

# **Report on the Units**

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**June 2007**

**1901/MS/R/07**

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## CONTENTS

### GCSE English Literature (1901)

#### REPORT ON THE UNITS

<b>Unit</b>	<b>Content</b>	<b>Page</b>
*	Chief Examiner's Report	1
2441	Drama Post - 1914	2
2442	Poetry and Prose Post - 1914	9
2444	Pre-1914 Texts	15
2445	Drama Pre - 1914	20
2446	Poetry and Prose Pre - 1914	22
2443/7	Pre/Post – 1914 Texts (Coursework)	27
2448	Post- 1914 Texts	29
*	Grade Thresholds	31

## **1901 GCSE English Literature**

### **Report on the Units - June 2007**

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

This report comprises the reports of Principal Examiners and the Principal Coursework Moderator on the work submitted by candidates for assessment in both Scheme A and Scheme B in Summer 2007.

The reports aim to indicate which texts and questions were most popular, and the general strengths and weaknesses identified by examiners over the marking period. It is hoped that these reports will provide valuable feedback to Centres on how candidates performed in their chosen units, and will assist teachers in the way they guide their candidates 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)**

The position of *Journey's End* as the most popular post-1914 Drama text is now firmly established, closely followed by *Death of a Salesman* and *Whose Life Is It Anyway?*, while *The Caretaker* continues 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*, with the non-Shakespearian options, Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People* and Wilde's *An Ideal Husband*, gradually increasing their share of the market.

Examiners reported that the vast majority of candidates had not only become very familiar with their set texts but were also making strenuous efforts to focus on the wording of their selected question. Many answers communicated not only close engagement with characters, situations and ideas but also genuine enjoyment, and examiners continue to marvel at the quality of much of the work produced under exam conditions in 45 minutes. Comments such as "inspirational... outstanding... a pleasure to mark... superb..." appeared frequently in examiner comments and one concluded: "This year's candidates have triumphantly disproved any suggestion that standards are falling." There was widespread evidence of thorough, sensitive and supportive teaching in the way so many candidates felt confident enough to express their own informed personal response. A willingness to engage complexities (in Dr Scott's feelings at the end of *Whose Life Is It Anyway?*, for instance), or to challenge the dominant premise in a question (that Osborne *should* be commanding the company in *Journey's End*,) or to risk a range of possible interpretations (of exactly why Biff might refer to his father as "Willy" and "Pop" at different points in the *Death of a Salesman* extract) rather than settling for oversimplified explanations or received opinions, often characterised outstanding answers. In addition the best answers continued to express an appreciation of these plays as theatrical experiences directed at audiences, rather than written texts directed at readers, and Examiners were often moved and exhilarated by some of the empathic responses in particular: one candidate's representation of Hibbert was so authentically unpleasant that it made the Examiner "laugh with delight", and Willy Loman was so convincingly voiced by one candidate that the Examiner felt that "Miller himself would have been proud to have produced this."

Although the vast majority of Centres had clearly made shrewd and careful Tiering decisions, there was a noticeable reduction in the proportion of candidates entered for the Foundation Tier papers during this session, and a sizeable minority of underachieving Higher Tier candidates could well have benefited from the bullet-pointed structure offered by many Foundation Tier questions. The unnecessary and environmentally unfriendly use of eight, twelve and even sixteen page answer booklets for these single-question papers continues to disadvantage some candidates, who apparently feel the need to fill the space available.

Once again the extract-based question proved to be by far the most popular choice for every text, so much so this time that it appeared that candidates had either stopped reading after the first question or had been discouraged from attempting any question other than the extract-based option. Patterns of question selection do vary from Centre to Centre and many candidates clearly feel more secure if they have a printed extract as a starting-point, but it would be a shame if Centres are narrowing choice and the approaches to Drama texts with the message: "Avoid the empathic/discursive question at all costs!" The opportunity to write in character (especially, this time as Willy Loman, Dr Scott, Hibbert, Beatrice and Juliet) stimulated work of the very highest quality and the argumentative approach (to Osborne's qualities of leadership or the unpleasantness of a selected Pinter character, for instance) allowed candidates to demonstrate critical understanding and sharp selectivity. Several Centres, in attempting to encourage empathy, closer engagement with the texts and a sharper awareness of genre, have clearly made role-play, hot-seating and acting-out approaches generally, a central and effective part 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. Some candidates, however, find it difficult to see these plays as anything other than written texts and themselves as readers, and so adopt exactly the approach, particularly to the extract-based question, that they might use for poetry - commenting on patterns of word-sound, punctuation and graphological features, and often devoting more time to analysing the writing in the stage directions, than visualising the dramatic action, engaging the characters and evolving situations, and exploring the impact of the dialogue (see point 2 below).

Given the numbers of candidates opting for the extract-based questions, it was a great relief that most candidates managed to establish an effective balance between close attention to the printed extract and awareness of the whole-play context. This has always been a serious concern amongst Examiners and successive reports have concentrated 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. However, the vast majority of candidates are now managing to make the dramatic detail of the extract their primary focus and to convey a sound grasp of context (see point 1 below).

Examples of clear under-achievement could be attributed to the following causes:

1. **Unbalanced extract-based answers**

The difficulties inherent in exploring the impact of a particular scene in detail while establishing its place in the context of the play continue to undermine the work of some candidates. In addition, the two-strand question (Question 7 on *Whose Life Is It Anyway?*, for example which signposts attention to the “dramatic” detail of the extract itself and its “significant” impact in the play as a whole) often receives unbalanced attention, with the exploration of the detail of the extract submerged in whole-play reflections. 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.

2. **Formulaic answers**

Many candidates began their answers (usually to extract-based questions) with an all-purpose list of headings which they clearly hoped would help them to focus on “the ways” in which the playwrights write. For example: “Miller makes this a moving climax in the play with his use of context, stage directions, language, punctuation and dialogue...” This straitjacketed approach tended to distance candidates from the dramatic effect of the dialogue and action and to prevent them from involving themselves with a specific question about a specific moment in a specific play, and led to such unhelpfully generalised remarks as “Miller makes this moving with his use of exclamation marks...” or “Clark uses a lot of direct speech in this extract...” or “The stage directions help you to see what’s going on in the scene...” While it is laudable that candidates should want to avoid just “telling the story” in order to show awareness of the writer at work, some are tending to adopt a feature-logging approach to 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. In the worst cases this led to decontextualised counting of dashes and exclamation marks, or the frenzied search for ellipsis or stichomythia, or the analysis of alliteration in stage directions, and squashed all personal response to the emotion of the scene or any sense of these texts as scripts for performance. The fact that an audience does not see stage directions or indeed punctuation became rather obscured in answers of this kind.

### 3. Exam inexperience leading to:

- indeterminate question selection, often missing out the question number on the front-page grid and in the margin or basing a discursive answer wholly on the passage printed for the extract-based question, as if the candidate is unsure about the paper layout or which question to settle on;
- the unloading of pre-packaged introductions containing definitions of the American Dream, or details of Sherriff's war experiences, or quotations from the writers commenting on their works, without any specific focus on question or text;
- anchoring an empathic answer to the wrong moment in the play so that Willy Loman reflects on the final showdown with Biff (used as the extract for Question 1 on *Death of a Salesman*) rather than on the events of Act One (prescribed by the empathic Question 3);
- the copying out of notes from the critical introductions to set texts (particularly on Biff and Happy for Question 2 on *Death of a Salesman*);
- 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 Biff's doomed attempt to force his family to face reality, and many managed to engage the idea of a climax explicitly, to place the references to "spite" and the troubled nature of the relationship between Willy and Biff in the context of the trip to Boston, to recognise the scene as emotional heart of the play and to fully explore its power to move. "Superb" was an adjective frequently used by Examiners to describe the quality of answers to this question. The strongest were able to range widely across the extract, commenting on the effect and significance of Biff's longer speeches, of the reactions of Linda and Happy, of movement and of Willy's final remark. However, some candidates missed the searing irony of that final remark ("That boy – that boy is going to be magnificent!") and seemed unaware of its consequences so that their answers gave a sense that Biff's truth-telling has stimulated self-knowledge for the whole family and that love conquers all and secures a happy ending. Similarly there was a tendency to read some of Willy's other remarks too literally ("I suppose that's my fault!... Then hang yourself!") and thereby to reach some unconvincing conclusions. Some answers displayed an unhelpful obsession with stage directions as if they are divorced from the action of the scene, or got bogged down in the logging of exclamation marks or dashes, insisting that they always indicate anger or suspense, or lost the primary focus on the extract in tracing the development of the relationship between Biff and Willy throughout the play or in pursuing lengthy thematic explorations of flawed values and the American Dream. Many Foundation Tier candidates made shrewd use of the bullets to structure their answer and attention to the third bullet about building tension was particularly productive. **Question 2** was a less popular choice across both Tiers. There was much intelligently comparative comment about the conflict between the two brothers and the strong answers drew on a range of detailed reference from the initial bedroom scene to the "Requiem" to pinpoint differences in personality, values and relationships with both Willy and Linda. The word "dramatic" in the question was occasionally read simply as "extreme" rather than "theatrically effective" which perhaps limited some answers to an acceptable but rather narrow character-contrast approach and reduced the attention devoted to the impact of the conflict between the brothers. The best answers seized on the word "dramatic", fully explored the impact of particular confrontations between the two brothers (in the restaurant, in the final family showdown, in the "Requiem"... ) and kept the significance of Biff's Boston discovery clearly in view. Several candidates produced comparative character studies but gave little sense of their dramatic impact, some lost the comparative focus altogether and devoted their answer entirely to Biff, and some could only make use of the extract printed for Question 1 to give some support for their ideas. There was some past/present confusion, a tendency to dwell on the boyhood scenes and to give an over-lengthy emphasis to the idea of sibling rivalry and of Happy as the

largely overlooked and therefore attention-seeking younger brother. Indeed, some candidates considered Happy far more admirable than Biff and overlooked his intention to follow his father's route to unhappiness and disaster. Several candidates relished the opportunity to spend some time "inside Willy Loman's head" in response to **Question 3** and most managed to convey strong impressions of his speech patterns, his confusion and his capacity for self-contradiction. Some opted to characterise Willy as entirely delusional and basking in the false optimism of Biff's proposed visit to Bill Oliver and his own to secure a desk-job from Howard, and many Foundation Tier candidates used the first bullet wisely to anchor themselves firmly to the prospect of a successful visit to Howard. A few managed to subtly modify the optimism and to convey a recognisably weary Willy unable to fully suppress the doubts and fears crowding in on him. Some candidates were confused by the play's time sequences and were therefore unable to confine their thoughts to the prescribed moment and attributed knowledge to Willy (about his sacking, about Bernard's Supreme Court appearance...) which he has not acquired at the end of Act One, and some entirely transposed the moment to the end of the extract printed for Question 1.

