

Report on the Units

January 2008

1901/MS/R/08J

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This report on the Examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the syllabus content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the Examination.

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CONTENTS

GCSE English Literature (1901)

REPORT ON THE UNITS

Unit/Content	Page
Unit 2441: Drama Post - 1914	1
Unit 2442: Post-1914 Poetry and Prose	8
Unit 2443: Pre-1914 Texts (Coursework)	12
Unit 2447: Post – 1914 Texts (Coursework)	12
Unit 2444: Pre-1914 Texts	14
Unit 2445: Drama Pre-1914	18
Unit 2446: Poetry and Prose Pre - 1914	20
Unit 2448: Post- 1914 Texts	21
Grade Thresholds	23

Unit 2441: Drama Post - 1914

General Comments (including 2445)

A significant number of Centres, representing well over one third of all those following the 1901 Specification, took advantage of the staged entry opportunity and entered candidates for the January Drama Units this year. The overall size of the entry for these Units was slightly smaller than in January 2007, but within that figure there was an increase in Higher Tier entries and a significant decrease in Foundation Tier entries. It was clear that the vast majority of Centres had made shrewd and careful tiering decisions and there was a general feeling amongst examiners that the overall quality of work produced was higher than in any other January entry so far. There was widespread evidence of thorough and sensitive teaching in the way that so many candidates were able to display sound textual knowledge, to focus on the terms of the question, to develop a personal response, to consider the impact on the audience and to engage the emotions depicted in and generated by these plays. Most candidates conveyed not only understanding but also a sense of enjoyment and a willingness to think for themselves that had clearly been stimulated by enthusiastic teaching. Although there is still work to be done in urging some candidates to see the plays as more than just written texts and themselves as more than just “readers”, more and more candidates are trying to picture the play on the stage even if they have not benefited from seeing a live performance. Damaging tendencies like the unloading of prepared answers irrespective of the question, the sterile classification of written features like punctuation and the lengthy consideration of sociological or historical backgrounds – all at the expense of attention to the dramatic detail of the onstage action - were less marked on this occasion although they continue to hamper the achievements of some candidates (see reasons for under-achievement, listed below).

Once again it was clear that *Journey's End* and *Whose Life Is It Anyway?* are firmly established (in first and second place respectively) in the affections of teachers and candidates. *Death of a Salesman* still attracts a sizeable following, especially at Higher Tier, and *The Caretaker* remains the choice of a small but enthusiastic minority. The extract question remains the most popular option although there was a noticeable increase in the numbers attempting the empathic approach. Patterns of question choice varied significantly from Centre to Centre and, on occasions, it seemed that choices had been deliberately circumscribed and candidates warned off particular approaches so that in some Centres no candidates attempted the empathic question and in others (more rarely) virtually every candidate attempted the empathic question as if the extract or discursive choices were seen to be too challenging. In an ideal world, of course, candidates would feel prepared and confident to tackle all three approaches and would make their choice based on personal preference and familiarity with the material. Time constraints may make this difficult but it would be a shame if a lingering perception that the empathic question in particular is either too “risky” or too “soft” an option closes off such a stimulating, involving and imaginative approach to the teaching (and examining) of drama texts. Many candidates of all abilities find the opportunity to adopt a point-of-view very distinct from their own a liberating and stimulating experience, and find that the directness and compression of a “thoughts caught on the wing” approach suits them much better than the structure of the critical essay in a 45 minute exam. Some familiarity with the style of all the possible questions seems like a sensible policy so that choices are not artificially circumscribed before the candidates have even opened their papers.

Examiners once again logged their environmental concern that 8-page and even 16-page answer booklets continue to make regular appearances when the average answer in this one-question exam occupies only two to three sides.

Examples of under-achievement, though less marked than in all other January entries, could generally be attributed to the following causes:

1. Getting the balance wrong in the extract-based question. Many previous reports on the Drama Units have commented on the damaging tendency to choose an extract-based question and then to treat it like a broadly discursive question as if the extract itself does not actually appear on the paper, but this tendency continues to undermine some answers. The best answers establish the context quickly and then use the extract itself as a starting-point for all their ideas, so that a discussion of Ken Harrison's medical condition and the issue of choice in response to Question 7, for instance, will be rooted firmly in the detail of the extract and the tense sparring between Dr Emerson and Mr Hill, rather than bouncing away from the extract and taking on a wholly separate life of its own. Specific responses to the powerfully disturbing images in Juliet's soliloquy, printed on the 2445 papers for Question 4 on *Romeo and Juliet*, should not be swamped by lengthy summaries of the doom-laden events which have brought her to this point or of the tragic consequences of consuming the potion. Conversely, some candidates adopted such a blinkered, line-by-line approach to the extract that they conveyed very little sense that they had read the rest of the play at all. This proved damaging for the small number of candidates who worked through the conversation between Willy and Linda (Question 1 on *Death of a Salesman*) and took the mood of optimism and hope at face value as if sharing the delusions of the Lomans and ignoring the rest of the play, or for the candidates who responded to the tensions between Stanhope, Hibbert and Trotter (the characters present onstage on the Question 10 extract from *Journey's End*) without reference to the raid, the death of Osborne or the real reasons for Stanhope's anger. The place of the extract in the play remains an important element in extract-based answers and successful candidates manage to complement their attention to the detail of the prescribed extract with a sharp awareness of context. The rule of thumb recommended in previous reports remains a good working guide for candidates: devote at least two-thirds of extract-based answers to discussing, quoting from and commenting on the extract itself but don't neglect the significance of the extract in the whole-play context.
2. Decontextualised feature-logging. The hearts of examiners tend to sink when answers on a play extract which deals with the highly charged emotions of serving soldiers in a First World War dug-out (Question 10 on *Journey's End*) begin with statements like "Sherriff makes this a particularly dramatic scene with his use of dashes." When faced with questions which invite them to "Explore the ways" or explain "How" effects are achieved (especially at Higher Tier), several candidates retreated into a generalised listing approach which distanced them from the dramatic effect of the dialogue and action and prevented them from involving themselves fully with the characters and situations. Comments about punctuation and stage directions, in particular, were often so sweeping that they could have been applied to any extract from any play, and candidates who noted that dramatists achieve their effects by using language were wasting valuable time by not engaging with a specific question about a specific moment in a specific play. Some candidates continue to adopt a feature-logging approach to the technical features of the words on the page, with very little reference to the exact nature of the dialogue or of the action or of the characterisation or of the plot development, as if these are not part of the dramatist's craft. The obsession with graphological features (like punctuation or the use of italics for stage directions) conveys the strong impression that these candidates see the plays merely as written texts directed at a reader rather than at an audience and read stage directions as tacked-on elements of this written text rather than as part of the dramatic action of a scene. In the worst examples of this approach, candidates classified the number of dashes or rhetorical questions or ellipses at great length but paid scant attention to what is actually happening onstage or to what the characters are saying to each other. In a 45 minute essay there is no time for generalised comments like "the writer achieves his effects with the use of dialogue and stage directions...the stage directions tell you how the character is feeling and how the line should be said". Answers which engage with the specific question and explore the effect of specific moments in their prescribed play will obviously be the most successful.

