

# **Report on the Units**

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**June 2006**

**1901/MS/R/06**

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

The reports on the Examinations provide 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.

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## **Chief Examiner's Introduction**

These reports aim to identify which texts and questions were most popular and the general strengths and weaknesses examiners noted over the marking period. It is hoped that the comments contained in this report will provide valuable feedback for Centres on how their candidates performed in their chosen units and will also help teachers in the way they guide their pupils to fulfil their potential in future examinations in English Literature at this level. Teachers might profitably read the post-1914 Drama report, Unit 2441, and particularly the paragraphs on the extract-based question, 'Fruitless Feature Logging and Exam Inexperience', to discover why their pupils sometimes under-achieve in GCSE English Literature generally.

## 2441/1 – Foundation Tier and 2441/2 – Higher Tier

### Scheme A: Drama Post-1914

#### General Comments (including 2445)

*Journey's End* is now firmly established as the natural successor to *An Inspector Calls* as the most popular post-1914 Drama option, closely followed by *Death of a Salesman* and *Whose Life is it Anyway?*, with *The Caretaker* continuing to attract a smaller but very enthusiastic following. *Romeo and Juliet* remains by far the most popular pre-1914 choice, followed by *Much Ado About Nothing* and Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People*, with the new 2445 choice, Wilde's *An Ideal Husband*, beginning to make its mark with a small number of Centres.

The vast majority of candidates displayed sound textual knowledge and also managed to suggest genuine enjoyment of and a powerful emotional response to their chosen play. There was widespread evidence of thorough, sensitive and supportive teaching of the texts themselves and of the difficult skill of writing the 45 minute essay. Many candidates had clearly benefited from careful advice on maintaining a relevant focus on the question, on developing ideas effectively, on selecting and integrating quotations, on time management and on taking the PEE (point, example, explanation) approach to building their answer. A willingness to risk a range of possible interpretations (of exactly why Dr Scott is upset at the end of the *Whose Life is it Anyway?* extract, or of the symbolic significance of the collapsing dug-out at the conclusion of *Journey's End* ...) rather than settling for a simplified or received opinion, was a striking feature of several outstanding answers. The appreciation of these plays as theatrical experiences directed at audiences, rather than written texts directed at readers, continues to gain ground (though see comments on feature-logging below) and Examiners were often amazed and exhilarated not only at the maturity, perception and originality of the candidates but also at the way these 16 year-olds could display such close emotional engagement with the distant fictional plights of a superannuated salesman, a devious tramp, a paralysed sculptor or soldiers in the Great War... Indeed, Questions 1 and 10, in particular, (on the "moving" features of extracts from *Death of a Salesman* and *Journey's End*), Question 4 (on the ending of *Romeo and Juliet*) and several of the empathic questions were often so fully and movingly answered that hard-bitten Examiners felt their own readings of the texts being challenged and enriched in the process of marking. "A joy to read" was a frequent comment at the end of an answer.

The vast majority of Centres had clearly made shrewd and careful Tiering decisions and although some script envelopes continue to hit the mat with an unnecessarily loud thud, there were fewer examples this time of Centres using environmentally unfriendly eight or even twelve page answer booklets for this single-answer exam.

The extract-based question continues to be by far the most popular choice for each text despite the difficulty which many candidates experience in striking the right balance between paying close attention to the printed extract and placing it in the context of the whole play (see below). Empathic questions continue to grow in popularity and the opportunity to write in character (especially as Bernard, Raleigh and Friar Lawrence) stimulated work of the very highest quality. Several Centres, in attempting to encourage closer engagement with the texts and a sharper awareness of genre, have clearly made role-play, hot-seating and active approaches generally, central and effective parts of their teaching of Drama texts, and many candidates had clearly benefited from seeing (or being involved in) a performance of some or all of their set play. The discursive questions which offered more open approaches, but without a clear extract or moment in the play as a starting-point, proved less popular; but the candidates who were prepared to root out relevant detail for themselves during the planning process produced some fine responses (particularly to Question 5 on the relationship between Romeo and Mercutio).

Where there were examples of under-achievement, these could be attributed to the **three** usual causes:

## **1 The extract-based question: balancing attention to the extract and the whole play context**

This continues to be the most serious concern amongst Examiners, especially as the extract-based question is by far the most popular choice, accounting for about three-quarters of all answers. Previous reports on the Drama Units have consistently commented on the damaging tendency to choose an extract-based question and then to treat it like a broadly discursive question as if the extract itself does not actually appear on the paper, and this tendency continues to undermine the achievement of some candidates. Extract-based questions always refer to “this extract” or “this moment” or “this scene” or “this passage” or use the word “here” to anchor the question to the extract, and although it is true that these questions do require a sense of context and a related overview of the whole text, close attention to the extract itself remains the core requirement for successful answers. Question 10 on the ending of *Journey’s End* and Question 4 on the ending of *Romeo and Juliet* clearly require a sense of context in order to engage the developments, ironies and resolutions in the final scenes, but many candidates lost sight of the printed extract (and the question) in the process of establishing a whole-play context and thereby devoted the bulk of their 45 minutes to areas of their own choosing. Several candidates spent so long tracing the relationship between Stanhope and Raleigh throughout the play, for instance, or so long explaining and lamenting the tragic events that culminate in the final moments of the play in the Capulet tomb, that they were left with no time to engage the dramatic detail of the printed extract itself. The best answers establish the context quickly and then use the extract itself as a starting-point for all their ideas, so that a discussion of the relationship between Stanhope and Raleigh in response to Question 10, for instance, will be rooted firmly in the moving intimacy of their final scene, rather than bouncing away from the extract and taking on a wholly separate life of its own. A consideration of the Willy Loman’s flawed values and his sense of failure for Question 1 should foreground the detail in the extract rather than tracing (at great length) the importance he attaches to personality and appearances throughout the play. Almost as damaging, but probably less prevalent, is the tendency to provide a running commentary on the printed passage with no sense of context as if it is a previously unseen extract from a play which the candidate has never read. The place of the extract in the play remains an important element in successful answers and the balance will shift according to the nature of the extract and the question but, as a rule of thumb, the advice remains that candidates should devote at least two-thirds of extract-based answers to discussing, quoting from and commenting on the extract itself.

## **2 Fruitless Feature Logging**

There have been many benefits from the more systematic teaching of “knowledge about language”, from the spread of “literacy hour” approaches, and from the changes brought about in many English Departments by the growing popularity of English Language at Advanced Level, but one unfortunate effect is that a substantial minority of candidates may have come to see literary texts as mere repositories for linguistic devices and literature essays as exercises in the classification of data. “Miller makes this a moving moment in the play with his use of dashes, exclamation marks and rhetorical questions in Willy’s long speech” is not an encouraging initial response to an extract from *Death of a Salesman* (Question 1) which portrays one of the most crushingly humiliating moments for the play’s central character. Questions at Higher Tier, in particular, often refer to “the ways” employed by the writer or ask the question “how” about the writer’s methods; in trying to focus explicitly on the writer at work, some candidates confine themselves to the technical features of the words on the page, with very little reference to the nature of the dialogue or of the action or of the characterisation or of the plot development, as if these are not part of the dramatist’s craft. Many candidates are able to see stage directions as part of the dramatic action of a scene and appreciate details of lighting, music and set outlined in stage directions

as important elements in the text's theatrical impact. However some candidates still approach plays as if they are written texts directed, like a novel, at a reader rather than an audience, and therefore become bogged down in the way stage directions are written and even punctuated with no reference to the action or the immediate context. Several candidates spent valuable time admiring the alliterative effects, the onomatopoeia, the similes and even graphological features such as the punctuation or the use of upper case for characters' names in Sherriff's stage directions at the end of *Journey's End* (Question 10) rather than focusing on the dramatic impact of what an audience would see and hear.

### 3 Exam Inexperience

shown by:

- the candidates' lack of confidence in their own voices and personal responses, and reliance on unadventurous, detached and formulaic approaches – including the unloading of extraneous social/historical/cultural/literary material (on Miller's politics, the Wall Street Crash and consumerism in the U.S.A., on Aristotle and Greek tragedy, on the background to World War One and Sherriff's involvement in it, on Pinter's Jewish origins and the fear of displacement...) even though this is certainly not an assessment objective for the drama units
- tackling only one part of a two-part question so that, for instance, the "funny" but not the "upsetting" features of the *Whose Life Is It Anyway?* extract (Question 7) were explored (or vice-versa)
- tackling the bullet points without explicit reference to the stem question (at Foundation Tier)
- not making the answer number clear, either on the front-page grid of the answer booklet or in the margin, as if the candidate is unsure about question selection
- confused responses to empathic questions, like the use of contorted third-person ("If I was Lord Capulet I would be thinking) or of inappropriate "Dear Diary" approaches, or in addressing an unseen audience as if engaged in explanatory conversation rather than thinking private thoughts – as though some candidates are unfamiliar with the empathic question but still find it an attractive option
- answers to more than one question or on more than one text
- long plans but short answers – over-elaborate plans are often unhelpful in such a short exam.