The popularity of *The Caretaker* endures, and the outstanding quality of much of the work continues to challenge the received wisdom that Pinter should only appear on A-Level and Higher Education reading lists and to suggest that the teachers (and candidates) who make this choice have a real enthusiasm for the text. The openness of **Question 4** appealed to many candidates and a wide variety of "gripping" features emerged with some successful answers highlighting the characterisation, particularly of Davies, some the changing balance of power in the relationship between Davies and Aston and some the hints of menace and violence. Close exploration of language and sub-text and a willingness to engage the complexity of the characterisation were features of the strongest answers 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, particularly of Davies's vicious ingratitude or of Aston's unintentionally humorous understatement ("I don't think we're hitting it off") in the face of Davies reaching for his knife. Some candidates tended to skim over Davies's opening rant rather quickly whereas others seemed unaware of the powerful significance of Aston's quiet defiance and willingness to stand his ground. Unsurprisingly perhaps, Davies proved to be the almost unanimous choice as the play's most unpleasant character in response to **Question 5** although there were a few convincing arguments for Mick. The best answers displayed a staggering command of textual detail to support their ideas and took great delight in exploring and exemplifying the portrayal and exact nature of the unpleasantness. Some candidates took too long eliminating the two other characters before settling on the portrayal of one but Examiners remarked on the large number of "excellent" answers to this question. Very few candidates opted to answer **Question 6** and so it is difficult to generalise about performance but it was clear that candidates found it easy to select amusing moments but much more difficult to explore the sources of the humour and to justify their choices.

Now in its third year, *Whose Life Is It Anyway?* continues to provide an accessible and productive option for many candidates at all levels of ability and to encourage strong engagement with both characters and issues. Most candidates who chose to answer **Question 7** on both tiers understood the nature of the ethical dilemmas dramatised in the extract and reacted very strongly to the forced injection, to Emerson's patronising attitude and to his casual dismissal of Ken and the needle. Strong answers registered the impact of Ken's announcement that he has decided "not to stay alive" as a dramatic turning-point in the play, saw the change in his tone as he realises what is about to happen and traced his growing anger and frustration. There was a tendency to devote much more time to the thematic significance of the moment in the context of the play (in terms of power, choice professionalism...) than to the dramatic detail of the confrontation, and several candidates were so sidetracked by the ethics of "euthanasia", an issue which (as Mr Hill later points out) is not centrally addressed in this play, that they ignored dramatic features like the building of suspense in the opening twenty-five lines and began their answers with Emerson's arrival at Ken's bedside. There were some quirkily



exaggerated responses to Dr Emerson which presented him not only as a high-handed abuser of patients and very much the villain of the piece, but as someone who is “evil and immoral” and who has sinister intent in dismissing both Dr Scott and the Sister as if to conceal a furtive act. Valium was often thought to be a life-saving drug rather than a tranquilliser. Strong answers to **Question 8** on both tiers ranged widely across the play to demonstrate Ken Harrison’s fascinating and memorable qualities and conveyed a very strong appreciation of his wit, his intelligence, his profound effect on other characters, his courage and his honesty. Narrower and less successful answers were often confined to a discussion of his sense of humour with sexual innuendo receiving a great deal of detailed attention, and some candidates saw his appeal as a character in rather simplified terms – that he is “jolly” or “lively” or “good for a laugh”. The best answers showed an awareness that his humour is invariably rooted in the darker implications of his condition and responded to his very immobility as a strikingly memorable feature in a theatrical hero. Successful answers to **Question 9** quickly established a real feeling for Dr Scott’s complex predicament, engaged the conflict between the woman and the doctor and conveyed a moving combination of wistfulness and professionalism. Most answers conveyed a secure understanding of her attitudes and feelings at the end of the play and avoided excessive sentimentality, although there was some drift into the world of Mills and Boon with tales of unrestrained yet unrequited love of the “I don’t care! I’ll take him home and care for him myself” variety.

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 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** were alert to the humorous tone of the exchanges between Trotter and Mason and, at Foundation Tier, the bullet points assisted many to identify the developing suspense and the underlying fear of the big attack later in the scene. Strong answers showed critical understanding of dramatic structure by exploring the creation of the surprisingly cheery mood (through the symbolism of the sunlight, the descriptions of and reactions to the “wonderful” spring morning, Trotter’s whistling and eager anticipation of breakfast, Mason’s dry humour...) and contrasting this with the intensity of the previous scene. In addition, there was much intelligent comment about the significance of Trotter’s comfort eating and the displacement value of the food banter, about Raleigh’s silent presence onstage, about Osborne’s sensitivity and gentle humour, about the subtle confirmation of Stanhope’s generosity and devotion to duty, and about the symbolic possibilities of the birdsong. Some candidates, however, got caught up in a single approach and unloaded an essay on coping strategies generally or a wide-ranging character study of Trotter or a generic pre-packaged discussion of the set and the significance of candles or a detailed analysis of squalid trench conditions which focused, in particular, on the quality of the porridge. Indeed several candidates focused on the food to the point of an obsession which far exceeded Trotter’s and took the conversation about breakfast so seriously that they were convinced that the lumps in the porridge would be reappearing as dumplings and were horrified at the prospect. Some took the appeal-to-all-the-senses approach and insisted that Sherriff would be capturing the attention of the audience with the smell of streaky bacon in the theatre. Some devoted so much time to the way the initial stage directions are written (commenting in full on the alliteration of “sunlight ...shines...steps...”) that they left themselves little time to engage the characters, the dialogue and the situation. Trotter’s anecdote about his former cook confused a number of candidates who thought that he was still describing Mason and, although many candidates identified the non-standard forms of speech used by Mason and Trotter, they were unsure how to develop this observation and often found it difficult to disentangle notions of class and notions of rank so that the nature of the relationship between Trotter and Mason, in particular, proved very elusive for them. **Question 11** was a popular discursive choice, as if candidates relished the opportunity to eulogise such an attractive character as Osborne. Many answers ranged confidently across the play to explore his sterling qualities and strong candidates not only established his courage, sense of duty, loyalty, tact, sensitivity, unselfishness, calmness, modesty...in detail but kept the idea of leadership clearly in

view. Some Higher Tier candidates completed highly polished, complimentary and very detailed studies of Osborne's character, as if they were answering the more open Foundation Tier question, and missed the focus on Hardy's opinion. The very best answers were prepared to test Hardy's judgement, often regarded him as an untrustworthy source and were not content to conclude that Osborne's avuncular role and essential niceness automatically qualify him to be the Company Commander. Although some answers lost the primary focus on Osborne in their readiness to evaluate Stanhope's leadership, there were many telling comparisons between the two men with Stanhope's handling of Hibbert often advanced as evidence of the firmness required in wartime. However there was quite a widespread tendency to dismiss Stanhope as merely a hot-headed "binge-drinker" and to ignore the many tributes to and evidence of his leadership. Some answers spent so much time examining the initial exchange between Hardy and Osborne and placing the quotation in context that their ideas lacked range and development. Osborne's role in the raid was often so exaggerated as evidence of his bravery and dedication to duty that it was claimed that "he died saving Raleigh" or "he took a bullet for Raleigh", and although it was gratifying to read the argument that he would make a good Commander because he had been a teacher before the war, many candidates extended this to insist that he had been a "headmaster" (rather than a "schoolmaster") in his former life. There was widespread praise for the answers to **Question 12**, with several Examiners commenting that many candidates managed to convey a very convincing (and often entertaining) impression of Hibbert's self-absorption, self-justification and insensitivity. Remarkable subtlety was often displayed in sustaining an authentically whingeing tone and in referring to episodes which reflect no credit on him in a way which suggests that he is concealing unpalatable truths from himself. There was a tendency in some answers to airbrush out the undesirable characteristics and to create a rather generous and sensitive soul, mourning Osborne, concerned about the relationship between Stanhope and Raleigh, finding fault with himself and making allowances for Stanhope. There was often no acknowledgement of the previous confrontation with Stanhope and some answers, particularly at Foundation Tier, simply worked their way through the events of the drunken dinner with little sense of Hibbert's voice or character. Many candidates clearly enjoyed having a stab at Hibbert's idiom and managed to integrate carefully selected quotations in a fairly seamless way, although some adopted non-standard forms which would have been much better suited to Trotter or used rather jarringly modern expressions like "Stanhope really lost it...what is he like...I'm not bothered.."

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

### General Comments

As in previous years, examiners were rather divided over whether Centres had entered their candidates at the appropriate Tier. Many reported that candidates were correctly entered, though a number felt that some candidates who underachieved at Higher Tier might have benefited from the steps offered with some Foundation Tier questions in order to avoid the distressful outcome of being ungraded at Higher Tier.

