



General Certificate of Secondary Education

English Literature

Specification 4710

47101H: Exploring modern texts

Report on the Examination

2012 Examination – June series

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GCSE English Literature 4710

Principal Examiner's Report Unit 1 (47101H)

This is the first time that this component has been taken by a significant number of students although, of course, numbers have been increasing. Therefore the comments on this report, collated from reports written by a large team of senior examiners, are based on a wide range of responses seen – in terms of both quality of response and texts studied. All the texts were studied by a greater or smaller number of the candidature but a few of the comments below will inevitably be based on seeing, perhaps, the work of one or two schools.

A few general comments are offered to begin:

- Undoubtedly, schools are adapting increasingly well to this new specification, particularly in terms of addressing the assessment objectives: few students fail to address AO2 and, one hopes, the clear and precise addressing of AO4 will continue to improve.
- There are very few rubric infringements and very few students have issues with timing. Usually Section B is not sacrificed time wise for Section A. This is pleasing and it must be said that one marvels at and respects the achievements of some students within one and a half hours. Their marshalling of thoughts and their breadth and depth of response are sometimes truly remarkable.
- Linked perhaps to the previous point, the gap between achievement on Section A and Section B is gradually decreasing as schools and students become familiar with the demands of the latter. The best students do, however, tend to achieve equally impressively in both sections.

Section A: Modern prose or drama

Anthology: *Sunlight on the Grass* Question 1

Almost all students engage with *Compass and Torch*, often in a most sensitive and thoughtful way; indeed, some can empathise with the situation the boy finds himself in. The consideration of AO2 was very accessible to students of all abilities; in addition to the two titular key symbols students referred to, the pounding hooves of the wild horses were seen to equate to the boy's heartbeat, and the image of the horse baring 'its bright red arse' an image of the ugliness of life which had hitherto remained hidden. Indeed, there were varied interpretations of the significance of the horses. The bleak and barren countryside was seen to have multiple significances: the state of the marriage; the new father-son relationship full of difficulties which had to be negotiated and the boy's mind as he grows to face the ugly new realities of his changed world. There also was some very good analysis of viewpoint. Students have plenty to write about in this story and most chose wisely: other avenues for examination included the symbolism of the gate, the use of 'boy', 'man' and 'Jim' and the precise words chosen to describe the father's actions to reveal his feelings.

The choice of story was crucial in part (b): those who chose, for example, *My Polish Teacher's Tie* could not focus on the task but presumably it was chosen because the candidate either knew it well or liked it the most. *When the Wasps Drowned* was very popular, as was *Anil* and *The Darkness Out There* – all worthy choices. In response to the first of these, there was some

wonderful close analysis of details such as how Wigfall juxtaposes Eveline's innocence and experience in 'pouting Smartie-red lips', the almost throwaway references to death such as 'the days were stifled by the heat' and the possible implications of Mr Mordecai's name. In *Anil* the metaphor of the small star which shone through one of the 'holes in the roof' was discussed by all students at totally different levels. At Band 2, students pointed out that the small star was a metaphor for the boy's future; at 3, there was an explanation that this represented his bright hope for the future, unlike his parents who saw no stars and had no dreams. At Band 4 students explained this significance relating it to the way the star merely 'shimmered' later, as the boy's belief in the wonder of light had been blighted by his experience of an evil act. At Band 5, this image was developed into considerations of the overall pattern of the story; the 'shimmering' perhaps representing the difficulties he would encounter as he achieved realisation that life was not full of wonder, and that for the majority, the sleeping state of the villagers suggested the mundane nature of life. Perhaps the 'shimmering' of the star suggested that the tears filling his eyes were signs of the first dawning of maturity upon the boy? At Band 6 the two references to the star were incorporated into the overall moral scheme; they were interpreted as rare glimpses of beauty in a corrupt universe.