3. Exam Inexperience leading to...
- a. inattention to one part of a two-part question so that some answers covered what is “dramatic” (the conflicts, the tensions, the changes...) in the relationship between Stanhope and Raleigh (Question 11 on *Journey’s End*) but neglected to explore what is “important” about the relationship (in showing the effects of war on Stanhope, in contrasting innocence and experience, the home front and the front line...), for instance
 - b. a panicky misreading of the question – some candidates mistook Prince Escalus (Question 5 on *Romeo and Juliet*) for Paris, for instance
 - c. time-wasting opening paragraphs which announce intentions and rehash the question (“I am going to write about what I find fascinating in the opening to Act Two of *Death of a Salesman* - Question 1) rather than beginning to answer it
 - d. the linear answer to discursive questions, working chronologically and laboriously through the development of relationships (between Ken and Dr Scott - Question 8, or Stanhope and Raleigh - Question 11, or Beatrice and Benedick - Question 2) without establishing an overview and exploring selected detail which clearly relates to the terms of the question
 - e. contorted third-person (“If I was Stanhope I would be thinking...”) or “Dear Diary” approaches to empathic questions, or the loss of the particular character’s limited point-of-view so that the young Biff (Question 3 on *Death of a Salesman*) possesses full knowledge of everything that is to happen in the next seventeen years or so, or Romeo (Question 6 on *Romeo and Juliet*) knows every detail of the heated exchange between Tybalt and Capulet - suggesting that some candidates are unfamiliar with the empathic approach but still find it an attractive option in the exam
 - f. the missing out of answer numbers, either on the front-page grid of the answer booklet or in the margin, as if the candidate is unsure about question selection
 - g. answers to more than one question or on more than one text...a few candidates tackled a *Death of a Salesman* question because it appeared first on the paper when they had clearly not studied it
 - h. long plans but short answers – over-elaborate plans are often unhelpful in such a short exam.

Comments on Individual Questions

Death of a Salesman

Question 1 proved a very popular choice and there were many outstanding answers which looked closely at the dramatic detail of the opening to Act Two and produced fascinating responses to the significance of features like the music, the buttoning/unbuttoning of the jacket, Willy’s desire to plant seeds and the failing refrigerator. Many candidates on both tiers commented intelligently on the mood shift in the extract, as money worries return to haunt the Lomans, and successfully contrasted the morning mood and the relationship between Willy and Linda in the extract with other areas of the play. The strongest answers grounded their exploration of the apparently hopeful mood in a clear grasp of the play’s tragic context and conveyed the power of the ironies in Willy’s optimism about Biff’s doomed meeting with Oliver and about his own with Howard, in his yearning for a pastoral idyll in the light of his disdain for Biff’s modest dream to work on the land, and in remarks like “I slept like a dead one” on the day of his death. Many successful candidates were prepared to pursue a range of symbolic possibilities, especially of the seed-planting, suggesting that this is Willy’s attempt to make some mark, or that it is emblematic of a fresh start, or represents another doomed dream of an older, simpler, rural America, or his sons and his failure to raise them well, or his subconscious knowledge of his imminent suicide. Weaker answers tended to plunge into the extract and work through it without taking time to shape their response, and as a result often bought into the Loman optimism with little sense of the enveloping tragedy. There is still a tendency to cite the “American Dream” as a blanket and self-explanatory term which requires no further comment

and prepared discussions of thematic issues distracted some candidates from the dramatic detail of the extract. Assertions that the use of the word “kid” in this play is always a sign of condescension, and that reference to music must involve the flute and its associations, were not helpfully applied to this extract.

Question 2 was tackled by a small but generally confident minority and the best answers conveyed a clear understanding of the play’s dramatic shape in their identification of contrasts (between Biff and Bernard, between Willy and Bernard, between Willy and Charley as fathers, even between Bernard and Howard or Ben...) and of Bernard’s function (in representing genuinely earned success, or embodying the Lomans’ aspirations, or suggesting a rejection of Willy’s superficial values, or providing a reality check, or an example of genuinely admirable qualities...). The ironic reversals in the stories of Biff and Bernard were often very intelligently handled. The best answers paid particular attention to the impact of Bernard’s present-time conversation with Willy in confronting Willy with his own failings and those of his sons, and in stimulating the guilt about Boston which will erupt in the restaurant scene. As one candidate succinctly put it: “Bernard asks the question which the audience is desperate to ask – ‘What happened in Boston, Willy?’” Some candidates experienced difficulties in maintaining the focus on Bernard and drifted into preferred essays about Biff or Willy or flawed values generally.

Question 3 proved to be a highly successful choice for a large number of candidates. The best answers attributed a range of very powerful feelings to the young Biff, combining anger, disillusion and spite very movingly with a sense of sadness, betrayal and loss, and the agonising realisation that he must carry his burden of knowledge alone. These strong answers were underpinned by judicious references to appropriate details like the stockings, the sneakers which are soon to be burnt, the rejection of the Uni option, Mr Birnbaum and the missing Math points, and happy recollections of Biff’s lost childhood, whereas some weaker answers became rather detached from the play in expressing the angst which any modern teenager might feel in experiencing a similar situation. A few candidates struggled with the time shifts and portrayed a Biff already drifting from job to job or knowing about the rubber pipe, or a Biff who could predict with uncanny and unrealistic accuracy the events of the next seventeen years or so. Most candidates managed to produce a convincing “voice” although there were problems with idiom/anachronism of the “my head’s all over the place... like a computer with a virus...because my dad’s been playing away...” variety. Some voices were far too adult, measured and analytical for the moment and the character with some unassimilated discussion of the “American Dream”.

The Caretaker

There were so few answers on *The Caretaker* during this session that generalised comment is very difficult. Most of the Pinter candidates tackled **Question 4** and Pinter’s portrayal of Mick in the extract as unpredictable and menacing proved a productive focus for many answers. The strongest answers wrestled interestingly with the way Mick manipulates Davies, by apparently confiding in him and then turning on him when he makes an indiscreet remark about Aston. The very best were able to explore the dramatic detail of the extract in the context of the play’s shifting relationships without drifting into the kind of decontextualised attention to the surface features of the language (ie the number of interrogatives, exclamations, ellipses...) which has undermined answers on this text in the past. Genuine engagement with the power Mick wields through his linguistic range and fluency was often a central feature of outstanding answers.

A willingness to engage the ambiguities and contradictions in the portrayal of the two brothers in a selective way characterised successful answers to **Question 5**, and one or two sympathetic Astons emerged in response to **Question 6**, but there were very few answers to these two questions.

Whose Life Is It Anyway?