### Comments on Individual Questions

The vast majority of candidates who studied *Death of a Salesman* opted for Question 1 and the scene of Willy's sacking. Many successful candidates engaged with the dramatic detail of the extract closely and wrote very powerfully about the pathos in Willy's desperate but ineffective pleading, in his yearning for an idyllic past, in the destruction of his dreams, in his sense of failure and in his mental disintegration. Many reacted strongly to Howard's handling of him, (particularly at Foundation Tier, where Howard had his own bullet point) and suggested a fascinating range of symbolic possibilities for his recording machine. The best answers managed to maintain the vital balance between close attention to the "moving" elements of the extract and the broader consideration of the "significance" of the extract in the context of the whole play, so that the touching story of Dave Singleman's death and funeral, which has so inspired Willy, for instance, was often seen as an ironic contrast with his own death and funeral, and the consequences of Willy's sacking in this scene directly linked with his suicide later on this same day. Some candidates tended to accept Willy's valuation of himself as a highly successful salesman in the past rather uncritically (unlike Howard) and to assert that Willy's family will definitely benefit from the insurance money at the end of the play (as if Willy's suicide is a successful strategy). The term "American Dream" appears to have become an all-purpose thematic label which can provide the final word on the significance of any moment in the play without the need for further discussion or explanation. There was some confusion, particularly at Foundation Tier, about the



characters mentioned by Willy (Ben, his father, Dave Singleman, Al Smith, Frank...) with several insisting the “death of a salesman” is actually that of Willy’s father, and one common misreading of a stage direction suggested that Willy has become so desperate that he is banging his “head” (not his hand) on Howard’s desk. The tendency in weaker answers to spend more time on the punctuation than on the depiction of the dramatic situation, and to pay much more attention to stage directions than the dialogue, was particularly noticeable in the answers to this question. Question 2 was a less popular choice across both Tiers and although there was much intelligent comment on the use of Ben as a contrast for and powerful influence on Willy, several answers overlooked the central fact that Willy has received the news of Ben’s death just before the action of the play commences and that his appearances in the play, therefore, only take place inside Willy’s head. The best answers moved beyond a literal reading of Ben as a “realistic” character, engaged the detail of his portrayal in terms of dress, speech, attitudes, use of umbrella..., considered when and why he appears in the play, and refused to settle for an uncritical view of him as the epitome of material success and a worthy role model for his younger brother. The very best even managed to make the distinction between the scenes where Ben exists in Willy’s memory and his final two appearances where he seems to become an extension of Willy’s psyche or, ultimately, as “a Mephistophelean figure, leading Willy to his death”, as one candidate memorably put it. There were many recognisable Bernards in response to Question 3 on both Tiers, based carefully on the details of past and present scenes. Many Foundation Tier candidates used the bullets wisely and anchored themselves to the detail of Bernard’s conversation with Willy in Charley’s office. Successful answers generally tended to focus on features such as his concern for both Willy and Biff, his curiosity about events in Boston and the reasons for the subsequent sneaker-burning and fist-fight, and his recollection of the details like the thrill of carrying Biff’s shoulder guards, and there were some wonderfully authentic voices which fully reflected the successful lawyer rather than the teenage nerd. Some candidates adopted voices which were rather too smug or malicious or self-congratulatory to be entirely convincing.

The popularity of *The Caretaker* continues to grow, particularly for Higher Tier candidates and although imported material about Pinter’s background or the influence of Beckett or the Theatre of the Absurd was often a distraction, there was a great deal of excellent work on this text. The openness of Question 4 appealed to many candidates and a wide variety of “fascinating” features emerged with some successful answers highlighting the characterisation, particularly of Davies, some the relationship between Davies and Aston and some the humorous effects. The anecdotal nature of the extract meant that candidates tended to focus closely on the language and although the tendency to drift into the decontextualised feature-logging of language effects (noted in the *General Comments*) was particularly noticeable in some answers to Question 4, the linguistic analysis was often effectively grounded in an exploration of character or humour. The discursive Question 5 was more popular than the extract-based question in several Centres, and candidates who avoided the temptation to unload a prepared character sketch of Davies and who used the implications of Mick’s remark to clearly shape their response produced some fine answers. Sympathy for Davies was in rather short supply overall, and agreement with Mick was often convincingly established, though some candidates were more prepared to take a more critical line on Mick, to empathise with Davies, to see his behaviour in the context of the life he leads and to make allowances. The candidates who answered Question 6 (very much a minority choice) were often highly sympathetic to Aston and able to explore the impact of his long monologue effectively and in great detail. Candidates sometimes had difficulty in defining a clear “moment” or in selecting a second “moment” to sit alongside the monologue but there were many strong responses to the character.

Now in its second year, *Whose Life Is It Anyway?* continues to provide an accessible and productive option for many candidates at all levels of ability. Most answers to Question 7 on both tiers expressed a clear response to the upsetting features of Ken's situation and appeared comfortable (in general terms at least) in discussing issues such as Ken's powerlessness and his determination to take control of his destiny. Candidates were less comfortable in exploring the sources of humour, though there were many good responses to the unexpectedness of Ken's "breasts" compliment and to the wit he employs. Several candidates, especially at Foundation Tier, found the relationship between Ken and Dr Scott and her reasons for being upset at the end of the extract, difficult to understand, and some thought Dr Scott was a nurse. The strongest candidates explored the dialogue in detail and with great sensitivity, paying particular attention to Dr Scott's reactions and recognising the relationship between the humour and the seriousness of the situation rather than splitting their answer in two. Question 8 was something of a minority choice, but candidates who took the time to rummage through Kay Sadler's eight or so brief appearances in the play were able to produce detailed and varied responses. Many candidates avoided the character sketch or narrative re-working approaches and saw how her newness and lack of "professionalism" set her apart from other medical staff. Strong answers examined the development of her relationship with John and examined the significance of this relationship in the context of Ken's predicament. Successful answers to Question 9 quickly established the strength of Dr Emerson's conviction that he knows best and his stubborn refusal to accept defeat, and the strongest captured a voice that conveyed both his prickly authoritarianism and his devotion to his patients. Less confident answers drifted into self-doubt, sentimentality or even into dramatic conversions to the cause of patients' rights.

Some candidates continue to suggest the impact of other media on their lives by referring to the author of *Journey's End* as "the Sherriff" and by insisting that Raleigh has a sister called "Marje", and some continue to get bogged down in the minute analysis of scene-setting stage directions at the expense of the action and dialogue, but it is clear that the teaching of this play has been remarkably successful in engaging the interest and the emotions of candidates across the ability range. The majority of candidates who chose the extract-based Question 10 appeared genuinely moved by Raleigh's death ("he's so young...he's so brave...he's just left school...should still be playing rugger or exploring the woods...") and strong answers on both tiers managed to explore Stanhope's relationship with Raleigh in their final moments together (the first name terms, the solicitude, the physical intimacy...) and to see how and why this relationship has changed. The best answers demonstrated (but were not distracted by) a firm grasp of the whole-play context, not just in the changing relationship between Stanhope and Raleigh but also in the use of stagecraft (Osborne's bed, the angry dawn, the burning candle, the collapsing dug-out...). Some outstanding answers really explored the detail of the dialogue to convey the impact of features such as Raleigh's continuing sense of duty, the moving attempts at humour and the power of understatement. There was some confusion about the exact moment of Raleigh's death (with some suggesting that he is crushed by the collapsing dug-out), several candidates thought the "pale, drawn face" belonged to Raleigh rather than Stanhope, and there was a tendency to ignore the effect of the soldier's arrival and to insist that any pause or long silence automatically generates tension and "suspense". Interpretations of the final moment varied with some candidates responding to what they saw as an unresolved "cliff-hanger" and speculating optimistically that Stanhope might yet return to live happily ever after with Madge in the New Forest, and others (more convincingly perhaps) emphasising the finality of the extinguished candle and the destroyed dug-out. Question 11 was a minority choice, and some candidates found it difficult to move far beyond the welcome humour, ordinariness and domesticity which Mason brings to the play. The best answers profited from close attention to the dialogue, particularly the exchanges between Mason and Trotter, and the courage, the sense of duty and the sensitivity which Mason displays in his final appearance. There was confusion about role and rank, and a tendency in some answers to be slightly patronising (like Sherriff himself, perhaps) about Mason's "bad English". There was widespread praise for the answers to Question 12, with several Examiners commenting that weak responses were very rare indeed. In some Centres, well over half the candidates had chosen this empathic option and

generally made the 90-odd year journey from exam room to dugout with remarkable ease and confidence, identifying closely with Raleigh and his predicament. The best conveyed a very deep understanding of character and situation, integrated appropriate expressions and carefully selected quotations to suggest Raleigh's idiom, and often added ironies of their own (of the "Osborne's a great chap and a real survivor...I could learn a lot from him" variety). Successful answers generally tended to highlight Raleigh's respect for Stanhope, his awareness of his own inexperience and of the importance of rank, his willingness to criticise his own behaviour and his embarrassment at the contents of the letter. Uncharacteristic petulance and bitterness crept in, on occasions, as if some candidates were really asking themselves "If I were to be in Raleigh's position what would I (rather than he) be thinking?" so that inappropriately hysterical tirades against Stanhope's outrageous violation of Raleigh's rights skewed a few responses. Some answers suggested a Raleigh who was rather too knowing and fully understood that Stanhope feared exposure and the loss of Madge's love. Some idioms owed rather more to *Friends* than to *Blackadder Goes Forth* (or *Journey's End*) with the occasional Raleigh asserting that he "would be there for Stanhope whatever because they had history" and there was some misplaced sympathy for Raleigh because of all the rifles he had to clean. One candidate offered a rather incongruously analytical response to the contents of the letter: "In my letter I wrote that I was 'awfully proud' to think he's my friend, with the 'awfully proud' being an oxymoron." As with last year, though, the overall quality of the empathic writing on this paper was excellent.