Question 2

This was by far the less popular of the two questions, probably because the named story proved a challenge for some to come to terms with. Weaker responses dealt with the young man's feelings rather superficially and found it difficult to focus with much precision on the writer's methods. Nevertheless some students did engage with the uncertainties, dreams and peer pressure experienced by a young man. There were many clear responses to the story-within-a-story structure, its playfulness and the ironic effects created. They discussed the universality of the situation where a dream-world ideal far surpasses the actual truth of an event. Comparisons between the imagined and true situations exposed the boy's fantasies as unrealistic. A few students suggested that the term '100% Perfect Girl' with its mathematical precision revealed the idealised uncertainties of the youth. Interestingly, none of the students had a great deal of sympathy for the young man's daydreams.

A range of stories was selected for part (b) as 'feelings' are applicable to all. Students engaged with *The Darkness Out There* and *Compass and Torch* at all levels but there were also some interesting responses to *My Polish Teacher's Tie*. The fact that the protagonist was an adult did not diminish the imaginative and sympathetic responses to Carla's emotional journey. There were some lovely responses which considered her low self-esteem and impaired sense of personal identity. These students discussed the solution to both problems in her 'rediscovery and renaissance' of her Polish roots; students responded imaginatively to the moment when two exiles joined hands and sang the Polish song, celebrating their nationality, identity and sheer joy of life.

William Golding: *Lord of the Flies*

Question 3

Many students covered the deaths of Piggy and Simon, usually selecting and explaining details and Golding's methods whilst sustaining a response. Better responses were very perceptive, with students being sensitive to imagery, tracking the progression of deaths from the first arrival on the island, and the degeneration of the boys' morality and humanity into savagery. Also, Golding's use of imagery and the presentation of the themes of sacrifice and death of civilisation through the characters of Simon and Piggy were explored, as was the different language used to present each death. Distinctions between levels of response occurred when students took a more abstract line of approach, considering the 'death' of virtue, honour, purity and justice. In such responses students incorporated such deaths as part of Golding's overall scheme.

However, there were other routes towards evolving a complex and thoughtful response. One technique employed was that of playing with perspectives. For example, on Simon's death the author was seen to offer an enlarged perspective as Golding focussed on the cosmic harmony at his death, and of Nature taking back one of her own. Suddenly, in this switch the murderous boys took on the appearance of the black flies which swarmed around the pig's head. Simon was obviously going to a far better place, a place that matched his own spirituality. This suggestion was reinforced with the parallel death of Piggy, whose brains were merely the 'stuff' that came out of his head, indicating the total incomprehension of the value of his scientific skills; along with Simon's spirituality, such higher virtues were unrecognised by the boys, representing mankind as a whole.

Question 4

This was a clear question which facilitated responses across the mark range. One approach was simply to write about the places and what happened at each, referring to descriptive details and Golding's methods; often, such responses did not address the idea of 'importance'. Better responses demonstrated detailed knowledge of the places chosen and connected them successfully to key characters and ideas. Particularly successful were the responses to the jungle and its dual nature: a sanctuary for Simon, yet a place of fear for others. These responses often developed convincing arguments that it was not the places themselves which are good or bad but the ways in which the different characters respond to and perceive them.

Kevin Brooks: *Martyn Pig*

Question 5

This was the more popular question. Weaker responses approached it as a character study, writing about Aunty Jean as a real person and describing what she said/did with supporting details without any addressing of Brooks' methods. Better responses commented on the way Brooks uses Martyn's view point to present Aunty Jean to us and the fact that this may influence our opinion – some considering also the idea of Martyn as an unreliable narrator. Better responses also responded to the idea of her 'importance'. Some were able to understand that, ironically, Aunty Jean herself is a drinker and to understand also, at the end of the novel, Martyn's feelings about living with her. On the whole students did well in picking out relevant details used to demonstrate what Aunty Jean was like, despite less successful attempts to comment on why she was important.

