

English Literature

General Certificate of Secondary Education **GCSE 1901**

Report on the Units

January 2009

1901/MS/R/09J

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA) is a leading UK awarding body, providing a wide range of qualifications to meet the needs of pupils of all ages and abilities. OCR qualifications include AS/A Levels, GCSEs, OCR Nationals, Key Skills, Entry Level qualifications, NVQs and vocational qualifications in areas such as IT, business, languages, teaching/training, administration and secretarial skills.

It is also responsible for developing new syllabuses to meet national requirements and the needs of students and teachers. OCR is a not-for-profit organisation; any surplus made is invested back into the establishment to help towards the development of qualifications and support which keep pace with the changing needs of today's society.

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.

OCR will not enter into any discussion or correspondence in connection with this Report.

© OCR 2009

Any enquiries about publications should be addressed to:

OCR Publications
PO Box 5050
Annesley
NOTTINGHAM
NG15 0DL

Telephone: 0870 770 6622
Facsimile: 01223 552610
E-mail: publications@ocr.org.uk

CONTENTS

GCSE English Literature (1901)

REPORT ON THE UNITS

Unit/Content	Page
2441/1, 2441/2 Drama Post - 1914	1
2442 Poetry and Prose Post - 1914	7
2444/01, 2444/02 Pre-1914 Texts	12
2445 Drama Pre - 1914	16
2446/01, 2446/02 Poetry and Prose Pre - 1914	18
2443/2447 English Literature (Coursework)	19
2448 Post- 1914 Texts	21
Grade Thresholds	22

2441/1, 2441/2 Drama Post - 1914

General Comments (including 2445)

A significant number of Centres, representing well over one third of all those following the 1901 Specifications, once again 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 2008, largely because of a decrease in Foundation Tier entries, and, although Centres had clearly made careful tiering decisions, a sizeable minority of Higher Tier entrants might have benefited from answering the more structured Foundation Tier questions. There was a general feeling amongst examiners that the overall quality of work produced was higher than in any other January entry so far and that answers to empathic questions (particularly adopting the voice of Charley for Question 3 on *Death of a Salesman*, Trotter for Question 12 on *Journey's End*, and Friar Lawrence for Question 6 on *Romeo and Juliet*) were particularly impressive. Appreciative adjectives like "superb", "sophisticated", "incisive", "perceptive" and even "entertaining" appeared regularly in Examiners' reports and one concluded: "I was lucky to be able to savour the work of such interested and alert students." 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 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. More and more candidates are trying hard to see themselves as members of an audience and spend productive time exploring the ways in which audience responses are affected by sound, movement and gesture, alongside the effect of the dialogue, of characterisation and of plot development. The experience of seeing a stage or film version of the text or of acting out key scenes or of other performance-based approaches like role-play and hot-seating had clearly enriched the learning of many candidates.

Some damaging tendencies persist, however, such as the unloading of pre-digested material irrespective of the question, the sterile classification of written features such as punctuation, and the lengthy consideration of sociological, biographical or historical backgrounds – all at the expense of attention to the dramatic detail of the onstage action. Centres clearly spend a lot of time helping candidates to structure their answers, but all-purpose prepared introductions which list generalised headings as a way into the dramatist's craft (conflict, language, stage directions, lighting...) waste valuable time and hamper engagement with the particular wording of a particular question on a particular moment/character/relationship...in a particular play. The word, "moving" appeared in two of the most popular extract questions on both tiers (Question 1 on *Death of a Salesman* and Question 10 on *Journey's End*) and a small number of candidates found it to be rather an elusive term, preferring instead to focus on "dramatic" or "memorable" details as if repeating previously practised answers or finding an emotional response difficult to express or completely misunderstanding the word in this context and writing about onstage movement.

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, once again, there was a noticeable increase in the numbers attempting the empathic approach. Patterns of question choice varied significantly from Centre to Centre and, on occasion, 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. Some candidates

Report on the Units taken in January 2009

appeared unsure as to their question selection and, in the case of Journey's End for instance, seemed to hover between Question 10, the extract question, and Question 11, the discursive "sympathy for Stanhope" question, often limiting themselves by only using examples from the extract in answer to Question 11 or by writing exclusively about sympathy for Stanhope in answer to Question 10. A firm commitment to a particular question, with the number of that question recorded in the grid on the front page of the answer booklet and in the margin at the start of the answer, is beneficial to both candidate and examiner.

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.

Generalising about the findings of over twenty examiners based on the work of 14,000 candidates is always a difficult exercise but several clear and familiar trends have emerged.

Successful candidates:

- see the texts as scripts for performance and themselves as members of an audience
- see the stage directions as part of the dramatic action of the scene and visualise this onstage action
- pay explicit attention to the wording of the question and balance attention to each strand of the question
- devote at least two-thirds of answers to extract-based questions to discussing, quoting from and commenting on the extract itself but still convey understanding of the whole-play context
- anchor empathic questions securely to the prescribed moment to focus solely on what that character knows, thinks and feels at that point
- construct purposeful opening paragraphs which focus specifically on a particular question about a particular play
- range selectively across the text to find supporting detail for discursive answers
- avoid formulaic approaches and trust their own direct personal response.

Less successful candidates:

- see the texts as pieces of writing only and themselves as readers
- see the stage directions merely as a pieces of tacked-on written communication and ignore the onstage action
- lose (or ignore) the focus of the question and import prepared material which has very little direct relevance, or misread the question entirely and write about the wrong character/relationship/moment...
- produce generalised answers to extract-based questions with little attention to the printed passage, or approach the extract as if it is an "unseen" exercise and give little sense of the rest of the play
- ascribe knowledge, feelings and attitudes to characters in empathic answers which are inappropriate to that character at that point in the play, or work through the character's experiences in a chronological and unselective way up to the prescribed point without asking "what's my main feeling at this precise moment?"
- produce a sweeping opening paragraph with an all-purpose list of headings and largely ignore the question
- become bogged down in one moment in the play in answering discursive questions so that the range of reference becomes too narrow
- work through a pre-digested agenda without fully engaging with the question or the play, and without expressing a personal response
- run out of time, sometimes after getting bogged down in overlong plans.

Comments on Individual Questions

Death of a Salesman

Question 1 proved a very popular choice and many answers were described by examiners as “a delight to read”. Strong candidates established the context quickly and concisely, saw that the dead Ben was a projection rather than a memory and understood not only the exact nature of Willy’s “proposition” but his desire to end Linda’s suffering and secure Biff’s success in the business world by committing suicide. Many found Willy’s desperation, his guilt, his nostalgia and his confusion, and his willingness to admit his own failure and to lay down his life for his family very moving indeed. Many conveyed a confident grasp of the broader context by exploring the tragic ironies in Willy’s delusions about his funeral, about the insurance company paying out and about the planting of seeds in the boxed-in neighbourhood, and some noted the futility of Willy sacrificing his life to win back a love which Biff conveys to him in their final conversation anyway. Successful candidates were prepared to pursue a range of symbolic possibilities, especially in relation to the function of Ben in the scene and to the seed-planting. There was some impressively close attention to the way Willy’s language reduces suicide to a business proposition and some candidates embarked on a subtle exploration of the portrayal of a person as an expendable commodity with a commercial value only, suggesting, in keeping with their own times perhaps, the folly of a society wedded to consumerism and to credit and commenting on the irony of Willy acting as a ruthless business man here selling the only thing left – himself. Weaker answers tended to plunge into the extract and work through it without taking time to establish the dramatic context or shape an overview of the question, and some candidates found the nature of the “proposition” and of the complex nature of Ben’s role very difficult to engage. 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 moving features of the extract.

