

# **English Literature (Opening Minds)**

General Certificate of Secondary Education **1901**

## **Examiners' Reports**

---

**January 2011**

**1901/R/11J**

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, Diplomas, GCSEs, OCR Nationals, Functional Skills, 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 specifications 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 specification 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 2011

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](mailto:publications@ocr.org.uk)

## CONTENTS

### General Certificate of Secondary Education

### English Literature (1901)

### EXAMINERS' REPORTS

<b>Content</b>	<b>Page</b>
2441 Drama Post – 1914	1
2442 Poetry and Prose Post – 1914	8
2444 Pre-1914 Texts	11
2445 Drama Pre – 1914	14
2446 Poetry and Prose Pre – 1914	16
2443/7 Pre/Post – 1914 Texts (Coursework)	17
2448 Post- 1914 Texts	18

## 2441 Drama Post – 1914

### General Comments (including 2445)

The overall size of the entry for these Units was slightly smaller than in January 2010, largely because of the continuing decline in Foundation Tier entries. In January 2005, Foundation Tier candidates accounted for approximately 40% of the overall entry for that session, whereas in January 2011 the figure was below 7%. Centres had, nevertheless clearly made careful tiering decisions, although a small minority of Higher Tier entrants might have benefitted from answering the more structured Foundation Tier questions. Examiners were very complimentary about the overall quality of work produced and it was clear that the vast majority of candidates had studied their texts very carefully and had thoroughly enjoyed the process. It is a source of enormous pleasure to Examiners that their appreciation of texts they have loved and taught for (in many cases) over thirty years can still be enriched by reading so many wonderfully engaged and original responses.

Once again there was much evidence of thorough, imaginative and sensitive teaching in the way that so many candidates displayed a very detailed knowledge of their texts, and were able to shape strong and well-supported personal responses anchored firmly to the terms of the question chosen. A willingness to engage closely with the powerful feelings generated by these plays was a striking feature of many answers. Movement, sound, gesture and other specific features of staging were often explored with great intelligence, alongside the effect of dialogue, characterisation and plot development, as if candidates are being enthusiastically encouraged to adopt the perspective of an audience member and to visualise the action. Candidates who have been fortunate enough to see a performance of their set texts or, at the very least, have been actively involved in classroom-based drama activities designed to bring the text to life, continue to enjoy a huge advantage when it comes to exploring dramatic effects. Happily, the number of candidates who see themselves as readers only and focus, for example, on punctuation as a primary source of drama or pay detailed attention to the prosodic features of stage directions, continues to decline.

There were very few examples of candidates answering more than one question or tackling more than one text, and Foundation Tier candidates, generally, made very good use of the bullets to structure their answers. Rapid reading of the question led some candidates to penalise themselves by writing about the wrong character or by choosing a moment different from the one specified by the question, and others experienced difficulty in balancing the demands of two-strand questions (“moving/ significant”, “entertaining/ revealing”...) or in focusing on the detail of extract-based questions while conveying understanding of the whole-play context.

*Journey's End* remains by far the most popular post-1914 Drama text, closely followed by *Death of a Salesman* and *Whose Life is it Anyway?*, and although *The Caretaker* remains a minority choice, it continues to be taught and studied by a number of dedicated Pinter enthusiasts. *Romeo and Juliet* remains the most popular pre-1914 choice, followed by *Much Ado About Nothing*, with the non-Shakespearian options, Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People* and Wilde's *An Ideal Husband*, attracting so few candidates that generalised comment in this report is virtually impossible. The pattern of question choice once again varied significantly from Centre to Centre. Although the second question on each play, which tends not to be anchored to a single starting-point in the text, proved to be a successful option for many candidates (particularly on Bernard in *Death of a Salesman*, Raleigh and Osborne in *Journey's End* and Tybalt in *Romeo and Juliet*), it was not unusual to find every candidate from a Centre either tackling the extract-based question or the empathic question as if their options had been deliberately circumscribed and they had been advised which task to attempt prior to the exam. The empathic question

continues to grow in popularity session by session and, once again, there were so many outstanding reproductions of the voices of Happy, Friar Lawrence and, in particular, Raleigh, that many Examiners were moved to lament the absence of the empathic question from the new English Literature Specification.