## 2442/1 – Foundation Tier and 2442/2 – Higher Tier

### Scheme A: Poetry and Prose Post-1914

In an examination sat by over 52000 candidates, at two separate Tiers, responding to thirteen texts involving seventy-eight questions, a report that can satisfactorily meet the concerns of all Centres that entered candidates is an impossible challenge. Moreover, this report risks appearing rather unbalanced because some texts are rarely taken up by Centres. *Opening Lines* and *Opening Worlds* are overwhelmingly the most popular choices, and making helpful comment on texts for which there is little take-up is difficult when there is little body of evidence on which to comment.

It is hoped nonetheless that this report will at least be of some help to Centres in understanding how their candidates fared in Summer 2006, and in preparing for the future.

Examiners were rather divided over whether Centres had entered candidates at the right Tier. Many reported that candidates were correctly entered, though a significant number sometimes felt that candidates who underachieved at Higher Tier might have benefited from the stepped approaches offered in Foundation Tier questions.

Written Communication is also a factor on 2442; it is the only unit in Scheme A where it is assessed (- the same applies to unit 2446 in Scheme B). Overall outcomes can be affected quite considerably. Written Communication attracts a maximum of six marks at Higher Tier, and four at Foundation. Candidates scoring near the top of the ranges advantage themselves considerably in their quest for good marks overall. They should, of course, be encouraged to spell, punctuate and write accurately on all units as a matter of good practice. However, Written Communication can affect significantly the grade a candidate achieves on this unit, and this in turn may explain why some candidates are less successful on Poetry and Prose than they are on the Drama unit, 2441.

### Poetry

This summer saw the replacement of the *Generations* and *The 1914-1918 War (i)* Sections of *Opening Lines* with *How It Looks From Here* and *The 1914-1918 War (ii)*. Judging from the results, some candidates coped very well with the change, whilst examiners had the pleasure of assessing responses to poems that had not become over-familiar by exposure to several years of regular appearances on the Question Paper. Some examiners, however, reported that candidates seemed ill at ease in their response to the new poems, appearing to have been drilled in what responses to produce to particular poems and which quotations might prove most valuable. This can pose difficulties when these responses have to be adjusted to meet the demands of the questions on the examination paper.

There were some very strong comparisons of Adcock's *Things* with Hill's *The Hare*. Some candidates saw the poems as reflecting the insecurities experienced by insomniacs and being, in fact, neither dream nor nightmare. Many were able to comment effectively on the structure of *Things*, its use of repetition, the starkness of the sentence "It is 5 a.m.", and the absence of any salutary waking up, or coming to terms with the now personified "worse things", by the poem's conclusion. They were also able to trace the progress of the hare's cry from the river to the woman's ear, considering in some detail the imagery Hill creates. Many candidates wisely chose to recognise that Hill's poem achieves part of its effect by the puzzling, elliptical nature of the imagery and did not attempt to simplify it by explaining "what the poet is trying to say". Weaker responses attempted to reduce the dream/nightmare into some sort of rational framework, flatly identifying the hare with an aborted child or a dead mother. Some candidates were misled by Adcock's first name into believing that she was male, whilst Stevie Smith was not infrequently referred to as "he". However, there were good responses to the invitation to compare *Oh Grateful Colours*, *Bright Looks!* and *Judging Distances*, with Smith's delight in the colours of both natural and fabricated things clearly

recognised. The two voices in *Judging Distances* seemed to confuse some candidates, although many were able to respond, often with enjoyment, to Reed's satire of military language and the attitudes that underlie it. Analyses and comparison of two poems (*A Consumer's Report, I am a Cameraman* and *Sometimes*) were often thoughtful and lively, although some responses focused on explaining the content of the Porter and Dunn poems without considering how these poets expressed their views on life. Few candidates responded to Porter's humour, in the belief, perhaps, that poets are too lofty to stoop to humour. Opinion on whether *Sometimes* was an optimistic or a pessimistic poem in its views on life was divided and depended upon the candidate's interpretation of the title-word; some felt that it asserted the triumph of goodness and decency in a fallen world, whilst others felt that such triumph was too infrequent to celebrate.

As ever, the war poems attracted a large number of candidates, with the comparison of *Joining the Colours* with *The Send-Off* proving particularly popular. Many commented on the parallel situations in the poems and on the poet's sympathy with the men being sent off. Some interpreted Hinkson's description of the young men as "Foolish" as condemnatory, although many saw her sympathy for their naiveté. Responses at Foundation Tier tended to explain both poems, often working through them line by line and attempting to put into 'understandable' language what the poet was trying, and, presumably failing, to say; for example that "smooth-cheeked" meant that they were too young to shave. However, they sometimes provided more appreciative comment on her language, responding to her description of them as "golden" and stepping "Out of the mist ... into the mist." *The Send-Off* was usually quite well understood at both Tiers, although weaker responses again tended to offer line by line explanation. Understanding was not always secure; some candidates read "siding-shed" as "sliding shed" and assumed that a sliding-shed was a train; some thought that the men "sang their way" as happily as the gay and golden boys in the Hinkson poem, because they were also described as "gay", missing the force of "grimly". Many responses noted the significance of the "white with wreath and spray"; some identified wreath and spray, without real basis, as white feathers given by their womenfolk to shame them into action. Best answers on the Owen recognised his anger and offered close engagement with the language, commenting sensitively on the "unmoved" nodding of the signals, the winking of the lamp and "They were not ours". Exploration of Brittain's *Perhaps* and Keown's *Reported Missing* was very satisfactorily attempted by the candidates at Foundation Tier who opted to undertake it, and the comparison of the poems was quite successfully made by Higher Tier candidates. Less successful responses offered explanations of why the poets were grieving or, in Keown's case, "in denial"; the best responses at Higher Tier engaged with the word "movingly" in the question and responded to the language sensitively. The question focusing on *The Target, Lamentations*, and *The Parable of the Old Man and the Young*, attracted no great interest at either Tier. *The Target* was often sensitively discussed but the voices in *Lamentations* were too often confused, with a number of candidates missing the poem's irony and criticising Sassoon for his crass insensitivity to the soldier's agony.

As ever, best responses to the poetry were characterised by focus on the language and its effects. Fewer candidates now set out on a device-identifying quest, aridly cataloguing their finds and ignoring the effects they produce. However, a significant number still hunt down ever more exotic devices. Where in the past the hunt was on for a basking oxymoron or a migrating metonymy, candidates now seek out anaphora (a cluster of them in *Things*), enjambement (offered with variant spellings), polysyndeton, asyndeton, the rule/device of three, tautology, synaesthesia ... The resulting response too often provided no overview of the poem and offered no real engagement with it or with the language the poets use to communicate their meaning. Often identification of rhyme and reference to enjambement were accompanied by unhelpful comments of the kind that "this helps the poem to flow". Examiners noted that a significant number of poetry responses, after an introduction that may, or may not, have made reference to both poems (if comparison is on the agenda, reference to both is preferable), immediately discussed rhyme, rhythm and structure as if abba, cdcd, the sonnet/ballad form, and the poet's use of caesura and enjambement were central issues. Too often such priorities demonstrated little real understanding or enjoyment of the poems.

The extract-based questions on *Opening Worlds* proved, as usual, to be very popular. Candidates, however, need to be reminded that they are not required to compare and contrast the extracts or any features they may contain. The ability to compare and contrast is assessed only in responses to poetry. It is a QCA requirement that candidates must refer to more than one short story, which is why two extracts are printed in the first question on any short story collection. A number of candidates lost focus on the question about the relationship between parents and children by ransacking the extracts in order to compare Clement and Bolan, and Dave Dovecot with Bolan's father. Comparison may sometimes be used to give structure to a response to prose but should not become an end in itself. Some candidates at both Tiers were apparently expecting to write about poverty and determinedly did so, at, of course, the expense of relevance. However, there were some fine responses to the extract-based question at both Tiers, not least when candidates used the extracts in some detail to support their ideas. Question 15, concerning "Pride goes before a fall", was often well answered, although some examiners commented that candidates were not always at ease with the proverb. *Dead Men's Path* provided a wealth of material and candidates usually found a reasonable share of it by analysing Michael Obi's attitudes towards the school, the beliefs of the villagers, and the consequences to him and the school of so arrogantly ignoring the advice of the priest. Neo's pride was often well illustrated, but her fall, much less obvious than Michael Obi's, eluded some candidates. Ravi's pride in what he presumes will be his victory was often sensitively considered by candidates, who generally and rightly felt much more sympathy for him and his fall than they did for Michael Obi or Neo. Good answers responded in detail to both vital parts of the saying, illustrating both the characters' pride and the nature of their fall. Weaker answers focused on pride but did little on the fall or *vice versa*.

