

# **Report on the Units**

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**January 2007**

**1901/MS/R/07J**

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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.

Mark schemes and Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers.

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### **Chief Examiner's Introduction**

The pattern of entry indicated that Centres used this January examination session principally to enter candidates for the Drama units (2441 or 2445) as a basis for entering them in the June examination session for the Poetry and Prose units (2442 or 2446), Coursework units (2443 or 2447) or the Examined Alternative to Coursework units (2444 or 2448).. Accordingly, the reports on the Drama units, especially that on the post-1914 Drama unit (2441), are the most detailed, reflecting the entry. Although Question Papers were set for Unit 2446 pre-1914 Poetry and Prose, the entry was such that it was not possible to produce a report. Other reports are comparatively brief since, although there were sufficient candidates on whose work comments were possible, they answered on a very limited number of texts. This was a disappointment to question-setters, who regretted that questions resulting from hours of reflection never reached the eyes of candidates! However, the existence of the Question Papers should provide material for teachers preparing students for future examinations.

The 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 these reports will provide valuable feedback for Centres on how their candidates performed in their chosen units and will help teachers in the way they guide their pupils to fulfil their potential in future examinations in English Literature at this level.

**2441/1 – Foundation Tier and 2441/2 – Higher Tier  
Scheme A: Drama Post-1914**

**General Comments (including 2445)**

Although the size of the entry for these Units was slightly smaller than last year's record January figure, a significant number of Centres - representing about one third of all those following the 1901 Specification - took advantage of the staged entry opportunity and entered candidates for the January Drama Units this year. There was widespread evidence of thorough and sensitive teaching, not just in the sound textual knowledge displayed by the vast majority of candidates but also in the extent to which so many candidates were willing to express their enjoyment of their selected text and to engage closely and personally with the emotions depicted and generated by these plays. One Examiner summed up a general feeling when she reported that she often found the responses of candidates "moving in what they reveal about the sensitivities of our younger generation."

Many candidates had been successfully encouraged to focus on the terms of the question and refer to them regularly in order to structure relevant answers, and, although there is still work to be done in urging some candidates to see the plays as more than just written texts and themselves as more than just "readers", most candidates are trying to picture the play on the stage even if they have not benefited from seeing a live performance. The tendency to immerse themselves in thematic or psychological readings at the expense of attention to the dramatic detail of the onstage action, which has hampered the achievement of candidates in the past, was perhaps less marked on this occasion.

There was ample confirmation that last year's anxieties about the loss of *An Inspector Calls*, *Educating Rita* and textual annotation were completely unfounded, and the most recent acquisitions, *Journey's End* and *Whose Life Is It Anyway?* seem to be firmly established (in first and second place respectively) in the affections of teachers and candidates. Indeed, *Journey's End*, the oldest and most traditional of the four post-1914 texts now on offer, appears to have affected candidates in a particularly powerful way, not least because the understanding of many candidates had been enriched by seeing recent theatrical or filmed versions of the text.

The vast majority of Centres had clearly made shrewd and careful tiering decisions, although the proportion of candidates entered for the Foundation Tier papers was noticeably smaller than January 2006, and several candidates who were entered for Higher Tier might have responded more confidently to the more structured format of most Foundation Tier questions.

The extract-based questions remain the most popular choices, and candidates continue to draw reassurance from the provision of a printed extract as an anchor for their answers. Answers to the more discursive-style questions (on the Woman, Dr Emerson, Don John...) which offer no specific starting point in the text, were very much in the minority, but it is noticeable that the proportion of candidates opting for empathic approaches continues to increase. There could be many reasons for this and one may well be that candidates are recognising that the balance between a detailed exploration of the extract and an overview of its significance in the play as a whole is often difficult to achieve. A more positive explanation could well be that many candidates of all abilities find the opportunity to adopt a point-of-view very distinct from their own a liberating and stimulating experience, and find that the directness and compression of a "thoughts caught on the wing" approach suits them much better than the structure of the critical essay in a 45 minute exam. Examiners continue to be amazed at the imaginative leaps made by so many candidates in empathising with apparently remote characters and situations and commented on the remarkable authenticity of answers written in the voices of Biff, or Ken or Osborne or Benedick or Lady Capulet. Although some candidates continue to experience difficulties with anchoring empathic reflections to the exact moment prescribed by the question, the majority enjoy the security of a specific starting point and underpin their imaginative leap with a very sound understanding of character and situation. In some Centres, the empathic approach

has become by far the most popular; in others it is rarely attempted, as if candidates have been advised to avoid it at all costs. Some familiarity with the style of all the possible questions seems a sensible policy, so that choices are not artificially circumscribed before the candidates have even opened their papers.

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

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

Many previous reports on the Drama Units have 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; but this tendency continues to undermine some answers. 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 Willy Loman's failings as a father in response to Question 1, for instance, will be rooted firmly in the detail of the extract and the flawed values he is imposing on his sons, rather than bouncing away from the extract and taking on a wholly separate life of its own. An exploration of the moving elements in the pre-raid conversation between Osborne and Raleigh (Question 10 on *Journey's End*) should foreground the dramatic detail of the extract (Osborne's protective role in the conversation, the growing intimacy between them, the glance at the watch, the significance of the ring on the table...) rather than surveying Osborne's avuncular role throughout the play. Specific responses to the gripping elements in Claudio's denunciation of Hero, printed on the 2445 papers for Question 4 on *Much Ado About Nothing*, should not be swamped by lengthy summaries of Don John's plot and its consequences. Conversely, some candidates adopted such a blinkered, line-by-line approach to the extract that they conveyed very little sense of character, relationships or of context generally. This proved particularly damaging for the small number of candidates who worked through the conversation between Osborne and Raleigh (Question 10 on *Journey's End*) on a rather literal level without placing its powerful effects in the context of their suicide mission. Question 7 on *Whose Life Is It Anyway?*, asks about the effectiveness of the first scene as an opening to the play, and yet many candidates confined themselves exclusively to the words of the printed extract (and particularly the examples of "sexual innuendo") and conveyed no sense of the expository nature of the scene and of where the play is leading, as if, like a reviewer of a new production, they were trying not to spoil the story for an Examiner who may not have seen the play as yet. The place of the extract in the play remains an important element in extract-based answers and successful candidates manage to complement their attention to the detail of the prescribed extract with a sharp awareness of context. The rule of thumb recommended in previous reports remains a good working guide for candidates: devote at least two-thirds of extract-based answers to discussing, quoting from and commenting on the extract itself but don't neglect the significance of the extract in the whole-play context.