The extract-based question (**Question 7**) once again proved the most popular. Many candidates on both tiers established a clear view of the purpose of the meeting and of the nature of the disagreement between Dr Emerson and Mr Hill. The strongest answers paid close attention to the verbal sparring and conveyed the developing dramatic tension in the battle of wits and wills, and also saw the significance of the visit in confirming Mr Hill's decision to represent Ken and in Ken beginning to take control of his destiny, and understood the point of the final phone call. Some contrasted the formality of the language with the livelier language used in other scenes. The very best often noted the central irony that Ken's life is at stake and he is not personally involved in the discussion. Successful answers often maintained a balanced view of the two professionals and, although many enjoyed the idea that Emerson's authority had been challenged and that he had met his match, they recognised that both men were expressing valid arguments and were carrying out their respective duties. Weaker answers tended to simplify the issues and to demonise Dr Emerson, seeing him as the play's villain and an unscrupulous operator, and even condemning him for mentioning money when he misconstrues the reason for Hill's visit.

The candidates who tackled **Question 8** and managed to establish a personal view of the relationship between Ken and Dr Scott based on carefully selected support and on an appreciation of the feelings of both characters were the most successful. Weaker answers tended to offer prepared essays on the development of Dr Scott throughout the play or to drift into a narrative account of the shared scenes without a strong focus on the nature of the relationship. A willingness to explore the complex conversation about sexual desire, to engage with the drama of Dr Scott's professional and personal conflicts and to offer interpretations of the significance of the proffered and rejected kiss at the end of the play, tended to characterise the strongest answers. Some candidates, particularly at Foundation Tier, experienced difficulties in sorting out the hospital hierarchy and often wrote about Dr Scott as if she is a nurse. There was a widespread tendency to cite every humorous comment as "sexual innuendo" including Ken's very direct compliment, "You have lovely breasts".

The best answers to **Question 9** recognised Kay's youth and inexperience and restricted her point of view accordingly, concentrating on her determination to do the right thing and to become a good nurse, and wrestling with the problems posed by her most challenging patient and by the dating of a colleague with a different approach to his job. Her dutiful professionalism and seriousness were often nicely captured. Strong candidates drew selectively on the conversation about measles and the expense of keeping Ken alive to differentiate Kay's view from John's and also on the conversation about guilt which immediately precedes the moment prescribed by the question. Some candidates found it difficult to restrict their perspective and gave Kay too much knowledge and understanding of Ken's personal life, of his relationship with Dr Scott and even of the private conversations between Scott and Emerson. Some misunderstood the meaning of Ken's "tonic" remark and although some drifted into a rather gushingly romantic view of John, there were some beautifully appropriate remarks like: "John is a little too hands on for my liking."

Journey's End

Question 10, based on the aftermath of the "celebratory" meal, was the most frequently answered question on the paper, followed by **Question 12**, the Stanhope empathic. Many candidates on both tiers displayed a clear sense of the post-raid context, and the most successful not only understood the effect of Osborne's death on Stanhope but also explored the impact of Raleigh's absence and tried to be precise about the reasons for Stanhope's anger. Candidates who commented on the significance of Raleigh's reported remark, "You're not having that, are you?", and conveyed understanding that Stanhope's outbursts to both Trotter and Hibbert are a direct result of Osborne's death and of Raleigh seizing the "moral high

ground”, tended to produce the most authoritative answers. The changing moods and building tensions were often fully discussed with a sharp focus on the dialogue, on the dramatic effect of Stanhope’s prolonged silence and on the impact of the ominous gun sounds in the distance. The second strand of the question proved to be a discriminator and while the majority of candidates could trace the tensions in the printed extract, some adopted a rather blinkered approach, seemed as keen as Stanhope to avoid discussion of the raid, made no reference to Osborne’s death, were unwilling to speculate about the reasons for Raleigh’s absence and therefore found it difficult to make central points about the extract as a “revealing moment in the play”. Some answers got rather bogged down in the possibility that Hibbert is deliberately and knowingly stirring up trouble between Stanhope and Raleigh or that Stanhope is angry because he blames Raleigh for Osborne’s death, and, as with *Whose Life Is It Anyway?*, there was some confusion about rank/hierarchy and a feeling that Hibbert has every right to tell Stanhope to go to bed. Some argued rather unconvincingly that Stanhope’s anger is a shock to the audience because a new side of his character is being revealed. Some logged and calculated the exact number of features like exclamations, imperatives, dashes, italicised words... without engaging with the dramatic situation. Others lost focus on the extract and used the conflict between Stanhope and Hibbert as a starting point for a lengthy discussion of their relationship elsewhere in the play.

The best answers to **Question 11** established a clear view of Stanhope’s complex and evolving relationship with Raleigh, avoiding oversimplification (like “he likes him again at the end”) and selectively exploring the impact of the charged scenes which they share (the initial meeting in the dug-out, the “censoring” of the letter, the confrontation prompted by the meal and Raleigh’s final moments). The weakest drifted into narrative and an unselective working-through of the relationship which often became unbalanced in its concentration on the earlier scenes and obscured the line of argument. This linear approach often prevented Higher Tier candidates from engaging with the second strand of the question, the “importance” of the relationship, and from developing ideas about honour, heroism, the sacrifice of young men and the effects of war.

Although **Question 12** demanded an imaginative leap into the role of a Great War Infantry Commander with life and death responsibilities and appeared more remote from the candidates’ experiences than the young Biff dealing with family trauma or the young Romeo reacting to the first flush of a forbidden love, perhaps, it proved to be a popular and productive choice. The best expressed a very clear view of the suicidal nature of the raid and wrestled with the conflict between Stanhope’s personal anxieties about Osborne and Raleigh and his sense of duty. The detail of the conversation with the Colonel was often sensibly and selectively employed to provide a real flavour of the moment, and the reasons for selecting Osborne and Raleigh, and Stanhope’s professional pride in his Company were fully grasped. Weaker answers experienced some difficulties in accepting the stark realities of the doomed raid and expressed unfounded optimism about the outcomes or continued to argue that Trotter or Hibbert or indeed Stanhope himself should be involved in the raid rather than Stanhope’s two closest friends. Strong answers managed to express a sense of guilt or responsibility or anguished speculation about the potential impact the deaths of Raleigh and Osborne on their families and on Stanhope himself, without tipping over into inappropriate sentimentality or mawkish self-pity. An excessively harsh view of Raleigh was expressed, on occasions, given the circumstances of the raid, with some Stanhopes counting their blessings that Raleigh might be killed and that his irritating presence would be removed. There was much convincing anger about the nature of the raid but some lost control of tone and attitude and slipped into a histrionic railing against the war dominated by bitter cynicism about the high command which was far more reminiscent of Sassoon than Stanhope, and others lost the seriousness of the moment in their enthusiasm for the general idiom and supplied so many “cheeros”, “awfullys”, “splendids” and “jolly goods” that Stanhope began to sound like Bertie Wooster. For many candidates, the words “prig” and “funk” (or “flunk” in some cases) have become general terms of abuse applied to Raleigh, Hibbert, the Colonel and the “Boche” indiscriminately, and Stanhope acquired a rather 21st Century voice, on occasions: “If Hibbert thinks he can bunk off, he’s having a laugh”. There were some unrealistically accurate predictions like “I expect Osborne will give me his watch and wedding

Report on the Units taken in January 2008

ring.” Nevertheless the overall quality of the responses to this empathic question was very high indeed with many candidates conveying an exact knowledge of the moment, a strong grasp of character and relationships, and a convincing voice. Original reflections like “Every time I see Raleigh he reminds me of his sister” and “If only I had not gone back to Barford with my MC, Raleigh wouldn’t have come out here” suggested sophisticated understanding, and one candidate even tried to convey the depth of Stanhope’s self-loathing by coining the word “stanhopelessness”.