The difficulties faced by Cathy and Jing-mei's mother in cultures new to them were often clearly understood. Cathy's difficulties were perhaps more easy to identify than the mother's, though her poor English and belief that everything is possible in America were perceived as root causes of her problems. Her failure to understand that the typical Chinese obedient daughter is not easily hatched and reared in America was also seen as a major part of her difficulties. Some candidates at Higher Tier misread the question and wrote about Jing-mei and her difficulties, and not about the mother's. Some responses at Higher Tier drifted from the question's emphasis on "a foreign land and culture" to difficulties arising from marriage (*The Young Couple*) or the generation gap (*Two Kinds*), although good answers focused closely on the question's thrust.

*Empire of the Sun* has become a minority text. Of those who answered on it, most responded to the extract and commented soundly on points of tension. Foundation Tier candidates tended to narrate what was happening without focusing on the key words of the question; "tense" and "exciting".

The question on the extract from *Things Fall Apart* was answered well by candidates who focused closely on that extract. Weak responses ranged through the novel to show that life in Umuofia can be frightening or threatening, paying too little attention, at Foundation Tier to what is happening in it; or at Higher Tier to the ways in which Achebe makes it so by his depiction of it in the extract; that is, how he writes about it, over and above what he says about it. The extract-based questions on this text in the summer demanded almost exclusive focus on the extract. Some responses were so influenced by Chielo's role as Agbala's priestess in the extract that they deviated into discussions of the subordinate part played by women in Umuofian society. There were many good, well-supported discussions of Okonkwo's qualities as a father. However, some candidates at Higher Tier overlooked the thrust of the question and simply talked about him as a brutal bully, considering such material as how he treats his wives, and the killings of Ezeudu's son and the messenger.

The extract-based questions on *The Old Man and the Sea* were popular with those candidates who had studied the text. As with the similar questions on *Things Fall Apart*, good answers focused almost exclusively on the extract, on Foundation Tier linking feelings

about the shark and the old man to what is happening in it, and, to some extent, to Hemingway's description of the shark; and at Higher Tier to the way Hemingway the writer creates tension and excitement. At Higher, this was a real opportunity to engage with Hemingway's writing, and best responses illustrated engagement to the full. Middle of the range answers narrated, without real response to, or analysis of language, though there were not infrequent references to "free indirect discourse" as part of Hemingway's method of narration. The old man's feelings and thoughts about the marlin were generally well understood, with better answers using the text in detail to support that understanding. Examiners reported regular misspelling of Hemingway, the popular prejudice being that he deserved an extra *m* to his name.

On question 28, the passage-based question on *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, best answers made much of the humour of the extract and the caricature of the perfect party member and role model that Orwell, through Winston, creates, and saw the essential absurdity of Ogilvy. Worthy responses drew parallels between the "virtues" of Ogilvy and the rebelliousness of both Winston, a smoker and reluctant physical exerciser, and Julia, who, despite membership of the Junior Anti-Sex League, adheres to no vow of celibacy; or the way Ogilvy, in the role of denouncer of his uncle, might have inspired Parsons' little daughter to denounce her father. Some argued that the creation of Ogilvy was significant because it highlighted the stupidity/gullibility of the people of Oceania in believing whatever they were told, picking upon details in the extract that they felt defied credibility. Stronger responses to the extract recognised that controlling the past was the means of controlling the present and that the sinister forces that controlled the past were perhaps a more central issue than people's gullibility. There were some strong personal responses, voicing indignation at the praise of such a person as Ogilvy, when so many of his actions would nowadays be condemned. There were good responses to O'Brien as a horrifying figure, especially when candidates focused on the way Orwell's language presents him as horrifying. Less focused responses tended to rehearse O'Brien's appearances in the novel describing what he says and, particularly, does, leaving the examiner to make inferences about why such descriptions might be horrific. At Higher Tier, there were comparatively few responses to the invitation to explore one or two moments when Orwell creates particularly strong sympathy for Winston, and of these the majority, not surprisingly, focused on what he suffers in Room 101. Less successful answers responded just to the situation – how awful it is to be confronted with what you most fear, and that mask, with a chamber of rats attached, is terrifying. More successful responses looked in detail at how Orwell's language makes what is happening to Winston terrifying and communicates that terror so powerfully to the reader that sympathy is compelled.

Very few candidates were attracted by *Modern Women's Short Stories*, but there were some good responses to the extract-based question on the situations of the married women that featured in the extracts.

Very few candidates wrote on literary non-fiction. One examiner was delighted to discover that the Hornby had clearly been taught by one of her Centres. Most responses were to Question 37, where candidates commented closely on the same taught features of the writing: first person narrative, parenthesis, informality, rhetorical questions, double perspective, italics, remembered detail, and self-deprecating humour. Unfortunately some candidates merely identified which bits of the extract illustrated the above list of features rather than commenting on Hornby's relationship with his mother. Only a few candidates focused first on the relationship (but did not really go beyond the fact that she queued in snow to buy football tickets for him) and then went on to list the taught features of the writing. None successfully considered the "weird little parody of a sitcom married couple".

Examiners provided some interesting observations about the language candidates themselves use. As in previous years, many, especially in responses to poetry, use "negative" and "positive" as if they were powerfully illuminating. Many candidates apparently feel that if they describe Owen as having a negative view of war and Hinkson or Sassoon as

not having a positive view, they have made particularly penetrating comments. When they are simply choring what several thousand other candidates are saying, they do not, unfortunately, distinguish themselves as worthy of high grades; instead, they appear to be using trite terms that convey little subtle understanding of what the poets feel and are conveying to alert readers. Examiners also noted that “sympathy” has been largely replaced by “empathy”, perhaps because, in this touchy/feely age, it suggests an inadequate response to the human experience. A significant number of characters in these texts certainly attracted empathy by the bucket-load.

However, examiners often praised the high quality of responses that they saw. Many candidates revealed a close understanding of the texts they had studied and had obviously enjoyed working with them. Some amazed examiners by writing so much, and exhibiting so much sensitivity, within the limited time constraints imposed by the examination.



## Scheme A: Pre-1914 Texts

### General Comments

There was some very pleasing and thoughtful work this summer; candidates seemed generally rather more comfortable with the Paper and its demands, and often demonstrated an ability to move quite significantly beyond mere rehearsal of narrative or plot, beyond simple regurgitation of learnt material, towards a genuinely personal and sensitively supported response to what they had read and to what they were asked to do. Of course there were weak answers, and answers that did not move any further than simple paraphrase, and there were some who seemed at times to be looking at the set passages for the very first time, but in general the spread of marks was better and wider than it has sometimes been.

There was, as examiners anticipate every session, rather greater response to the extract-based questions than to the general essay ones, and again there was clear evidence that in general candidates were more aware of how they should approach these. Almost without exception, whether at Higher or Foundation Tier, answers contextualised the extract but spent most of the time looking in some detail at what it contained and what it said at that moment in the play or novel (poetry will be dealt with separately later). Of course a few candidates spent too much time on either the context or on the extract, but these were relatively rarer this session than usual, and there was much determination to explore at least something of how each writer achieves his or her effects, with some sensible discussion of language.

It has almost invariably been the case in past sessions that poetry answers have been the poor relation, with drama - or more often prose - producing the strongest responses. For the first time, however, one examiner at least noted that some of the best answers that he saw were on poetry, and there was a general sense that – perhaps because of the poems selected, or the questions set on them, or perhaps because what has been said in previous Reports and at INSET meetings – candidates overall showed considerably greater competence and indeed confidence in managing some quite sensitive and difficult work this time. There was a much greater sense that the words and images used by the poets matter, and rather less concern simply to identify techniques simply for their own sake.

Comments on individual questions

### ***Much Ado About Nothing***

- 1 This was the more popular question, answered sensibly and appropriately by most candidates, who saw it as a fitting way to tie up loose ends, to re-establish the romantic pairing of Hero and Claudio, and to establish the perhaps more realistic relationship of Beatrice and Benedick, whose control and humour in the extract was noted by most. Most understood the symbolic role of music and dance as a way of re-establishing order and stability, though the isolation of Don Pedro was noted by many; the villain, Don John, was seen as being properly dealt with by Benedick, though surprisingly many candidates seemed to believe that he was still at large (misreading the expression “ta’en in flight”).
- 2 There were few answers on Hero, and virtually all were from Higher Tier candidates. Most were rather disappointing, seeming to be little more than “prepared” character studies of the character, with only occasional reference to her supposed jewel-like nature. Many answers adopted Claudio as the focal point, and explored how he saw her, combined too often with half-digested ideas about a patriarchal society and how women were regarded in this.