*Unhelpfully Formulaic Approaches*

When faced with questions which invite them to "Explore the ways" or explain "How" effects are achieved (especially at Higher Tier), several candidates retreated into a generalised listing approach which distanced them from the dramatic effect of the dialogue and action and prevented them from involving themselves fully with the characters and situations. Answers to Question 7 which began, "There are many ways in which Brian Clark makes this a striking and effective opening to the play and I will be looking at context, plot, setting, character and language", or worse, "Clark uses many ways such as language, stage directions and punctuation to make this an effective opening..." were wasting valuable time by not engaging with a specific question about a specific moment in a specific play. Some candidates continue to adopt a feature-logging approach to the technical features of the words on the page, with very little reference to the exact 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. The obsession with graphological features (such as punctuation, or the use of italics for stage directions) conveys the

strong impression that these candidates see the plays merely as written texts, directed at a reader rather than at an audience, and read stage directions as tacked-on elements of this written text rather than as part of the dramatic action of a scene. In the worst examples of this approach, candidates classified the number of dashes or rhetorical questions or ellipses at great length but paid scant attention to what is actually happening onstage or to what the characters are saying to each other. Answers of this type to Question 1 on *Death of a Salesman*, for instance, made no reference to the details and significance of the fight or the reported chase but logged the number of exclamation and question marks in full.

*Exam Inexperience* (which is perhaps more marked in January entries) leading to inattention to one part of a two-part question so that answers covered what is “revealing” (thematically, psychologically...) about Willy’s memory scene (Question 1 on *Death of a Salesman*) but not what is “dramatic” for an audience; for instance: time-wasting opening paragraphs generalising about Sherriff’s war experiences and life in the trenches (*Journey’s End*) or the ethics of euthanasia (*Whose Life Is It Anyway?*) or attitudes to women in Elizabethan England (*Much Ado About Nothing, Romeo and Juliet*) without any specific focus on question or text; the treatment of stage directions as if they are pieces of narration to be relayed to the reader/audience as part of a written text rather than part of the action of a scene; adopting contorted third-person (“If I was Osborne I would be thinking...”) or “Dear Diary” approaches to empathic questions, suggesting that some candidates are unfamiliar with the empathic approach but still find it an attractive option in the exam; false starts – beginning and then abandoning one question in favour of another really hampers performance in a one-question, 45-minute exam; running out of time mid-sentence or listing bullet-pointed ideas in a rushed final few minutes; tackling the bullets without explicit reference to the stem question (at Foundation Tier); the missing out of answer numbers, either on the front-page grid of the answer booklet or in the margin, as if the candidate is unsure about question selection; 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; the use of overlong quotations, sometimes to start sentences or paragraphs, with no introductory point.

## Comments on Individual Questions

### *Death of a Salesman*

The majority of candidates on both Tiers opted for **Question 1** and often produced fascinating insights into what the extract reveals thematically and psychologically (about the nature of success, flawed values, family relationships, sibling rivalry, the wrong dreams...). The best answers engaged with both strands of the question and paid specific attention to the dramatic action of the scene (the fight, the theft, the chase, the frantic pace of the entrances and exits...). The very best showed a sharp awareness that this scene takes place “inside Willy Loman’s head”, made effective links between past and present (in identifying Biff’s serial stealing as a consequence of Willy’s negligent parenting in the extract, for instance) and explored not only the psychological reasons for Willy’s thought processes at this point in the action but the stagecraft at work in the projection of his memories. Many candidates became rather disproportionately outraged at (and rather bogged down in) the lack of attention paid to Happy (as if this is a resonant experience for many sixteen year-olds) although a few developed this idea and made a very astute connection between Willy and Happy as younger siblings living in the shadow of their elder brothers. There was a tendency to view Ben uncritically as a role model and example of the kind of success Willy craves, without fully considering the significance of his fight tactics and of Linda’s response to him, and some candidates took refuge in the listing of half-assimilated ideas (“the American Dream, the pioneer spirit, the rural idyll...”) without explaining their significance or relevance. Some Foundation Tier candidates found it difficult to act on the prompt provided by the third bullet and make connections beyond the extract. A few candidates remained baffled by the time shifts and some were completely thrown by the entrance of Charley wearing “knickers” (with one registering surprise that such an apparently normal man should turn out to be a “cross-dresser”). The most successful answers to **Question 2** on both Tiers

showed a sharp awareness of the impact of the Woman on Willy's state of mind and on his relationship with Biff and Linda throughout the play, alongside close attention to the climactic moment in the Boston hotel. The very best saw the mystery and suspense generated by the laughter, the darning of stockings, Bernard's questioning of Willy and the withholding of information until the Boston revelation, and constructed fascinating contrasts between The Woman and Linda. Less successful answers misread the question as "the women" and wrote about all the female characters, or overlooked the upper case "W" in "Woman" and decided that Linda was in fact "the Woman" in the play and wrote exclusively about her. Some paid surprisingly cursory attention to the dramatic action and impact of the hotel bedroom scene and others expressed extreme hostility towards the Woman, labelling her a "prostitute" and suggesting that she is a calculating home-wrecker. A few candidates became rather distracted (from both question and text) by the critical view that Miller produces stereotyped female characters and tended to lose themselves in the analysis of his "whore/Madonna complex". A number of convincing Biffs emerged in response to **Question 3** on both Tiers and many candidates produced an assured American voice and made sensibly selective use of his conversation with Happy prior to Willy's arrival at the restaurant. The best answers avoided oversimplification and not only conveyed Biff's awareness of the difficulty of telling Willy the truth, in the light of his father's mental instability and suicide attempts, but also the painfully lingering impact of the knowledge that Biff has acquired from his trip to Boston. The willingness of candidates on both Tiers to engage and identify with the troubled family relationships in this play, in a genuinely personal way, continues to impress Examiners and one remarked that "this question produced some of the best empathic responses I have read since the Specification started."