It is appropriate to emphasise again that Written Communication is also a factor in arriving at a candidate's final mark on this Unit, this being the only Unit in Scheme A where Written Communication is assessed. It carries 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 a good overall mark. They should, of course, be encouraged to spell, punctuate and write accurately on all units as a matter of good practice, and not simply on this Unit (or 2446 on Scheme B, for that matter). Written Communication can affect the grade a candidate achieves on this Unit, and this in turn might explain why some candidates are apparently less successful on Poetry and Prose than they are on the Drama unit, 2441.

Most candidates used the allotted time well, providing two substantial responses to two texts. A number of candidates answered more than two questions, but there were comparatively few rubric infringements.

It was noted by many examiners this summer that by far the most popular texts on this Unit were the two OCR anthologies, *Opening Lines* and *Opening Worlds*. A number of examiners reported seeing no responses to other texts in their entire allocation. Those who did usually reported that responses to such challenging texts as *Nineteen Eighty-Four* were often perceptive and lively, students being greatly stimulated by Orwell's ideas and writing. Indeed, there were so few responses to such texts as D H Lawrence's *Ten Short Stories* and *Modern Women's Short Stories* that it is difficult to make much useful comment on them in this report.

### Poetry

As in previous years, candidates often seemed to find the challenge of the Poetry Section of the Paper more demanding than the Prose Section. The difficulty of responding to the language of sometimes complex poems, dealing with two poems, and organizing a comparison is certainly daunting. However, examiners are often amazed at how successfully some candidates rise to the challenge and produce outstanding responses to the poetry questions.

The better responses to the poems provided an overview of what the poems were about, and paid careful attention to the poet's treatment of the subject matter before moving to structure, verse lengths and often speculative discussion of what the effects of these features might be. These also engaged with the effects of poets' language. Weaker responses often offered no overview of the poems chosen for discussion, moving immediately into identifying patterns of rhyme, without commenting on what effects such patterns might create. Candidates usually showed awareness of the need to quote from texts, but sometimes quoted lines that did not support the comment they had made. Too often they moved to another point without taking the opportunity to analyse/discuss/respond to the language they had quoted. For example, many candidates noted that Duffy's language is vivid and unusual, quoting the "moon like an orange drawn by a child" that "You watch peel itself into the sea" and making no comment on how this is vivid and unusual.

*Opening Lines*, particularly the Section on the War poetry, was the most popular of the anthologies. Duffy's *In Your Mind* was quite well understood, although the poem with which it was paired, Larkin's *Wedding-Wind*, was less well understood. Weaker responses claimed that

the bride expresses her regret and disillusionment with marriage after just one night. Better responses focused on the voice's "happiness ... joy ... perpetual morning ... delighted lakes ... all-generous waters" and to "our kneeling as cattle", recognizing that the poem might not be about disappointment. Often they argued that the wedding-wind was powerful, energising and masculine, and the "delighted lakes" and "all-generous waters" were life-giving. Weaker responses to language often commented that "kneeling as cattle" was, in some way Biblical, without showing how it was and what its effect might be.

Responses to the way fear is expressed in *The Hare* and *Bedfellows* were often interesting, candidates responding well to the situations created in both poems. There were biographical approaches to *The Hare*, which asserted that Hill is responding to her brother's death, or that a woman is haunted by a decision to have an abortion. Provided that they focused on the way the language of the poem conveys fear, such approaches were entirely acceptable. Responses to the poem were often focused and well-supported, highlighting the way the hare's distance becomes hauntingly present and its life, from an external force, to something alarming and inner. Responses to *Bedfellows* were not always confident. Some suggested that it was about a prostitute who had murdered a particularly obnoxious client, or about a client who had murdered a particularly obnoxious prostitute. Neither interpretation was comfortably supported by textual reference. The best responses here commented closely on the last lines of Paterson's poem. Weaker candidates referred to images such as the "dead halo" and "greasy head" without showing how these were fear-inspiring or commenting on the effect of such wording as "dreary innuendo"; what this "innuendo" was all too often was unexplored.

Perhaps the last question in the *How It Looks From Here* Section presented candidates with the greatest difficulty, many struggling to come to terms with *A Consumer's Report* and *I am a Cameraman*, both too often imperfectly understood. Arguably they are the two most difficult poems in the Section and weak responses showed little understanding of the view of life offered in either poem. Better candidates offered an explanation of parts of the poems that they found accessible, but only the best were able to demonstrate clear understanding of how the voices in the poem saw life and how the language, form and structure of the poems communicated those views to them as readers. Porter's humour was often overlooked, and responses to Dunne sometimes became simply grumbles about the way the media report current events. (Tony Blair's comments on the "feral" nature of the media were made after the examination was taken. Some candidates anticipated him. However, they found difficulty in showing that Dunn had anticipated even them with his poem.)

Question 4, inviting discussion in the case of Foundation Tier candidates and comparison in the case of Higher Tier candidates, was a popular option for those answering on *Section H: The 1914-1918 War (ii)*. Rather basic responses stated that *The Falling Leaves* was written by a woman, who therefore had no experience of the war and did not know what she was talking about, whilst McCrae, as a man fighting in the war, knew what he talking about; such responses indicated that the bodies were not buried, but simply strewn where they fell (unlike *In Flanders Fields*, where the men were given a burial). Most, however, were able to comment on the metaphor associating the soldiers with the leaves in *The Falling Leaves* and make something of the line that they were "Slain by no wind of age or pestilence". Best responses engaged with such enigmatic images as "snowflakes wiping out the noon". However, as the Marking Notes anticipated, candidates were often struggling with *In Flanders Fields*, since its call to "Take up our quarrel with the foe" is at such odds with the anti-war tone of much poetry written about the First World War, and with present-day attitudes to war. Often such lines as "We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow" were seen as central to the poem's "message": since the men were no longer able to enjoy the dawn and sunset the poem was anti-war. Such responses ignored the last stanza of the poem entirely, saying nothing about the throwing of the torch and the need to keep faith "with us who die". The "still bravely-singing" larks often caused puzzlement, better responses seeing them as nature soaring above man's re-enacting of nature red in tooth and claw whilst less persuasive responses suggested that they were the soldiers' souls on their way to heaven. However, varying interpretations were accepted, provided textual support was

provided (though it too often was not). The best responses engaged with the shocking effect of the monosyllabic line “We are the Dead”, its brevity and the capitalisation of the D; and with the archaic nature of the language of the poems (“slain” “pestilence” “multitude” “foe” “if ye break faith”). Many appeared to think that the poppies McCrae refers to were already symbols of remembrance when he wrote his poem. Often candidates did not respond to the invitation of Question 5 (on *Recruiting* and *The Parable of the Old Man and the Young*) at both Tiers to explore the feelings of the poets about dying young soldiers and show how the language conveys such feelings. There was much paraphrasing of both poems, particularly Owen’s. On occasion lengthy discussions of the structure of *The Parable* proved unhelpful; often it was identified as a sonnet, with two extra lines. Great significance was attached to this, but candidates were usually unable to develop the supposed significance, making no attempt to develop the claimed parallel by analysing the rhyme scheme or its internal structure. Better responses considered the Biblical language, the strapping down, and the effect of the separation of the final couplet from the rest of the poem. The best responses were those that considered the language and the ways in which it conveyed the bitterness of the poets.

*The Deserter* and *Reported Missing* were generally quite well understood. Candidates at both Tiers were able to show, to a greater or lesser extent, how war had affected the deserter (though its effect on his mother was sometimes ignored or not explored in any detail). Better comment was made on the structure of *Reported Missing* than on *The Parable of the Old Man and the Young*, linking the form to love poetry, focusing on the three quatrains and concluding couplet, and showing the effect of the structure. *The Bohemians* was the least understood of the three poems listed in Question 6, candidates too often seeing just one group of soldiers in the poem and not the two separate ones, the Bohemians and those who conformed to army regulations. The power of the last line was often overlooked; the Bohemians and the conformists met the same fate in Artois or Picardy. Some candidates responded to the poem as if it was an attack on military incompetence, based on “Surprised as ever to find the army capable/Of sounding ‘Lights out’, rather missing Gurney’s attack on the loss of individuality which the army demands.

The first question on *Touched with Fire*, pairing Soyinka’s *Telephone Conversation* with Betjeman’s *In Westminster Abbey* proved the most popular on this text. Candidates found much that was unpleasant about the landlady and the “praying” lady and were able to use both texts to support their dislike. The intellectual inferiority of the landlady to the would-be tenant was often noted and supported (her monosyllabic responses in bold being contrasted with such an imaginative leap as “spectroscopic/Flight of fancy”). A reflection of the influence of home-ownership in recent years characterised a number of responses where the voice of the poem was believed to be attempting to buy a house and not rent a flat or a room. Candidates often found Betjeman’s lady harder to pin down than Soyinka’s landlady. Her racism (“even more, protect the whites”) was often seized upon as a point of comparison with the landlady’s. That the poem is set at wartime was all too often not recognised, and her set of values, with “Democracy and proper drains” equally weighted, often unexplored. Analyses of how the poets’ language makes these women so unpleasant varied from the highly perceptive to the rather flat, those at the higher end recognising the humour in both poems and those at the lower tending to explain, somewhat humourlessly, what the poets were saying, or trying to say, about the women. There were many good answers on *Mid-Term Break* and *Refugee Mother and Child*, showing clear and sustained understanding of both poems; here there was often thoughtful focus on technique and detailed comparison of the poets’ methods.

Sometimes sixteen-year-olds’ responses to poetry assume a personal familiarity with the poets that doesn’t always sit easy. Too many candidates referred to Hill and Paterson simply as Selima and Don. On the other hand, Wole Soyinka, or the voice in *Telephone Conversation*, was sometimes taken to be a woman, though the voice, and the offer to display the raven black bottom, sound decidedly unfeminine. Candidates writing on *The Deserter* often assumed that Winifred Letts was male (though happily almost none called her Wilf or Fred).