### ***Romeo and Juliet***

- 3 As noted above, the extract questions were by far the more popular, and here this was overwhelmingly the case at both Foundation and Higher Tiers. Most answers were very well aware of the context of the extract, though a surprising number misplaced it, and most were able to say at least some appropriate things about Romeo's behaviour and manner in this short scene with the Friar. Higher Tier candidates were asked to say how the extract affected their view of Romeo, and most took the opportunity to compare, or contrast, his attitudes here with those both earlier and later in the play, and there was a good deal of thoughtful response to this question. Some answers spent far too long talking about other parts of the play, but the majority answered appositely and with good focus.
- 4 There were some very entertaining responses here; many candidates were able with considerable sensitivity to imagine themselves as the Nurse at this moment, and there were many lively and quite realistic attempts to reflect her irritation with Mercutio and the heat, and her planning how to break the news of Romeo's marriage plans. Her "voice" was very often well managed. Centres should note, and pass on to candidates, that answers which begin with some such phrase as "If I were the Nurse I would..." are not truly empathic, and are unlikely to achieve high marks as being unable to re-create a suitable voice; they must absolutely be the character concerned, and at the exact moment specified.

### ***An Ideal Husband and An Enemy of the People***

Examiners saw too few answers on either text to make any useful comment.

### ***Opening Lines – War***

- 9 There were some full and sensitive answers here; candidates had often been clearly moved by the emotion created by both Whitman and Dobell, and although there was a great deal to discuss in the two poems/extract many candidates demonstrated a very secure understanding of not just what they said, but more importantly of how this was said; Whitman in particular elicited some obviously very personal and emotive reactions.
- 10 This question was rather less successfully managed by the minority who tackled it, and there was much more "mechanical" answering from candidates who appeared to find the poems difficult to understand or to respond to. Southey's, for example, was rarely seen as containing any irony, and the sporting metaphor in Newbolt's was touched on by only a handful – and of these, some were perhaps over-influenced by World Cup events and assumed that the game in question was football.

### ***Opening Lines – Town and Country***

- 11 This was tackled by a large number of candidates, and more often than not was done well, with considerable sensitivity to the language and images used by Hardy and Kipling to create their pictures of nature. Most writing on Hardy did make mention of his wife, but this rarely took over from the picture of nature that was being asked about, and there was a lot of good discussion of the poet's use of colour. Kipling's poem was a little less well handled, perhaps because more subtle than Hardy's in its descriptions – more candidates here wrote more generally about the poem than about what the question really asked. Spelling is of course not an issue in this Unit, but it was an entertaining pity that more than one candidate seemed to think that the place being described by Hardy was called Old Beeny; several candidates also seemed to think that Beeny was his wife's name, which was rather depressing for examiners.

- 12 There were some excellent answers here, with Hopkins' poem producing some very sensitive and detailed responses indeed; one or two took the opportunity to talk as if he was an early 'green' campaigner (and in a sense perhaps this is what the poem is about), but most looked really very closely and thoughtfully at the poem's language, and were not at all fazed by its occasional eccentricities, indeed often noting these as particularly effective. Yeats was similarly appealing, though occasional candidates wanted to talk about his life and/or Irish nationalism to the detriment of properly close critical reading; and Meynell, though less widely used, also led to much thoughtful writing. One examiner commented that this was the most successful question in the paper.

### **Blake – *Songs of Innocence and Experience* and Hardy – *Selected Poems***

There were very few answers to either Blake question, and none to those on Hardy.

#### ***Northanger Abbey***

- 17 This extract led to some full, good and knowledgeable answers, relating events here to what happens elsewhere in the novel, and discussing ways in which the characters, especially Eleanor and General Tilney, are portrayed here and both before and afterwards. Most were evidently very sympathetic towards Catherine, and showed a good understanding of her incomprehension at General Tilney's abrupt and discourteous change of heart. Better answers made at least some comment on the nature of Austen's dialogue, as well as on the simple contents of the extract.
- 18 There were very few answers to this question.

#### ***Hard Times***

There were few answers on this text, and examiners reported that few moved much beyond relatively simple paraphrase and/or character study in Q19.

#### ***Far From the Madding Crowd***

- 21 This was one text where the extract question was less popular than the essay, but there were some thoughtful and sensibly argued responses; most clearly saw the obsessive and almost manic nature of Boldwood as opposed to the exhausted and unwilling acceptance of Bathsheba, with little real sympathy for either at this point in the novel. Most were well able to contextualise, though there was some tendency towards making more of this than of the extract itself.
- 22 The more popular, and better handled, question – there were of course candidates who told the story of the whole novel, but few did so without appropriate reference to the relationship that had developed between Oak and Bathsheba from the very first chapter to the very last. All thought that the marriage was right, both morally and artistically as well as romantically, and most argued their cases well and fully. The novel clearly appeals to a lot of young readers despite its occasional difficulties.

#### ***Silas Marner***

- 23 This was a very popular text and question, and almost invariably handled very well indeed; there were inevitably some candidates who simply rehearsed the story up to and including this extract (and sometimes beyond) with no reference to the words "powerful moment", but the great majority saw well how Eliot creates a range of different but equally striking and memorable kinds of conflict in these few paragraphs, and there was a lot of close and detailed quotation in support of the ideas put forward. The meeting of Godfrey and Silas, of Eppie and Silas, and of the possibility in the

reader's mind that Godfrey might conceivably persuade Eppie of the justice of his "claim" and "duty", combined with the awful possibility that Silas might lose everything again, were all well and thoughtfully discussed. Interestingly, not all candidates saw Godfrey as entirely bad, and there was often some sympathy for his – admittedly self-induced – predicament.

- 24** Dolly was written about by most of the few who tackled this question, and inevitably had made a warm and loving impression upon candidates as she had on Silas; her role in the novel was very well understood, too. A small handful wrote about Priscilla, but even fewer managed to do more than sketch her character and role in the plot.

### **Poe – *Selected Tales***

There were few answers to either question, and few that showed any real understanding of how Poe's language and style creates mood and character; answers tended to be simply assertive or paraphrase, and few unfortunately did much to really impress the examiners. Candidates knew the tales they wrote about, but could manage to do little with this knowledge, though some better answers did comment upon the way Poe creates tension and uncertainty in the openings to the two tales printed in Q25.

### ***The History of Mr Polly***

- 27** Quite a popular question, and often managed with some success; the contrast that Wells draws, between Mr Polly in this extract and the way he appears while working in Fishbourne, was well managed by most candidates, several of whom also drew attention to the opening paragraphs of the whole novel, and showed how the character had changed so radically. The romantic and somewhat idealistic description of the countryside was well noted, again in contrast to the pressured life that he led while married and trying to run his shop. A very few candidates also made use of the last sentence of the extract as a way of showing how the real Polly is at last freed and able to do what he had always dreamed of doing.
- 28** There were very few answers indeed to this question.

### **Chopin – *Short Stories***

- 29** There were relatively few answers to this question, but many were responsive to Chopin's language and inferences in the two extracts. Strangely, there was a tendency in many answers to discuss Armand elsewhere in the story, rather than in the extract, whereas the same candidates focused appropriately upon what the second extract says about the husband, with the rest of story being used as mere background.
- 30** 'La Folle' and 'Adrienne' were the most popular choices with candidates here, and most wrote sensibly and thoughtfully, with appropriate illustrative support from the stories.

## 2445/1 – Foundation Tier and 2445/2 – Higher Tier

### Scheme B: Drama Pre-1914

#### General Comments (see 2441 Report)

There was a much smaller entry for these papers than for 2441, and a very small entry for Foundation Tier which makes generalised comment difficult. The two most popular texts were *Romeo and Juliet* (by far) and *Much Ado About Nothing*, and although *An Enemy of the People* is becoming a more popular option as one of the two non-Shakespearian choices, Wilde's *An Ideal Husband* has only been tackled by a tiny minority of Centres so far.

#### Comments on Individual Questions

Question 1 proved to be the most popular by far of the *Much Ado About Nothing* options and there was strong evidence that candidates had been thoroughly prepared on the comedy contributed to the play by the officers of the watch. Strong answers expressed a clear understanding of Dogberry's self-importance and of his relationship with his comic sidekick, and supported this with detailed attention to the language of the extract, careful explanations of malapropisms and their effect providing a fruitful focus for many. The strongest answers differentiated clearly between the characters, suggested an awareness of how the scene might work on stage and even constructed subtle contrasts, on occasions, between the unintentional comic effects which they produce and Beatrice's more controlled wit. The exact sources of the comedy were difficult for some candidates to engage closely and this resulted in asserting that comic effects were present rather than really showing them in action. The openness of Question 2 appealed to many candidates and there were convincing and selective arguments about the enjoyment afforded by Beatrice's inventive wit, her independence, her loyalty and her strength of feeling, though some candidates drifted into much less personally engaged and all-purpose character sketches which lost the focus on "enjoyment". Question 3 was the least popular choice but there was some soundly argued and convincingly supported response to Claudio's cruel denunciation of Hero, for instance, and to the apparent reversals in the attitudes and feelings of Beatrice and Benedick, although the handling of the second moment was almost always less developed and confident.