### ***The Caretaker***

Pinter remains the choice of a small but enthusiastic minority of Centres, and many candidates continue to be fascinated by the unconventional nature of the plot, the characterisation and of the relationships, and able to focus closely on the quality of the dialogue and on theatrical effects. Although the tendency to feature-log and to develop a rather generalised commentary on the use of features like pauses, silences and ellipses (noted in the *General Comments*) undermined some answers to **Question 4**, many candidates balanced a detailed and specific look at Davies's speech and Mick's intimidating lack of response with an informed exploration of the shifting relationships and a clear sense of context. There were several well-prepared and carefully argued responses to **Question 5** and the best managed to weigh a variety of evidence before reaching a conclusion. **Question 6** was not a popular empathic choice and some candidates found both the voice and the attitudes rather too elusive so that a Davies sometimes emerged who was unconvincingly generous in spirit and sympathetic towards Aston. Some candidates made shrewd use of the tone (complaining, indignant, ungrateful, self-serving...) which Davies adopts at the start of Act Three (and which appears in the printed extract for Question 4).

### ***Whose Life Is It Anyway?***

This continues to prove a very popular text which stimulates strong personal responses from candidates across the ability range. The majority of candidates chose to tackle **Question 7** and the opening scene and nearly all of these found much to say about the striking effect of Ken's humour and "sexual innuendoes", often arguing convincingly about Clark's creation of a likeable central character and securing of audience sympathy from the start. There was a tendency to simply accept the jokes as evidence of a quick wit and a cheery demeanour but many candidates recognised the target of Ken's humour as his own paralysis, identified a bitter undercurrent and saw the humour as a masking strategy. This play, inevitably, is rather short on physical action and as a result many candidates engage with the words on the page and the intellectual arguments but find it particularly difficult to respond as an audience might and visualise what is going on, so that comments on Ken's helplessness as he is being lowered,

rolled and massaged throughout this extract (or comments on why the nurses are performing these tasks for him) were few and far between. Foundation Tier candidates often responded well to the first two bullets but found the third difficult and tended to quote Ken's "ruptured spinal column" comment rather than suggesting that the actions of the nurses show us that Ken can do nothing for himself. As noted in the *General Comments*, several candidates were much more comfortable discussing the striking features of the extract than considering its effectiveness as an exposition and gave little sense of the rest of the play. Nevertheless the implications of Ken's conversation with Kay in terms of recurring ideas (professionalism, sexual desire...) and Ken's decision about his future, were often explored very fully. Some candidates were happy to quote "the optimism industry" and "the monstrous regiment" to suggest a broad criticism of the medical professionals, without exploring what Ken means by these remarks. Others thought that Ken is offended by Kay's use of the past tense. Many answers to **Question 8** conveyed a very wide-ranging grasp of Dr Emerson's role in the play in support of carefully balanced arguments. His dedication as a Doctor, his determination to keep his patient alive and the testimonies of Dr Scott, the Judge and Ken himself were convincingly cited in his defence. The impact of the injection scene was often explored to build a more critical case, although his willingness to commit his patient with the connivance of a staunchly Catholic psychiatrist was only rarely discussed. Some candidates, particularly at Foundation Tier, were distracted by lengthy considerations of the ethics of euthanasia (or "youth and asia" as one candidate put it) and several thought that Dr Emerson, in wishing Ken "the best of luck" before the hearing and offering him a bed after it, is admitting defeat. **Question 9** proved to be a successful empathic choice and many candidates relished the challenge of conveying the voice of such an intelligent, witty and articulate character. The principle of "habeas corpus" had been generally well grasped and a tone which mixed excitement, hopefulness and apprehension was often convincingly maintained. There was some confusion about the two lawyers and their respective roles and some rather generalised reflections on Ken's situation, but most answers were well anchored to the prescribed moment.

### ***Journey's End***

This text has clearly struck a chord with a wide range of candidates and has very quickly established itself as the most popular 2441 text, ahead of *Whose Life Is It Anyway?* and *Death of a Salesman*. The best answers to **Question 10** managed the vital balance (noted in the *General Comments*) between close attention to the moving elements of the printed extract and a sharp sense of context. Answers which began by establishing the pre-raid context, and by making it clear that Osborne knows that the raid is "murder" but is trying to protect Raleigh from that knowledge, tended to be the most successful, and a readiness to engage with the impact of the actions in the scene, like Osborne's glance at his watch or Raleigh's picking up of the ring, was a striking characteristic of strong answers. A willingness to explore the significance of the ring moment, in particular, and to examine the effect of small details, such as Osborne's stuttering as he thinks of a plausible lie and the silence as realisation hits Raleigh, was a feature of the very best answers. Many candidates fully understood the nature of the printed conversation as a displacement activity but also traced the growing intimacy between the two men, and strong answers saw the way the sympathies of the audience are being engaged to make the subsequent deaths even more moving and traced the ironies in their planning for the future. There was a tendency to use terms like "dramatic irony" or "prolepsis" as self-explanatory labels and to leave them unapplied and unexplained, and some candidates, in tracing the ironies, were rather dogmatic in insisting that the audience (and indeed Osborne) already have absolute knowledge of the outcome of the raid. Many candidates felt that the conversational topics do not simply represent random avoidance behaviour and developed many fascinating arguments about the significance of the nonsense verse (linked directly to the folly of war), of the references to conquerors like William and the Romans (now buried by nature and the mists of time) and of the ironic discovery of a "lucky" horseshoe, although some of the symbolic readings (the threatening darkness of the New Forest, running pigs/running soldiers...) were rather more forced. The moving contrasts between the beauty of the English countryside and the dug-out,