It is recommended that candidates are encouraged to put the titles of poems in speech marks. Responses to *Sometimes* were often confusing, not least when the word “Sometimes” began a sentence, leaving examiners to work out from the context whether this heralded the poem’s title or was simply an adverb. Examiners also reported that the most successful responses to poetry began with an introductory paragraph highlighting what the two poems had in common and/or how they differed, before launching into a detailed exploration of the first poem, followed by a detailed discussion of the second, with similarities or differences referred to in the course of the second analysis, then a concluding paragraph again bringing the two poems together. Less successful responses tended to swing from one short paragraph on one poem to a short paragraph on the other, becoming disjointed and veering away from ideas and analyses that could have been more fully developed.

It is appropriate to consider, as this report has in previous years, that the word “sympathy” in questions somehow is translated by many candidates as “empathy”. Examiners must be hardened souls, resistant to modern touchy-feely times. One commented that, whilst able to feel sympathy for men who died and were buried in Flanders Fields, she “cannot empathise with the dead in *In Flanders Fields*, nor do I wish to”. She surely has a point whilst words continue to have a meaning in this distracted globe.

## Prose

Comfortably the most popular prose text was the OCR anthology *Opening Worlds*, and the most popular question the extract-based Question 13. There were many good answers at both Tiers, when candidates remembered that they needed to focus on the extracts. It is a requirement that candidates show knowledge of two stories, but, in the case of the extract-based question, this is done by inviting close focus on extracts taken from two different stories. The wording of the Question 13 at both Tiers referred to “these two extracts” and not to “these two stories”; and the adjective “vivid” preceded “pictures” (Foundation) and “impressions” (Higher). Candidates who wrote about the different cultures explored in *Snapshots of a Wedding* and *The Train from Rhodesia* as whole stories missed the opportunity to explore/analyse/respond to the language Head and Gordimer use to create a vivid picture of the culture. Answers which discussed Neo’s arrogance and Kegoletile’s choice of an educated wife rather than the humble Mathata; or the exploitation of poor and vulnerable natives by a cocky young husband on a train that represents the West, engaged with the themes of the stories and not with the way particular extracts are written. The opportunity to write discursive essays is offered by Questions 14 and 15 on this text.

Two extracts from the stories have to be set. Some candidates compare the extracts to give themselves a structure for their discussion. However, too many candidates indicate, both in their opening paragraph and their comments throughout that comparison is the purpose and thrust of the question. So many responses compared the extracts to show that both revealed the poverty of the cultures they depicted; or that the first extract revealed that this was a more prosperous culture than the one depicted by Gordimer. Others compared how each had been affected by westernisation (impossible to illustrate in *Snapshots of a Wedding*, unless one avoids the constraints of the extract for the freedom of the rest of the story, led astray by the reference to “a modern wedding” in the last line of the extract). The most persuasive responses focused, in *Snapshots of a Wedding*, on the description of early dawn, the unfortunate rather stupid fellow the ox, the ululating and the dancing (though a less persuasive response admired the women for being able to weave cloth whilst also shaking their buttocks in the air; another rather endearingly observed that a rather stupid ox is brought in, whereas in weddings here we would bring in a caterer). At Higher Tier, candidates could interpret the question as an invitation to consider these cultures as “different from ours” or “different from each other”. Either was acceptable, but close attention to the writers’ language was expected, however the question was interpreted.

All three story titles offered for discussion in Question 14 proved attractive to candidates, most of whom knew the stories well enough to do themselves justice in their answers. Weaker responses depended heavily on a narrative approach touching all too rarely on personal

engagement with the plight or dilemmas of Sidda, Mr Short and Nak. Some focused too strongly on Leela and the Sivasankers, attacking them, in Leela's case for bossing the hapless Sidda about, and, in her parents', for their prejudice against him. Many responses did not focus closely enough on Mr Short, but offered general condemnation of the treatment he and his wife receive. Many also seemed unaware of the Cultural Revolution in China, and consequently missed the importance of the central section of the story, often omitting it altogether, implying that Mr Short was sent to prison merely as a result of his neighbours' prejudices. There were some recurrent misunderstandings: Sidda was often referred to as a "slave", which he plainly is not (as distinct from the legitimate claim, if supported, that he is treated rather like one). The policeman's assertion of Sidda's criminal record was mostly either ignored, or more frequently taken at face-value; very few candidates challenged whether the inspector's reliability was unimpeachable in this instance. A surprising number of candidates attributed the line with which Mr Sivasanker concludes the story to his less than delightful wife. A number of responses focused insufficiently on the question, criticising at length the characters of Mr and Mrs Sivasanker or berating them for spoiling Leela, whose faults were often paraded at unnecessary length. Some candidates did not explore Nak's dilemma, spending too long discussing their feelings for people who had to endure the meteorological conditions Nak endured. A common misunderstanding was that Nak toiled to find frogs in blistering heat, although the story describes the cold of the morning as piercing his bones. However there were many confident responses that focused on the injustice suffered by Sidda and the appalling nature of Nak's dilemma whereby he has to choose between caring for his dying son or applying personally for the two hundred baht (thus avoiding jail).

There were many perceptive discussions of the portrayal of school life in *The Pieces of Silver* and *The Winter Oak*. Most were able to identify the military discipline of Mr Chase's school, the reluctance of the children to give up their free-time activities, the humiliations inflicted on the pupils and many other of its qualities. They found discussion of Anna Vasilevna's classroom and its atmosphere more difficult, too often veering from the classroom to the forest and the description of the winter oak. Weaker answers tended to summarise both stories without focusing on aspects really relevant to the questions; sometimes much was made of the way Clement and Evelina raise the money and how ironic it is that Mr Megahey provides the most generous contribution. As with Question 13, many candidates tackled Question 15 apparently believing that they needed to compare the two portrayals of school life. Sometimes this provided a helpful structure for the response, but often candidates seemed to be in pursuit of similarities or differences, for example contrasting Mr Chase with Anna Vasilevna or the punishments meted out in each school. Some responses to *The Winter Oak* advanced the idea, for the first time in the memory of senior examiners, that the story is a criticism of the Soviet system. Whilst this may, or may not, be the case, it did not prove helpful to candidates tackling this question.

There were too few responses to Lawrence's *Ten Short Stories* for any useful general comments to be made in this report.

Ballard's *Empire of the Sun* attracted a number of responses, particularly to Questions 19 and 20. Candidates showed sound knowledge of Jim's relations with Dr Ransome, the best responses being those which supported their understanding with close reference to the language of the extracts. There were successful responses to Question 20 looking at how Jim's experiences affected him, some suggesting that he is greatly changed and others feeling that in many ways he had hardly changed at all. Either approach was perfectly acceptable, provided that the text was used in support.

The extract-based question on *Things Fall Apart* was the most popular of the three at both Foundation and Higher Tier. Foundation Tier candidates often responded quite strongly to the different reactions to Okonkwo's suicide, especially that of the District Commissioner. The better responses at this Tier quoted from the extract and provided comment on why the Commissioner's reaction made them angry. Higher Tier candidates often looked carefully at the way Achebe's writing makes the ending so powerful, noting that the man about whom Achebe writes a novel might merit "a whole chapter" or "a reasonable paragraph" in the District

Commissioner's projected opus on the "*Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger*". Some responses responded with indignation because Okonkwo was a character they admired unreservedly who had been driven to suicide by the insensitivity of Christians and the District Commissioner. The best responses qualified this judgement by recognising that Okonkwo had just beheaded a messenger and that Achebe, as throughout the novel, offers a balanced presentation of Okonkwo, painting him as he is, warts and all. There were fewer responses to Okonkwo's relationship with Nwoye (Foundation Tier) and to the importance of Nwoye in the novel (Higher Tier). The weaker responses revealed what they remembered of Nwoye, showing some knowledge of the novel, whilst the best showed a supported awareness of how the son is used to shed ever more light on the father, and the way the coming of the white man expedites the falling apart of the Ibo culture. There were even fewer responses to Question 24, inviting discussion of a moment which shocked the candidate. The chosen moment was usually, and quite understandably, the killing of Ikemefuna. The best Higher Tier responses focused closely on the language Achebe uses at this moment, whilst, at Foundation Tier, candidates usually remembered to support their shock with reference to the text, though without always commenting on the language.

*The Old Man and the Sea* was quite a popular text and again the extract-based question was the most popular of the three questions. The infrequent appearances of the boy in the novel meant that most candidates focused on the extract, untempted by any urge to deviate to other apparently more attractive areas (though some did, quite usefully, look at the opening of the novel). However, some candidates did, despite the wording of the question, wander away from the extract and look at moments in the novel when the old man missed the boy and highlighted these. Other somewhat unfocused responses discussed the old man's return to his shack, comparing him to Christ and his sleeping position to the Crucifixion. This report offers an opportunity to emphasise, and re-emphasise, that, whilst the extract-based question offers the opportunity to show understanding of the wider context to illuminate issues within the extract, the prime focus of the response must be the extract. However, there were many very good responses at both Tiers that showed clear understanding of the boy's relationship with the old man and of the way it is brought to life, not least in the boy's tears, shed unashamedly in a macho culture; and the boy's acceptance of the spear as a rite of passage, an acknowledgement of his succession to the position and traditions of the old man. Comparatively few candidates attempted Question 26 at either Tier. Those at Higher Tier were usually able to support their view of the old man's struggle, whether futile or courageous, with appropriate textual support, whilst the best either argued their case passionately or argued that his struggle incorporated elements that were both unsuccessful (hence futile) and admirable. Very few succumbed to the temptation to respond to Hemingway's presentation of the fishing community.

