting of hundreds of words which have been 'joined up' in the controlled assessment. Unable to find much which has been properly written afresh in the controlled assessment they have referred the work to AQA. One of the criteria applied by the Awarding Body is one which tests if students have gained an unfair advantage over other students by using inappropriate notes. If that is the case, Student marks will be withheld. That has happened in a very small number of extreme cases this summer.

Several isolated instances of plagiarism have been reported to the Awarding Body. Where students have been allowed to use extensive notes they have sometimes used the opportunity to copy chunks from the Internet, put it onto the notes page and then copy it into their 'controlled' response. Moderators invariably express surprise that the plagiarism has not been noticed by the centre; moderators notice it because the level of language and ideas is incongruent with other parts of the Student's work. In a small number of cases, entire pieces of writing have been plagiarised. This usually occurs when students have had access to computers. It is especially important that students are made aware of the consequences of plagiarising work from the Internet and also important that schools check any work of which they are suspicious: it usually only takes a minute or two of searching to determine the legitimacy of work.

Schools might help their students by suggesting that 'brief' means less than a couple of hundred words –as a rough guideline – and that marks cannot be awarded to chunks of text copied from notes onto the final assessment. It is not appropriate to use symbols and text style abbreviations if these are written into full sentences in the notes. The focus on notes should move on from what is legitimate to what is actually helpful.

Notes pages must be submitted with holders of work. If students have not used notes, a signed form to this effect should be submitted.

There has been a lot of evidence that schools have found effective routes through the specifications, integrating skills and content. In the first two years it is unsurprising that in many schools most students have followed the same route using similar tasks and the same texts. As familiarity with the specifications builds it is to be logged that centres will vary tasks and texts according to the abilities of students. More able students in particular may benefit from differentiated tasks which provide challenge. They can be best prepared for Literature Unit 2, the poetry exam, and English/Language Unit 1 by properly developing their ability to engage with writers' use of language and structure in controlled assessment. In some cases, students placed in bands 4 and 5 seem to be re-hashing received ideas about a list of technical terms rather than independently exploring language and structure with the assuredness and sophistication which they would want to display in the exams.

There are some pieces of practical advice for administering the sample which Moderators would like schools to embrace. They may seem relatively minor but are of considerable help to Moderators:

Centres are asked to bear the following administrative points in mind. These may seem relatively minor but considerably help to assist the moderators and permit time to be allocated to the big task of remarking folders:

- Unit 2 records should not be included in the folders
 - The work in folders should be organised in the same order it appears on the Candidate Record Form
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- English Language and English Literature are separate components and work must be kept separate.
 - students' work should be kept together using treasury tags. Paper clips are not secure and wallets greatly increase the time taken to moderate folders.
 - It is important to check that the mark on the Centre Mark Form/List matches that on the Candidate Record Form.
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English (ENG03)

Most moderators reported that the writing tasks in English tended to be more reliably assessed than the reading tasks. Where they noticed instances of over-rewarding, it tended to be around the top of Band 3/bottom of Band 4. The most common reason Moderators considered reading responses to be over-rewarded was the absence of evidence for particular strands of the mark scheme. Use of bullet points to support a task title might help students address all the necessary criteria. The way to 'test' a possible task title is to put it against the criteria in the mark bands and make sure it provides an opportunity for students to address all of them.

Because of the relatively short time available for each of the three pieces of reading in English, it is especially important to devise tasks which are manageable in approximately 75 minutes. If tasks invite exploration of the development of Macbeth will end up skimming over the surface of the entire play. Many students produce work which ends up being placed in bands 1 and 2 because they offer narrative recall of the text they are responding to because they have too much ground to cover.

It is easier for students to address criteria concerning ideas and writers' craft if their responses are based on close examination of parts of texts. However, if students are to meet criteria in band 3 about 'significant meanings in texts' and band 4, 'sustained and developed interpretations of texts' it is equally important that they respond to more than one or two small sections of text. Students responding to, for example, the first chapter of *Great Expectations*, or Chapter 5 of *Frankenstein*, or the balcony scene in *Romeo and Juliet* often seem to think that the 'text' is those sections. In each case the novel or the play is the text and in selecting passages to focus on, students should consider how their response to parts can indicate their understanding of the whole. One of the reasons a focus on Curley's wife in *Of Mice and Men* has been effective for many students is that it has been possible to focus on the character at the beginning, middle and end of the novella. So, although advice is to closely examine parts of texts, it is also important that students show their understanding of the wider text. This might involve students in writing about three or four parts of a text rather than one but there might still be a focus on one main part of a text as long as its importance to the whole is properly explored.