and between Raleigh's relationship with Stanhope past and present, were often brought out very powerfully. Some candidates on both Tiers found it difficult to differentiate between the feelings of Osborne and Raleigh, or to see that Osborne leads the conversation for the sake of Raleigh, and simply attributed terror to both, and some Foundation Tier candidates lost sight of the key word, "moving", in the stem question. One or two took "moving" to mean "fast-moving" and confined themselves to discussing the pace of the dialogue. **Question 11** was more of a minority choice and while strong answers were able to shape a well-supported and wide-ranging character contrast and explore the dramatic details of the confrontations between Stanhope and Hibbert, some candidates only dealt with character traits, often interestingly linked to themes of duty, honour, courage, coping strategies, leadership, but rather detached from the dramatic action. The time-wastingly generalised introduction on the horrors of war or on Sherriff's own war experiences, noted in the *General Comments*, was an unhelpful feature of several answers to this question. Ghosts of former questions, like the January 2006 extract question which focused on the "revolver" scene between Stanhope and Hibbert, haunted some answers to such an extent that this one scene became the only point of reference, whereas other answers moved confidently onto the drama of the "celebration" dinner and of Hibbert's delaying tactics when the attack begins. There was a tendency to oversimplify the differences between the two men in some answers (along the brave/cowardly, strong/weak lines) whereas some astonishingly sophisticated candidates saw self-loathing in Stanhope's feelings for Hibbert, and argued that Hibbert embodies the worst aspects of Stanhope's character. Many candidates continue to refer to the playwright as "the Sherriff", but whether this is a mark of respect or the evidence of a resurgence of Westerns (or "Robin Hood") remains a mystery. **Question 12** proved to be the most popular empathic question on the paper and in several Centres was more popular than the extract-based question on *Journey's End*. Many candidates clearly relished the imaginative leap from exam room to dug-out, enjoyed playing with the Officer idiom and characterised Osborne with an authentic mixture of sympathy, concern, kindness, loyalty, selflessness, calmness and understatement. Strong answers integrated direct quotation very shrewdly and added many helpful details drawn from the confessional conversation which Osborne has just shared with Stanhope. Some candidates had difficulty anchoring their answer to this prescribed moment and reflected on everything from the rockery at home to yellow soup to Hardy's slovenly trench-keeping without fully engaging with Osborne's particular concerns at this point (like Stanhope's state of mind and the effect on him of Raleigh's arrival). A few candidates had Osborne expressing complete incomprehension at Stanhope's response to Raleigh as if the bedtime conversation had not taken place and, at Foundation Tier, some candidates launched into a detailed summary of the following days rather than sticking to the moment and musing about the future, in response to the third bullet. Some voices became unconvincingly strident, histrionic and condemnatory (of Stanhope, Hibbert, the war and its leaders ...) and owed rather more to Stanhope or even Sassoon, than Osborne; and a substantial minority were overly bothered by Stanhope's jocular request for a kiss, some investing it with a homo-erotic significance. The voice was undermined, on occasions, by modern expressions and "what is he like...bad-mouth...they have history...stressed out...lost it...there for him..." were particularly intrusive. Nevertheless, the words "superb" and "moving" cropped up in the reports of several Examiners to describe the quality of the writing in many of these empathic responses.

## 2442: Post 1914 Poetry and Prose (Written Examination)

### General Comments

Compared with the high numbers of candidates entered for this Unit in June 2006, the January 2007 numbers were considerably lower. Some were, it appeared, re-sitting the Unit, whereas a number were sitting it early. Comparatively few of the thirteen texts were used by Centres, the most popular being *Opening Lines*, particularly the section on The 1914-18 War, and *Opening Worlds*. Thus it is difficult to make helpful generalisations about overall performance on the Unit. However, examiners reported that candidates in most cases seemed reasonably well prepared for the examination and, in poetry responses, were often able to respond sensitively to the language. Answers were often carefully focused on the thrust and terms of the question.

Most, though not all, of Centres entered their candidates for the Tier appropriate to their abilities. It is sometimes necessary to remember that Higher Tier candidates who fail to reach a mid-E grade become unclassified.

One examiner expressed considerable concern about the many weaknesses in general writing skills, especially in spelling, punctuation and grammar, she encountered. Titles of poems and short stories were too often not put in speech marks, causing confusion, especially when such titles as 'The Red Ball', 'Perhaps', and 'The Hero' appeared as the red ball, perhaps and the hero. One candidate failed to use capital letters to begin sentences and filled fifteen lines of paper without recourse to full stop or comma. Written Communication is assessed on this Unit, the only Unit in Scheme A (Post-1914 Poetry and Prose) where such assessment is made. The Written Communication mark can affect the grade awarded for this Unit, favourably or unfavourably.

In their responses to poetry it was felt that too many candidates still fail to provide an overview of the poems they are comparing or discussing. Many, after an introductory explanation of what they are intending to do, spend an often very lengthy second paragraph identifying, in considerable detail, rhyme schemes, punctuation, enjambment and oxymorons, usually without any comment on the effect of such devices or close reference to the poems. The identification of devices becomes a substitute for a response to what the poets are communicating and how they are using the language to communicate with the reader. This "how" goes beyond an arid listing of which devices are being used. Some candidates found it difficult to support and illustrate the rather surprising claim that the use of punctuation "vividly conveyed personal feelings".

Comments on individual questions below are made only when there were sufficient responses on which to base a general comment.