There were some very strong responses, especially at Higher Tier, to *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, where again the extract-based question was the most popular of the three. There were some excellent analyses that focused closely on the extract and its language, identifying the religious references that deify Big Brother in the eyes of the sandy-haired woman. These also included detailed comment on O'Brien's eye-contact with Winston and its relevance to the Party's control over Winston and, by extension, to other potential thought criminals. Some candidates drifted away from the extract without subjecting it to much scrutiny, offering instead details from the novel as a whole to show how the Party controls the people of Oceania. The comments given on responses to the extract from *The Old Man and the Sea* are again relevant here. One examiner found candidates offering extraneous political theory, using the text to illustrate the theory, rather than the theory to illuminate the text. There was much material on Marx (not always well digested), theoretical constructs of the proletariat, false consciousness and the Freudian theory of the id, the ego, and the super-ego applied sociologically; all could offer interesting insights when used with the appropriate degree of sophistication, but not all sixteen-year-olds possess such a degree of sophistication. As with all texts, however, candidates need to be armed with whatever background knowledge they require to understand the text and this is bound to be determined by the judgement of the teacher. Background knowledge, of course, should not elbow textual, foreground knowledge from centre-stage. Few candidates responded, at either



Tier, to the question on Mr Charrington, and an insufficient number to the question on the proles for any useful comment to be made here.

There were too few responses on *Modern Women's Short Stories* for useful comment. These few were almost invariably to the extracts, Questions 32 and 33 finding almost no takers.

### **Literary Non-Fiction**

Few Centres enter candidates for this Section. Almost all candidates responded to the extracts. Most were able to make sound comments on amusing and entertaining aspects of Ethiopian hotels visited by Palin. Responses to the extract from *Fever Pitch* tended to rely heavily on paraphrase and avoid focus on language. Very few engaged with the humour, passing up the “gangrenous hamburgers” and the “fizz” provided by “Stavros of Edmonton”.

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

### General Comments

This was overall a very good session indeed, with rather more candidates than in previous years demonstrating not merely some good knowledge of their texts, but even more importantly a real awareness of how to address the set questions, and of how to use relevant quotations and references. There was considerably less reliance upon simple narration or paraphrase, a most welcome and encouraging trend, which was especially noticeable in answers to the poetry questions, where there were some very good and detailed answers. This is not to say, of course, that all scripts were equally good – some were thin and some were poor – but there were more really good ones this summer than there were really weak ones.

One examiner sums it up well when she says that “*candidates’ responses suggested that they had been well prepared, especially for the passage-based questions, where most were well focused and examined the writers’ language in some detail.*” This last point is echoed by another examiner, who says that even where candidates found it hard to write with real confidence they made sure that they did explore the words closely – “*the formulaic openings adopted by many candidates served to launch them into their answers, and may have reminded some of the importance of making a response to language.*”

Examiners are not impressed, nor are they taken in, by candidates who spend time simply expressing admiration for the excellence of a writer (“Shakespeare is a very good writer” is a typically unhelpful comment) or about the poems being “simply fabulous and magnificent”. Both comments may well be true, but candidates will gain marks only by *exploring what is written*; generalisation will rarely be useful, especially given the very short time allowed in this Unit.

All examiners were pleased to find that every prose text was again used by candidates this summer, and with one possible exception all led to some good and often excellent work; the fact that almost invariably these answers were the last that candidates wrote did not seem in any way to harm their writing, and often produced the highest mark.

Rubric errors were almost non-existent, and despite the very tight time allowance for the examination there appeared to be very few candidates who ran out of time, or who had to write over-hasty final answers; planning the paper seemed to be much more successful than has been the case in the past.

### Comments on Individual Questions

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

1. This was by far the more popular question on the play, and elicited some good and engaged writing; most candidates were able to see that despite the darker context of the passage – Benedick’s agreement that he will ‘kill Claudio’ – the couple can still not resist continuing their ‘merry war’. Some answers spent rather too much time rehearsing earlier examples of the wit and banter between the two lovers, but most focused well and thoughtfully.
2. Not a widely-chosen question, and while most of the few candidates who did tackle it were well able to relate to Claudio’s surprise at Benedick’s challenge, and to his feelings of outrage against Hero, very few were really able to establish a convincing kind of “voice”.

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

3. Answers were split roughly 50/50 between this and Q4; answers on the passage were almost all at least sound, and often very sharply perceptive, making thoughtful and sensitive comments about how an audience will respond to the dramatic and moving qualities of the events here – Romeo’s swift change from dreamy (literally) romanticism to horrified response and impetuous action, and Balthasar’s difficult and even potentially dangerous position – were very confidently handled by most. Shakespeare’s use of dramatic irony was a technique noted by many as helping to create the drama and emotion, as was Shakespeare’s re-iteration of the part played in the drama by Fate.
4. Most answers focused upon Juliet’s fear but determination when she takes the potion given to her by Friar Lawrence, and showed in some good detail how Shakespeare’s language, as well as Juliet’s actions, creates a sense of her fear and courage. Other moments selected were the balcony scene, Juliet’s confrontation with her father, and her suicide. Few answers covered more than one moment, so there was ample detail in what was written.

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

**5 and 6.** There were too few answers here to make valid general comments, but it was good to see some work on this play.

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

**7 and 8.** There were too few answers here to make valid general comments, but it was good to see some work on this play.

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

9. Answers were split roughly 50/50 between this and Q10. Most answers found relevant and quite sensitive things to say about both poems, and the best were able to show some interesting links and also differences between the two, often recognising the somewhat inflated rhetorical language and images of Byron’s writing, contrasted with the harsh reality of Kipling’s. Inevitably some relied over-much upon rhythm and rhyme scheme – certainly these are important in Byron – but usually without discussing any of the impact or effect that these have on the reader.
10. There was plenty of interesting and thoughtful writing here, and all three poems were used quite widely. Perhaps unexpectedly, Asquith seemed to create more reaction than either of the others, though Newbolt was quite well understood, and his poem’s feelings about British heroism were seen as either unhelpfully dated and out of touch with even the reality of his time, or occasionally as deliberately exaggerated for parodic effect. Lovelace was less confidently approached, very few candidates found nothing of value or relevance to say – though the answer that said that the speaker preferred to go to war to living in a nunnery was not perhaps the most confident response.

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

11. As with *War*, answers were split roughly equally between the two options, and there were some very thoughtful and perceptive responses, particularly to Hood’s poem, where repetition and alliteration were, thankfully, not merely noticed but commented on in ways

that demonstrated some real grasp of the poet's techniques. Most candidates made many relevant and well-supported comparisons between this and Blake's poem, often drawing attention to the fact that while Blake's horror is quite general, Hood's is focused very tightly and exactly on just one – albeit representative – woman.

12. Here was a good instance of the need to read what the question asks! Almost all answers tackled *The Eagle* and *Beeny Cliff*, with just a handful writing on Keats's Ode. Tennyson's poem presented few difficulties, and there were some very interesting responses to his images, especially those suggesting the power and arrogance of the eagle; the problem arose with Hardy, where too many answers spent too much time talking of Hardy's relationship with his wife, and forgot that the question asked about "the wonder of nature". Where they saw a contrast between the impermanence and transience of human love and life, compared with the grandeur and permanence of nature as exemplified in the great cliff, then some very good discussion followed; however, those who simply rehearsed what the poem says about Hardy's love and subsequent unhappiness too often fell very short of the mark. Candidates must keep strictly to what they are asked.

### ***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***

17. Most answers on this question were at least sound, and most saw some very clear differences between the worldly and selfish Isabella and the naïve and entirely unsuspecting Catherine, with good reference to the passage. The word "entertaining" in the Higher Tier question was, however, rarely explored or illustrated, though often asserted.
18. There were too few answers to this question to make valid comments.

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

19. Most answers saw, and illustrated very perceptively and fully, the ways in which Dickens portrays Bitzer in this well-known passage; Foundation Tier candidates drew attention quite competently to the contrast between his characterisation and that of Sissy. Rather less successful were many Higher Tier answers in showing how Dickens prepares readers for Bitzer's role later in the novel; many answers entirely failed to address this part of the question – another example of how important it is to focus upon what is asked.
20. There were too few answers to this question to make valid comments.

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

21. There were some very good answers here; candidates often saw this moment as not simply an exciting and memorable one in its own right – though there were some good and

detailed discussions of Hardy's writing here and his descriptions of the storm – but were able also to say why and how it was important and significant in the novel as a whole, drawing attention to Bathsheba's continuing reliance upon Gabriel, and perhaps a dawning sense that she could love him, and her growing realisation that Troy is not all she believed him to be.

22. There were a few answers to this question, and it was clear that despite his undoubted foolishness throughout the novel most candidates could feel, and justify, some quite warm sympathy for Boldwood; the valentine episode was naturally the most popular choice, but several were able to explain well why they felt sympathy for him as he shoots Troy at the Christmas party. It was good to read such confident work on this long and not always easy novel.

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

23. Some excellent work here – and there was a good deal of this, as *Silas Marner* was by quite a long way the most popular prose text this summer. Some answers spent too long establishing the context of the passage, when a brief introduction was really all that was needed, and inevitably some also wrote too much about what happened later, but most were well able to identify ways in which Eliot draws such a harrowing and haunting picture of Silas's loss and his fearful grief at this moment – even those who felt little sympathy for his miserly and hermit-like lifestyle could see at least some reason for feeling his emotion.
24. This, on the other hand, was rarely handled very well – largely because many of the relatively few Higher Tier candidates who tackled it mis-read the question. Foundation Tier candidates were able to write generally about Eppie and her character, but the HT question specifically asks for consideration of the view that she is depicted as “too good to be true”. Too many answers simply discussed ways in which she was, or was not, good for Silas, and so did not explore the plausibility or credibility of her character as drawn by Eliot.

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

25 and 26. There were some competent and sensibly illustrated answers on these stories, but few that were really good; most answers were on the extract-based questions, and drew apt attention to many of the words and phrases used by the two speakers, offering evidence of at best a distorted sanity. Answers on Q26 were similarly sound, but lacked much of the detail that a high band mark must require.