Finding an effective starting-point for their answer proved a difficult challenge for some candidates and a huge amount of time was occasionally wasted in the production of an introductory paragraph which simply reworked the terms of the question or listed headings (context, conflict, language...) as part of a formulaic approach or provided unhelpful biographical/historical detail about Miller's attitude to capitalism or Sherriff's wartime experiences or Great War propaganda. Both extract and empathic answers require an understanding of where the prescribed moment fits in the play and therefore planning time would be much better spent in establishing the exact location of the moment, clarifying which characters are onstage, what they know and what they are feeling at this point, and what the audience knows and is likely to be feeling as well. Successful introductory paragraphs to extract answers go straight for the dramatic context and, for instance, point out: that we already know that Ken has a ruptured spinal column and will spend the rest of his life reliant on hospital care and that John and Ken are meeting for the first time (*Whose Life Is It Anyway?*, Question 7); that Stanhope and the audience are fully aware of the likely consequences of the imminent German attack (*Journey's End*, Question 10); or that Friar Lawrence has already married Romeo and Juliet, and the Prince has banished Romeo for the killing of Tybalt (*Romeo and Juliet*, Question 4). Similarly the starting-point for successful empathic answers has to be a return to the prescribed moment in the text to ascertain exactly what the character knows and has just experienced: Happy is about to face the wrath of his mother after deserting Willy in the restaurant and is therefore unlikely to be analysing his childhood experiences in great detail (*Death of a Salesman*, Question 3); Raleigh and Stanhope have been unable to make eye contact in the aftermath of their confrontation on the previous evening, Raleigh has been traumatised by Osborne's death and he is about to face the huge German attack, so he is unlikely to embark on a chronological account of the past three days or discuss the importance of food as a "coping mechanism". It is laudable that candidates should wish to display their knowledge of the whole play, but empathic answers tightly focused on the specific circumstances of the prescribed moment and maintaining the character's limited point-of-view, tend to be the most convincing.

After sixteen sessions assessing these Drama Units since May 2003, it's possible to summarise the features which tend to characterise successful and less successful answers as follows:

### **Generally**

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
- construct purposeful opening paragraphs which focus specifically on a particular question about a particular play
- select and integrate brief quotations to support and amplify their ideas
- 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

- start with a pre-packaged introduction which is unhelpfully generalised, biographical or list-like and says nothing specific about the play or the question
- lose 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 or wrong moment
- become bogged down in feature-logging and detached from the dramatic action
- work through a pre-digested agenda without fully engaging with the question or the play, and without expressing a personal response.

### **Extract-based Questions**

Successful candidates:

- devote at least two-thirds of answers to discussing, quoting from and commenting on the extract itself but still convey understanding of the whole-play context
- start by returning to their text to locate the extract in the context of the whole play
- establish the dramatic context for the characters and the audience quickly and economically in the opening paragraph
- ground their whole-play reflections firmly in the detail of the extract
- pay close attention to the way the dramatic action evolves throughout the extract.

Less successful candidates:

- produce generalised answers 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
- produce a sweeping opening paragraph with an all-purpose list of headings and largely ignore the question
- rarely quote from the extract or copy out huge chunks unaccompanied by any attempt at commentary
- miss the reference to “this moment” in the question and as a result answer the question on the play as a whole with little reference to the printed extract.

### **Discursive Questions**

Successful candidates:

- focus rigorously on (and sometimes challenge) the terms of the question and maintain relevance throughout
- range selectively across the text to find supporting detail for their arguments
- balance their attention to double-stranded questions on two characters/two moments/two elements
- show a sharp awareness of audience response
- quote shrewdly and economically
- reach a relevant conclusion.