Question 2 was tackled by a small but generally confident minority and while there were many powerfully argued cases for unconditional admiration of Linda’s strength, forbearance, selflessness, loyalty and devotion to a difficult man, many at Higher Tier had the courage to challenge the view of Linda as “wholly admirable”. It was often female candidates who found Linda rather irritatingly passive and some constructed fascinatingly critical readings of her as representing 1940s (and in flashback, 1930s) housewives as dependent doormats, and accused her of colluding in the dream which destroys her husband. The strongest candidates conveyed sensitive understanding of Linda’s reasons for not confronting Willy about the gas pipe and made good use of her dramatic denunciations of her sons in both Act One and Act Two. There were some quirkily critical comments about her choice of cheese, and some argued, rather unconvincingly, that Linda has full knowledge of Willy’s affair, or that she is to blame for Willy’s failure because she blocks his trip to Alaska with Ben or that she’s happy in the *Requiem* because she’s finally “free”. Weaker answers, especially at Foundation Tier, became rather bogged down in the opening scenes, and some Higher Tier answers focused on sympathy rather than admiration or misread “wholly” as “holy”.

There were several recreations of Charley’s voice in answer to **Question 3** which were thought to be so authentic that they could have been produced by Miller himself. Most candidates captured Charley’s sympathetic but pragmatic viewpoint and were firmly anchored in the moment, producing detailed reflections on the card game, on the job offer, the loans and Willy’s confused references to Ben and making selective and appropriate use of sentiments which Charley expresses later in the play. Some Charleys were rather unrealistically well-informed about conversations conducted in the privacy of the Loman home (although one or two ingenious candidates did justify this by referring to the flimsiness of the adjoining walls) and some were rather too omniscient and analytical in their references to delusions and the American Dream. There was a sense in weaker answers that the card game scene had not been revisited during the exam as if candidates were relying on memory alone and some voices

tipped over from exasperation into a bitterness and anger about Willy's behaviour which struck an unconvincingly aggressive note.

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 the strongest answers wrestled interestingly with the ways in which Mick intimidates Davies and traced the dramatic power he wields through his possession and use of the trousers, the violence, the abuse, the interrogation techniques and his facility with a range of linguistic registers. Some candidates concentrated so extensively on the second ("revealing") strand of the question that they lost focus on the printed extract, but the very best were able to explore the dramatic detail and the language of the tense interaction 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. Imported information about Pinter's massive influence on the development of the British theatre distracted some candidates from the specific nature of the task.

A willingness to engage with the clear contrasts between the two brothers, using the differences in their language and in their attitudes to Davies in particular, characterised successful answers to **Question 5**, whereas some weaker answers focused on the oddities of their relationship rather than the differences between their characters. Successful answers to **Question 6** tended to choose moments like the ending of the play or the attacks by Mick to construct an argument, and to show understanding of how Mick traps Davies with his questions, his rapid changes of subject, his violence and his taunting comments - but there were very few answers to these two questions.

Whose Life Is It Anyway?

The extract-based question (Question 7) once again proved by far the most popular. Many candidates on both tiers established a clear view of the purpose of the meeting and of the nature of the ethical disagreement between the two medical practitioners. The strongest answers explored the language, tone and intensity of the argument, recognised the courage of Dr Scott in challenging her boss and noted how her language changed before petering out altogether into a nod, and also saw the significance of the consultation in terms of some of the play's central issues like choice, professionalism and power. A balanced view of Dr Emerson which acknowledged his commitment to his patient alongside an analysis of his authoritarian methods was often a characteristic of more thoughtful answers and some discussions were informed by Dr Scott's own comment later about Emerson caring for Ken like a father. The very best often focused on the telling irony that the audience is privy to this discussion of Ken's treatment but he is not. Weaker answers tended to simplify the issues and to demonise Dr Emerson, seeing him as the play's villain and an unscrupulous operator, condemning him unreservedly as patronising and dictatorial, and citing the use of Dr Scott's first name and the description of Ken as "intelligent, sensitive and articulate" as merely examples of his sarcasm and condescension. Confusion about the context led some candidates to believe that Ken has already announced his intention to seek his own death and to misconstrue the nature of the Valium decision as a matter of life-and-death. Some candidates became so wrapped up in the power of the play's themes (particularly professionalism, sexism, status and the individual's right to choose) that they lost contact with the extract altogether.

The candidates who tackled Question 8 and managed to establish a personal view of the relationship between John and Kay based on carefully selected support and on an appreciation of the effect of the relationship on an audience, were the most successful. Many candidates shaped strong arguments about the liveliness of John's pursuit of Kay and about the way the relationship lightens the tone of the play and balances its more weighty concerns. Some were able to explore the effect of the relationship in heightening the tragedy of Ken's predicament and

to link this to Ken's painful reflections on sexual desire and on his own impotence, and some made shrewd use of John and Kay's contrasting approaches to their jobs and to Ken, and of their discussion of the cost of keeping Ken alive. Weaker answers tended to offer separate character studies of both Kay and John or to drift into a narrative account of their shared scenes without a strong focus on the impact of the relationship.

The best answers to Question 9 captured Ken's frustration and sense of despair in a voice which was suitably cynical and world weary, and stayed in the specific moment by reflecting on the details of his most recent conversation with Dr Scott. The very best were courageous enough to explore his complex feelings about his own impotence without over-sentimentalising his relationship with Dr Scott. There were some wonderful attempts to reproduce examples of Ken's wit, of the "I'll engineer my own death even if it kills me" variety. Although there was some sensibly selective use of quotation, some candidates found it difficult to sustain a voice of such awareness and intelligence, and others conveyed a broad sense of an angry death-wish without really grounding this in the detail of Ken's character and his specific experiences.