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

- 27 Perhaps surprisingly, given how dated much of this novel can seem, there was some very good work indeed, and many candidates had clearly thoroughly enjoyed and appreciated it. Most answers on this question related details from the passage very well to what we learn later about Mr Polly and his marriage, about his love of words, and about his frustrations at the whole of life, at least until the very end of the novel. The candidates who discussed his indigestion as a metaphor for his general life malaise, and who saw a similar metaphor in the fact that that despite the blue sky the weather was in fact bitterly cold, were undoubtedly seeing something of real value in Wells' writing.

**28.** This was rather less well managed, and was in fact tackled by only a handful of candidates, most of whom relied rather too much upon narration of their chosen moment, or upon a paraphrase of most of the novel, with only brief reference to one of the given moments. A few certainly saw how Mr Polly's life was changed – quite radically – by the event in question.

***Chopin: Short Stories***

**29 and 30** There were just a few answers on this text, mostly handled soundly and thoroughly.

**2445/1 – Foundation Tier and 2445/2 – Higher Tier  
Scheme B: Drama Pre-1914 – May 2007**

**General Comments (see 2441 Section)**

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 candidates so far. The remarks in the *General Comments* (2441) section of the report on the narrowing of question choices are particularly relevant to 2445 during this session and many Examiners lamented the rarity of empathic answers, in particular.

**Comments on Individual Questions**

The extract-based **Question 1** proved to be the most popular by far of the *Much Ado About Nothing* options and there was strong evidence of thorough preparation in the confident grasp of context which the majority of candidates displayed, although a few wrote as if they were taking Leonato's announcement of Hero's death at face value. The dramatic impact of the heated exchange was often closely engaged with some close attention to the language used to convey the anger and aggression of the elderly brothers and some impressive awareness of how the scene might work on stage, particularly the potentially comic exaggeration of Antonio's anger and Leonato's restraint of him. In fact, answers tended to be much more developed on the "dramatic" rather than the "revealing" strand of the question, sympathy for the brothers (or even Hero) was in short supply and there was little detailed consideration of the arrogance and heartlessness of the accusers, Don Pedro and Claudio. The openness of **Question 2** appealed to many candidates and there were many convincing and selective arguments about the enjoyment afforded by the character of Benedick. His inventive wit, in particular was very well explored and exemplified, and the candidates who examined his gulling scene and the comic reversal in his attitudes, and examined the impact of his changing relationships with Beatrice and Claudio, tended to produce highly successful answers. Some candidates gave rather an undue emphasis to Beatrice in their answers as if they were tackling a question from a previous paper and 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 the best answers conveyed a strong sense of Beatrice's liveliness and wit, genuine enjoyment of the discomfiture she has inflicted on Benedick at the masked ball and a real relish of her language. Hints of more complex feelings for Benedick and of a greater sensitivity beneath the disdain, often surfaced in the strongest answers as if the ground were being prepared for later developments.

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 Romeo's previous relationship with Rosaline or with the future fight with Tybalt, there were many sensitive and sharply focused responses. The best answers placed this pivotal scene neatly and economically in context, contrasted the language and feelings of Tybalt with the language and feelings of the lovers, suggested the foreshadowing of future conflict and maintained a selective balance between attention to the dramatic impact of the evolving situation and attention to the impact of language and imagery. Examiners certainly did not expect exhaustive coverage of such a packed passage but some candidates virtually ignored the lovers in their minute examination of the row between Tybalt and Capulet, and some ignored Tybalt's cholera in their dedicated analysis of the powerful impact of the lovers' sonnet. Although the focus on the word "memorable" or even on the relationship between Romeo and Friar Lawrence was not always sharp and several candidates drifted into an answer to the question they might have preferred

(about the character of Friar Lawrence and his role in the play generally), **Question 5** proved a popular and productive choice for many. The candidates who saw the Friar as Romeo's closest confidant, placing his handling of Romeo's declaration of love for Juliet and of Romeo's reaction to the news of his banishment at the centre of their answers, tended to write with the greatest relevance and authority. Many candidates went far beyond romantic gushing in their portrayals of Juliet (in answer to **Question 6**) and managed to convey a fascinating and authentic mixture of feelings. Anxiety, urgency, foreboding, despair, passion, desperate hope... tended to be the dominant notes in successful answers. Some answers did become rather bogged down in sentimentality and a romantic afterglow and others made the situation even more complicated for Juliet by transposing the prescribed moment to the *end* of Act Three, Scene Five so that her dissimulation with her mother, her father's threats and the Nurse's betrayal of her all became part of the answer.

The very small number of takers for Wilde's *An Ideal Husband* conveyed a strong sense of enjoyment in answer to **Question 7**, where the expository nature of the extract in terms of plot and character development was firmly grasped. As often happens with extracts from early scenes, candidates appeared rather coy about exploring the significance of their observations in terms of what happens later in the play (between Lady Cheveley and Mrs Chiltern, for instance) - as if they are loath to spoil the ending for an Examiner who may not have read/seen the play. Candidates were understandably more confident in exploring character contrast and the origins of plot conflict in the extract than examining the sources of humour and the nature of the witty dialogue.

Successful answers to **Question 10** on *An Enemy of the People* displayed a very strong grasp of context and of the way the extract represents a final temptation, an ultimate test of Stockmann's integrity. Many candidates grasped the thematic significance of the agonising choice which Stockmann has to make and, in addition, the best answers explored the dramatic expression of the conflicting feelings he is experiencing (in his movement, his language, his apparent wavering...) and the building of suspense. There was a great deal of sympathy for the way Stockmann suffers at the hands of the community he is trying to serve at the public meeting in many answers to **Question 11**, although the exact focus of the question (on the portrayal of Stockmann himself) was occasionally lost in the vigorous denunciation of the corruption or naivety of the townsfolk. Several strong answers, while sympathising with Stockmann's situation, were alert to the more disagreeable aspects of his personality revealed in Act Four. There were some convincingly passionate Petras portrayed in response to **Question 12** caught up in the excitement of her father's plans and her admiration for him. Some candidates expressed some credible anxiety about the practical situation as if Petra is aware of her mother's concerns, but the dominant impression conveyed in successful answers was that Petra is very much her father's daughter.



**2446/1 – Foundation Tier and 2446/2 – Higher Tier  
Scheme B: Poetry and Prose Pre-1914**

Candidates entering for this unit produced some well written, responsive and cogently argued essays this year, which showed on the whole extremely good knowledge of the set texts. Foundation Tier candidates responded particularly well to the degree of emphasis, at this level, on personal response to the affective powers of the poems and to characterisation and narrative situation. One area of concern this session, however, was the apparent lack of understanding in the poetry section of the paper, as outlined below.

Work on the OCR anthology *Opening Lines* varied considerably this year in both the *War* and the *Town and Country* sections. Strong answers were characterised by an ability to understand the overall meaning of the poems and the poet's viewpoint combined with the skills of analysing the effects of language. Many candidates this year, however, seemed to be writing about the poems as "unseens" without a clear grasp of content or of the poet's standpoint - especially in response to the war poems. This was equally true of Higher Tier responses as of those at Foundation level. Interpretations of the poems varied widely, as is accepted and welcomed, but there were responses to the poems that are simply not supported by the words on the page. Some of the poems were also interpreted very literally. Candidates need to study *all* the poems in the section and look for likely pairings so that they are prepared to compare. Too many candidates took "compare" to mean contrast, ignoring the wording of the question and looking for differences between the poems that do not necessarily exist.

This was particularly evident in answers to Question 1 on *The Man He Killed* and *Song*. Most candidates wrote well about the Hardy poem, although some seemed to think that the narrator hated his enemy and was glad that he shot him. Most candidates were able to comment on the vital repetition of "because" and drew very reasonable conclusions from this about the narrator's state of mind. *Song* proved problematic for candidates, as many ignored the fact that the first two verses are qualified by the final verse, as signified by the "But" of the opening line. They, therefore, interpreted the poem as vindictive and pro-war. A minority of candidates read the poem in a very literal way and thought that the narrator was a hunter's hound and not a human. The most successful answers examined the words of the poem very carefully. The phrase, "vanquished victors", attracted the attention of the most able, and they also appreciated the force of "the hunter's hound" Candidates who had been well prepared, wrote detailed and sensitive responses to both poems. There were some excellent, genuinely exploratory responses to Question 2. These grasped the different uses of the natural world in each poem and wrote perceptively about the pathetic fallacy in *Tommy's Dead*. Less successful answers tended to ignore the wording of the question and to omit the depiction of Ohio in *Come up from the fields father...* which contrasts dramatically with the second half of the poem and adds poignancy to the family's grief.

Candidates responded to the obvious contrast between Kipling and Collins' poems in answer to Question 3. Strong answers here were characterised by an understanding of the final lines of *Hyaenas* and the romanticised view of the soldiers' sacrifice in *Ode Written in the Beginning of the Year 1746*. Some weaker answers spent too much time giving autobiographical information about Kipling at the expense of responding to the actual poem and confused the disrespectful perspective of the hyaenas with that of Kipling.

Question 4 on *The Passionate Shepherd to His Love* and *The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd* proved very popular and there were some extremely accomplished answers, examining both the Arcadian fantasy of Marlowe and Raleigh's "tempus fugit" riposte. The best understood the convention which Marlowe was writing in and appreciated the fanciful way he was expressing his adoration of the nymph. Less successful answers made overstated claims for the shepherd being either too materialistic or too lustful and missed the Nymph's point that time changes everything. Strong answers perceived that the shepherd's world is unrealistically timeless and

weaker ones took it all a bit too literally in a “how could he afford those things on a shepherd’s wages and wouldn’t that bed of roses have lots of thorns in it, wellies would be more appropriate than fur lined slippers ” style response.