Virtually all the Shakespeare responses were based on *Romeo and Juliet* and Macbeth though some lovely work was seen based on *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. For the 'different cultures' task the most common text by a very wide margin was *Of Mice and Men* though moderators saw some interesting work based on poems chosen from previous and current AQA Anthologies. Poetry responses were often the strongest of the three pieces submitted, perhaps because students seem to see poetry as a legitimate basis for exploration of writers' techniques. Many schools used poetry from the First World War but there was also some good writing based on '*The Man He Killed*' and '*The Charge of the Light Brigade*'.

In many schools English is the course chosen for students on the C/D borderline and below with higher achieving students following the English Language / Literature route. Students for whom performance in bands 1 and 2, and the lower end of band 3 would indicate positive achievement would usually be better served by having tasks which are broken down into smaller parts. Some task titles which have confronted grade F/G students seem fairly daunting: 'Gender representation in *Much Ado About Nothing*' seems a particularly difficult approach to characterisation for many students. There is nothing wrong with breaking tasks down into questions which address the key assessment objectives. Breaking a task down into smaller sections might also help students cope with a controlled assessment that is structured over more than one lesson. In particular this approach might help students address the objective

they find most challenging, the criterion concerning writer's use of language. It might also help students address the criterion about the contexts in an appropriate way: the focus should not be simply on contextual detail of the Wikipedia type, it should be on the significance of the contexts to the text. As with very able students, the best way to approach the contexts is to begin with the text: there could be questions targeted on specific textual details.

There was a lot of very engaging writing. The writing produced in controlled assessment has been better – more interesting, more concise and better focused – than writing in coursework. Moderators have read some lovely, thoughtful and reflective personal writing. Adult education schools in particular have produced some beautiful writing about personal experience. The best writing about 'An Important Person' has emerged when students have been taught to take a step back and to reflect. Just as 'The Assassin' achieved some kind of strange national status leading several young people to write formulaic and often very unpleasant narratives, so new tasks seem to have become widespread. One task which tends not to work very well is based on *Saving Private Ryan*. 15/16 year old students are invited to write first person fairly harrowing accounts of landing on Omaha beach based on the opening sequence of the film. Some responses have been sensitively handled and genuinely moving but some have left moderators wondering why 15/16 year olds would be invited to put themselves into that world, especially as their lack of real engagement can be seen in some formulaic and cloned responses. Giving students a choice of scene to write about might lead to better results in some instances.

Moderators encountered very few incomplete folders. This is a real tribute to the work of schools with some very challenging students. Some schools, remembering the Legacy rule about 'incomplete' folders intervened in the choice of folders for the sample sent to the Moderator. There is, however, no need to intervene – it no longer matters if the lowest mark is based on an incomplete folder.

English Language (ENL03)

There were lots of responses to *Of Mice and Men* in Unit 3a: Extended Reading and, unsurprisingly after the material in the Standardising Booklet, much of it was based on Curley's wife. The novella has been the subject of forensic examination across the land with much attention paid to the significance of the colour red, the relationship between bulls and red, the relationship between bears and fish and even the significance of ostrich feathers. The novella also seems to be responsible for the spread of use of 'foreshadowing', a term which many students now apply to various aspects of various novels and plays. For all the criticism made of use of the novella it continues to be enjoyed by young people reading it for the first time and it is a rich source of material for the exploration of writer's craft. It is worth remembering that contextual issues are not assessed in controlled assessment but they are in section B of the Unit 1 exam.

For Extended Reading, virtually every centre will use a text which is also being studied for English Literature, so the choice of text is not restricted to *Of Mice and Men*. Moderators have reported that *Lord of the Flies* seems to have produced some particularly good high achieving students perhaps responses from because there is more depth and challenge in the text than in a novella like *Of Mice and Men*. One text that has produced mixed results is *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The main issue seems to be that students find it difficult to engage with writer's use of language, concentrating instead on character study and theme. The best responses engage with Harper Lee's use of Scout as a narrator.