Unit 2442: Post-1914 Poetry and Prose

Compared with the number of candidates entered at both Tiers in June, 2007, the January number was quite small, with comparatively few texts studied. Comfortably the most popular texts were the two OCR anthologies, *Opening Lines* and *Opening Worlds*. Candidates in many cases had been entered for the appropriate Tier, but there were occasional cases where this was not so. Centres are reminded that weaker candidates are in danger of being ungraded if they are entered at Higher Tier; and the level of a strong candidate's achievement will be capped at Grade C if entered at Foundation Tier.

A substantial number of candidates, particularly at Foundation Tier, appeared to find difficulty in completing the paper in the allotted time; there were often very short second answers, too brief to do any sort of justice to the question, which adversely affected the candidate's level of achievement. One teacher-examiner wondered whether Centres, given the pressure on their time and resources, were able to lay on "mock" examinations to prepare their candidates for the authentic examining experience.

Most candidates at both Tiers displayed a satisfactory knowledge of the texts they had studied, but, obviously, those who knew and understood their texts well attained a higher level of achievement than those whose knowledge and understanding were much more limited. Centres know the importance of encouraging candidates to revise thoroughly before the examination and to include the poetry in their revision.

Poetry

Opening Lines was the most popular of the poetry texts, and the *1914-1918 War Poetry ii* the most popular section.

Comparatively few candidates answered on *How It Looks From Here*, and most of those considered the pairing of *Judging Distances* and *Engineers' Corner*. Most showed some understanding of what was interesting and amusing in the Reed, especially those who differentiated between the army "voice" and that of "the one at the end, asleep." Some candidates, unfortunately, showed little understanding, one claiming that it was to do with English people building on land that had once been used to graze sheep. The irony of *Engineers' Corner* was often missed, candidates taking the poem at face value. There were some sound responses to Plath's *Mirror*, indicating the fears and worries of its user, and some ingenious interpretations of *The Hare*, explaining that the occupier of the bed was a pregnant woman desperate for a child, or, alternatively, a woman abandoned by her husband and desperate for a child. Few seemed content with the thesis that *The Hare* could be simply a nightmare in which events, though surreal, evolve into a fear or worry blown out of proportion, especially in the "dead of night". The best answers were those that engaged with the language of the poems, the writing, rather than merely explaining what the candidate thought they meant, the content. There were too few responses to the third question for any valid comment to be made.

The pairing of *The Bohemians* and *Lamentations* was the most popular of the three questions on the war poetry, but, not surprisingly, candidates did not find either poem easy. Good analyses of the Gurney discussed the two types of soldiers portrayed, the non-Bohemians as well as the Bohemians, recognising that lying in Artois or Picardy was the destiny of both. Responses often failed to distinguish between the two groups, or understood Gurney as taking the moralistic stance that those who did not follow army regulations died, whereas those who did not only survived but were promoted. *Lamentations* again proved challenging. Good analyses understood that, in Sassoon's ten lines, there are three characters: the narrator, whose judgement of the grief-stricken soldier Sassoon satirises in the last line; the watching sergeant;

and the stricken soldier himself. Such analyses focused on the way war has affected all three, desensitising both the sergeant and the onlooking narrator, and reducing the soldier almost to an animal. Sound discussions focused on the suffering of the soldier and considered the language Sassoon uses to describe it. There was some misunderstanding of “gone west”: some candidates interpreted this as meaning “been posted to the western front”; and others took it to mean that the brother had deserted. Another interpretation was that the soldier kneeling half-naked on the floor was being beaten and tortured because of his brother’s desertion. Such misinterpretation was perhaps influenced by images of Abu Ghraib but owes nothing to Sassoon’s poem.

Candidates were usually able to respond quite well to the expectations of men joining the colours in the Hinkson poem and to what actually awaited them, and support their ideas with detailed reference to the poem. *Recruiting* they often found more difficult, perhaps because of the different voices in the poem. A number of answers focused on Mackintosh’s attack on such targets as the “fat civilians”, losing sight of the set question about what men expected and found. Similarly a number of answers to Question 6 lost sight of how the women at home were affected by the deaths of the men, and simply went through the poems, often with some thoroughness, explaining what they were about without following the thrust of the question. Too often *Perhaps* – was seen as much more upbeat than its title suggests, candidates claiming that Britain was now ready to get on with her life, despite the last line of each stanza. The tone of *Reported Missing* was not always clearly identified, with “I laugh!” creating some misunderstanding. Some candidates claimed that the speaker was a mother who was in denial about her daughter’s death, and very few recognised the sonnet form or what it might suggest. As with all poetry answers, the best endeavoured to respond to how the language is used and not simply to explain or paraphrase what the poets are saying.

There were no responses to the poems of Larkin and Fanthorpe.

Few Centres were tempted to answer on *Touched with Fire*, but those of their candidates who succumbed mainly responded to *5 Ways to Kill a Man* and *Telephone Conversation*. The Brock was often simply explained: verse 1, Crucifixion; verse 2, medieval times; verse 3, First World War ... The significance and effect of the last verse were frequently over-looked. A number of candidates commented effectively on the emotionless tone and the recipe-style structure, but could profitably have commented on the language in greater detail. Candidates responded quite well to the situation in *Telephone Conversation*, but hardly at all to the language of the poem. Racism was strongly condemned, often with the dubious assertion that it was a twentieth-century problem that has disappeared in this enlightened twenty-first century. What has disappeared is the twentieth-century telephone booth, so candidates seemed sometimes baffled by “Red booth”, “Button B” and “Button A”. The humour of Brock was often hinted at, but not often developed, whilst Soyinka’s was almost invariably undetected, perhaps because of the seriousness of his theme. Certainly very few candidates tried to make anything of the last lines of his poem.

There were some interesting responses to *Hawk Roosting* and *Mushrooms*, not least where the hawk and the mushrooms were the focus as representatives of the natural world, and not their environment, such as trees and loam. Plath, as ever, provoked unexpected interpretations; not least that *Mushrooms* is about the birth of a baby, with Plath’s personal history well to the fore. With close textual reference in support, this interpretation was quite acceptable, if not always closely related to the question. There were too few responses to the actions of the men in *Digging* and *Dulce et Decorum Est* for useful comment to be made.

Generally, poetry essays relied on paraphrase/ explanation with some textual support. Overviews of the poems were comparatively rare; it is of great help to examiners in arriving at a mark if the candidate gives a clear indication of understanding what the poems are about at an early stage of the essay.

Prose

Comfortably the most popular of the Prose texts was the OCR Anthology *Opening Worlds*. It is probably worth repeating in this Report that the ability to compare is not assessed in candidates' responses to prose texts. Comparison is, of course, assessed in responses to poetry.