Question 6

Some students struggled with this question. Many focussed on the struggle of Martyn's life up to William's death without referring to Alex's role or Dean's role in relation to control / lack of control and the complexities of his relationships with them and the main twist in the plot they involved. There was a tendency to write about events with some references to control / lack of control.

Susan Hill: *The Woman in Black*

Perhaps the more precise focus of Q08, enabling the students to home in on a particular part of the novel, made it more popular than Q07. Certainly, this is an increasingly popular text with students across the ability range and most engage with the ever-popular ghost story genre. One senior examiner noted that students wrote 'amazingly well' about it and had a clear sense of narrative techniques. Responses to both questions usually showed students' ability to 'step back' from the text and examine Hill's techniques.

Question 7

Many students were able to access marks in Band 4 in this question with higher responses demonstrating some insightful exploration of Arthur's increasing sense of isolation. Also, most students were able to engage in some form of discussion about Hill's use of language as well as there being evidence of consideration of the use of the past tense and of the structure of the novel. It was interesting to note that many students were able to view this task objectively, rather than only subjectively.

Question 8

This question elicited some excellent responses in terms of how Hill creates tension, with some detailed analysis of sentence structure, repetition and points of climax. Quotations were usually carefully selected with thoughtful exploration of their effects on the reader. The responses of both Arthur and Spider were considered and Hill's use of imagery was a rich vein which was analytically exploited in the best responses. Other approaches included the cosy, yet slightly negative, atmosphere at the start of the novel with the gothic and isolated atmosphere later. There was an overwhelming feeling from senior examiners that many students responded exceptionally well to this question and, indeed, this text.

Joe Simpson: *Touching the Void*

Question 9

Students across the range did well with this question. The focus on 'tension' meant that they were automatically steered to AO2 and were usually able to explain clearly how Simpson built up that tension. Those who were able to explore the imagery of a battle between man and nature produced some very thoughtful of exploratory responses. Simpson's use of dialogue also provided a rich source of analysis. A number of students pointed out that tension is further raised because the reader will be aware that the text is non-fiction so the reader cannot relax in the knowledge that no harm can come to fictional characters. There seemed to be many students with a detailed knowledge and understanding of the text; they engaged with the narrative style, genre and setting. Close attention to the finer points of textual detail, including technical terminology, was much in evidence. Joe and Simon were compared and contrasted to explore the way that different responses to the climb also created tension. A pitfall identified was when students relied heavily on PEE: a point, followed by a quote, followed by an explanation in relation to tension; it was difficult to award many marks for ideas/themes/attitudes when a candidate relied heavily on a 'PEE chain'.

Question 10

Responses to this question, much fewer in number, also showed engagement with the text but weaker responses became more of a character study rather than focussing on how Richard is 'important'. Better responses were able to see the way in which Richard's inexperience and separateness from Simon and Joe set up events later in the text.

Dylan Thomas: *Under Milk Wood*

Question 11 / 12

No responses to this text were seen by senior examiners before reports were written.

Arthur Miller: *The Crucible*

Question 13

Students achieving in the lower bands struggled to go beyond a character study of Giles Corey with little mention of Miller or the methods he uses. Some wrote about the character as a 'real'

person and many at this level did not comment on our changing views of him as the audience – from the rather irritable man he is at the start to the heroic character at the end who dies as he does.

However, there were undoubtedly many students who responded with real engagement and insight to this question. Some students, perhaps, were not expecting a question on Giles Corey and this worked to the advantage of many of them because they had to ‘think on their feet’, as it were, rather than rely on learned material. There was a sense that they had to re-read some sections of the play and come to their own, original, conclusions which lead them to analyse dialogue and stage directions more incisively. Giles proved an interesting character for students as they tried to reconcile his courage in trying to save his wife and in dying without revealing the source of his information with his concern about his wife’s reading and stoppage of prayer at the start of the play. Many students made sensible comments about the flawed nature of humanity or the refining effects of suffering on Giles – often linking this to the title of the play. Some excellent responses showed admiration for his ‘simple heroism’ and his refusal to speak whilst being pressed to death suggests that every man has a hero within; others saw him as comic relief in a dark drama. The ‘response’ element to this task also seemed to set students free.