Once again, the extract-based question proved to be the most popular *Romeo and Juliet* choice, and although the tendency to lose contact with the extract already noted in the "General Comments" on 2441, did undermine some answers which concentrated excessively on preceding events, there were many sensitive and closely argued responses. Once again, the extent to which candidates could engage the language of the extract (for instance the Prince's regretful imagery and the formality and finality of his closing speech) as well as the moving elements of the woeful story which is unravelled in the extract, was a key discriminator. The reconciliation between Capulet and Montague produced anger rather than consolation for many candidates, and there were many strong responses of the "two old fools still trying to outdo each other after they have destroyed their children" and "too late now" variety. Although the focus on the word "memorable" was not always sharp and several candidates drifted into an answer to the question they might have preferred (about the contrast between the characters of Romeo and Mercutio, - or just about Mercutio, which excluded Romeo from the answer), Question 5 proved a popular and successful choice for many. The handling of the impact of the relationship in the fight scene was central to many strong answers. A few candidates confused Mercutio with Benvolio, with damaging effects. There were several highly believable Friar Lawrences (in answer to Question 6) who were carefully anchored to the moment and still expressing optimism despite the severity of the setbacks, in voices which were remarkably authentic. Some answers became rather bogged down in Lawrence's fondness for Romeo and in Romeo's reaction to the news of his banishment, and therefore lacked variety and a broader reflectiveness.

The small number of takers for Wilde's *An Ideal Husband* conveyed a strong sense of enjoyment, particularly in answer to Question 7, where the humorous nature of the relationship and the contrast between father and son was explored in detail. The best answers demonstrated a strong awareness of context and of the comic relief afforded by this scene in the midst of more serious concerns and dramatic developments. A very small number of candidates tackled Questions 8 and 9, but the sense of Lady Chiltern's gradually softening moral rigidity was effectively conveyed and well-supported, and Sir Robert's noble determination to recover his composure (after the shock of losing the love of his wife, his closest friend, his political career...) and denounce the canal scheme in the House was captured in suitably restrained voice.

The number of Ibsen enthusiasts continues to grow and responses to *An Enemy of the People* certainly suggested that it had been taught in a way which had brought the characters and issues alive for the candidates. The best answers to Question 10 displayed a very strong grasp of context and of the choice which Dr Stockmann has to make, registering the contrast between Stockmann and his wife, and the potentially huge private cost of performing a public duty. There was some understandable hostility to what some candidates saw as Stockmann's egotism, selfishness and rudeness, but some candidates became so preoccupied with this critical view that his concern for the health and welfare of the community and his honest determination to tell the truth became rather obscured. This unremittingly hostile view of Stockmann also emerged in some answers to Question 11 (and Question 12) to the extent that his brother emerged with more credit in some answers, which is surely not a response which Ibsen would have anticipated. Similarly, agreeing with the "compact majority" that Dr Stockmann is, in fact, "an enemy of the people" seems a valid line to adopt (in answer to Question 12) so long as the nature of these "people", particularly their mindlessness in Act Four, is placed firmly in context. The "dramatic" in Question 11 was occasionally read simply as "extreme" rather than "theatrically effective" which perhaps limited some answers to an acceptable but rather narrow character contrast approach rather than exploring the way in which the conflict between the brothers drives the play along. There was some detailed and highly effective criticism of the hypocrisy and self-interested trimming of the gentlemen of the press and of the self-serving and mean-spirited Peter Stockmann in the answers to Question 12, and all the students of Ibsen gave the impression that they not only knew the play but could support lively arguments in a highly selective way.

## 2446/1 – Foundation Tier and 2446/2 – Higher Tier

### Scheme B: Poetry and Prose Pre-1914

#### General comments

This paper produced some impressive work this year at all levels of ability. The strongest scripts were characterised by candidates responding to the importance of key words in the questions such as “entertaining”, “dramatic” and “enjoyable” and thereby showing that they could appreciate the power of literature to affect them.

It was pleasing to see some strong work at Foundation Tier this year with candidates generally writing full and engaged answers particularly in response to the War poems and Kate Chopin.

In poetry answers the most successful approach, on the whole, is to look at the poems individually and then compare key features. An approach that seesaws from one poem to the other often leads to spurious comparison and superficial analysis. The vocabulary of linguistics made frequent appearance in poetry answers this year. Like all critical vocabulary, it needs to be well used and within the context of an argument. Too often, candidates identified pre-modifiers, or listed semantic fields that allowed us to judge whether a poem was positive or negative. To assert that a poem about war contains ‘the semantic field of war,’ followed by a list of words taken out of context and with no subsequent comment, is not very illuminating. Comment on rhythm and structure is only interesting if it assists interpretation.

Answers on prose texts also suffered, to a lesser degree, from a propensity to approach the passage-based question via comment on punctuation rather than beginning with content. Some responses, particularly at Foundation Tier, either did not know the context of the extract or conversely wrote almost all about the context or significance and too little about the extract itself. In the short story collections candidates are not required to compare the two stories. Comparisons may be illuminating and strong candidates sometimes integrate this very successfully into their responses but for the average candidate it adds a burden they could do without and distracts them from the main thrust of the question.

The most common infringement of the rubric this year (though these were few) was for candidates to answer two poetry questions instead of one. Foundation Tier candidates tend to write less in the second answer and, at both tiers, candidates were tending to run out of time. This was sometimes caused by lengthy and rather redundant introductions, which either restated the question or gave unnecessary historical background.

The hard work put into the course by candidates and teachers was much in evidence in the scripts seen this year.

#### Comments on individual questions

##### OCR *Opening Lines*

Q.1 was by far the most popular question in the War section with many intelligent explorations how of the poems’ imagery, rhetoric and structure conveyed strikingly different attitudes. Many noticed the structural similarity of the poems, despite their different objectives. The best answers, therefore, went on to contrast the strong visual imagery of Asquith with insistent and increasing disturbing rhythms of Scott. They understood the significance of the reference to “Agincourt”, explored the seductive power of the recruiting drum, related form to meaning and avoided over-simplification and a negative versus positive over-generalised response. There was some unhelpful speculation about the poets and their experiences, with some seeing Scott as a volunteer and a World War One poet in some instances.

In response to Q.2 successful answers focused clearly on the horrors of war, usually by a close examination of the imagery in the Byron and the irony in After Blenheim. There was much misunderstanding of The Destruction of Sennacherib on both tiers of the paper. Many candidates thought that there had been a battle between two armies and did not grasp that the Assyrian army had been destroyed by the Angel of Death, or that the fourth stanza referred to horses rather than people.

Answers to Q.3 Tennyson were generally better handled, especially if candidates made it through the Valley of Death to the last stanza and really focused on the question. Surprisingly, candidates were less confident with Newbolt, tending to dismiss him as a poet who thought war was a game of cricket without really exploring the nature of the motto in terms of comradeship, teamwork, unselfishness, the greater good, grace under pressure and learning to lose with dignity. Many quoted "England's far and Honour a name" out of context and without understanding. Candidates who took on the "how far" element of the question, successfully selected the imagery in the poems which presented a less "heroic" view.

Q.4 was the most popular question on the paper. There was some breathtakingly perceptive work, which shaped genuinely comparative explorations of both poems. The very best were able to explore the effect of Wordsworth's use of personification, the sonnet form and listing, without just identifying these features and moving on, and to suggest a range of possible interpretations of Blake's central images (the "mind-forged manacles", the blood on the walls, the "marriage hearse") without simplifying or paraphrasing. Less successful answers unloaded unhelpful and half assimilated material about the Romantics and the Industrial Revolution, or drifted into unhelpful generalisations about Wordsworth's "positivity" as opposed to Blake's "negativity". Modern ideas of London often intruded and there were many comments on pollution in a very much twenty-first century use of the term.

Many of the answers to Q.5 were very ambitious, especially on the Keats. Quite a few very good candidates, however, found it difficult to focus on the question. They clearly wanted to show instead how the poem reflected Keats' progress towards death, with its implications of Winter approaching. Similarly, many articulate and confident candidates did not explore Yeats' images of nature. Stronger responses to this question looked not only at the vivid imagery of Keats and Yeats but also at how each poem idealises and romanticises nature, without losing a sensuous feel for its physicality. There was an impressive level of response to each poem's word painting.

Q.6 provoked a variety of responses. Some wrote sensitively about both poems and were moved by their contrast between the permanence of nature and transience of man. There was some confusion, however, even amongst strong candidates, about the relationship between the present and the past in Beeny Cliff, and On Wenlock Edge was often misunderstood both in terms of content and style; for example candidates thinking that "snow the leaves" meant that leaves were buried in snow.

### ***Songs of Innocence and Experience***

Q.7 was the most popular on Blake and responses to London here were generally more profound than those to Q4, as might be expected and Infant Sorrow produced a variety of different readings of the infant's struggle. Some were eager to condemn him as having surrendered to experience when he 'thought it best to sulk': this may reveal more about contemporary teenage sulks than Blake's babe, whose language maintains its vigour and energy, even in 'swaddling bands'.

There were not many takers for Q.8 but those who attempted it generally produced excellent answers, steeped in knowledge of "innocence" and "experience".

Q.9 produced a very pleasing variety of responses. Holy Thursday and Nurse's Song were probably the most popular, and produced a very wide variety of interpretations. Emphases in



interpreting Blake's complexity of imagery and ambiguity of diction will vary considerably; it is the quality of response which is assessed, and the ability to justify interpretation by reference to the text. Strong responses noticed the tonal ambiguity which surrounds both the beadle and the nurse, and did not condemn them too quickly but examined the world of experience which they represent. Ironies are more straightforward in *The Chimney Sweeper*, where good answers contrasted the pathos of the poem with its powerfully satirical direction.