Journey's End

Question 10 based on the conclusion to Act One, proved to be the most popular question on the paper, closely followed by **Question 12**, the Trotter empathic. Many candidates on both tiers displayed a clear sense of the context, and the most successful not only understood the reasons for and the extent of Stanhope's drunkenness but also the precise nature of his feelings about Raleigh's arrival in his company. There was some blurring of the two strands of the question but the most authoritative answers focused clearly on the moving features of the extract, particularly the revelation of Stanhope's exhaustion and vulnerability, and the tenderness of Osborne's devotion to him, and also saw the significance of the extract in emphasising the impact of the war, in demonstrating the importance of the relationship between the two men, in securing sympathy for Stanhope and admiration for Osborne, and in priming the audience for later events. A central feature of successful answers was often a sensitive appreciation of the way this extract highlights the effect of the war on Stanhope and reveals his contradictory characteristics. There were many fascinating symbolic readings of stage business - Stanhope turning his face to the earth wall, the blowing out of the candle, the winding of the watch, the looking up at the stars (often seen to be a foreshadowing of Osborne's death), the rumble of the distant guns - and many contrasted Osborne's sensitive handling of Mason and the pepper issue with Stanhope's earlier aggression. A few candidates understood the moving irony that Stanhope would rather die ("go west") than have Madge's feelings for him undermined and a tiny minority argued that Stanhope's apparently random rant about Hardy is in fact a drunken mishearing of Osborne's "hard day" remark. Lengthy preambles about Sherriff's war experiences, or about the reactions of a 1920s audience as opposed to a modern one, wasted valuable time for some candidates and others conflated Questions 10 and 11 so that "sympathy for Stanhope", based on the detail in the extract, became the single approach to the question (see **General Comments**). Weaker answers tended to overlook the fact that Stanhope is drunk and to treat his request for a goodnight kiss and for Osborne to wear a lacy apron with the utmost seriousness (or to invest it with homoerotic significance), and to categorise Mason's appearance as comic relief and leave it at that. One or two thought that Osborne blows Stanhope a kiss ("Kiss you be blowed!").

The best answers to **Question 11** at Higher Tier ranged confidently across the play, engaged the "How far" of the question explicitly and suggested different possible responses to Stanhope's complex character. Strong answers at Foundation Tier tended to be grounded in a shrewd choice of particularly traumatic moments for Stanhope - with Raleigh's arrival, the selection of Raleigh and Osborne for the raid, the outburst after Raleigh's absence from the dinner and Raleigh's death - proving to be the most productive. Responses to the showdown with Hibbert were interestingly varied with some candidates sympathising with Stanhope for his firm, leadership and for his willingness to expose his own fears, and others seeing him as violent and irrational. Stanhope's handling of Raleigh's letter also divided opinion and sympathies although the strongest answers tended to understand the strain of the war and to retain a sympathetic

grasp of Stanhope's youth, courage and sense of duty. Some candidates spent a disproportionate amount of time examining the initial discussion of Stanhope by Hardy and Osborne and so were unable to explore Stanhope's character in action very fully and the weakest drifted into narrative and an unselective working-through of events.

A large number of candidates relished the opportunity to inhabit the tightly-fitting tunic of 2nd Lieutenant Trotter in answer to **Question 12**. His voice proved highly accessible for the majority of the candidates and there was a profusion of appropriate expressions - "bloomin'", "Boche" (rather than "Jerries", which cropped in some answers) and "skipper" - and of dropped aitches, and many characteristic references to food, gardening and countdown charts. Careful scrutiny of the context for this moment was the cornerstone for successful answers and appropriate selections from Trotter's utterances in the dinner scene were often effectively integrated. The strongest answers remained firmly anchored to the prescribed moment, to the sad loss of Osborne and to the uncomfortable experiences shared at the "celebration" dinner, and expressed a quiet pride and determination in response to the promotion. Adopting a "Dear Diary" approach or recording all of Trotter's experiences chronologically, rather than catching his thoughts on the wing as he leaves the dug-out to go on duty, led to very formal stilted and unconvincing responses, and using stage directions to frame Trotter's thoughts was similarly unhelpful. The very best answers managed to characterise Trotter as a man who is not naturally reflective and is too cheerfully resilient to brood for very long, but who contests Stanhope's suggestion that he is "always the same", is genuinely upset at the loss of Osborne, sympathetic in different ways to both Raleigh and Hibbert and very loyal to Stanhope. Weaker answers tended to lose Trotter's idiolect and reproduce a voice which could have belonged to any of the Officers, or to register such astonishment and delight at the honour bestowed upon him (as if Stanhope has other Officers competing vigorously for the post and the announcement is a complete surprise) that the answer came to resemble an acceptance speech at an awards ceremony. Some candidates were so keen to display their own grasp of textual detail that they found it difficult to restrict Trotter's in a believable way so that he appeared to possess a comprehensive knowledge of conversations (particularly about Madge, the letter, Hibbert and the revolver, Osborne's England cap...) from which he is excluded. The occasional portrayal of Trotter as a working-class hero exulting in his elevation to a much coveted role at the expense of the public school toffs, and references to his proud children waiting at home were also unconvincing.

2442 Poetry and Prose Post - 1914

There were comparatively few candidates entered for the January 2009 session. Of these, some were clearly sitting this Unit for the first time, whilst others were re-sitting in an attempt to improve their outcomes in June 2008. Most were entered at the appropriate Tier, although some, especially at Higher Tier, were not. Most Centres are aware that Grades A-D are targeted at Higher Tier; candidates who do not reach the mark required for the allowed higher E find their work unclassified.

Of the thirteen texts offered on the question papers, most candidates opted to answer on *Opening Lines*, *Touched with Fire*, *Opening Worlds*, *The Old Man and the Sea*, and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, though there were a few responses to *Empire of the Sun* and *Things Fall Apart*. The war poems in the OCR selection drew considerably more responses than those in the *How It Looks From Here* section. Where this report offers no comment on certain individual questions, it is because there were too few responses, or none, on which to comment.

The 1914-18 War (ii)

Question 4

This was a very popular question. Answers were often focused principally on *Recruiting*, with the Owen meriting just one paragraph at the end. Most candidates were able to note the attack on the “Fat civilians” and to recognize Mackintosh’s attack on the propaganda of the period, with stronger candidates looking at the repetition of “Lads, you’re wanted” and the variations on this initially encouraging invitation. They often showed understanding of the reference to the “Girls with feathers”, although some associated the girls and feathers with entertainments of a somewhat insalubrious kind. Too infrequently they referred to the shift from “girls” to “harlots”. On occasion the anti-war qualities of the poem were over-emphasised at the expense of the attack on the propaganda, and the praise of the honest men called upon to sacrifice their gaiety and their strength. Mackintosh’s reference to “poor devils like yourselves” was often understood only by stronger candidates to refer to Germans in a similar situation to the English soldiers seduced by propaganda. Writing on *The Parable of the Old Man and the Young*, some candidates found it difficult to say who Owen was criticizing: some thought it was fathers in general; others thought it was army officers; others targeted the government. Too often candidates appeared to misread the question and criticised the young men who went to war, and not those who sent them.

Question 5

The exploration/comparison of the moving memories of men killed in war in *Spring in War-Time* and *The Seed-Merchant’s Son* was also quite popular. On the whole the Nesbit was fairly well understood, but the Herbertson rather less well, understanding often not going beyond recognition of the youth of the son. Some responses, especially at Foundation Tier, showed understanding through paraphrase, whilst better ones commented on the poets’ use of language to make the memories moving. The better responses also engaged with the problematic last couplet of the Herbertson, whereas weaker ones declined to engage in any way with the couplet.