Less successful candidates:

- become bogged down in one moment in the play so that the range of reference becomes too narrow
- rely only on the printed extract for the previous question for their ideas and quotations
- spend the bulk of their time on one strand of a two-stranded question
- lose the question entirely and unload pre-packaged and lengthy material about “the American Dream” in *Death of a Salesman* or about coping strategies in *Journey's End*, or on another previously prepared topic with limited relevance to the question.

## **Empathic Questions**

Successful candidates:

- anchor empathic questions securely to the prescribed moment to focus solely on what that character knows, thinks and feels at that point
- emphasise the character's dominant feelings and priorities at that point in the play
- select appropriate detail and integrate quotations of the character's actual words smoothly into the answer
- maintain a limited point-of-view so that knowledge and attitudes are credibly circumscribed
- sustain a voice that rings true in terms of language and tone
- know when to stop and therefore avoid repetition.

Less successful candidates:

- ascribe knowledge, feelings and attitudes to characters in empathic answers which are inappropriate to that character at that point in the play
- 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?"
- lose the moment entirely and leap on to later moments in the play
- use inappropriate or anachronistic idioms
- over-simplify or stereotype both character and language
- write too much and therefore lose control of point-of-view and repeat themselves.

## **Comments on Individual Questions**

### *Death of a Salesman*

The extract for **Question 1** stimulated some fine answers which not only conveyed a strong sense of the dramatic situation for Willy at this point, but also explored his increasingly fragile and desperate state of mind and Charley's kindly attempts to make him see sense. Many candidates focused on Willy's ominous reflection about being "worth more dead than alive" and linked this intelligently to his sacking, his suicide, his continuing delusions and his flawed values. The final bullet on the Foundation Tier question ("hints of problems to come") prompted a rather more thoughtful look at the dramatic context than was apparent in some Higher Tier answers. Willy's readiness to fight Charley was sometimes cleverly connected to the punching bag gift and the failures of the Loman men. The significance of Willy's inability to accept Charley's job offer, of his belief in the importance of being "well liked" and of the striking contrast with Charley (as a father and a businessman) was often very intelligently handled. There was a tendency to spend much more time on the "significant" strand of the question and to launch into long thematic discussions without fully engaging with the moving portrayal of Willy in this extract: the lonely, insecure, guilt-ridden, unemployed man who has one "friend" and who is being forced to confront the reality of his own failure and the pain of Charley and Bernard's success but is clinging to a fantasy about his job, his sons and, ultimately, his life insurance. Some candidates ignored Charley's role completely or found his business advice and references to J.P.Morgan hard to understand. Others were so unsympathetic to Willy that Charley was portrayed as almost saintly by comparison.

**Question 2** was the least popular Miller question but it was answered consistently well. The best answers paid thoughtful attention to the appearances of both the young and the mature Bernard but made particularly effective use of his adult conversation with Willy to emphasise his modesty, respect, kindness, hard-work, loyalty and the total absence of resentment at the way the Loman men have treated him. His restraint and unwillingness to rub Willy's nose in his achievements, stimulated much strong and intelligent response. Many saw that a key component of Miller's portrayal of Bernard was the way he is contrasted with Biff, and pursued a contrast between the values of the two households and the career paths of Bernard and Biff very

successfully. Some candidates even pointed out the irony that Bernard (like his father) is very "well liked" by the audience. There was a misconception among some candidates that Charley genuinely takes no interest in his son and that Bernard has overcome paternal indifference to achieve success.