### ***Hardy Selected Poems***

Answers to Q.10 on the Hardy Selected Poems focused effectively on alienation, incongruity, loneliness and isolation in both poems and were fully comparative.

Question 11 and 12 were less popular but there were some fine responses to Q.12 with the idea of loss at the centre of the answers.

### ***Northanger Abbey***

*Northanger Abbey* continues to be a popular text and all three questions were answered. The passage based Q.13 was very popular and answered most effectively when candidates engaged both with the entertainment factor of John Thorpe's boorish and boring gig obsession and showed how the passage hints at his mercenary nature, which impacts so disastrously upon Catherine later in the novel. Other approaches were to show how effective an introduction it was to Thorpe by contrasting him with Tilney as a potential hero of the novel.

Answers to Q14 showed extensive knowledge of the novel and a clear understanding of the variety of means by which Austen alerts the reader to Isabella's true nature. Candidates seemed to thoroughly enjoy ripping Isabella to shreds.

The Thorpes also came in for much criticism in answer to Q.15. General Tilney, surprisingly, was let off more lightly. Candidates selected material adeptly and demonstrated how Austen gives the less materialistic characters the ending they deserve.

Some answers were rather overburdened with explanations of the Gothic, sometimes at the expense of focusing clearly on the question set.

### ***Hard Times***

Good answers on *Hard Times* did not allow comment on social and historical context to divert attention from the ways in which narrative shapes the reader's response.

Q16. was generally answered very well. There was much engaged writing which managed to convey a wider understanding of the lives of the workers, perceiving the cruelty, the exploitation and the suffering and the place of this descriptive passage in the novel. Many made useful comparisons with Chapter Five, to show how Dickens' imagery is sustained. One or two made brilliant parallels between the author's ironic evocation here of fairy palaces and melancholy mad elephants and the town's attempt to exclude the imagination and its representatives, the circus folk. It was important to move beyond physical to moral pollution: the location of this passage in the middle of the novel suggests things won't get better if 'the eye of Heaven itself becomes an evil eye'.

Q17 was the most popular task on Dickens. Candidate relished the opportunity to write about someone so detestable and ranged with extraordinary energy across the novel highlighting the description, lies, and treatment of Louisa, the circus folk and Stephen Blackpool. It was important to comment on the qualities of the writing and the very best made perceptive analysis of him as an 'inflated' man throughout the novel, who is finally exploded by its conclusion, and connected his characterisation with Dickens's satire on capitalism and its consequences.

Q18 was far less popular but well done by the candidates who chose it. The characters could not be more different but were effectively contrasted by exploring just a couple of key episodes involving each. The writing allows Harthouse's shallow cynicism to emerge from his own thoughts; while Blackpool's clumsy language struggles to express his honesty and integrity. Candidates tended to judge them by their treatment of others, but were aware of the role of the writing in shaping our sympathies.

### ***Far From The Madding Crowd***

In responses to Q19 some candidates showed problems with knowing the context of the passage but the best appreciated Hardy's positioning of the reader and also wrestled with the complexity of Bathsheba's feelings for the dead Fanny. Many rightly identified it as a turning point in the novel, and provided detailed and well-supported insights into the novelist's techniques. The discriminator here was the detail of comment on the writing and appreciation of the melodrama. Most mentioned Bathsheba's 'vision of Oak'; fewer mentioned that he is praying or were able to make the link with the chapter in Weatherbury churchyard.

The best answers to Q20 avoided a chronological character study and focused selectively on the idea of "sympathy". Troy's reaction to Fanny's death and the gargoyle featured successfully in the sympathy vote; his torturing of Boldwood and general treatment of Bathsheba appeared successfully for the prosecution. Some candidates oversimplified his character and ignored his growing self-awareness and self-disgust.

There were some excellent answers to Q21 which combined detailed attention to Bathsheba's stoicism, unselfishness, dignity, courage, modesty and honesty in the final chapters with a broader view of her character throughout the novel. Some candidates, however, produced very general 'character sketch' responses when it was important to focus on the words of the last four chapters. While comparison was important to show that she had changed, her conversations with Oak also merited close analysis.

### ***Silas Marner***

Q22 was popular and very well done, especially when candidates fully appreciated the immediate context and saw the humour in the passage as part of its drama. Good answers appreciated the need to balance drama in the writing (alert to the previous history of Silas and his relationship with the Raveloe villagers) with significance in the context of the novel. Comment on the symbolic significance of the villagers inviting the weaver to share the warmth of the hearth 'not his own', and interpretation of the authorial intrusion in the beautiful final sentence of the extract made it easy to broaden out and consider the novel as a whole at the conclusion of an essay.

In answer to Q23 candidates were happier writing about Godfrey's failings as a father rather than those of his own father Squire Cass. Question 24 proved quite challenging but many candidates argued convincingly for Eppie as a moving and credible character, mainly citing her rejection of Godfrey in favour of Silas as the most affecting part of the novel. Others saw a case for her being "literally as good as gold, sickeningly cute, unbearably adorable".

### ***Poe: Selected Tales***

In answers to Q.25 the best answers informed their close attention to the extracts with a sense of context commenting on the last-minute rescue of the imprisoned narrator from the pit and the shrinking room, and the growing guilt of the motivelessly murderous narrator. Weaker answers treated these like unseen passages, quoted at length and added a comment using terms such as "vivid...detailed...Gothic...building suspense", or became obsessed with counting dashes or exclamation marks, without really developing their response.

Few tackled Q26 and some of those did not understand the ending of *The Premature Burial*.

The best answers to Q27 focused on the exact nature of the murder and of the murderer rather than spanning the whole story. Most candidates chose *The Black Cat* and *The Cask of Amontillado*. There were strong responses to the atmosphere and details which surround the murders, while also connecting the stories through the idea of walling your victim up. The strongest answers addressed the writing rather than totally on the situation and highlighted the perversity and remorselessness of the narrators; several suggested Montresor's apparent rationality made him more disturbing.

### ***The History of Mr. Polly***

Few candidates answered questions on *The History of Mr. Polly* but examiners saw work which was written with verve, understanding and good support from the text.

### **Kate Chopin: *Short Stories***

Candidates find the Kate Chopin short stories accessible and engaging. In answer to Q.31 the intensity of Chopin's writing, the concentration of her narrative and the complexity and variety of her protagonists produced rewarding and interesting responses. It was again important to contextualise these powerful passages, in order to highlight their ironies. The detail, description and impact on the reader were all well handled, on the whole, with effective contrasts between Louise's 'monstrous joy' and the husbands' 'gnawing desire'. Some candidates, especially at Foundation Tier, however, did not understand the context of the extracts at all, failing to see that Mrs. Mallard felt liberated by her husband's supposed death and that *Her Letters* was not simply about grief.

Q32 was generally answered very well at all levels. There was sympathy for Tonie as the victim of unrequited love, tempered with distaste at his obsessiveness and selfish reaction to Claire's death. Armand was roundly condemned for his racism and heartless treatment of his wife again. This was balanced with some sympathy for him (or glee) when he makes his devastating discovery at the end of the story. Some candidates assumed what his reaction to the news of his parentage would be. Chopin does not tell us but many candidates were clearly convinced that he would be full of remorse. Many candidates showed a secure understanding of the social and historical context of these stories and used this to good effect in their answers.

Q33 was less popular but was answered with close attention to language by those who chose it.

## 2443/2447 Coursework

Despite all the recent and much-publicised reservations about coursework, some of which will be alluded to later in this report, these units have again provided a valuable means for students of all abilities to demonstrate their engagement with literature and to develop their skills of expression and analysis. Even amongst candidates whose responses are necessarily limited there is evidence of close reading and understanding and an elementary appreciation of how language works to achieve effect.

It is to be hoped that school managers equally appreciate how well planned and standardised coursework can enhance their results and Ofsted reports. Moderators reported some situations where departments clearly in disarray or under time pressures had not been able to complete paperwork properly or organised effective internal moderation as required by the regulations. Such factors are invariably to the detriment of students and it is elementary good practice for colleagues to work together in curriculum preparation and assessing to common standards.

There were many obvious demonstrations of how teachers can enable students to construct arguments by using scaffolding techniques. Where it enabled candidates to express their own individual insights and to employ their own expression this proved an effective teaching method. Where it simply led to catch phrases reiterated by entire teaching sets it had the effect of diminishing the possible achievements of the more able students and exposing the weaknesses of the less able. Thankfully such practices are rare, as are the examples (albeit even smaller in number) of plagiarism from internet sites that moderators identified. These were usually easily spotted and teachers who are responsible for authentication should ensure such abuses do not get through. Taking a suspect phrase and 'googling' it is simple enough. In most cases it was a matter of fairly unconfident students not having sufficient understanding to assimilate their reading, but procedures require that such instances are reported for suspected malpractice. Now secondary resources are so readily available, teachers would do well to train candidates in how to use them constructively.