Candidates may find comparison a useful way of giving a structure to their essays on prose, but too often the impression is given that comparing is an end in itself. Sometimes paragraph after paragraph focused on the similarities and differences between Nancy and Neo, with dizzying oscillations from one story to the other. This came at the expense of the question at both Foundation and Higher Tier which threw the emphasis on the characters and their relationships with family members.

In addition, both questions referred to "these extracts". Candidates did not need to go out of the extracts, although clearly some feelings about Neo have already been created by the time the extract begins. The same, of course, is not true about Nancy since the extract is taken from very early in the story. Weaker responses at both Tiers relied exclusively on telling both stories, or building up character studies, supported by textual detail, of Neo particularly, based on material from much earlier in the story. Sometimes *Dead Men's Path* was not well understood: Nancy was variously said to dislike her husband, simply going along with him for the money; to be a good teacher; to be over-bearing and ordering her husband about; to have always loved him, despite the fact that he didn't care for her ... Somewhat better answers paraphrased the extracts with a little focus at Foundation Tier on feelings towards the characters. The best responses engaged with the language of the extracts, considering the effects of such words as "infected" in *Dead Men's Path* and "patronizingly" and "And how's things?" in *Snapshots of a Wedding*. At Foundation Tier some candidates were shocked at Neo's way of securing Kegoletile as a husband, overlooking the fact that this is her second pregnancy and that the amiable Mathata has also borne Kegoletile's child. Some were also apparently appalled that Neo showed disrespect towards her elders, as it seems that in this country disrespect towards one's elders is unknown.

Question 14 on the difficulties faced and overcome in *The Tall Woman and Her Short Husband* and *The Pieces of Silver* was successfully answered by a number of candidates who clearly identified such problems as prejudice, cultural upheaval, ill health and poverty, and remembered to go on and show how they were overcome. Less successful responses did not consider how they were overcome. Some major difficulties, such as Mrs. Tall's death, were sometimes surprisingly omitted. Only the best answers here managed to comment on the way the writing memorably conveyed the difficulties; most contenting themselves with identifying them without reference to the writing. Question 15, on attractive/unattractive (Foundation) appealing/unappealing (Higher) aspects of the natural world in *The Winter Oak*, *The Gold-Legged Frog*, and *Games at Twilight* was well done where candidates selected appropriate descriptions from the stories and considered the language the writers use. Unfortunately, a number of candidates had little idea of what "the natural world" was, trying to interpret it in terms of "natural relationships between people" or "children playing". Others picked up on relatively minor details, such as spiders in the woodshed or the snake bite, or answered on the natural beauty in *The Winter Oak* by mentioning the elk tracks but omitting any reference to the oak tree. At Higher Tier the question invited close engagement with the language, an invitation which, disappointingly, was usually ignored.

Few candidates had studied the D H Lawrence short stories. All who had answered the extract-based question and offered effective analyses of the two passages. Most supported their analyses with well-selected references, although some candidates identified literary devices at the expense of showing understanding of the content.

There were too few responses to *Empire of the Sun* for valid comment in this report.

Report on the Units taken in January 2008

There were few responses to *Things Fall Apart*, these principally to the extract-based question. Good analyses focused closely on the extract and showed some sympathy for Unoka and a lifestyle so different from his son's. Less successful responses offered a basic paraphrase or re-wording of the extract.

Of the Hemingway questions, the extract-based proved the most popular, with Foundation Tier candidates able to engage with the old man's situation and character. Many wrote a few lines putting the extract into context before working their way through the extract, sympathising at Foundation Tier with the old man's weariness and his knowledge that the fight now was useless. The best answers at Higher Tier explored how Hemingway's writing makes the extract dramatic, commenting on such powerful words as "clubbed", "chop", "driving" and "tearing". Some candidates argued that the "coppery and sweet" taste in the old man's mouth was blood, and inferred that the old man had received some fatal internal injury and his spitting into the ocean represented his final defeat. An alternative interpretation, that spitting blood indicated anger, was sometimes offered. Whichever interpretation was presented, the candidate showed a willingness to engage with the whole extract and not simply with the first four paragraphs. There were few responses to Manolin and his importance in the novel, and these did little more than provide a character study, or outline what he does.

There were few responses to *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and these almost exclusively answered the extract-based questions. Candidates often felt strongly about O'Brien and his actions and their effects on Winston. Stronger responses pleasingly supported their views with close reference to the text, showing knowledge and understanding of the situation in which Winston finds himself. However, there was sometimes a lack of real thoroughness in response to Orwell's language; quotations from the extract could profitably have been more fully analysed.

There were no responses to *Modern Women's Short Stories* or to *Pole to Pole*.

There were, as ever, occasional responses to *Fever Pitch* from Centres where the text had apparently not been studied and candidates had attempted the extract as an unseen. However, the text had been studied at one Centre where the examiner noted that it had obviously been a joy for these students to study and that their responses conveyed their enthusiasm and knowledge. Most were able to highlight some amusing moments, engage with Hornby's humour and focus on Hornby's technique. As ever, the best responses were those which paid close attention to the language of the extract.

Written communication was very variable. This is the only Unit in Scheme A in which it is assessed and candidates can advantage, or disadvantage, themselves considerably depending on their ability to communicate clearly and accurately.

Unit 2443: Pre-1914 Texts (Coursework)

Unit 2447: Post – 1914 Texts (Coursework)

General Comments

Moderators again reported the high standard of course work in this examination. Option 2443 remains the most popular choice with only one centre opting for 2447 in this series. Centres clearly demonstrated good practice, in their application of the assessment criteria and in their choice of some very demanding texts and tasks. Moderators had nothing but praise for the vast majority of teachers who had worked hard to annotate work so effectively and provide practical and positive support to enable students to appreciate and respond critically to a range of literary texts.

Most centres had clearly heeded advice from previous Moderation Reports, and the small number of Centres that had to have their marks adjusted bore testimony to this.

Task setting was generally very effective and Centres are trying very hard to incorporate socio-cultural elements within a text into the tasks that are being set. Centres are realising that an awareness of Elizabethan “values” does not always involve giving a four paragraph introduction to the life and times of William Shakespeare or sharing with us the foibles of “penny stinkers” or “groundlings”.

Evaluating film versions or producing actor’s notes were successful with highly able students, who could also share with the reader an understanding of text and dramatic effect, but with the less able student this often creates an opportunity to give a narrative summary of the shoot-out at the garage or to concentrate on the superficial elements of lighting and costume but with only the most generalised knowledge of the text.

There were some excellent examples of how a response to a Shakespeare task can invite an appreciation of dramatic technique and an awareness of audience; in other words, acknowledging Shakespeare as theatre.

The most successful poetry essays were those where the tasks set allowed students to demonstrate skill in using a knowledge of context to inform understanding; to compare texts in a sophisticated manner; and to explore and appreciate the function of form and language in an original and engaging manner. Moderators reported less evidence in this examination of students seeing the poetry response simply as a translation exercise or as a clinical listing of literary devices.