### Comments on Individual Questions

- 1 Candidates at both Foundation and Higher Tier showed some understanding of the McGough and Paterson poems, though, as ever, weaker responses ventured no further than offering some explanation of them. Better answers offered comment on McGough's use of the images of gravity, the giant yo-yo, and rugby, responded to the macabre, even frightening, atmosphere of 'Bedfellows' and were able to sustain a comparison of the portrayal of death in the two poems.
- 4 This was the most popular of the poetry questions at both Foundation and Higher Tiers and was often very competently answered, with some sensitive comments on the language of the poems and interesting comparisons drawn. Responses to 'Perhaps' were about equally divided between whether it was an optimistic or pessimistic poem, but views were usually quite well argued and supported. Weaker candidates were able to draw some general comparisons but often found the language inaccessible. Such lines as "they have no scent this year" and "But we never built our nest" were often quoted but

were rarely commented on. There was some misreading, for example seeing Nesbit's "violet" as a colour and "red roses blown" as roses blown by the wind over the garden. Sometimes the reference to "your clay" was not understood.

- 5 Weaker candidates found difficulty in discussing the way 'Spring Offensive' presents the horrors of war. This was often because they considered only the opening lines of the poem and focused upon the peaceful landscape. 'The Deserter' was much more accessible, and most were able to comment both on the man's fear and on the repetition of "An English bullet in his heart". Stronger candidates drew from the most appropriate sections of 'Spring Offensive' to illustrate the horrors of war and used the deserter's fear, and the language Letts uses to portray it, in sensitive responses to the poem.
- 6 Candidates at both Tiers found Sassoon's 'The Hero' to their liking and were able to respond to the mother's emotions, though not all really explored the implications of the officer's lying to the mother. The first part of 'Lamentations' was generally well understood, most candidates commenting perceptively on the soldier's grief. However, the responses of the sergeant and the officer, which act as a frame to the soldier's emotion, were sometimes ignored or not understood, and the lacerating irony of the poem's last line was quite often not understood. There was occasional misunderstanding of Sassoon's language, resulting in the not infrequent assertion that the soldier's brother was still alive - had not "gone west", but was being sent to the Western Front. Few candidates tackled 'The Seed-Merchant's Son'; those who did commented sensibly on the youth of the lost son and the apparent desolation of the father. The last lines of the poem, perhaps unsurprisingly, caused difficulties of interpretation.
- 13 The extract-based question was the most popular of the three on *Opening Worlds* and, in general, responses were well focused and supported by close reference to the given passages. At both Tiers candidates commented in greater detail on Ravi's happiness than on Bolan's, where the significance of the new ball and the boy's pleasure in buying the "black puddin'" were often either not understood or under-developed. Some responses read as if comparison of the extracts was a requirement. The A03 requirement for comparison is tested only in Poetry. Candidates may find thinking in terms of comparison lends a useful structure to their answer, but teachers need to bear in mind that comparison is not targeted here.
- 14 This was very satisfactorily answered by candidates who focused on two characters clashing, but not so well by candidates who considered the outcome of the clashes in too great detail or who simply narrated relevant chunks of two stories. Nor was it well answered by candidates who did not focus on "a character" clashing with "someone in authority" but offered generalised clashes, such as teachers clashing with pupils in 'The Pieces of Silver' and the village elders with Nak in 'The Gold-Legged Frog'. Few made use of 'The Winter Oak' and usually did not identify a clash between Anna and Savushkin but focused only on the enlightening of an otherwise intransigent young teacher.
- 15 This question was answered by few candidates, some of whom found it difficult to focus on the difficulties of family life and consequently fell back upon narration.
- 19 *Empire of the Sun* attracted very few candidates but responses here were often excellent.
- 20 There was close analysis of the language and situation in the extract and responses  
21 showed good understanding of the horrors to which Jim was subjected, supported by well selected textual references.

- 25 This was comfortably the most popular question on *The Old Man and the Sea* at both Tiers. Most were able to find some drama and excitement in the extract, better responses going beyond the situation in which the old man finds himself and exploring Hemingway's descriptions of the sharks. Weaker candidates tended to stray too far from the extract, providing lengthy accounts of events leading up to this particular moment.
- 27 There were a number of thoughtful personal responses to moments when Hemingway makes a reader feel particularly sorry for the old man. The best Foundation Tier answers focused on details within the chosen moments, whilst at Higher Tier the best focused both on details and the language Hemingway uses. The weakest answers came when the moment or moments were not defined and the entire book was summarised to illustrate why the old man is to be pitied.
- 28 There were some excellent responses to the extract-based question on *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Best candidates soared out into the whole novel, launching themselves from a close engagement with and analysis of the situation and the language of the extract. They found much that was dramatic and significant about the given moment; and, since there was so much to be found in the extract, responses were often refreshingly different from each other and thoroughly perceptive.
- 29/30 There were few responses to these two questions, but again the text had clearly been carefully studied and well understood. One examiner commented on the powerful way candidates had risen to the challenge of this apparently "difficult" text. The engagement with and understanding of this text suggests that it is succeeding in stimulating the minds of students at this level.
- 34 It was pleasing to see some *Pole to Pole* responses. Most were on the extracts, where candidates tried to focus on the language; Palin's humour and irony were most frequently identified and commented on. Interestingly, nobody seemed to understand Palin's reference to Basil Fawlty, the sixteen-year-old of the twenty-first century sadly unaware of that apoplectic hotelier.
- 36 The question on Chernobyl was less well answered. It appeared that candidates did not know the magnitude of the disaster, or the nature of the disaster. The question asked for a personal response pointing to the visit being described powerfully and movingly. The analyses were often simply cold and clinical accounts of Palin's day.
- 37 Most responses commented on Hornby's wanting to be one of the crowd as a football hooligan, but far fewer attempted, or were able, to explain why; fewer still were able to give their personal response to this. Most were able to comment on Hornby's humour, but many provided no evidence of it from the extract. Candidates seemed well furnished with writing techniques to look out for; asides, self-deprecating comments, use of hyphens and italics, for example. They often identified examples of such techniques but were unable to comment on their effect in the extract. However, it was encouraging to see that candidates had studied *Fever Pitch* and were not attempting the extract simply as a promising, because sporting, unseen.