Some schools, but not many, have used poetry as the focus of tasks for Extended Reading and, a greater number, have used a Shakespeare text. Schools will have a variety of factors to consider in choosing a text, one of which may be preparation for A Level. It is worth remembering that any genre of text may be used.

As was the case in English, students' writing was usually more reliably assessed than the Extended Reading. For some reason the introduction of controlled assessment seems to have led to an improvement in the quality of written work seen by moderators in comparison with coursework. There could be several reasons but one strong possibility is that the improvement could be linked to the restriction in time. Most controlled assessment pieces of writing are concise and seem to have a freshness that was often lacking from some very tired coursework pieces of writing. The best writing has undoubtedly been from schools where students have been given some freedom of choice. 'Don't Get Me Started' has been a delight to read where students have been given the freedom to take some risks and be entertaining. It has worked less well where it has turned into a kind of argument piece of writing influenced by Strategy ideas about discourse markers with little of the sense of ownership and commitment that makes the best polemic writing stand out.

Film reviews have, similarly, been most engaging and thought-provoking when students have been writing about a film of their choice. To have virtually every Student in a centre write about the same film and express the same point of view, making the same points, in the same order, seems less effective, especially in helping students meet band 5 criteria.

Spoken Language Study, the one significantly new element to GCSE, is quite difficult to generalise about. Some schools are still coming to terms with a subject that they have not previously taught. There has been some wonderful writing by young people about their own spoken language and about things like texting. The best responses have come from students who have produced their own concise data and have written about themselves, their friends and family. Less effective has been writing based on political speeches, often American political

speeches. Where students have explored the political / cultural context and paralinguistic features of speeches there have been some excellent, analytical responses, but sometimes students have been producing analysis of the written script.

Where moderators have had difficulty in confirming centre marks it has usually been because they could not find evidence of particular strands of the mark scheme. There are only three strands in each band of the mark scheme so it seems reasonable to expect students to address each of them. The ones that sometimes seem to be missing are the one concerning 'public attitudes' (better understood as 'social attitudes') and the one concerning analysis of data. As with any task, it is very important to test it out by considering how effectively it will help students address all the criteria. That could easily be done by adding bullet points to the task or, in the case of lower-achieving students, breaking the task down into questions.

GCSE Literature Unit 3 (Shakespeare and ELH) (47103)

AO1 was the most successfully addressed assessment objective, largely because it required engagement with the subject matter – characters, situations, events and themes which invited personal comment. There was a distinction, however, between those students who wrote confidently about *themes* in the play (jealousy in *Othello*, ambition in *Macbeth*, Love in *Romeo and Juliet*) but are less able to write about *ideas* about those themes (e.g. that ambition can be a powerful stimulus for success but can also prompt tragic decisions, or that jealousy can be a sign of passionate love, but can also blind one to the truth, or that love can be a source of joy but also a motive for rash action). There was a further distinction between those who wrote confidently about ideas and those, usually the most able, who wrote about *writers' ideas*, because tracing ideas to something specific to a writer requires reading for attitudes implied in repeated kinds of outcome, or patterns of evaluative language. We can never know what Shakespeare's own ideas were about love, for example, but his presentation of it as more complex than a "good thing" may allow some probing for a plausible attitude of realism, idealism or scepticism. Students would be helped if, instead of compiling an inventory of ideas in a text, they were to consider the *perspective* of the writer as something which was reflected in the presentation of the ideas. They would also be helped by understanding that AO1 can be successfully treated by detailed and descriptive comment on what characters say and do, but that AO2 requires a shift from engaging with characters as if they are real, to engaging with the writer's craft that makes them seem real – which is the difference between writing about character and writing about characterization.

AO2 is a matter of understanding and appreciating a writer's craft, and is usually addressed through language choices. This is the most likely way of showing grasp of literary skill, but it does need to be a matter of more than identifying a list of techniques and devices. A student in Literature who has knowledge of (for example) oxymoron can be credited with some knowledge, just as a student in biology can be credited for knowledge of the existence of photosynthesis. However, in both cases, for higher marks, the knowledge has to be applied to how the feature works and for what purpose and with what effect.
(See comments on the usual 8 below)

AO2 is also about form and structure: "form" in this case relates broadly and most usefully to the specific genre of drama, rhyming verse, prose fiction. It is understanding the way in which writers exploit features of the chosen form that leads to the most successful work. For example, Shakespeare employs voice and action to work visibly and audibly on a public stage. Austen employs dialogue as a dramatizing device and authorial management of reader response in the narrative. Structure is nearly always more interesting than form, because this is where the internal development, contrast of continuing dynamic of ideas, feelings and attitudes comes into play, so that a reader may be engaged by an anecdotal start, drawn into sympathy by development and then forced to recognize wrongness in a conclusion.