The most popular poems were still *Dulce et Decorum est* and the *Charge of the Light Brigade*. Centres are again reminded that where a comparison is made of a pre- and post-1914 poem, it is essential 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 are now studying the short stories of Dickens and Hardy for the prose piece, the most popular being *The Signalman*. Some centres are still jeopardising responses by focusing on tasks such as “What do we learn about the 19th century from Hardy’s short story?”, and the inevitable comments on the lack of telephones or a quick text message prevail! Some centres tackle lengthy novels such as *Great Expectations* and *Jane Eyre* and are to be complimented for this. Here, as with the Shakespeare task, however, there is a tendency for some Centres to concentrate on one or two chapters, which begs the question as to whether some of the candidates have in fact read or even understood the whole text.

Report on the Units taken in January 2008

Despite comments on a number of previous reports, a minority of Centres are submitting folders where every student from a teaching set appears to be using the same essay structure copied from the board or work sheet, with the same quotations. This can exclude candidates from the top bands where evidence of original thought is demanded.

Sadly, again, in a very small number of Centres, moderators reported essays that were submitted that had clearly been downloaded from the internet. Most schools are extremely vigilant about this, when it is drawn to their attention, and respond swiftly and positively to deal with the problem. However there are still a very small number of examples of schools submitting work to the moderator where it has clearly been downloaded, with teachers adding comments on the folder such as "this work is clearly not the candidate's own response. What do you make of it?". The moderator can make nothing of it, and will only return the work to school and ask them to re-assess it and take the necessary steps to prevent this happening in the future.

Course work continues to offer candidates an opportunity to explore a wide range of stimulating literature and reflect intelligently upon it. Teachers are to be congratulated for their hard work in supporting students in their growth as adult readers, and for their continued hard work in delivering all aspects of the course work component.

Unit 2444: Pre-1914 Texts

General Comments

As has been the case in recent years, there was a relatively small entry this January – particularly small at Foundation Tier – but examiners were very pleased indeed with much of the work that they saw; there was a considerably greater confidence in almost all scripts about *how* to address the questions set, and how to avoid simply rehearsing plot and content. Pleasing, too, was the fact that no one genre was noticeably or consistently weaker than the others; poetry was managed with far greater confidence and sensitivity than has often been the case, and the prose questions – almost invariably the last – were quite often the strongest, suggesting among other things that timing was not a problem for virtually all candidates. Extract-based questions unsurprisingly tended to be more popular, and most answers spent most of their time exploring the printed extracts rather than simply establishing their place in the texts as a whole and then re-iterating the whole plot. In short, focus generally was much tighter and more relevant this January than has sometimes been the case, and examiners saw a lot of very sound and competent answers, together with many that were very good or even better; relatively few were very weak. Some very good answers were, however, spoiled by not adhering strictly to the terms of the question set; candidates do perhaps need to be reminded very strongly that they must answer what is asked, not just what they would have liked the examiner to ask!

Comments on Individual Questions

Much Ado About Nothing

There were no answers on this text.

Romeo and Juliet

3 This was by far the more popular question on the play, and led to some very competent answers indeed, with many candidates exploring not just the immediate context of the given extract, but also its impact upon the tragic outcome of the rest of the play. There was ample discussion of the different ways in which the three named characters speak and act here, though a surprisingly large number failed to say anything at all about Mercutio's wounding and death; those who did discuss this often made sensible and thoughtful comments on the way in which his customary banter changes to bitterness in his wishing a plague upon both the Montagues and the Capulets – a curse which many candidates saw as being fulfilled by the end of the play. Most answers were well able to explore the different kinds of language used by Romeo, though many appeared unaware that his reason for not wishing to fight was not weakness, nor just fear of the Prince's recent edict, but his marriage to Juliet. Many argued quite convincingly that it was his naivety regarding Tybalt's likely reaction to Romeo's words here that led directly to Mercutio's death. Many also saw similarities between Mercutio and Tybalt: both are impulsive and aggressive, though Tybalt's aggression finds expression here simply in actions not words.

4 There were some very good responses indeed to this question, though relatively few candidates attempted it. Most were able – often quite movingly – to give an appropriate voice to Capulet's likely mixture of grief and guilt, though some relied over-much on a simple but prolonged outpouring of emotion without enough (or occasionally without any) reference to the events that led to the deaths of Romeo and Juliet, and also of course of Paris, Lady Montague, Mercutio and Tybalt. Most spoke of Capulet's unnecessary rage when Juliet refused to marry Paris, and of the long-lasting and ultimately destructive family feud (or "fude", as so many spelt

Report on the Units taken in January 2008

it). Some managed to introduce some brief quotations or half-quotations from the text, and while this is certainly not a requirement for a high mark it is bound to add some conviction and authority to an empathic answer.

An Ideal Husband

There were no answers on this text.

An Enemy of the People

There were no answers on this text.

Opening Lines: War

9 and 10 Answers on this text were split more or less evenly between the two questions, with perhaps slightly more tackling Q10. As noted above, there were relatively few simple paraphrase or narrative answers this session, and candidates – even where they seemed uncertain about what their poem was really saying (often the case when writing about Brontë’s *Song*) – still focused much more upon the words and phrases being used than upon unsupported assertions about structure or technique, with the result that answers were much more convincing than has sometimes been the case in past sessions. Almost all candidates, at both Tiers, made sensible and often well sustained comparisons; the most confident moved easily and frequently between their two poems, but even the least confident answers made real efforts to compare or contrast, not just with a simple “however” but with apt exploration of ideas and language. Most used Housman and Scott in Q10, with a few tackling Collins, though not often with real certainty.

Opening Lines: Town and Country

11 and 12 As with “*War*”, answers were very evenly split between these two questions, and across all three poems in Q11. There were some sharp and sophisticated discussions in Q11, and candidates appeared very confidently familiar with all three poems, looking in detail at the ways in which a range of misery and unhappiness is portrayed. The strongest answers generally came from work on Rossetti and Hood, in both of which poems the writers’ language and structuring were very sensitively explored. Q10, perhaps unexpectedly, was less successful; candidates were again very well aware of what Wordsworth and Keats are writing about and what their poems are saying (though it was rather disappointing to read more than once that Wordsworth’s poem is set in the peace of the countryside!), and there were some very full and critically secure discussions of both poems; however, surprisingly many appeared to forget what the question asked, and lacked any but the most incidental reference to “peacefulness”. The best answers, however, did make frequent reference to, and quotation from, the words used by both poets in creating a relaxing and calm atmosphere. And in the words of one examiner, “there wasn’t much ‘device-spotting’, and where devices were identified their effects upon the mood of the poems were generally also identified and discussed – a big improvement upon much that has been seen in some previous sessions.”

Blake: Songs of Innocence and Experience

There were no answers on this text.

Hardy: Selected Poems

There were no answers on this text.

Austen: Northanger Abbey

There were no answers on this text.