**2444/1 – Foundation Tier and 2444/2 – Higher Tier  
Scheme A: Pre-1914 Texts (Examination)**

**General Comments**

As in the January session last year, the entry this time was small, but examiners noted some encouraging trends: answers on poetry suggested a rather greater confidence than has often been the case in past years; there were few truly poor answers on any of the texts used; there was considerable evidence that candidates had been conscientiously prepared in the best ways to address examination questions; points made were more often supported by textual quotation; handwriting was rather more legible!

Having made these points, however, it has to be said that while there were few really weak answers, there were equally few really good ones; while well prepared, many candidates still produced answers that were more mechanical and perhaps “learnt” than truly personal and engaged; quotations, while certainly used illustratively, were not often explored.

Two or three relatively trivial points in conclusion: few candidates indicated on the front page of their answer books which questions they had answered; too many still referred to novels, and even poems, as plays; and perhaps most seriously of all there were some occasions where the register used in answers was seriously inappropriate – “Juliet’s mum and dad” is not how we should expect GCSE candidates to refer to Lord and Lady Capulet, nor (although the points are no doubt valid and understood) does Tybalt “diss the Montagues”, and “Mr Polly was truly stuffed” is hardly the best terminology for a formal examination.

**Comments on Individual Questions**

***Much Ado About Nothing***

There were no answers on this text.

***Romeo and Juliet***

- 3 Most candidates addressing this question noted the way in which the Nurse clearly teases Juliet by delaying her good news, and her slightly self-centred fussing about her aches and pains is surely exaggerated for its effect on Juliet. Her love of fun was also noted by many, as was her obvious happiness when telling Juliet of Romeo’s intentions and plans, and indeed her bawdiness. More confident candidates were able at the same time to see how Shakespeare uses the Nurse to create a tension in the drama at this moment, and indeed how these characteristics echo what we have already learned about her personality and her relationship with Juliet. Few candidates had any difficulty with the passage or its context, though the quite substantial number who criticised the Nurse so seriously for her apparent selfishness and unkindness to Juliet here were surely misreading what the text says.
- 4 A generally very well managed question; most answers selected wisely and aptly, looking at one or two of the following scenes: the play’s opening, the Capulets’ ball; the fights between Tybalt and Mercutio, and then between Tybalt and Romeo; the play’s closing scene. Simple narration was not enough, of course, and better answers were expected to “explore” the chosen scenes, and the ways in which it/they reflect the effects and impacts of the feud; many answers did just this, but a lot remained purely descriptive and narrative, and too many did not clearly identify the “moments” that the question required, often merely outlining the whole plot of the play.

### ***An Ideal Husband***

There were no answers on this text.

### ***An Enemy of the People***

There were very few answers on this text, all on question 7, and showing a sound understanding of Dr Stockmann's character and relationships.

### ***Opening Lines: War***

- 9 A popular question, but not managed more than satisfactorily by most candidates; there was a lot of simple paraphrase, and relatively little exploration or discussion of *how* the two poems use the drums to express their views; Scott's poem led to rather more confidence, largely because of the very striking and memorable images in the second stanza, whereas Housman's less strident writing was not quite so securely handled.
- 10 Most answers used the Hardy and Dobell poems, with only a tiny minority discussing Brontë (and her "Song" seemed poorly understood by most who wrote on it). There was some sensitive discussion of both poems, with Hardy's seeming rather easier and more striking in its portrayal of the ironies and dreadful sadnesses caused by war's compulsions; Dobell's poem was less securely understood by many, and those who wrote on it tended to focus upon only very small parts rather than upon the whole.

### ***Opening Lines: Town and Country***

- 11 and 12 Q12 was the more popular here and most candidates had at least a general understanding of all the three poems. Wordsworth was the most popular choice, with the other two equally split. Most candidates seemed to be able to make at least a general contrast/comparison, but there was a tendency to merely pick out images and make vague general comments rather than to identify the precise effect of the words. Best answers commented on the majesty of the picture of London in the Wordsworth and on the way in which he uses colour and personification; on the dullness of the imagery in the Meynell and the way in which she seems to be making an adverse comparison with country life; and on the use of colour in the Wilde. As usual there was too much reliance on the words 'positive' and 'negative' without any really clear exploration or development of what was meant by using them. The Housman and Kipling were not so well understood (Q11) and some candidates struggled to do more than merely write out bits of the poems.

### ***Blake: Songs of Innocence and Experience***

There were no answers on this text.

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

There were no answers on this text.

### ***Austen: Northanger Abbey***

There were no answers on this text.

### **Dickens: *Hard Times***

**19 and 20** Here more candidates took the passage-based option (Q20), perhaps because their knowledge of the whole text was not comprehensive. There were no problems regarding comprehension of the questions. Most candidates understood the injustice of the situation of the working man in Q19 and were able to give at least a general comment on the fact that if you had no money then divorce was a luxury beyond your aspiration. Better answers commented on the way in which the Law was there to punish rather than to protect people in Stephen's situation, and the best commented on the general attitudes of Bounderby and Mrs Sparsit and on their hypocrisy, especially in view of Bounderby's later divorce of Louisa.

Question 20 produced some fairly reasonable answers though mostly based on the beginning of the book and the visit to the circus. It was disappointing that very few candidates had a real overview of how Louisa changes and gains in self knowledge as the whole novel proceeds. Some did not even mention the marriage to Bounderby or the connection with Harthouse.

### **Hardy: *Far From the Madding Crowd***

There were too few answers on this novel to make useful general comment.

### **Eliot: *Silas Marner***

**23** This was overwhelmingly the more popular question on the novel. The passage produced some good responses: quite understandably, candidates felt strongly critical of Godfrey and his reactions here to the death of his wife; many noted the way in which Eliot has led us to see him earlier as the "good" brother, with Dunsey as the "bad", and thus how she makes this moment such a shocking revelation. Several were tempted to write more about Silas than Godfrey – understandable but not helpful in addressing the terms of the question. This was possibly due in part to the length of the description of the child in the extract's long paragraph, and this led naturally but irrelevantly to the way in which Silas is drawn to her – a few did note the ambiguity and pain with which Godfrey sees her at this point, and suggested that at least for a moment Eliot makes us feel sympathy for him.