Question 6

For candidates opting to explore the ways in which the poets memorably convey feelings about loss of life in war, the popular choice was to pair *The Falling Leaves* and *Joining the Colours*. These candidates were usually able to recognise that the falling leaves and snowflakes in the Cole represent the falling soldiers. However, there were two fairly common misreadings: some candidates, apparently overlooking the word “no” in line four, suggested that the wind was the reason why the leaves whirled whistling to the sky; others explained that in line seven the soldiers were described as wandering off, usually to heaven, although “wandered” is actually applied by the voice of the poem to herself. The tone of *The Falling Leaves* was often

misunderstood, with its mood being described as angry. *Joining the Colours* was much better understood, with sound comments being made on the youth and naivety of “the mothers’ sons” and their unawareness of what awaits them. There were some pleasing discussions of the structure of the poem, with some focus on the short fourth line which concludes each verse. Less secure responses somewhat sweepingly suggested that no one watching the young men pass had any idea of what lay ahead of them, though clearly the voice in the poem knows all too well. Few candidates chose to discuss *The Bohemians*, and only a few of these understood the poem. Some stated that the Bohemians were killed because they refused to clean their buttons or polish their buckles, whereas those who conformed to the Army’s expectations earned their promotions and enjoyed successful military careers. Such readings tended to make no reference to the poem’s bleak and shocking last line.

Touched with Fire

Question 10

Of the three questions set on *Touched with Fire*, most candidates answered on the exploration/ comparison of *Dulce Et Decorum Est* and *Five Ways to Kill a Man*. Most were able to comment on the violent imagery in the Owen, with the most successful analysing it in some detail. Some candidates trawled through the whole poem, largely offering paraphrase, but many were selective and made much of the most appropriate lines. *5 Ways to Kill a Man* was rather less well considered, many candidates, especially at Foundation Tier, simply explaining each verse or identifying the historical period referred to in each. The third verse describing the conditions of the First World War was said by some candidates to be describing the Second World War. The last verse was often not understood, or simply ignored. However, some were able to comment on the structure, progression and emotionless tone of the Brock, with the best answers being able to comment on the effect of these.

Question 11

Candidates at both Tiers found much to comment on, whether it concerned the memorable impressions of people, or the poets’ use of humour, in *Telephone Conversation* and *In Westminster Abbey*. Soyinka’s landlady and Betjeman’s society lady provoked strong feelings, ranging from dislike to outrage, and, at both Tiers, candidates found ample material to support their feelings. Higher Tier candidates recognised the way the caller in *Telephone Conversation* mocks the landlady and the revelation of the lady’s hypocrisy in the Betjeman. Encouragingly, some identified and clarified the apparent ambiguity at the end of the Soyinka. Foundation Tier candidates tended to miss the mockery and hypocrisy in the poems and took them at face value, but were usually able to demonstrate overall understanding of the poems.

Question 12

The question linking *Refugee Mother and Child* and *Digging* was sometimes chosen. Most candidates at both Tiers were able to express some response to the poignant images in the Achebe, and *Digging* was usually well understood. The focus of weaker candidates on the Heaney sometimes wavered as they outlined Heaney’s possible sense of regret at not literally following the tradition of his father and grandfather, but nonetheless following it metaphorically by doing his digging with his pen.

PROSE

Opening Worlds

Question 13

The question on the extracts from *Dead Men's Path* and *The Gold-Legged Frog* was comfortably the most popular of all in the prose section this January. Good answers at both Tiers emphasised Obi's arrogance and the priest's attempt to offer an acceptable compromise. Michael Obi provoked feelings of anger in candidates, allowing them to show considerable engagement with the extract. The priest's "stout walking-stick" seemed to fascinate Foundation Tier candidates and many were able to show its success in drumming home his points. However, the priest's part in the confrontation was sometimes given too little attention, perhaps because of the strength of the anti-Obi sentiment. The confrontation in the extract from *The Gold-Legged Frog* was less well considered, candidates often being uncertain whether Nak was intending to make a joke, despite his "uncontrollable" exasperation, or retreating into a discussion of conflict between the deputy, as representative of wealth, and Nak, representing poverty.

Some general comments on extract-based questions on short stories might be useful here. Comparison of the extracts is neither expected nor required. The AO3 requirement for comparison is tested in the Poetry Section of the 2442 question papers. That two extracts are printed reflects a QCA requirement that more than one story in a selection is considered in candidates' answers. Especially at Higher Tier, candidates are asked about the writing and the writer's techniques. This means that the bulk of the answer must focus on the set extracts and that deviating into discussion of other parts of the stories must be at the expense of discussing/analysing the actual writing. With reference to these two extracts, a clear indication of what the confrontations are about, Obi's closure of the path and Nak's necessary journey to the deputy although his son is dying, was helpful. A lengthy account of Obi's appointment and ambitions, and Nak's early morning search for frogs culminating in his son's being bitten by a cobra, were not. Occasionally candidates did not get as far as the Srinawk extract in their retelling of all that preceded it.

As already indicated, some candidates ignore the thrust of a question and follow the route of a prepared answer. Several of the stories in *Opening Worlds* have poverty as a prominent theme and candidates, who have no doubt discussed this theme in class, on occasion discuss it in the examination hall, although the question does not demand it. Examiners are reminded that candidates' answers must be relevant to the question; those that are not are self-limiting.

Question 14

The invitation to discuss unpleasant characters produced some quite lively responses at both Tiers. Candidates' engagement with the texts was again evident, as it was in Question 11 and in responses to Michael Obi. Mr Chase was obviously much detested, and several noted that, unlike teachers at their own Centres, he was thoroughly unsympathetic and a disgrace to his calling. Many were able to support their view of Mr Chase with close, careful attention to the language Sealy uses in describing his appearance and actions. The husband in *The Train from Rhodesia* was considered to be totally unpleasant and there were some detailed discussions of his treatment of the old craftsman. The tailor's wife in *The Tall Woman and Her Short Husband*, though invariably found to be unpleasant, attracted less thorough attention. Candidates often found it difficult to move beyond a brief consideration of her nosiness and love of gossip to a consideration of her role in aiding the authorities and crass insensitivity to the Short Husband's grief at the loss of his wife at the end of the story. However, invitations to candidates to respond to unsympathetic characters seemed to prove successful.

Question 15

Where candidates avoided re-telling the stories, this question tended to be answered very well, showing considerable understanding of the relationships from both the adult's and the child's sides. The relationship Bolan has with both his mother and his father in *The Red Ball* was sensitively considered, as was Anna's relationship with her class and then with Savushkin, both before and after her visit to the forest. The mother and daughter relationship in *Two Kinds*, and the reasons for its being fraught, were also carefully considered, with good answers providing detailed textual support for finding the depiction of relationships particularly memorable.

D H Lawrence: *Ten Short Stories*

Question 16

This was the most popular question on the Lawrence selection. Candidates tended to respond rather better to the extract from *The Lovely Lady*, showing stronger overall understanding of the relationship between Robert and Ciss, their feelings and how Lawrence suggests them, than they did to the passage from *Second Best*. Ciss was identified as desperate to move their relationship forward, with her speech and actions at every point suggesting this; Robert's actions were often analysed in depth, especially the kiss on the cheek, the sudden flushing, his confession "I am no lover of women", all showing the struggle he has to act against his mother's wishes. Most saw the ending of the extract as a sign that their relationship would now deepen. Candidates were usually on Ciss's side, arguing that she was right to exert herself "to get her man". The extract from *Second Best* was less well understood. Those who considered Frances to be flirting with Tom often made a sound case. Others were somewhat uncertain, like Anne, when confronted with the characters' mixed emotions. Nearly all candidates identified the mole as a metaphor, but few proceeded to explore its significance in any depth.