Question 14

This was the more popular of the two tasks and there were different approaches to it, all of which worked across the range of students. Some examined different characters and their attitudes to the court; others selected different attitudes and organised their response in that way; others adopted a more chronological approach. Those who fared well explored many different attitudes, comparing and contrasting them very effectively, for example, the Hathorne/Danforth situation; Abigail’s use of the court for her own purposes; Proctor’s responses and reaction to the court and Hale’s changing views as the play progresses, with some mention of Giles Corey and Rebecca Nurse. The most successful students explored how Miller uses these characters as dramatic constructs to deliver his message, linking them closely to McCarthyism, as well as analysing the language used by these characters in the court. Some impressive responses explored the dramatic effect of Abigail’s language use on the audience which reveals her understanding of humanity in that no one is completely free of selfishness – poignantly reminded and pointed out by contrasting with Danforth’s attitude to the court. There were also many challenging and individualistic readings of this question. Particularly pleasing were those students who looked at attitudes to the court as revealed in the self-serving, breathtaking sinfulness and self-deceit practised by those who approve of the court because they are the self-appointed arbiters of the institution itself. Their attitudes were explored in detail to reveal the utter folly of believing a pack of ‘hysterical, silly yet deeply dangerous young girls’; they twisted the concepts of ‘goodness and virtue for purposes of self-aggrandisement’. The sadistic and cruel presiding Judge John Hathorne and the selfish, pretentious Thomas Danforth were seen for what they were, especially in contrast to the ‘enlightened and redeemed’ Reverend Hale.

Diane Samuels: *Kindertransport*

Question 15 / 16

Unfortunately, this was not a popular text and senior examiners saw responses only in samples from their examiners. It was felt that students had enjoyed the text and many responded thoughtfully to it, making effective use of details – including stage direction - in their responses. The text was very well-handled by some students; the question on ‘settings’ eliciting exploratory responses, linking, for instance the dust to the past and things left undisturbed and the attic as a room in the subconscious. However, it was also noted that some students struggled with the tasks and tended towards a narrative response, focussing on the experiences of Eva/Evelyn’s life and experiences.

J.B. Priestley: *An Inspector Calls*
Question 17

This was overwhelmingly the most popular question in Section A. This text is enjoyed by students who are intrigued by Inspector Goole (aka Inspector Google – so named by Priestley because he knows everything – a sign of the times!) so this question offered an opportunity to respond well at all levels. Some students were preoccupied with whether the Inspector is real or not, without seeing that the characters are all devices within a play controlled by Priestley.