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

There were no answers on this text.

### **Wells: *The History of Mr Polly***

**27** Most answers on this novel tackled Q27, often very well; most candidates saw the entertaining comedy – albeit quite black – of Mr Polly's feelings of panic when he realises that he could die in the fire that he planned to start, having failed through fear of the knife to cut his throat properly. His indecisive manner was noted by many, though the words in lines 7/8 "while he did his business" surely suggest his wish to cut his throat rather than to complete some business connected with the shop accounts. The expression "Hi!" was seen by many as an oddly inappropriate one to use when calling for help – though a few did note that this may have been how people might have screamed out in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century – and many too found the predicament of Mr Rumbold's deaf mother-in-law very amusing, as surely Wells meant us to. The fact that instead of committing suicide Mr Polly becomes a hero was noted by very many candidates as an entertaining piece of irony.

Incidentally, Mr Rumbold's mother-in-law does not sit on the roof of the shop banging and kicking and rattling; nor is she "death", but "deaf"!

**28** Several candidates took the opportunity here to vent some real venom against Miriam, without whose pre-marital wiles and later ill temper Mr Polly might have had a much happier and more prosperous life; a few did note that some at least of her reduced tolerance might have been due to Mr Polly himself and the way he treated both her and life in general. Whichever view was taken, however, most answers supported their views with sensible and apt reference to events in the novel, though very rarely with quotation of any sort.

**Chopin: *Short Stories***

**29 and 30** There were few answers on this text, and all on Q29; candidates showed a sound understanding of both stories and both characters and their situations, making clear why they felt sympathy for the two women concerned, and in many cases how Chopin presents the situations that lead to this sympathy.

**2445/1 – Foundation Tier and 2445/2 – Higher Tier  
Scheme B: Drama Pre-1914**

**General Comments (see 2441 Section)**

There was a relatively small entry for these papers (especially at Foundation Tier), compared with 2441, which makes generalised comment difficult. Only two of the four texts on offer (*Much Ado About Nothing* and *Romeo and Juliet*) appear to have been taken up for this particular January session.

**Comments on Individual Questions**

***Much Ado About Nothing***

**Question 1** was by far the most popular choice and the most successful answers managed to engage with both the dramatic context and the language of the extract closely. The very best were described as a “delight to read”, used embedded quotation confidently, engaged with audience perspectives and fully grasped the impact of the dramatic irony and of concepts like disguise and honour. Language was explored in detail, with candidates discussing the effect of the shared lines, the imagery and the building up of Claudio’s fury. Some answers were diverted from the passage by an overlong consideration of attitudes to women in Elizabethan society. Wide-ranging textual support and a sound overview of the impact of his machinations characterised the successful discussions of Don John (in response to **Question 2**), and most candidates avoided the drift into narrative to shape carefully focused answers which foregrounded Shakespeare’s use of contrast, in particular. Very few candidates adopted the persona of Benedick (**Question 3**) but there were some outstanding answers which balanced anger, indignation, defiance, wounded pride with a sense of developing but repressed feelings for Beatrice, and were steeped in the text.

***Romeo and Juliet***

Once again, the extract-based question (**Question 4**) proved to be the most popular *Romeo and Juliet* choice, and many strong candidates managed to convey a clear understanding of the perilous nature of the situation, respond to the power of the feelings which the lovers express and explore the richness of the language. There was a tendency (noted in the *General Comments*) for some answers to become detached from the situation and lose themselves in decontextualised feature-logging (of light/dark imagery, rhetorical questions, shared lines...) and for others to be distracted by imported socio-historical material about attitudes to women or love as a form of madness in Shakespeare’s England. Many of the small number of candidates who tackled **Question 5** constructed well-supported cases for the punishment of their chosen character. Friar Laurence, in particular, aroused great hostility with some characters characterising him, not always convincingly, as sinful rather than bumbling and well-meaning. Lord and Lady Capulet, and Tybalt (with the sensible qualification that he is not actually around to be punished at the end of the play) provided other fruitful targets. There was a tendency to narrate rather than to evaluate, at times, and some candidates missed the emphasis on the upper case and emboldened “**ONE**” in the question, and proceeded to work their way through a number of characters without developing any argument fully. **Question 6** was one of the less popular empathic choices and although several candidates conveyed Lady Capulet’s indignation and incomprehension at Juliet’s fierce rejection of Paris and captured a self-righteous and haughty detachment from the feelings of her daughter, some candidates experienced great difficulty in assuming the voice and attitudes of such an unsympathetic mother, and indulged in lachrymose self-reproach.

**2443/1 Scheme A and 2447/1 Scheme B  
Coursework**

Once again it is recognised this January how much dedication teachers put into supporting students submitting their coursework at this time of year. Though a few schools have a major entry, for many it is a single candidate or small numbers; but all demand attention, time given to standardisation and administration as well as learning support. Moreover many of the candidates are trying to improve on a result achieved in a previous series. Most centres were nevertheless well organised and prompt with their paperwork, which inevitably benefits their entry. Those few who delay or are less efficient always make it more difficult to ensure that results will be published on time, as there is a very short turn-around time for moderation.

Best practice involves accurate completion of the cover sheets, with the calculations of any deficiencies being indicated and tasks being clearly described. Where candidates are re-sitting, Centres are reminded that at least one piece should be new and that this should be indicated. Most helpful always are teachers' annotations that draw attention to a candidate's strengths and explain the marks in terms of the criteria. In many centres moderators can see evidence of constant constructive feedback being given via marginalia or by formative and summative comments.