Students who address Shakespeare's dramatic craft by comparing specific details of printed text with interpretation and performance on stage or screen provide strong evidence of understanding that their text is drama; that there are possibilities of alternative interpretation; and that Shakespeare's writing is rich in embedded cues for actors. This enables a moderator to see that the student is approaching AO1, AO2 and AO3 in a coherent and integrated way. The clear implication of this is that students will be advantaged by experiencing their text performed in a theatre, or on screen, and/or in their own classroom.

AO3 can be for some students the organizational feature that results in methodical if mechanical sequences of comparisons based on theme, language, form and purpose. Comparison is most successfully done where it becomes an occasional illumination of the similarity or difference between two texts, or two writers. Weaker responses do little more than list links which may be seen between the texts. More successful answers develop evaluative comparison from the links established.

AO4 is most successfully approached through cultural rather than historical aspects of contexts. What characters are made to say and do may illustrate cultural preferences, values and attitudes that the writer wants to illustrate, either to applaud or to denigrate. Writers may use characters as an illustration of values and attitudes they want to promote. How readers respond will depend upon their own cultural values and attitudes. Making this explicit allows some development of alternative interpretation and evaluation, linking AO4 to AO1.

Annotation:

It is useful to remind ourselves of what we understand by “sophisticated”, “perceptive” and “analysis”.

“Sophisticated” is best understood as a combination of informed and independent subtlety and complexity. Commenting on Lady Macbeth that she is manipulative and provocative is not sophisticated. Neither is it sophisticated to claim that Tennyson’s choice of rhythm creates the sounds of horses’ galloping.

“Perceptive” is best understood as independent insight which makes subtle or forceful use of a detail that would not seem significant to most readers, or as an insight into the implications or applications of an idea beyond the context of its textual location.

“Analysis” is best understood as different from description, from recording what is visible in a text. It assumes some degree of searching from the source elements which, brought together, can be used to develop an understanding of an emerging pattern which is more than the separate parts. It requires some qualities of probing, synthesizing and theorizing possible functions and relationships not immediately obvious.

English Literature Unit 5 (Exploring Poetry) (47105)

This was, as expected, a smaller entry than for Unit 3, with approximately 80 schools submitting work. The vast majority of schools had their marks confirmed, though several examples of leniency approaching the limits of tolerance were noted.

Although schools have free choice in the choice of poetry for the Unit, there was some similarity in the choice of texts studied. One very popular choice was of war poetry, with Tennyson's *Charge of the Light Brigade* representing the literary heritage and a selection of first world war poems representing contemporary writing. Another was love poetry, usually sonnets, with Shakespeare and EB Browning representing the heritage and various writers including John Cooper Clarke, Ted Hughes and Carol Anne Duffy representing contemporary writing. Rather less common, but equally well done, was the choice of Wordsworth's *Prelude* with a selection of poems about nature. In all of these there was much use made of poems from the AQA Anthology, *Moon on the Tides*. Schools who used this resource sometimes chose one of the clusters as offered under a theme heading e.g. Conflict or Relationships, but others made their own selection from across the clusters, or added poems from elsewhere.

The most successful work, and the work Moderators found most enjoyable to read, was from schools where students had studied a wide range of poems and made their own selection of four or five to write about, basing their response on a choice of questions. Students who chose their own poems from a range demonstrated a stronger sense of ownership, and wrote about the poems with a more convincing personal voice and supported their knowledge and understanding with more authentically selected textual detail.