Question 18

There was a handful of responses to the portrayal of conflict between men and women in *Tickets, Please* and *Her Turn*. Successful answers focused on the physical attack at the end of *Tickets, Please*, emphasising Lawrence's graphic description. Candidates tended to see the girls as clear winners in the conflict, although some recognized that Annie in her "bitter hopelessness" is far from triumphant. They found *Her Turn* less accessible, candidates being uncertain as to why Radford capitulates to his wife after her spending spree.

Things Fall Apart

Question 22

There were comparatively few responses to the extract-based question on *Things Fall Apart*. Candidates were usually able to comment effectively on what they felt about Okonkwo, noting his sense of guilt, inability to settle and unacknowledged remorse. Whilst some pity was felt for him, it was often tempered by anger at the action he had just committed.

Question 23

There were some strong responses to Ikemefuna at both Foundation and Higher Tiers. At Foundation Tier candidates were able to demonstrate what they found likeable about him, although they did not always focus on why he is important in the novel. Higher Tier candidates often wrote quite comprehensively about him, showing his influence on both Okonkwo and Nwoye, discussing the light he throws on the tribe and its customs and how his death contributes to the falling apart of Umuofia.

The Old Man and the Sea

Question 25

There were some pleasing responses to *The Old Man and the Sea* at both Tiers. Candidates usually remembered to focus closely on the extract in Question 22 and noted the possible magnitude of the struggle that is starting to unfold. They focused on the size of the marlin, its

Report on the Units taken in January 2009

intelligence and strength and on Santiago's cramped hand, lack of companion, and his own intelligence and determination. The best responses at Higher Tier looked at the writing and the way Hemingway's similes underscore the danger the fish poses to the old man.

Question 27

There were a number of thoughtful responses at both Tiers to Question 27 concerning the old man's loneliness and how he copes with it. Some felt he coped successfully and others that he scarcely coped at all, but most were able to support their ideas with detail from all areas of the novel.

Nineteen Eighty-Four

Question 28

Responses to *Nineteen Eighty-Four* suggested that that this text had been studied with some enthusiasm and that candidates had engaged closely with it. The extract-based question drew responses to its horror, whether it was to O'Brien's attempt to break Winston's spirit, Winston's own words when he enrolled himself in the Brotherhood, or Winston's appearance in the mirror. The best responses focused closely on the extract and considered Orwell's graphic language, especially when describing the state of Winston's body following his treatment in the Ministry of Love. On occasion candidates wrote that the extract recorded O'Brien's triumph over Winston and Winston's final submission, forgetting that Room 101 and Winston's worst fear is still to come. There were few responses to Question 29 on Julia. Question 30, on the Party's possible eternal retention of power, was often very well answered, with candidates showed detailed knowledge of the novel to support their ideas.

Written Communication

In English Literature Scheme A, Written Communication, worth 4 marks at Foundation Tier and 6 at Higher, is assessed only on this Unit, Post-1914 Poetry and Prose. Candidates who can spell, punctuate and use the rules of grammar accurately so that what they are saying is clear can boost their final mark on the Unit quite considerably. Candidates whose spelling, punctuation and use of grammar are weak disadvantage themselves. Formal English is preferable to such phrases and words as "Bolan's mum", "taking the mickey" and "gob-smacked".

2444/01, 2444/02 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 again very pleased 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 almost all candidates. Extract-based questions unsurprisingly tended to be more popular, and most answers to these 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 their plots. In short, focus generally was again much tighter and more relevant 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.

Comments on Individual Questions

Much Ado About Nothing

There were too few answers on this text to make any useful general comments.

Romeo and Juliet

Question 3

This was the more popular of the two questions on the play, and was generally answered competently, occasionally extremely well, and very rarely poorly; candidates invariably knew the context, and were able to make sensible and thoughtful responses to the ways in which Shakespeare introduces us to the Friar and his relationship with Romeo. His father-like concern was noted by many, as was his shock at how suddenly Romeo has switched his affections from Rosaline to Juliet. Many answers were understandably critical of the way in which the Friar agrees so quickly and readily to marry the two lovers, and while most saw this as evidence of a good nature, hoping to end the long-running Capulet/Montague feud, a good number of answers also saw it as perhaps indicative of the Friar's own impetuous character (ironic in view of his words to Romeo "*Wisely and slow . . .*"); there were several who perhaps rather curiously saw this change of heart as evidence of the Friar's selfishness – he should not, they argued, be using Romeo and Juliet for his own ends, but none showed how ending the feud could be a selfish motive. Most answers very pleasingly supported their ideas with quotation from the set passage rather than simply asserting a view without supporting evidence.

Question 4

There were some very lively and often convincing empathic responses here; the moment selected is of course a particularly powerful one, and no candidate had any apparent difficulty in appreciating at least something of the emotional turmoil that Juliet must be going through: she has been threatened by her father, half-abandoned by her mother, betrayed or at best let down by the Nurse, she has lost her cousin Tybalt, and worst of all her husband has been banished on pain of death. It is no wonder that she should feel totally lost and isolated. Most answers captured some or all of these factors, and the best were able to go beyond simply writing what

one examiner called “a Mills and Boon type of gushing”, and were able to demonstrate a real knowledge and understanding, at times echoing some of the words and phrases used earlier in the play by Juliet herself or other characters. There was some quite moving writing here – though the one answer that said Romeo’s banishment was “a bit of a nuisance” did not perhaps fully appreciate the implications of what Romeo was up against.

An Ideal Husband

There were too few answers on this text to make any useful general comments.

An Enemy of the People

There were too few answers on this text to make any useful general comments.

Opening Lines: War

Question 9

This was by far the more popular of the two “War” questions, and was generally done well or very well, with plenty of quotation and critical exploration to support the ideas being put forward. There is of course much to find admirable in the determination and bravery of the soldiers in both poems, and in their persistence in fighting against odds which they were well aware were overpoweringly against them. There was some occasional expression of anger that any men should be placed in the position of the soldiers here, but even where this formed part of an answer the candidates nonetheless found their defiance and courage admirable. Quotation was used well by most, together – especially in the Tennyson – with some sensible reference to the effects of the poems’ rhythms and rhymes; simple and unsupported assertion was thankfully rare. It is worth pointing out that, as has been the case in most previous sessions when the Newbolt has been set, a surprising number of candidates thought that “ten to make and the match to win” refers to a game of football rather than cricket and inevitable confusion results from this misconception. Historical awareness was often a little awry where it was mentioned, with both poems being placed in one or both of the World Wars by several candidates. More worrying was the belief in more than one that the Light Brigade was *walking* into the Valley of Death. Most Higher Tier, and many Foundation Tier, candidates made apt and quite detailed comparisons between the two poems, often moving easily and fluently between them.