However, students who chose this task were generally very focused on the question and were able to answer in some detail about the Inspector's importance. There is still some confusion and some misunderstanding about what exactly socialism (and sometimes communism) and capitalism are but, arguably, these terms weren't thrown around with quite the same abandon as last year. There is, though, still a tendency for some students to reduce Sheila's and Eric's character development to 'first they are capitalists and then they are socialists'. I particularly liked the analysis of the 'blood, fire and anguish' speech that many students did well, including one centre that had clearly understood the way in which these prophetic words would seem especially powerful to a post-war audience. Similarly, some excellent exploration of the 'one body' metaphor was seen, which was a much more effective way of examining the Inspector's (and Priestley's) views than resorting to the more simplistic 'The inspector wants the Birlings to become socialists' approach. A new reference (new to senior examiners anyway) was the fact that Goole is 'a fishing village on the Humber' and Goole was fishing for information: this was much in evidence and arguably not entirely convincing. The Goole / ghoule reference was popular – if students did something with it. One candidate considered the reference but he did not stop there. Instead, he considered how the word 'inspector' contains the suggestion of a 'spectre'. The idea was pushed further in seeing him as a spirit, 'similar to the ghosts of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* seeking to redeem the upper and middle class people'. So he was seen as a redemptive force evident in the imagery of 'one body' and 'fire and blood and anguish', redolent of the Book of Revelations. So it was suggested that the Inspector 'could be a representative of the Holy Spirit helping God's people to make the correct choices'. He could absolve them of sin, as he did with Sheila, who was considered 'not entirely to blame' for Eva Smith's death; she saw her sins, repented and was redeemed. This was a beautiful sequence of ideas rooted in a fairly routine reference to the Inspector's name. Other excellent responses were more grounded, considering the apparent 'impartiality' of the Inspector's attitude which on scrutiny became extremely socialist. When he cut Birling short in his reference to golf he spoke 'dryly' to symbolise how little these incidental details evidencing power and influence actually mattered in the overall scheme of things. His role was to 'rebuke and influence' stage characters and the audience alike in order to educate both about the correct political views; if the audience of the time had doubts, there was the 'suffering' of two world wars to drive home his lesson. In this reading the Inspector 'was not preaching a religious gospel, but rather his own social doctrine of morality'; persuasively, several students accepted the lesson; as one wrote: 'The future is now in our hands, and I am sure we have learned our lesson through this great play. We will look after it well'.

A word of caution in conclusion: some students were unclear about what close textual analysis is which was evident in a minority of responses to this task. It is not unpacking a quotation in detail in each paragraph: this approach involved, for example, taking a stage direction and explaining the meaning of every word – this is not analysis,

Question 18

This was the minority response possibly because there is some lingering uncertainty among students about how to handle a question based upon an extract (although more likely is that they welcomed a question on Inspector Goole). Nevertheless, students generally fared well. Those who did less well either focussed only on the extract and what that revealed or they effectively ignored the extract and just wrote about the play itself or the characters. The extract selected proved helpful to most, allowing the students to develop their own favourite lines of enquiry effectively. Topics included the insidious class divisions of the age; others chose to use the piece as introductory to a study of Priestley's techniques, especially his use of stage directions, beginning with the references to the changing lights on stage. Others seized upon the fact that all were pretty self-satisfied to show how this certainty disappeared at the hands of the Inspector. The beauty of a task like this is that it is very malleable; canny students can adapt to allow them to expand upon their favourite issues and ideas.

Dennis Kelly: *DNA***Question 19 / 20**

DNA is becoming rather more popular with the full range of students and there is evidence that students are achieving at the highest level in response to this text; this is most encouraging. It must be remembered that this is a text which works on many levels. In Q19, which was much less popular than Q20, the concepts of 'law and justice' were clearly inviting a considered – or better - response but some students responded at a more descriptive / narrative level rather than addressing what they thought Kelly may actually be saying. Nonetheless, there were responses which were excellent and looked beyond the obvious and really engaged with the issues. The intriguing relationship between Phil and Leah (Q20) fascinated and interested many students and some were able to comment on a range of techniques used by Kelly to present it: their 'conversations', the pauses and silences, the settings where they are shown, the symbolism of Phil's eating, his monosyllabic replies and the use of black humour. Students who showed an understanding of the fact that the text is a play tended to fare better.

Section B: Exploring cultures**John Steinbeck: *Of Mice and Men*****Question 21**

Steinbeck's novel remains hugely popular and for good reason: students enjoy it, respond well to it at all levels and, while teachers may tire of it, Lennie, George et al are fresh to students each year.

The part (a) task invited students to examine 'methods' and thus address AO2. There were still those, however, who focussed on meaning instead, simply glossing words and phrases. Other students interpreted Steinbeck's words in a way which was disconnected from his apparent intentions; students need to know how far is too far when it comes to interpretation. Thus, for instance, there was a range of responses to 'sausage' curls, some convincing (she was made to look ridiculous despite her best efforts), some less so (sausages were attractive to Lennie because he liked eating).