The least successful work, not surprisingly, was from students who answered the same question on the same two or three poems. The limited number of poems studied was a limitation on their responses, and the dependency in many cases on common notes and preparation was an additional limitation of their ability to show independent and personal responses. Where high marks are awarded for work that is commonly derivative, it is difficult for a moderator to agree with schools' judgements that the work is "sophisticated", or that comments are "perceptive" or that textual detail is "imaginatively" selected. This means that the submission of heavily-scaffolded work, sometimes identical in structure and detail, is very unlikely to be agreed as Band 4 or Band 5 work, whatever the claims of centre annotation. It cannot be emphasized too much that the best work seems to emerge from preparation which establishes common key skills which students then apply to their own choice of material.

Annotation remains a matter of crucial importance to teachers and to moderators. Schools need to know that one of the first things a moderator judges is the annotation: firstly to see if it is securely familiar with the key terms of the assessment criteria, and then to see if the terms are applied realistically and appropriately at specific points in the response where students' attainment is being rewarded. If the first impression is of apt and realistic application of the Band criteria, moderation proceeds on the basis of confidence in the centre's judgement, and the moderator's task is to confirm, where possible, the centre-awarded marks. If the first impression is of unsupportable claimed attainment, moderation proceeds on the basis of closer reading and wider scrutiny of the whole sample, which is likely to result in disagreement with centre marks beyond tolerance, with consequent adjustment of marks for the centre's whole entry.

The best responses to Poetry were a pleasure to read, with ample fulfilment of AO1's requirement for "critical" and "imaginative" responses. Many of them were the result of students' enthusiastic engagement with ideas and attitudes, expressing agreement or disagreement, exploring the implications of what they had read for their own and others' daily lives. It is worth

adding that the word “imaginative” is best understood as an original supported interpretation rather than wildly speculative statements about writers’ lives and motives.

Fulfilling AO2 was most successful when students addressed language choices as aspects of poets’ conscious or unconscious attitudes, and assessing the effects of language choices on different readers. It was least successful when, after a very brief general comment on the poems’ significance, students spent the rest of their time listing and illustrating the devices which they identified in the texts. These were usually the familiar roll-call of metaphor, simile, alliteration, assonance, personification, onomatopoeia, caesura and enjambment. Obviously some of these, particularly metaphor and personification, are important features of writing which exploits language’s associative and referential qualities, but too often these technicalities were *explained*, usually by literal glossing, rather than *explored*, with little evaluation of effects on readers other than that they were effective or powerful or clever. Too often they were a substitute for engaging with the writers’ communicated thought, feeling and experience, rather than evidence of responsive readers engaging empathically, or expressions of dissent or discoveries of personal or wider relevance. In particular, it is very, very rare to find a student’s comments on caesura or enjambment helpful in displaying qualities associated with Band 4 or Band 5. Almost universally, these comments establish that a student knows something, but is unable to show how that knowledge may be applied in the interests of showing a writers’ skill or a reader’s appreciation. It is understandable that students feel some acquired expertise bestowed by learning technical vocabulary, but they should know that once they show knowledge of these things, the moderator is then triggered to check that they make appropriate and plausible use of the knowledge. In many cases, students would be better off writing as themselves, having read some poetry that conveyed some insight into the way the world goes.

In some cases, a centre’s commendable attempt to establish a common core of reading skills across all components resulted in some indiscriminate application of aspects of the Reading repertoire. For example, students determined to find examples of rhetorical questions, the rule of three and what is usually called “repetition”, laboured mightily to declare these features important aspects of their writers’ literary accomplishment.

The comparative element of AO3 was generally well done, with sustained focus on similarities and differences, usually involving ideas and attitudes and language, form and structure, so reinforcing and aligning focus on AO1 and AO2. There were some interesting examples of students comparing attitudes and situations in the poetry (e.g. war poems) with modern events and responses such as Iraq and Afghanistan. Some students made interesting use of comparison in respect of their own first and subsequent responses to the poems, with comment on what they had at first not noticed, or not thought significant. Some schools appeared to have prepared students to structure a response on a list of features to be compared, which did little to help the students to develop a response showing engagement with texts and authors because they were committed to creating a written grid of compared items.

It is hoped that schools will take note of the Autumn standardising materials as a guide to what may be best practice in this Unit. If a centre has a preference for Controlled Assessment rather than external examinations in Poetry, it seems appropriate to expect that the outcome will be more than a summary list of what students have learned about things to look for in Literature. It is not knowledge, but knowledge application that allows students to show that they can use what they know rather than repeat what they know.