Question 10

Of the three poems here, most answers looked at the Dobell and the Hardy; few used Lovelace, though in fact those who did so seemed more confident than those writing on Dobell, where the situation was often misunderstood; a surprising number of answers appeared to think that all the people in *Tommy’s Dead* are soldiers rather than relatives of one who has been killed. The poems all create different feelings about the soldiers, of course, so contrast rather than comparison was easier to manage, but this was not often done in a particularly fluent way, most candidates preferring to write about each poem individually then drawing a few points together at the end of their answers.

Opening Lines: Town and Country

Question 11

This pairing was obviously very helpful to candidates, almost all of whom were well aware that Raleigh’s poem is, as its title says, a direct response to Marlowe’s; most, too, saw clear contrasts in the ways in which nature and natural images are used – Raleigh taking hold of Marlowe’s ideas and satirically or sardonically mocking them in turn. Many answers were able to move fluently and easily between the two poems rather than treating each separately, demonstrating a good level of confidence and understanding of both. Most also saw the idealistic, unrealistic quality of Marlowe’s seductive imagery, and often made sensible but clearly 21st-century-

influenced comments about how they (usually female candidates here) would not in fact be taken in by the exaggerations of “beds of roses”, let alone “a thousand fragrant posies”, and pointed to the far more down-to-earth realism of the nymph’s reply – love will not last any more than spring and summer will, and sitting on rocks will inevitably become cold and uncomfortable! A handful of answers noted the pastoral tradition within which the earlier poem was written, but many more talked of its chocolate-box perfection in contrast to the colder knowingness of Raleigh’s response. Only a few seemed to notice the impact of Raleigh’s final stanza – the nymph is in fact surprisingly close to being seduced.

Question 12

There were some very good answers here, especially on Blake’s poem and Hood’s *The Song of the Shirt*, both of which, albeit in different ways, present distressing and fearful pictures of town life. A good number of answers noted that while Blake talks in quite general terms throughout his poem, and ranges very widely across a spectrum of people and scenes, Hood focuses very closely upon just one woman; even if she is representative of many more, the poem strikes so strongly because of its individual and personal detail. Its sardonic title, too, was noted by many – it is not much of a *song* in its cold and frightening picture of desperate poverty and oppression. Although she is not literally a slave, many saw an illuminating link between her “slavery” and Blake’s “mind-forged manacles” and “chartered streets”. The few candidates who used Hood’s *Conveyancing* found it quite hard to see that it is far more entertaining and amusing than either of the other two – although accidents can occur, they are not seen as anything like so serious as the awful conditions drawn in the other two poems.

Blake: Songs of Innocence and Experience

There were no answers on this text.

Hardy: Selected Poems

There were no answers on this text.

Austen: Northanger Abbey

There were no answers on this text.

Dickens: Hard Times

Question 19

This was by far the more popular question on the novel, and generally was managed well or very well; Harthouse (or “the stranger”, which is all we know of his name in the extract) was rarely seen as more than a smooth, cool, laid-back, wealthy, flirtatious, somewhat discourteous and arrogant young man! Few candidates were able to see anything much to like in him, regarding even Mrs Sparsit’s clear admiration as evidence of his deceitful nature. The rest of the novel of course supports this view entirely, and many made clear that they saw his feigned politeness to Mrs Sparsit as a fore-runner of the way he seduces Louisa later, a seduction which is undertaken only because – as in the passage – he is clearly so very *bored* in Coketown. A few answers spent too much time writing about later events, but most focused correctly and closely upon the passage itself. There were some very good and detailed discussions here.

Question 20

Only a few candidates wrote on Bitzer, and did so competently but with little apparent enthusiasm or personal engagement; perhaps his colourless and unemotional nature rubs off on readers. Most answers looked at just two moments in the novel – the opening scene in Mr Gradgrind’s classroom and Bitzer’s later role in the aftermath of the bank robbery – and most were descriptive/narrative rather than exploratory.

Hardy: Far From the Madding Crowd

Question 21

This was by far the more popular question. Most candidates were able to discuss Troy's change of feelings towards both Fanny and Bathsheba, some ranging outside the passage to give a sense of contrast. The best answers showed real engagement and looked at the reasons why the passage is so powerful: it not only concerns Troy, but also shows to what a low state he has reduced the formerly tough and independent Bathsheba. The best answers explored Hardy's language, the use of religious imagery and the disjointed quality of the dialogue, and the very best perceived the irony of the situation – that Troy is now expressing undying love for Fanny when he previously treated her callously, and that she is more powerful in death than she ever was in life. Unfortunately some answers on this text suffered from 'last answer syndrome' and did not get as far as they might have done.

Question 22

Only a few candidates answered this but they generally chose well; the most popular incidents being the receipt of the Valentine, Boldwood's bribery of Troy and Troy's return. They also attempted to show how the description of Boldwood's behaviour contributes to the effect.

Eliot: Silas Marner

Question 23

This was by far the more popular question, though there were not many answers on the novel. Most saw how and why this is such a significant and pivotal moment; as one candidate put it, there would not be much of a story if Silas had in fact been guilty of the theft! The callous way in which Silas is treated by William Dane, and by the rest of the Lantern Yard congregation, was well noted, as was Silas's sudden and deeply heartfelt abandonment of faith in both God and other people; most answers rightly saw this as the reason for his initial reclusiveness and isolation when he arrives in Raveloe. Too many used the passage merely as a stepping-stone to a more general answer on the rest of the novel; the question certainly asks how this moment is significant, but this was not an invitation to tell the whole story.

Question 24

There were few answers to this question, but they were generally sound and sensible, contrasting the way in which Silas was initially treated – with suspicion and uncertainty rather than open hostility – and the change that occurred after the loss of his money, and more so after his "adoption" of Eppie.

Poe: Selected Tales

There were no answers on this text.

Wells: The History of Mr Polly

There were too few answers on this text to make any useful general comments.

Chopin: Short Stories

There were no answers on this text.

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 three of the four texts on offer (*Much Ado About Nothing*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *An Ideal Husband*) appear to have been studied by a significant number of candidates for this particular January session, with *Romeo and Juliet* proving to be by far the more popular Shakespearian option and a small group of Wilde enthusiasts studying (and clearly enjoying) *An Ideal Husband*, but Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People* attracting little or no interest this time around.