Centres should take note of when moderators in the Mod/Reps warn that marking was only just within tolerance. If, next time, standardisation fails to take that into account marks may just teeter over the edge and result in scaling. Particular care must be taken in the January sitting because where there is a small entry just one or two folders assessed without due rigour could result in the complete set being scaled.

Moderators are always pleased to see different pre-1914 poems being used. Marlowe's 'Passionate Shepherd to his Love' proved a subtle poem but accessible enough for all levels of ability. Tennyson's 'The Eagle', though short, offered considerable potential for a study of language that also suited students less comfortable with poetry. Task setting should avoid random combinations of poems with little guidance as to which common features might link them. An intriguing comparative task was to compare Dickens's description of Miss Havisham with Carol Ann Duffy's, which provided plenty of opportunity for candidates to meet the assessment criteria. This is a safe task in Language but, of course, in Literature care must always be taken to ensure that the pre-1914 text receives adequate treatment. Many centres may prefer to avoid that mischance by concentrating on two pre-1914 texts.

Both in Shakespeare and the prose many tasks focused on an analysis of one scene, very often the party scene in 'Romeo and Juliet'. It may be tempting to use such tasks if a candidate's motivation to read is questionable and if time is short. Responses, however, must be penalised if they fail to show an understanding of the complete text; this might be by cross-reference to other scenes, or comment on context or development.

Some general points emerge concerning all genres:

Candidates who do particularly well acknowledge genre differences between drama, poetry and prose. They might, for instance, comment on versification or stagecraft. Moderators have commented that many students regard characters as real rather than as artistic constructs and so fail to examine the author's craft. The best pieces, as always, were able to relate language, style and form to effect and to go on to appreciate the text. So often a clinical analysis of rhetorical devices does not result in a young person demonstrating a reading experience; appreciating emotion or enjoying insights into character and relationships. The "What happens in..." type of question can result in all genres being treated purely as narrative. Also asking candidates to consider too many poems often leads to superficial paraphrases unless they are particularly able.

Two features of good essay writing are always identifiable. A response is constructed progressively and coherently, building on ideas towards a conclusion. Too often a response is a random set of reactions and observations that lack cohesion. Second, there is much concern about uncritical and unadapted use of the internet. (Years ago moderators saw the same problem with Coles Notes, reference books or teacher notes on the blackboard.) Usually this is not malicious but a result of a lack of training. Students have easy access to marvellous resources and need teaching as to how to be selective and evaluative, how to interrogate the material and then use their wider experience of a text to inform their own responses. Not only can this enrich their own responses, it also prepares them for 'A' Level and beyond.

Once again moderators enjoyed reading work that went beyond forensic analysis, a sort of 'Waking the Dead' approach with literary cadavers dissected on the table. At their best candidates appreciated how the writer's craft engaged them and presented them with a living and moving experience of literature.

**2448/1 – Foundation Tier and 2448/2 – Higher Tier  
Scheme A: Post-1914 Texts (Examination)**

There were only a very small number of candidates for this paper at Higher Tier, and an even smaller number at Foundation. The texts studied were *Death of a Salesman*, *Opening Lines* (War, ii) and *Opening Worlds*.

***Death of a Salesman***

Answers to Question 3 varied considerably. At best they looked closely at dramatic aspects of the extract, including the care and concern of Linda, the flute and other aspects of the stage directions, and Willy's repeated references to death, and also saw some whole-play significance. Less successful answers narrated the extract without any apparent knowledge of later events, or discussed the American Dream without much reference to the extract. The smaller number of answers to Question 4 were generally well supported in arguing for sympathy for Biff.

***Opening Lines* (War, ii)**

Most answered Question 11. Better answers were able to express some sense of the contrast in 'Lamentations' between the howling, raving brother and the calmness of the sergeant, and the ironic possibilities of the last line. Most argued with relevant support that the woman is in denial in 'Reported Missing'. Better answers commented on effects of language; weaker answers were just at pains to explain and paraphrase. Few answered Question 12, invariably comparing 'The Falling Leaves' and 'The Seed-Merchant's Son'. Better answers showed awareness of symbolism in the leaves and the seeds; weaker answers tended to forget the phrase 'the natural world' in the question.

***Opening Worlds***

Question 17 produced some perceptive answers, in which the extract was treated closely and a sense of the story as a whole was communicated in each case. Those few who did not know the stories well found it difficult to trace tension. Some answers showed commendable overall understanding of the stories but referred little to the extracts. Better answers to Question 18 were those in which the evidence adduced was detailed and clear. Candidates and their teachers are reminded that comparison is not asked for nor required in these questions on the short stories.

**General Certificate of Secondary Education  
English Literature (1901)  
January 2007 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	18			0
2442/1	Raw	46				34	28	22	17	12	0
	UMS	69				60	50	40	30	20	0
2442/2	Raw	66	52	46	40	34	28	25			0
	UMS	100	90	80	70	60	50	45			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	26	20	14	8	0
	UMS	41				36	30	24	18	12	0
2444/2	Raw	60	53	47	40	34	28	25			0
	UMS	60	54	48	42	36	30	27			0
2445/1	Raw	21				18	15	12	9	6	0
	UMS	27				24	20	16	12	8	0
2445/2	Raw	30	27	24	20	17	14	12			0
	UMS	40	36	32	28	24	20	18			0
2446/1	Raw	46				36	30	24	19	14	0
	UMS	69				60	50	40	30	20	0
2446/2	Raw	66	58	51	44	38	32	29			0
	UMS	100	90	80	70	60	50	45			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				34	27	21	15	9	0
	UMS	41				36	30	24	18	12	0
2448/2	Raw	60	46	42	38	35	32	30			0
	UMS	60	54	48	42	36	30	27			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>	3.6	14.4	38.1	72.0	92.1	97.3	99.5	100.0	100.0	480

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

For a description of how UMS marks are calculated see;  
[http://www.ocr.org.uk/exam\\_system/understand\\_ums.html](http://www.ocr.org.uk/exam_system/understand_ums.html)

Statistics are correct at the time of publication



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