All that said, there were countless wonderful responses to this task with excellent levels of analysis and insight. Many focussed closely on the symbolism of the rectangle of sunshine being 'cut off' and its implications and Curley's wife's name and the colour red proved fruitful for consideration at all levels. There were the usual references to foreshadowing – largely understood and well handled. The contrasting attitudes of the men to Curley's wife were especially well- handled and many students were able to explore the differences of approach to her with close reference to details.

In part (b) there was a vast range of approaches – some considerably better than others, not surprisingly perhaps as some students have not really come to terms with writing about context. Thankfully, however, there are fewer students who simply wrote about the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl and how hard life was for everyone, but particularly for women. Another less successful type of response was to make sweeping generalisations about attitudes to women with scant – or no – reference to the text. Others, again less successful, refer only to the extract and repeated some of their ideas. Slightly better were those who wrote about Curley's wife in the whole novel and then made some concluding points in relation to context. Those who fared much better broadened their response to include Aunt Clara and Suzy/the cat house. There was also evidence of some real engagement with the female species and a woman's place in society. It was particularly impressive to read that 'Curley's wife's problem is that she is bound...' - the expected sequence to that observation would be that she is bound to Curley. But the student took the idea and ran with it, suggesting that she was 'bound to her gender'. That says it all very deftly and cleverly. Doomed by her gender, Curley's unnamed wife, representative of all women, was born into a life of gender warfare; at times, woman is the prey, evident in her Hollywood dreams misadventure. At other times, the enemy when, 'like the Greek sirens', Suzy and the prostitutes are perceived as luring men to their beds to relieve them of their money - and a wife could be just as costly, as her make-up and slippers suggest! At other times, as the woman of the house, she is without identity; an object to be neither seen nor heard, destined to fulfil her husband's wishes. To be born into the female gender is to be automatically ranked as a second-class citizen.

Students who do well in part (b) use details as their starting points – i.e. work from the text out, rather than the context in. For example, attitudes to women are revealed by the fact that Steinbeck focuses on Curley's wife's appearance, even Slim refers to her as 'good-lookin' – and following with some analysis of the details.

A word of caution follows and this really does concern a minority of students. This question seemed to unleash generalised views about women in the 1930s and, unfortunately, clear misogyny. These students failed to understand that the views of the ranch workers were not those of Steinbeck and countless responses began 'Steinbeck presents Curley's Wife as a 'tramp'/slapper/prostitute/whore/slut/slag, etc, etc'. Much more successful responses also saw Curley's wife as a tragic figure trapped in the dysfunctional society of the ranch/1930s society. It was also evident that Curley's wife's behaviour evoked a great deal of condemnation from many students. Not only was there an assumption that this character sleeps around, but leaps of logic are being made that she is akin to/or actually is a prostitute, simply because she is an outrageous flirt and wears red. Her use of make-up and glamorous clothing is also widely criticised, while others censure her for venturing out of her house. In some cases students are colluding with the sexist vision of womanhood exhibited on the ranch and were ultimately suggesting that Curley's wife should know her place. Steinbeck's ambivalent presentation of her sometimes does not help to encourage a sympathetic interpretation of this character, but it is clear that studying this text does offer a vital opportunity to challenge some of our own society's stereotyped views of women.

Moreover, it is inevitably the case that those who have been given the opportunity to consider a more balanced interpretation of Curley's wife develop a much more sensitive and mature understanding of this tragic character.

**Chimananda Ngozi Adichie: *Purple Hibiscus*
Question 22**

In this question, the invitation to write about contextual issues (AO4) was in part (a) of the task and, by and large, students realised this although, of course, response to context would also be credited as appropriate in part (b). Interestingly, the perhaps less obvious invitation to AO4 in part (a) liberated some students to respond to both the passage and the novel in a less formulaic way, addressing all AOs in both parts of the question. Senior examiners reported that they read some 'wonderful' responses to this novel.