Teachers are often choosing combinations of poems that offer stimulating comparison in terms of background, language and meaning. Where students analyse how background and language enhance meaning some impressive responses are apparent. Blake and Wordsworth continue to form a staple diet, as do Tennyson and Owen (though in the latter case teachers would do well to remember that only half the combination is pre 1914). The Metaphysicals provide opportunity for all the assessment criteria to be met, and a comparison of Donne with Elizabeth Barrett Browning made for an effective task. Creative and empathic tasks on the poetry, such as interviews and letters, rarely achieve full recognition of the assessment objectives. These reports comment annually on the tendency for poetry analysis to be device-led rather than meaning- or effect-led. This can be demonstrated syntactically. This may be unsophisticated but it has the right priority: ".....creates effect. This method is called juxtaposition", is better than "There is an example of juxtaposition in line 5 ...". Centres must be wary of using two twentieth century poems for 2434, such as Auden and Duffy, then transporting them across to 2443 with a gesture at Donne thrown in. (Incidentally D.H.Lawrence's school poems could just creep in, with a publication date of 1912.)

Many centres set tasks on Shakespeare or prose in which candidates analyse just one or two scenes. This can encourage depth of examination but there must be evidence of studying the whole text. One moderator doubted if those studying an extract from *Little Dorritt* had read the whole book, for instance. Where possible, it is better to allow students to choose an episode for discussion. It was encouraging to see students not blanching at the prospect of studying full Nineteenth Century texts such as *Far from the Madding Crowd* and *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, both of which provide plenty of opportunities for the single episode question. *Jane Eyre* continues to work well and one can see many of these students preparing a platform from which they can move easily into A Level study. These texts give scope for

realising how cultural features such as gender, moral values, conventions and social class inform a study of text. However, centres should be careful of setting titles that will lead to a consideration of texts only as social and historical documents rather than literary artefacts. At least one centre demonstrated how *Dubliners* can be a stimulating text for candidates of a wide ability. Centres still are shy of non-fiction, however, which is a pity because some well chosen texts might appeal more to reluctant readers. 'How does HG Wells present his vision of the civilised world in *War of the Worlds*?' was a really good task, enabling candidates to integrate social/historical convincingly. Wilkie Collins' *The Moonstone* proved an interesting way of exploring views of 'Englishness'.

Lord Capulet's attitude to his daughter was a topic of discussion for many centres. When well introduced it focused on a manageable part of the play and provided excellent grounds for AO2 and AO4. It showed how skills of using evidence and reference to detail to construct an argument and a personal viewpoint could be facilitated. In some cases, inevitably, it showed how easy it is to lapse into mere narrative. This was often the answer to questions on who was to blame for the deaths of *Romeo and Juliet*. One must also be careful to ensure that debate about different types of love also acknowledges AO2. Comparing two film versions of *Romeo and Juliet* must be premised upon a discussion of the written text; it thus becomes a triangular discussion - and too diffuse for many students. Some rewarding debating issues on Shakespeare included: 'all men are bastards' in *Much Ado About Nothing*; comparing the murders of Duncan, Banquo and the Macduff family; the fact that despite the suffering in *Romeo and Juliet* the audience never feels despairing; and is *A Midsummer Night's Dream* suitable for a young audience?

There was also a spate of questions on Macbeth' that directed candidates more to the history of James I than to Shakespeare's play. It was in the indiscriminating production of background that candidates most ransacked the internet. Risking the accusation of plagiarism they wrote sometimes over half an essay of totally worthless biography that had no bearing upon the question. The fact that Tennyson's brother took opium never did quite inform a study of 'The Charge of the Light Brigade'. It must be remembered, too, that Shakespeare is a playwright and that dramatic effect and stagecraft are important, but embedded within a wider discussion rather than merely director's notes.

Only a small minority of centres opted for 2447. Where they did it seemed possible to employ a wider variety of texts through which candidates could expand their experience. Some notable examples were Katherine Mansfield, *Dancing at Lughnasa*, *Top Girls* and T.S.Eliot's 'Prufrock'.

Once again the moderators are grateful to the vast majority of centres who have undertaken their teaching and assessment duties with flair and professionalism, exploiting coursework as a means to stretch their candidates and demonstrate their abilities. Often course materials accompanied the folders, and teachers' annotations revealed how detailed and supportive was their scrutiny of students' work. All credit must go to those who helped a lad negotiate his way through Marvell's worms and chariots to the understanding that "Marvell wanted to embed his mistress." He certainly did!

## 2448/1 – Foundation Tier and 2448/2 – Higher Tier

### Scheme B: Post-1914 Texts

There were just under five hundred entries for this session, the great majority at Higher Tier. Most candidates had been thoroughly prepared for the examination: there were few rubric infringements, and few weak third answers. Some Foundation Tier candidates attempted too many questions.

Answers on *Whose Life is it Anyway?* were mostly to Question 1, the extract-based question. This was generally well answered, with a good understanding of the issues, although some drifted into paraphrase. Better answers tried to respond to the 'dramatic' idea as well as why it is an important moment. The few answers to Question 2, an empathic question, found it difficult to manage an effective combination of appropriate voice as well as content. Some wrote as if they were speaking to Dr Emerson, which was not what the question meant, but they were marked tolerantly.

The other drama text to feature substantially was *Death of a Salesman*. Most tackled Question 3; better answers were those which could make, however implicitly, cross-references to wider knowledge of the character and the play while discussing the extract. Better answers were also those which developed a response to Willy. The few answers to Question 4 mostly achieved appropriate voice and content for Linda: some Lindas knew and understood much more than others.

Poetry answers were invariably on *Opening Lines*. Question 9 was a popular choice. Both poems presented a degree of difficulty to candidates. Some firmly believed that the dying man in the McGough was injured in a rugby accident, and others that the wife was the narrator ('the man that I love'). Many, however, were able to explain the yo-yo analogy well. Similarly, some believed that the dead man in Bedfellows had been murdered ('his suffocated voice'), but again there were nevertheless some good responses to this challenging poem. Question 10 was also popular, but few discussed *The Cat and the Sea*, and none with confidence. There were some face-value answers, that really believed that the poet hates cats and loves rats respectively; but most answers saw at least some of the subtlety in the poems. Question 11 was more popular than 12. Few answers showed understanding of, and many confusion concerning, the primary meaning of 'blackthorn snow' in the first line of Nesbit's poem. Some answers to 12 would have benefited from more careful attention to 'the suffering of soldiers', the target area of the question.

*Opening Worlds* and *The Old Man and the Sea* were the main prose texts treated. Answers to Question 18 were mainly successful, expressing evident understanding of the stories and response to characters. Answers to 17 were less so, often struggling to find 'a variety of feelings' about the characters in the extracts or being unable to use their contextual knowledge of the stories to inform their feelings. Questions 27 and 28 both evoked thoughtful and responsive answers. Many had been taught a schematic Christian symbolism to interpret this text which emerged in answer to 28, the significance of the boy.

**General Certificate of Secondary Education  
English Literature (1901)  
June 2006 Assessment Series**

**Unit Threshold Marks**

Unit		Maximum Mark	a*	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	u
2441/1	Raw	21				19	15	12	9	6	0
	UMS	27				24	20	16	12	8	0
2441/2	Raw	30	27	24	21	18	15	13			0
	UMS	40	36	32	28	24	20	16			0
2442/1	Raw	46				33	27	22	17	12	0
	UMS	69				60	50	40	30	20	0
2442/2	Raw	66	51	46	40	34	27	23			0
	UMS	100	90	80	70	60	50	40			0
2443	Raw	45	41	36	31	26	21	16	11	6	0
	UMS	60	54	48	42	36	30	24	18	12	0
2444/1	Raw	42				33	27	21	15	9	0
	UMS	41				36	30	24	18	12	0
2444/2	Raw	60	50	44	38	33	27	24			0
	UMS	60	54	48	42	36	30	24			0
2445/1	Raw	21				18	15	12	9	6	0
	UMS	27				24	20	16	12	8	0
2445/2	Raw	30	28	25	21	18	15	13			0
	UMS	40	36	32	28	24	20	16			0
2446/1	Raw	46				36	29	22	16	10	0
	UMS	69				60	50	40	30	20	0
2446/2	Raw	66	56	50	44	39	29	24			0
	UMS	100	90	80	70	60	50	40			0
2447	Raw	45	41	36	31	26	21	16	11	6	0
	UMS	60	54	48	42	36	30	24	18	12	0
2448/1	Raw	42				33	27	21	15	9	0
	UMS	41				36	30	24	18	12	0
2448/2	Raw	60	46	42	38	34	28	25			0
	UMS	60	54	48	42	36	30	24			0

## Specification Aggregation Results

Overall threshold marks in UMS (i.e. after conversion of raw marks to uniform marks)

	Maximum Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
<b>1901</b>	200	180	160	140	120	100	80	60	40	0

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

	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U	Total No. of Cands
<b>1901</b>	6.4	21.8	46.2	70.4	85.9	94.0	98.0	99.5	100.0	55962

**55962 candidates were entered for aggregation this series.**

For a description of how UMS marks are calculated see;  
[www.ocr.org.uk/OCR/WebSite/docroot/understand/ums.jsp](http://www.ocr.org.uk/OCR/WebSite/docroot/understand/ums.jsp)

Statistics are correct at the time of publication









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