Dickens: Hard Times

19 and 20 There were a few answers on this novel; rather more tackled Q19, often seeing in the characters and unhappinesses of the two girls in the extract a microcosm of at least some of what Dickens is creating and criticising in *Hard Times* as a whole. Most again explored quite closely, and while most certainly made reference to events before and after the set passage the focus remained firmly upon what was written here. Some more confident answers noted Dickens's somewhat exaggerated and sentimental dialogue. Q20 was not handled quite so well, too many candidates simply narrating what Stephen Blackpool does, and what happens to him; many saw him as representative of the impoverished and poverty-stricken working-class, and as reflective of the various ills and hypocrisies which Dickens is criticising in Victorian society. Surprisingly, quite a few failed to mention his death, let alone its symbolic significance down a mineshaft, and too many failed almost entirely to focus on either the memorable or significant qualities of his role.

Hardy: Far From the Madding Crowd

21 This was overwhelmingly the more popular of the Hardy questions, and often managed very well; many candidates noted the curious but highly-charged wording at the start ("said the spot" and "said the wall") and made perceptive comment on the way in which this reflected the relative status towards each other of Troy and Fanny – the first being small and insignificant, the other hard and cold. This difference, and the light that it sheds upon much of the rest of the novel, were well managed by most, though not many actually explored the rest of the extract in as much detail as they could and should have done, too many simply concentrating instead upon ways in which Troy and Fanny appear elsewhere.

22 The few answers on this question were generally very sound, choosing appropriate moments in the novel and exploring what they show of Bathsheba, and for Higher Tier how Hardy makes us feel sympathy for her. The most popular moments were when Bathsheba opens Fanny's coffin, or when Boldwood shoots Troy at the end of the novel, but other moments led too to some thoughtful answers.

Eliot: Silas Marner

23 and 24 There were not many answers on this novel, but those candidates who did write on it generally showed a secure knowledge, but not always a secure ability to focus upon what the question asked; those doing Q23 responded with some often quite virulent dislike of Dunstan, but more as he appears throughout the first half of the novel than he does in the given extract; much time was often spent on contextualising the extract, and/or establishing exactly why Dunstan was so unpleasant, rather than exploring closely how Eliot portrays him in these two paragraphs. Some certainly did pick on several moments, especially the way in which Dunstan thinks so cruelly of "the old fool of a weaver", and of how he decides to use his brother Godfrey

Report on the Units taken in January 2008

to pursue his plans; some too noted the pre-echo of later events at the start of the passage where the Stone-pit is so unpleasantly described. Q30 was attempted by very few, and there tended to be more discussion of what happened to Silas *before* he arrived in Raveloe (and in one or two cases what happens to him after Eppie appears) rather than how he is treated when he first comes to the village.

Poe: Selected Tales

There were no answers on this text.

Wells: The History of Mr Polly

27 and 28 There were a few answers on this novel, split more or less equally between the two questions. Most answers to Q27 appreciated the slapstick humour of this passage, and were able to note many of the ways in which Wells creates this humour – particularly the way in which he writes at such length about what happens to Mr Polly in perhaps a couple of seconds, and the way in which he undermines Mr Polly's attempts to be at least slightly respectable and dignified. Q28 relied almost exclusively on Uncle Jim, with Christabel and Miriam appearing in a few; most answers tried hard to go beyond simple character study, to explore some of the ways in which the chosen character was made enjoyable and memorable.

Chopin: Short Stories

29 These short stories proved very popular and successful this January; candidates responded warmly and knowledgeably to the situations and the characters, and demonstrated some very good, and occasionally excellent, understanding of how Chopin makes language work on her readers. There were uniformly warm and sensitive feelings of sympathy for both the men in the two extracts, tempered but never destroyed by a sense that Tonie had brought at least some of his misery upon himself. There was some very close discussion of the words and phrases used in both extracts, which made for some strong answers.

30 Most answers took the endings of *A Matter of Prejudice* and *Lilacs*, and made some fascinating comparisons between them (comparison was not required by the set questions, but these two stories almost unavoidably invited it). Most noted and illustrated the humorous aspects of Mme Carambeau's change of heart at the end of the first story, particularly in relation to Chopin's description of the impenetrable fencing around her house at the start, and her apparent inability to understand where her son had got his stubbornness from. *Lilacs* is a much more delicate story, and most candidates writing on it clearly felt this; there was sympathy for Adrienne as the lilacs – like herself – were being swept unceremoniously away from the convent, but combined with understanding that she had brought her predicament upon herself; more sympathy was often felt for Sister Agathe, in fact, as she wept uncontrollably.

Unit 2445: Drama Pre-1914

General Comments (see 2441 Section)

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

Comments on Individual Questions

Much Ado About Nothing

Question 1 was the most popular choice and the most successful answers showed awareness of context and the irony of Don John's recent reconciliation with his brother, and conveyed what is revealed about his discontent, villainy and jealousy of Claudio by engaging with the dialogue closely. Attention tended to be exclusively restricted to Don John, at times, but several answers also managed to develop a subtle commentary on how the malevolence of Borachio and Conrade is revealed. Good understanding of the bastard brother's social position was often demonstrated but some answers became overloaded with historical context and Elizabethan attitudes to bastardy. The best answers to **Question 2** took time to focus on the idea of compatibility and to establish a personal view, rather than just running through the stages in the relationship without answering the question explicitly. A selective approach to the details of the initial and final relationships between Beatrice and Benedick, and to pivotal moments like Benedick's sympathetic response to Hero's shaming and his promise to kill Claudio, often underpinned successful answers. Close attention to their verbal intelligence and lively exchanges, as evidence of a promising likemindedness, was another feature of strong answers. The contrast with the relationship between Hero and Claudio was often effectively cited as part of a developing argument, but occasionally overbalanced the answer as if a prepared essay was being unloaded. **Question 3** produced some impressively authentic voices and varied responses to the moment. Well-integrated quotation, valid reflections on honour and loyalty, the strength of Benedick's feelings for Beatrice and his disapproval of Claudio's conduct, tended to characterise strong answers.

Romeo and Juliet

Once again, the extract-based question (**Question 4**) proved to be the most popular *Romeo and Juliet* choice, and many strong candidates managed to balance a clear understanding of the context with close attention to the language of Juliet's soliloquy and the disturbing nature of the imagery. The majority were sharply aware of the impending marriage, of Juliet's isolation and of her willingness to risk everything for Romeo, and were able to shape a strong response to her predicament. Many engaged her fears and her doubts about the Friar, but the significance of the dagger was not always fully grasped and there was a tendency to present her fears in summary form rather than exploring the language used, in some answers. At Foundation Tier, in particular, there was some confusion about Juliet's marital status and a tendency to spend a long time establishing the context at the expense of attention to the extract. Some candidates were similarly lured away from the extract by the need to explain, at great length, the historical context for arranged marriages and tyrannical fathers. Many of the small number of candidates who tackled **Question 5** constructed well-supported responses to the power of the Prince and recognised him as representing law and order, with one candidate viewing him as a philosopher at the play's end. Most worked methodically through his appearances and although some lost focus on the terms of the question, the majority were able to comment on how his words and

actions have an impact upon plot and character. A rushed reading of the question led a minority of candidates to make the damaging mistake of writing about Paris rather than Prince Escalus. **Question 6** was another popular empathic choice and often convincing in the portrayal of Romeo's emotional turmoil. The impact of the meeting with Juliet and of her beauty was often powerfully conveyed with well-selected and integrated quotation, and his feelings for Rosaline effectively contrasted with the true love felt for Juliet. Anxiety about the implications of the relationship in the light of the feud was often convincingly expressed although some candidates did lose the moment and Romeo's limited perspective to predict rather too accurately what was likely to happen next or to express the Friar's hope that a match would unite the families or to relay fears about the conversation between Tybalt and Capulet which Romeo does not (except in certain film productions) overhear. The Romeos who expressed regret and were still pining for Rosaline were much less convincing.