*Conveyancing* and *Symphony in Yellow* in Question 5 proved stumbling blocks for the unprepared. Many candidates seemed baffled by the content of *Conveyancing*, making it a far more complicated poem than Hood intended, and misread Wilde’s poem as an essay on pollution. Many gave the impression that they had never read *Conveyancing* until the examination. There were, however, some detailed and perceptive answers responding carefully to Wilde’s imagery and Hood’s sense of comedy.

Candidates wrote well about how a mood of mystery and horror are created in the *Song of the Shirt* and *The World*, selecting material effectively, analysing style and structure in depth and avoiding forced and unconvincing comparison. There were some rather far-fetched interpretations of *The World* (it is all about prostitutes, vampires and werewolves apparently) and some candidates who struggled with its overall meaning, though responding to the horror in the imagery.

Work on Blake’s *Songs of Innocence and Experience* was lively and perceptive. In responses to Question 7, *London* stimulated some fine writing. Strong answers scrutinised the imagery and suggested a range of symbolic interpretation. There were some very systematic comparisons, which looked at sound, colour and the treatment of children to structure the answers. The very best responses avoided oversimplification in their response to *Holy Thursday* and even suggested irony in Blake’s attitude to the regimented children and the compulsory exhibition of piety and gratitude. Less successful answers put diametrically opposed versions of the poem in the essay without rationalising the apparent contradiction.

It was always going to be interesting how candidates would approach the popular and much discussed poems in Question 8. Responses to this question, more than any other, suffered from an excess of baggage about the theories and prejudices of Blake. The best answers avoided reductive views of an “evil” Tyger and Blake’s hatred of “satanic mills” and, instead, commented on the energy, power and vibrancy of the beast and the narrator’s awed response to it. There were some fine contrasts between the voices of the two poems (innocent child/fearful adult) and thoughtful attention to the effect of question and answer in *The Lamb* and of rhetorical questions in *The Tyger*.

In answers to Question 9, the two *Innocence* poems *The Little Black Boy* and *The Chimney Sweeper* were the favoured pairing. These produced some bright responses to the use of voice, direct speech, absence/presence of parents, black-white imagery and the promise of a joyous afterlife. *Infant Sorrow* caused problems for some candidates but overall the suffering of children was understood and discussed with textual support.

Hardy’s *Selected Poems* produced some strong work but the tendency to force poems into opposite positions also emerged here, as in work on the OCR Anthology. The best answers to Question 10 tried to explain the nature of Hardy’s loss rather than simply reacting to the pathetic fallacy of the wintry landscape in *The Darkling Thrush*, but the handling of the second poem, *In Tenebris 1*, tended to be the discriminator here. Answers which went beyond the reference to bereavement in the first stanza (as a comparative thematic link with *The Darkling Thrush*), to look at the absence of all feeling in the rest of the poem and spend time considering the meaning, significance and effect of the final lines in each poem, tended to be very successful.

In answers to Question 11, the brevity and condensed impact of *She At His Funeral* was widely appreciated and there were many tightly focused responses to the contrasts and the effect of the personal pronouns. Some candidates were confused about the identity of the narrator in *Her Death and After* and argued for sympathy for the wife. The length of the poem led to some

narrative drift, as if candidates felt that they had to "cover" the poem rather than establish the situation quickly and economically and then adopt a selectively relevant approach.

In answer to Question 12, the need to establish common ground led some candidates to suggest that *On the Departure Platform* depicted another failing/ending relationship. There was, however, good attention to the significant imagery in *Neutral Tones* and the exact nature of Hardy's disappointment in *A Broken Appointment*. One candidate objected to the sexism in the description of the departing female as a bit of "fluff" in *On the Departure Platform*.

*Northanger Abbey* stimulated some well-informed and engaged writing, though the passage-based Question 13 was answered with varying degrees of success. Some candidates clearly understood the humour of the misunderstanding between Catherine and Eleanor and appreciated Henry Tilney's witty and ironic contributions. They saw the relationship between this passage and Catherine's response to *Northanger Abbey* later in the novel and Henry's similar role in leading her towards a less "Gothic novel inspired" view of reality. Less successful answers simply did not see the misunderstanding about the "something shocking" which was to come out in London or appreciate that Henry Tilney's comments about women's intelligence are not to be taken too seriously. Most candidates, however, could see the role the passage plays in the developing relationship between Catherine and Henry.

Question 14 produced some very detailed studies of Catherine and what makes her interesting and entertaining, with candidates citing her misjudgements, innocence/naivety, maturation process and the reader's ironically superior understanding. The strongest answers compared her "ordinariness" to the qualities of literary heroines and appreciated the amusement inherent in her adherence to the Gothic.

In answers to Question 15, candidates enjoyed getting their teeth into the Thorpes and exposing their mendacity, greed and selfishness, although one or two pitied them for their social position. Good candidates pointed out that the two single-parent families actually had much in common and that neither General Tilney nor Capt Tilney were in any way superior in morality to Mrs Thorpe or Isabella and saw that Eleanor and Henry made good foils for their Thorpe counterparts. The best scripts were aware that the distinction lies in the way the characters say things, as well as what they do, and brought out the qualities in the writing which encourage this comparison.

*Hard Times* produced some strong responses this year and strong answers demonstrated an excellent knowledge of the novel as a whole. Question 16 produced a wide variety of achievement and was most successfully tackled when candidates concentrated both on their own feelings about Gradgrind and Louisa and on how Dickens creates such a response. Many candidates put the passage into its context with skill, seeing it as the climax of Gradgrind's failed system, and looked closely at the writing. They showed appreciation of the dynamics of the Gradgrind/Louisa relationship, the new Gradgrind emerging, Louisa's "fire" finally bursting out and the nature of her crisis with Harthouse. Less successful responses were confused about the reason for Louisa's visit, claimed that she was questioning her love for Bounderby and failed to mention Harthouse at all. In general, however, sympathy for both characters was much in evidence although some tougher candidates thought that Gradgrind was receiving his just deserts.

Candidates who chose Question 17 answered well, selecting the initially comic and later more sinister aspects of Mrs. Sparsit. The snobbery, social comedy, jealousy of Louisa and Mrs. Sparsit's contributions to the novel's climactic discoveries were understood and appreciated, as well as the caricature comedy of her physical description.

In answer to Question 18, successful responses saw the relationship between Rachael and Stephen Blackpool as central to exposing the "muddle" of Coketown. Strong candidates supported their answers with a detailed knowledge of the text and of the "angelic" imagery

surrounding Rachael. Weaker responses delineated the tragic situation but did not comment on the nature of the relationship that closely. A common misconception was that Stephen had tried to kill his wife. Stephen's tragic death was handled with sensitivity.

The passage based Question 19 on *Far From The Madding Crowd* proved a strong discriminator. Successful answers looked closely at the descriptions of the destruction of Fanny's grave to establish the malignancy of fate and the consequent sympathy we feel for Troy. They also paid close attention to the end of the extract, where Troy wishes himself another man, explaining how the contrast between this and his usual arrogance leads us to see him in a different light - albeit temporarily; many candidates perceptively qualified this by pointing out that his regret for the dead Fanny hardly outweighs his selfish and callous treatment of her when alive.

The best answers to Question 20 avoided mere narrative and really evaluated Boldwood's state of mind, drawing on a wide range of evidence from the novel. Strong answers brought out the insistent and unyielding quality of his speech, as well as his neglect of the farm and purchase of gifts for 'Bathsheba Boldwood'. Candidates were good at identifying how Hardy sows the seeds of obsessive love very early in his descriptions of Boldwood, and a number wrote well about how he is taunted by Troy on the latter's return from Bath, and how this might set up the novel's tragic denouement.

In response to Question 21, candidates focused on what the episode of the bloated sheep reveals of Bathsheba's relationship with Oak, such as her dependence and his loyalty and love. The best responses showed a clear sense of the context but also looked at the detail of the chapter to convey a sense of the drama - the panic, the almost comic ineptitude of the rustics, the descriptions of the dying sheep, Bathsheba's agonised climb-down, the suspense filled delay. Weaker answers tended to narrate the episode without comment on its drama.

In answers to Question 22 on *Silas Marner*, candidates needed to balance analysis of the drama of the passage itself with appreciation of why it is a turning point for Silas and Godfrey. Passage based questions always require an in depth response to the extract and this should be the candidates' first priority. Godfrey's dramatic dilemma was analysed closely in good answers, which also showed a sense of context and the irony of his reactions in the extract. Godfrey might be freed by the death of Molly and by Silas's adoption of his child but he comes to regret his decision not to acknowledge her. Strong answers also perceived the drama of Silas's surprise entry into the Red House and commented on the significance to him and to the novel of his keeping Eppie, without relating his whole life story.

Question 23 was less popular but produced some lively responses: again candidates enjoyed the opportunity to dissect a truly repellent character, one or two spotting elements of caricature about him, especially his jealousy, blackmail, treatment of Wildfire and relationship with his elder brother. Better answers focused more on 'his fate' pointing out that he has a significant posthumous influence in the novel, and that ironically that influence invariably turns out for the better.

Answers to Question 24 were few and tended to be rather sketchy, seeing Lantern Yard as purely "industrial" and Raveloe as "rural" without comment on how Silas is treated by both communities and without looking at their different approaches to religion and "enjoyment".

Poe's *Selected Tales* continues to be a popular text, though Foundation Tier candidates, in particular, often find Poe's style very difficult. Too many candidates feel the need to include biographical details of Poe's alcoholism and drug dependency, which detract from the quality of their answers.

There were some effective answers to Question 25 but many candidates did not seem to have studied the relationship between Dupin and the narrator in the various stories in which they

appear and thus found the passages hard to decode and to put in context. Stronger answers focused on the Holmes/Watson element of the relationship and commented on its unconventional nature, as depicted in the extracts.