In part (a) the extract offered many opportunities for response: students wrote about the significance of bribery and the inhumane conditions suggesting corruption and oppression on a wider scale. Many also commented thoughtfully on the contrast between the images of Jaja and his shoulders which once 'bloomed' and now 'sag' – linking this to the impact of living not only in that society, but also, for Jaja, carrying the family 'burden' on his shoulders. Other thoughtful responses concerned the idea of 'Awaiting Trial' and what that tells us about Nigeria at that time.

Part (b) was often well done with some 'lovely' responses to the presentation of a heroic, self-sacrificing Jaja who changed as a result of his father's constant bullying and who ultimately gave up his freedom to protect his mother and sister/baby. There were many poignant details used to link to interpretation, with some analytical use of those from the stronger students.

**Lloyd Jones: *Mister Pip*
Question 23**

This text is gaining in popularity and students are engaging with the narrative and the issues it raises. The part (a) extract from the end of the novel resonated with the majority who wrote well about the significance of Mr Dickens, 'Great Expectations' and Pip in Matilda's life; not all students wrote well about the methods used to present Matilda's thoughts, however; those who did enjoyed unpacking descriptive details, sentence structure and repetition of key words. The extract did work well to focus attention on the narrative voice. The fact that the extract is from the end of the novel invited students to consider it in the light of the rest of the novel.

In part (b) many students responded in a thoughtful or an exploratory way to the use of Mr Watts to present attitudes to different cultures. The best responses certainly had a confident overview of the novel.

**Harper Lee: *To Kill a Mockingbird*
Question 24**

An ever-popular text, many students were able to engage with both the extract and with the expectations others have of Scout and what they show about Maycomb society. Weaker responses to part (a) were able to describe Scout's feelings with support from the extract but then failed to address how the reader is made aware of them. In part (b), the weaker responses did not refer to material beyond that which is in the passage and so never moved out to the whole novel. Other weaker responses described various characters' expectations of Scout but found it difficult to relate these to the society of Maycomb. The better responses handled part (a) confidently and with a real sense of engagement and enjoyment – analysing, for example, the metaphor of 'settling slowly to the bottom of the ocean' and exploring the adult retrospective humour in the recounting of the discussion about Christmas presents. Better responses to part (b) explored an interesting range of characters – including, for example, Calpurnia, Atticus, Mrs Dubose, Miss Caroline – detailing their expectations and relating them to the stereotyping and narrow-mindedness of the time (or the reverse). Indeed, some students observed the different expectations of characters who wished to maintain the status quo and those who desired social

change. It was interesting to note that most – but not all – students failed to be thrown by racism not being the focus of the context; indeed, they simply applied the skills they had learnt to the question set

**Doris Pilkington: *Rabbit-Proof Fence*
Question 25**

This was very much a minority text and the comments here are based on a limited number responses. Students found both parts (a) and (b) accessible in that the extract provided the opportunity for them to examine and sometimes explain/appreciate Pilkington's methods when presenting fear.

In response to part (b) students understood the demands of the question and were able to write, sometimes in a thoughtful way, about the issues surrounding the children of mixed marriages. It was felt, on limited evidence, that students who studied this text tended to fare better on Section A than on Section B – perhaps due to a lack of analytical/exploratory skills demonstrated.

A word of advice for some schools: it is not a good idea to 'second guess' what may be on a paper. Looking back at previous papers and trying to work out what may be coming up is not wise – and it is worth remembering that the F tier paper is a different paper. Questions are set which are accessible to H tier students and which invite them to address the relevant assessment objectives. If students have the relevant skills and their knowledge and understanding of the text is secure, then they should be able to tackle any task.

In conclusion, it is pleasing to know how many schools are opting for their students to take the English Language / English Literature route; arguably it is a more challenging option for some but one which is hugely worthwhile in that it enriches a young person's cultural experience and, for some, will foster a love for reading. As one senior examiner observed, 'it has been a great pleasure to read the many engaging and diverse personal responses to literature'. Long may this continue.