Comments on Individual Questions

Much Ado About Nothing

Question 1 was the most popular choice and the most successful answers tackled both strands of the question explicitly, scrutinised the language of the extract and were sensitive to the shifts in tone. A clear understanding of context and of the knowledge withheld from characters onstage was central to the strongest answers, as was an awareness of the interplay between the seriousness and humour in the scene. There was much intelligent and detailed attention to the dramatic double shock (Benedick's challenge and the revelation of the plot against the innocent Hero) administered to Claudio and Don Pedro, and to the comedy provided by Dogberry's linguistic incompetence alongside insights into the irony that this "ass" is playing a pivotal role in resolving the plot. The best answers to **Question 2** ranged widely and selectively across the text, took time to weigh the merits of different responses to Beatrice and established a personal view, rather than just identifying facets of her complex character or running through Shakespeare's portrayal of her without answering the question explicitly. A thoughtful handling of her reaction to the gulling and to denunciation of Hero was often the central feature of strong answers. **Question 3** was attempted by a tiny minority of candidates but some authentically understated and convincing voices were produced. Calm acceptance, forgiveness, relief and happiness both for herself and for Beatrice proved to be the dominant notes in successful reproductions of Hero's voice, mixed with some delight at the success of the gulling of Beatrice.

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 pay explicit attention to both strands of the question and to balance a clear understanding of the context with close consideration of the entertainment provided by the Nurse's bawdy humour and comically irritating interruptions and of the contrasting formality of Lady Capulet's language. There was much intelligent comment on the wider significance of Juliet being closer to the Nurse than to her mother, emphasised by the Nurse's warm and affectionate comments as opposed to Lady Capulet's cold and authoritative tone. The strongest candidates often saw how the scene anticipates Juliet's first meeting with Romeo, her later rejection of her parents' wishes, the unwitting role that Paris is to play in the tragedy and the irony of the Nurse's later betrayal of Juliet. There were some fascinating arguments about the artificiality of Lady Capulet's tribute to Paris, and about Juliet's naivety and restrained response, which established a contrast with the reality of her instant passion for Romeo and her rebellion against her parents. Juliet's replies to her mother and the context for the scene were disastrously misunderstood by some candidates, particularly at Foundation Tier, who insisted that she is rejecting the whole idea of marriage and that the whole exchange is ironic because she is already married to Romeo. The vital importance of establishing the exact context for the prescribed extract was demonstrated by the damaging effect of the assumption

that Juliet had already met and/or was married to Romeo, in that these answers often focused exclusively on a relationship which does not exist at this point in the play. There were many fine answers to **Question 5** which focused sharply on the word “moving” and constructed well-supported personal responses. Strong candidates often explored the language of the lovers (the initial sonnet, the setting aside of the family name in the balcony scene, the light imagery associated with Juliet...) and traced the doomed nature of their love through the imagery of death which they so frequently employ. The passionate level of sacrifice in their willingness to choose death rather than be parted was often examined in impressive detail. Weaker answers were often distracted by previously practised essays on fate or on contrasting types of love and included lengthy sections on Rosaline or Paris or the family feud, so that the focus on the central couple was inevitably lost. **Question 6** on Friar Lawrence was another successful empathic choice for several candidates, with some couching their answer in appropriately religious terms, speculating as to whether the mishap represents the malign workings of fate or God’s will and questioning his own past actions while considering what to do next. Some Friars emerged as highly pragmatic and still determined to devise complex ways of sorting out the mess; others were portrayed as interfering busybodies desperate to escape punishment rather than reflecting on past actions. One candidate included a moving section empathising with Juliet as she wakes in the Capulet tomb. Weaker answers conveyed little sense of the Friar as a man of God or of his attachment to the couple and often tended (rather unrealistically) to provide a complete re-cap on the twists and turns of the plot so far.

An Ideal Husband

Question 7 was by far the most popular choice on this text and successful answers revealed a sure grasp of the context and a clear awareness of the gravity of the situation for Sir Robert. There was much intelligent comment on the shifting balance of power and on the way Mrs Cheveley undermines Sir Robert’s posturing and relishes her growing ascendancy. Some candidates spent too long passing moral judgements on the characters and became distracted from the sources of the drama while others produced overlong plot summaries and so left themselves insufficient time to address the question. The best answers were able to pay close attention to the tension in the dialogue and to fully appreciate the depths of Sir Robert’s dilemma. **Question 8** was a minority choice but the liveliness and wit of Mabel Chiltern had registered strongly with some candidates. Her exchanges with Lord Goring and Lord Caversham, in particular, provided fruitful material and there was much perceptive comment on her love for Lord Goring, the sense beneath her light-hearted banter and the way she contrasts with Lady Chiltern. Very few candidates attempted to adopt the point of view of Lord Goring for the empathic **Question 9** but some managed to not only convey his numerous concerns at the start of the Fourth Act (what Sir Robert’s might have said to the House about the canal scheme, Sir Robert’s discovery of Mrs Cheveley in his drawing-room, the theft of Lady Chiltern’s letter, the proposal to Mabel...) but also capture the intelligence and benevolence beneath the sardonic humour.

2446/01, 2446/02 Poetry and Prose Pre - 1914

The entry for January 2009 was too small to make meaningful comments on performance. The general issues that arose, however, were the necessity to write about both poems in answer to Questions in Section A and both stories in answers to short story collections in Section B. Candidates tended to know one poem and have very little understanding of the other which necessarily affected their level of achievement. There is no necessity to compare short stories. Many candidates wasted time and effort on this.

In answering the passage-based question on short stories candidates need to look at the passages in some detail and have a sense of their context in the story as a whole. The thrust of the question, however, is usually on the impact of the passage itself and there must be some close reading, including response to language where appropriate.

In Foundation Tier answers candidates were aware of the content of the poems and stories but only the strongest managed to write about the language. Merely spotting poetic techniques such as repetition, alliteration, rhyme scheme makes little impact if there is no comment on their effect.

2443/2447 English Literature (Coursework)

The opportunity of entering Literature coursework in January is being exploited by many centres. For some centres January offers the chance to enter some particularly good candidates early so they can then concentrate on other studies. This results in folders almost exclusively of Bands 1-3 and the centres can lose sight of the complete range of marks. They may over-differentiate when awarding 40-45 when 45 is a notional mark and can contain a broad range of achievement.

Other centres may be using the opportunity for re-entering students who have narrowly missed a grade. They must note that at least one piece should be new and it would be very helpful to the candidate if that were indicated. The danger here is that teachers are tempted to squeeze candidates into a higher band and if there is a small entry the moderator only has to note a few being over-generously rewarded for the whole centre to be scaled down. A number of Moderation Reports may warn centres how close they came to this happening; for the sake of the majority of their entrants, these need to be more rigorous in future.

A lot of centres enter only one or two candidates in January and so have the benefit of a personalised report on the folders, and we hope this feedback will support them in future task setting and assessment.

Despite the Christmas holidays and the difficulty of getting folders in, marking and standardising them, most centres met the deadline and presented the coursework professionally. A few treated the re-sits a little casually and standardisation had not taken place with the usual care.

As always teachers' comments on the Cover Sheet assisted the moderator in understanding the mark given and were supportive to the candidates.

Two temptations were apparent – one to the teacher and one to the student. Understandably teachers want to give their candidates as much guidance as possible but it should be noted that the JCG Guidelines www.jcq.org.uk p.2; 4.4 state that “the provision of outlines, paragraph or section headings, or writing frameworks specific to the coursework task” are “not acceptable”. Such strategies in any case prevent candidates from demonstrating the personal and critical formation of opinions which are an essential criterion of Band 4 upwards. Where teachers can find the right balance between guided structure and personal response and where candidates are trained in the art of critical essay writing, individual insights are expressed and folders achieve high grades. For a few students the temptation is to borrow, uncritically and unadapted, from the internet. It seems a shame that students might risk their whole exam entry for a few irrelevant biographical notes. Instances remain rare so teachers should spot these malpractices and take action before moderation. Use of secondary source material is a skill worth teaching and rather than penalising candidates for doing it naively it would be better to train them how to use secondary source material constructively.