There was a very wide range of responses to Question 26. Many were excellent - selecting key aspects of the setting such as the symbolic fissure in the house in *The Fall of the House of Usher* and appreciating the use of colour scheme and clock in the Black Chamber of *The Masque of the Red Death*. Less successful answers gave unspecific comment on the description as gothic/scary/detailed, without comment on what makes it particularly memorable in the story.

Question 27 produced some excellent, near forensic work on both the psyche of the narrators and Poe's stylistic methods of revealing their state of mind. Lower achieving candidates tended to narrate rather than evaluate but there were some strong personal responses to what the candidates found disturbing, even though some found the narrator's treatment of the cat more disturbing than his casually embedding an axe in his wife's brain in *The Black Cat*.

Work on Question 28 on *The History of Mr. Polly* demonstrated background knowledge and personal response. The personality of Mr Polly had appealed to the candidates and the lazy, contented description in the passage proved evocative. Often, they were less sure on how to respond to the dialogue between Mr Polly and the fat woman, and some veered off the passage too quickly to give an overall impression of the novel as a whole and Mr Polly's development.

There were few answers to Question 29 suggesting, sadly, that that the three P's had made little impact.

In answer to Question 30 candidates responded well to the subtle comedy in Wells' narrative of the event. Some might have had a surer grasp of Miriam's character, values and motivation. Weaker candidates tended to relate the incident rather than concentrate on Wells' writing.

Candidates writing about Kate Chopin's *Short Stories* demonstrated engagement with the characters and strong personal response. In answers to Question 31, however, candidates tended to paraphrase rather than concentrate on the effectiveness of the extracts as openings to the stories.

There were some excellent answers to Question 32 although understandably some found it quite hard to comprehend Adrienne and her relationship with the nuns.

Responses to Question 33 really showed how far candidates understood the subtleties of two brilliant stories and appreciated Chopin's original narrative technique. Many candidates rose to the challenge and produced strong answers.

Very few candidates in either Tier failed to complete the paper and most used their time effectively.

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

The question of the seemingly unremitting rise in standards is clearly answered by the moderators of coursework this year. More and more centres have embedded into the curriculum effective means of teaching coursework and of using tried and tested tasks that have proved engaging, well differentiated and challenging to candidates of all abilities. Additionally, an increasing number of centres regularly implement effective standardisation procedures, resulting in accurate application of the assessment criteria. Many moderators have commented on the dedication of teachers and how their annotations reveal an astute interpretation of the assessment objectives and provide practical and supportive feedback to students.

Centres should read moderator comments on the ModReps carefully. Often there is affirmation and encouragement as well as wise advice. In some cases there is a gentle warning that assessment is nearing the limit of tolerance and such centres may find themselves being scaled next year. On the rare occasions where moderators have had to question a centre's order of merit, centres have responded positively and co-operatively: teachers and moderators share a common concern that other candidates should not be penalised because one teaching set has been marked too generously.

It may be worth commenting on tasks that have proved successful, even impressive, with some very able candidates but are fraught with danger for less able students if not properly supported. Tasks that look for some exploration of the socio-cultural elements within a text can satisfy AO4 but distract from the text as an artefact. For instance, questions on gender roles or parenthood in 'Romeo and Juliet' proved highly effective with some very capable students but in other instances meant that candidates failed to realise the text as drama in which stagecraft and language are instrumental in conveying emotion and character. Moderators often find that the favoured question of many centres which tries to attribute guilt in 'Romeo and Juliet' can result in a rather forensic diagnosis that ignores the fact that the candidates are fictitious creations. Evaluating film versions or producing actors' notes were successful when highly able students rooted their responses in an understanding of text and dramatic effect, but more commonly answers focused on lighting and costumes and offered only the most generalised knowledge of the text.

Many candidates were able to exploit the poetry questions to the full to demonstrate skill in using a knowledge of context to inform understanding; to compare texts in a sophisticated and sustained way (AO3); and to explore and appreciate the function of form and language in a way that was personal and enriching to the reader (AO2). These students must derive so much more pleasure from poetry than those who see it merely as another narrative form, a translation exercise or a clinical display of literary devices. Worse is the use of poetry as historical documentary, to study changing attitudes to war or the development of weaponry. One moderator was left wondering about the possible link between Marvell's being an MP for Hull and his fondness for nubile young virgins. This seemed about as significant as the fact that William Wilberforce and John Prescott have also been MPs for Hull! Some centres are clearly advising candidates to include (often irrelevant and unassimilated) biographical detail, in a mistaken view that this meets the requirements of AO4. Comparisons of Blake's and Wordsworth's perspectives on London continue to be effective and Oscar Wilde's opinion was added this year. However, there is a danger with including too many poems which often results in superficial comment purely at a level of meaning, hardly meeting the requirements of AO1, let alone the others. If centres choose to make a comparison between a pre and a post 1914 poem, such as 'Charge of the Light Brigade' and 'Dulce et Decorum Est', it is important that equal weight is given to each poem so that the full range of assessment objectives is displayed with the pre-1914 poem. Many centres have proved that a modern poem is not needed in order to complete the task well.

The problems caused by tasks directing candidates a socio-cultural study are evident, too, in prose assignments that focus on topics such as 'what we learn about the Nineteenth Century from Hardy's short stories'. Thus some responses are of the type that 'there was a lack of telephones', or that, 'if available, a quick text message would have saved the protagonist a lot of hassle'. One task that did prove successful with a number of candidates who were reasonably competent readers was about what we learn about schools variously from 'Jane Eyre', 'Nicholas Nickleby' or 'Hard Times'. In this case candidates avoided the pitfalls because of skilled scaffolding by teachers, where students were provided with a structure rather than with detailed content; these students are clearly learning how to become independent thinkers and communicators. 'The Red Room', 'Jekyll and Hyde', Kate Chopin, Sherlock Holmes and 'Wessex Tales' continue to work well, but it was also encouraging to see such works as 'Mayor of Casterbridge', 'Great Expectations' and 'Silar Marner' commanding the attention of candidates.

Some centres might consider giving candidates more of a lead on how to use quotation constructively. A quotation is effective if it is short, integral to an argument and fruitful in terms of exploration of language and style, rather than just reiterating a narrative point. Too often Shakespeare wrote a majority of the candidate's essay. Equally tiresome is where every student from a teaching-set appears to be using the same essay structure, copied from the board, with the same quotations. This can exclude candidates from the top bands, where evidence of original thought is demanded.

Centres still tend to prefer the 2443 option, but in some cases more able sets were challenged by the variety and opportunities offered by 2447 and moderators would certainly like to see more.

Coursework continues to offer candidates an opportunity to extend their appreciation of literature reflectively and intelligently. Teachers too have become adept at using its potential to facilitate the growth of young people as readers. It has given professionals in the classroom ownership of assessment and standardisation, a function that again this year has been used skilfully and responsibly.

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

There were less than five hundred entries for this session. Since the great majority were at Higher Tier the following comments will focus on these. Most candidates had been thoroughly prepared for the examination. There were few rubric infringements, although a small number of candidates attempted only two answers.

Most Answers on *Whose Life...* tackled Question 1, and most of those were able to engage with the two key words 'dramatic' and 'important' in the question. Weaker answers were those which neglected the former and just explained the story in response to the latter. The best of the few who attempted the empathic response for Question 2 were able to inscribe touches of irony in Dr Emerson's determination not to let Ken die.

*Death of a Salesman* was a popular text. Most answered on the extract, Question 3. Better answers showed not only an ability to look closely at Miller's dramatic methods in the extract, but also an awareness of its context. Some weaker answers contained unnecessary information about Miller's life and times, or unassimilated notes such as 'Willy is conventional insofar as he has a tragic character flaw' (Willy doesn't actually appear in the extract, and where do such notes come from?!), or disappointing assertions such as 'the extract is made dramatic by the use of punctuation'. Very few indeed attempted Question 4, the empathic response.

It is probably true to say that the poetry answers were not the weakest this session. Answers to Question 9 on the whole showed reasonable general understanding of the two difficult poems, but found difficulty discussing their language. Question 10 was a popular choice, but answers tended towards either sweeping summary or plodding paraphrase. Stevie was almost always 'he'. Question 11 answers usually showed sound grasp of the two war poems. However several were at pains to argue that since Hinkson was a woman she didn't really know what she was talking about. Question 12 answers were mostly well prepared, except that the significance of the Brother Officer in 'The Hero' was often omitted or misunderstood. Candidates and their teachers are reminded that the invitations to respond to the poems in the questions ('strong feelings', 'movingly', 'strikingly') should always be accepted, in preference to merely explaining what the poems are about.

Almost all prose answers used *Opening Worlds*. Better answers to Question 17 were able to address the key word 'effective' by referring to the passages and also to the stories which follow. Weaker answers made vague remarks about 'making you want to read on'. There were many good answers to Question 18 which referred to apt details in the chosen stories and which also understood how contrasts are made between rich and poor, and how the stories are structured to emphasise this. A few weaker answers tended to lapse into paraphrase, or into diatribe. Candidates and their teachers are reminded that there is no need to compare the extracts or the stories when answering these questions.



**General Certificate of Secondary Education  
English Literature (1901)  
June 2007 Assessment Session**

**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				32	27	22	17	12	0
	UMS	69				60	50	40	30	20	0
2442/2	Raw	66	49	44	38	33	27	24			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	52	46	40	34	27	23			0
	UMS	60	54	48	42	36	30	24			0
2445/1	Raw	21				19	16	13	10	7	0
	UMS	27				24	20	16	12	8	0
2445/2	Raw	30	27	25	22	19	16	14			0
	UMS	40	36	32	28	24	20	16			0
2446/1	Raw	46				37	30	23	17	11	0
	UMS	69				60	50	40	30	20	0
2446/2	Raw	66	57	51	45	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	37	33	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>	7.3	23.7	48.6	72.3	86.7	94.0	97.8	99.3	100.0	47410

**47410 candidates were entered for aggregation this session.**

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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