Unit 2446: Poetry and Prose Pre - 1914

There were only four entries at the Higher Tier for this Unit and therefore insufficient material to formulate a report. Centres are referred to the June 2007 report for detailed comments on candidate performance in this Unit.

Unit 2448: Post- 1914 Texts

There was a small increase in entry here as compared to the previous January: this time approximately a hundred candidates at each of the tiers. The texts studied were *Whose Life is it Anyway?*, *Death of a Salesman*, *Opening Lines* (War, ii), *Opening Worlds*, *The Old Man and the Sea*, and *Pole to Pole*.

Question 1 was by far the more popular of the two questions on this play. Almost all answers were able to engage with 'amusing', although with the predictable result that the retelling deadened the humour. Better answers used this first meeting to explore why John and Ken's relationship takes off, using Ken's later explanation that John doesn't feel guilty about Ken, so is able to treat him as a normal human being. Weaker answers had difficulty contextualising the passage – some maintained that this passage is the first time that Ken becomes aware that he is permanently paralysed. Better answers noted that the bitterness of Ken's jokes and self-parody serve as an introduction to his announcement of his desire to die. There were only a few answers to Question 2. These often found the empathic voice problematic, some merely retold the story, and very few gave any idea of it from his point of view.

Similarly Question 3 was by a very long way the more popular of this pair. Better answers not only referred closely to the extract but also showed an understanding of context, for example of why Dad is depressed, why Biff is unsettled, and ways in which in the play the goal of 'making money' has not proved to generate happiness. Weaker answers tended to narrate the extract at face value.

In answers to Question 11 there was some profitable attention to language in the McCrae poem - for example, focus on the implications of 'poppies...row on row' - and better answers remembered the question and suggested what might be the poet's attitude to sacrifice. *Parable* was a mystery to many, who struggled with the concept of a biblical story being an allegory of the war and its mismanagement. Many took the story as it is told, with its allusions to knife, fire and iron, belts and straps, parapets and trenches, as being direct and literal reference to the First World War itself. Weaker answers forgot the question, showed no overview of the poems, and just itemised structural and other language features. On Question 12 *The Target* was the most popular choice, and the most clearly understood on a straightforward level. Some higher tier candidates offered some very good points of comparison between *The Target* and *Lamentations*. Few, however, made a point of discussing Sassoon's sarcasm in the latter. *The Bohemians* was the least popular choice, and many struggled to understand a point to it. A number of foundation candidates penalised themselves by attempting to compare the poems, to the exclusion of giving meaningful personal response to them.

On *Opening Worlds* the majority favoured Question 17. Better treatments of the extract concerning the tailor's wife responded strongly to this nosey-parker, commented on aspects of the language (for example the connotations of 'ferret'), and showed some understanding of how this monster becomes more monstrous later in the story. The best answers responded to ironies in the language, such as 'racking her brains' and 'brilliant hypothesis'. Better answers on Leela were similarly close to the text and showed awareness of context, by referring, for example, to her parents, or to the way her relationship with Sidda develops in the rest of the story. The best answers gave a complex response to the little girl, noting her innocence but also her spoilt possessiveness. It is worth repeating that comparison of the extracts is not required in this question. Comparison sometimes generates insights, but often valuable time was being taken up with a relatively unprofitable agenda. A surprising number of answers to Question 18 dealt with Michael Obi rather than his wife Nancy. Better answers addressed the question, and considered the characters' materialistic attitudes. Weaker answers did not seem to grasp how Naraian finds it hard to resist the pull of his parents' luxurious lifestyle.

Report on the Units taken in January 2008

Question 27 was the more popular choice on *The Old Man and the Sea*. On the whole this was well done, and candidates made good use of the passage in their answers. Candidates also managed a balance between giving their own feelings – often beginning with ‘I feel sorry for the old man’ – and explaining how he thought and felt, usually referring to the rest of the novel and the friendship with the boy. Question 28 was also well done on the whole, and candidates showed commendable command of relevant detail from the novel in their answers.

It was pleasing to find answers on Palin. Almost all the answers were to Question 31, the first of the two, and candidates at both tiers were able to communicate a sense of humour. Better answers went beyond mere narration of the extracts, for example by looking closely at the exaggeration and sarcasm in Palin’s language, or, taking the cue from ‘unusual’ in the question, by appraising the scenes in the context of the book.

A few Foundation Tier candidates wrote too many answers, or only two, but in general handling time and rubric was not problematic.

Grade Thresholds

General Certificate of Secondary Education
 English Literature (1901)
 January 2008 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	18			0
2442/1	Raw	46				34	28	22	17	12	0
	UMS	69				60	50	40	30	20	0
2442/2	Raw	66	50	45	39	33	27	24			0
	UMS	100	90	80	70	60	50	45			0
2443	Raw	45	41	36	31	26	21	16	11	6	0
	UMS	60	54	48	42	36	30	24	18	12	0
2444/1	Raw	42				33	26	20	14	8	0
	UMS	41				36	30	24	18	12	0
2444/2	Raw	60	52	46	40	34	28	25			0
	UMS	60	54	48	42	36	30	27			0
2445/1	Raw	21				18	15	12	9	6	0
	UMS	27				24	20	16	12	8	0
2445/2	Raw	30	27	25	22	19	15	13			0
	UMS	40	36	32	28	24	20	18			0
2446/1	Raw	46				36	30	24	19	14	0
	UMS	69				60	50	40	30	20	0
2446/2	Raw	66	58	51	44	38	32	29			0
	UMS	100	90	80	70	60	50	45			0
2447	Raw	45	41	36	31	26	21	16	11	6	0
	UMS	60	54	48	42	36	30	24	18	12	0
2448/1	Raw	42				35	28	21	15	9	0
	UMS	41				36	30	24	18	12	0
2448/2	Raw	60	46	42	38	35	32	30			0
	UMS	60	54	48	42	36	30	27			0

Specification Aggregation Results

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

	Maximum Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
1901	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
1901	2.2	10.5	30.6	63.2	86.5	94.9	98.3	99.7	100	793

793 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

Statistics are correct at the time of publication

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Registered Office; 1 Hills Road, Cambridge, CB1 2EU
Registered Company Number: 3484466
OCR is an exempt Charity

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations)
Head office
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