Unit 2447 is used where centres feel their candidates can cope with the extra drama piece, but it has the advantage of extending their reading. In prose Ishiguro, Kate Atkinson, Salinger, 'The Kite Runner' and 'Wasp Factory' were successful, as were Plath and Heaney in poetry and 'Whose Life is it Anyway', 'Inspector Calls', 'Journey's End', Miller and Schaffer in drama.

As usual the most common task concerned guilt in 'Romeo and Juliet' where many of the re-sit candidates had simply asserted that each person was guilty and told the story to prove it. However, there was no attempt at evaluation or inclusion of stagecraft or comment on language which tends to restrict them to band 5. Many marginal entrants were able to draw attention to

Report on the Units taken in January 2009

stylistic features and label them correctly without drawing conclusions about how their use influenced the reader.

Sometimes candidates were replacing their summer Shakespeare assignment with a new one where the task gave clear prompts and directed them to specific scenes. This focussing of study is understandable when someone is trying to quickly improve their folder, but there must be sufficient evidence of engagement with the whole text.

Another feature which may have depressed students' achievement was the quality of their expression. Very often a moderator can identify a quick and intelligent mind frustrated by poor expression and essay writing skills. This is sometimes characterised by attempts to marshal evidence behind an argument with repeated phrases like, "I can tell this because..." The aspiration is always to try and reward the perceptions that sometimes lie behind weak expression.

However, there were many candidates who were able to neatly integrate all the assessment criteria into their answers with quotation being embedded into the argument and social and cultural background employed to inform a response to the text. Comparisons were sustained and well-balanced in the higher bands but merely acted as appendices elsewhere. Length was never a marker of quality and the best students were selective and concise in their use of material.

The January entry always demonstrates hard work. It might be teachers supporting a few re-sit students alongside their current teaching commitments. It might be students determined to overcome their summer disappointment alongside their new Year 12 studies. And there are many centres setting themselves gruelling targets by early submission. It is a privilege for moderators to be involved in this process of rewarding all this hard work and challenge.

2448 Post- 1914 Texts

The entry for this session was in line with the previous January, with this time a greater proportion of Higher Tier candidates.

Answers on *Death of a Salesman* showed a familiarity with what is happening in the play. Commendably, in **Question 3** most focused strongly on the stage directions and were able to comment on the significance of Ben's appearance, Willy's flashback, and the steady build-up of tension, punctuated by Linda's increasingly panicked calls. It was, however, disappointing to observe that many referred to 'the reader' rather than the audience in discussing this text. Only a few chose **Question 4**, and these tended to be weaker answers. A few used the passage in Question 3 as evidence, which was a restrictive approach.

On *Opening Lines*, **Question 9** was slightly the more popular choice of the pair. The Plath was reasonably dealt with but the Reed was less clear, and comments were sometimes restricted to quoting line 12 as if this by itself would answer the question. On **Question 10**, *Mort aux Chats* and *Rat O Rat...* were the popular choices. Most who did this question did understand that *Mort aux Chats* is a prejudiced and metaphorical rant, albeit some believing that the hatred was against the French! Some understood the sarcasm inherent in *Rat O Rat...*, although a few thought that the narrator had the rat's best interests at heart.

On *Opening Lines* **Question 11**, *The Deserter* was on the whole more successfully tackled – although Winifred Letts was too often identified as a man - and there was pleasing response to the language, such as the personifications, similes, and repetitions. *The Hero* proved more problematical. Some thought that Jack too was shot as a coward, some believed, strangely, that he really was a hero, because the title says so. 'Empathy' and 'sympathy' were used synonymously at times. On **Question 12**, *Recruiting* and *Joining the Colours* were the most used. Most answers were able to answer well, and with detail from the poems. There were signs of improvement in approaches to the war poetry, firmer grasp of the narrative of individual poems, and reduced tendency to spot language features such as alliteration for their own sake.

It was surprising to discover relative underperformance on *Opening Worlds* in this session. In particular, in answers to **Question 17**, many candidates argued that it is a happy ending to the story for Cathy. A number of candidates were under the illusion that they were supposed to compare the stories, especially in Question 17, and this inhibited the quality of their answers. In answers to **Question 18**, few understood fully the extent of Nak's misery, and the irony brought home at the end of the story. One or two strongly condemned him for leaving his son, without discussing the impossibility of his situation. Some candidates were unaware of, or ignored, the ending of *The Red Ball*, resulting in incomplete responses to the story.

Question 29 was the more popular question on *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Most were aware of when this passage occurs, and answers focused on 'gripping' with use of detail from the passage. A few, however, appeared unaware of the true nature and motives of O'Brien. Some were confused about the writing of the address under the telescreen, failing to see its significance.

A small number of Foundation Tier candidates answered only two questions, or attempted a question on a text which they had not studied.

Grade Thresholds

General Certificate of Secondary Education
English Literature (1901)
January 2009 Assessment Series

Unit Threshold Marks

Unit		Maximum Mark	a*	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	u
2441/1	Raw	21				19	15	12	9	6	0
	UMS	27				24	20	16	12	8	0
2441/2	Raw	30	27	24	21	18	15	13			0
	UMS	40	36	32	28	24	20	16			0
2442/1	Raw	46				33	27	22	17	12	0
	UMS	69				60	50	40	30	20	0
2442/2	Raw	66	50	45	39	33	27	24			0
	UMS	100	90	80	70	60	50	40			0
2443	Raw	45	42	37	32	27	22	17	12	7	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	35	30	27			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	15	13			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	33	30			0
	UMS	100	90	80	70	60	50	40			0
2447	Raw	45	42	37	32	27	22	17	12	7	0
	UMS	60	54	48	42	36	30	24	18	12	0
2448/1	Raw	42				34	27	21	15	9	0
	UMS	41				36	30	24	18	12	0
2448/2	Raw	60	46	42	38	34	29	26			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
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	2.5	13.0	35.7	66.7	87.6	96.4	99.2	99.9	100	1222

1222 candidates were entered for aggregation this series.

For a description of how UMS marks are calculated see;
www.ocr.org.uk/OCR/WebSite/docroot/understand/ums.jsp

Statistics are correct at the time of publication

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations)
1 Hills Road
Cambridge
CB1 2EU

OCR Customer Contact Centre

14 – 19 Qualifications (General)

Telephone: 01223 553998

Facsimile: 01223 552627

Email: general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk

www.ocr.org.uk

For staff training purposes and as part of our quality assurance programme your call may be recorded or monitored

Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations
is a Company Limited by Guarantee
Registered in England
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
Telephone: 01223 552552
Facsimile: 01223 552553

© OCR 2009