Many candidates conveyed a thoughtful insight into Happy's selfish, blame-shifting and deluded nature in response to **Question 3**, and managed to circumscribe his point-of-view so that his immediate concerns (the need to placate his mother, the events in the restaurant, embarrassment at his father's behaviour, irritation with Biff for spoiling his evening, speculation about his own short and long-term future...) took precedence over less selfish considerations and concern for the well-being of his father, in particular. Strong answers picked up key ideas from the conversations in the restaurant (for instance his advice to Biff about being economical with the truth) and on returning home (his insistence that he was trying to cheer Biff up). There was some subtle speculation about Biff's lost confidence and often a convincing mixture of excuses, prevarication and contradiction. Candidates clearly enjoyed the challenge of reproducing Happy's vernacular and direct quotation was often carefully integrated into successful answers. Some, however, were unable to stay anchored to the prescribed moment and allowed their answer to be dominated by whole-play reflections, sometimes going into minute detail about Happy's childhood and his perceived jealousy of his elder brother. As is often the case with any question about Happy, some candidates could see no further than the idea that he had been a child deprived of parental attention and therefore allowed the piping voice of the marginalised younger brother to drown out other more pressing considerations. Others lost Happy's particularly selfish point-of-view and, even allowing for a degree of entirely valid self-deception in his thoughts, began to sound much more like Biff, in their guilt, self-awareness and concern for Willy, or even like Miller in the insights shared on money, honesty and, sometimes, the American Dream.

#### *The Caretaker*

Students of Pinter continue to produce strong answers which are characterised by close attention to language and to the quirks of conversational interaction, although an overly linguistic approach occasionally led candidates away from the dramatic situation and into empty feature-logging and there were some unhelpful generalisations about the "Theatre of the Absurd" and about "Comedies of Menace".

**Question 4** was an almost universal choice and the best answers not only scrutinised the fascinating features of the language but also conveyed an intelligent understanding of the dramatic context for this climactic moment, of the changes in Aston and of the impact of the threatened violence as Davies turns on his benefactor. There was some intelligent attention to the effect of pauses, silences and the blackout and although Davies' possession and use of the knife throughout the scene was occasionally overlooked, many saw the wielding of it and Aston's unruffled response as central to the drama. The weakest answers remained detached from the evolving situation and relationship and remained unsure as to the location of the scene in the play.

**Question 5** was answered well by the tiny minority of candidates who attempted it and successful arguments were often based on detailed examples of Aston's kindness to Davies, on his dream of the shed and on the trauma of his psychiatric hospital experience. The best answers considered the contrasts with the unpredictable Mick and the ungrateful Davies in shaping a case for sympathy and often drew attention to stage effects such as lighting and silences. Weaker answers tended to use the printed passage for Question 4 as their principal reference point..



**Question 6** produced a few genuinely effective responses ranging credibly in tone from humorous to moving to angry, and capturing Mick's quick mind, varied vocabulary, exasperation, violent temper, and also his tenderness towards his brother.

*Whose Life Is It Anyway?*

There were many lively responses to the entertaining features of the exchange between John and Ken in answer to the very popular **Question 7**. Many candidates explored the friendly banter between John and Ken, although some found it difficult to explore the sources and exact nature of the humour and to tackle both strands of the question explicitly. Strong answers were prepared to visualise the physical comedy provided by John, and to move beyond broad labels like "sexual innuendo" and "comic relief" to look closely at the bitter undercurrents in Ken's gardening metaphors, in his reference to "scrap", his likening of the consultants to "Gods" and in his jealousy of Terence. The best answers were sharply aware of the expository nature of the scene, of the exact nature of Ken's condition and state of mind and of the impact of John's first appearance in the play. The contrast between John and the other medical professionals and the refreshing nature of his guilt-free approach, and the significance of John's singing, dancing, playing and freedom to pursue his musical career in emphasising what Ken has lost, were intelligently handled by many candidates. Some candidates neglected to check the position of the extract in the play and gave the impression that Ken and John were best mates who had developed their relationship throughout Ken's long stay in hospital; some gave the impression that the nature of Ken's paralysis was being revealed for the first time in this scene. There were very relatively few answers to **Question 8** but Ken's intelligence and eloquence, were often minutely analysed to demonstrate his sanity and to defend his right to choose. Some candidates lost the focus on the portrayal of Ken's character and became embroiled in an exploration of the hearing or of ethical issues.

There were some wonderful answers to **Question 9** which were firmly grounded in the intensely personal conversation between Ken and Dr Scott at the end of Act One and which conveyed her discomfiture very sensitively. The best answers managed the challenging task of reproducing the highly educated voice of a medical professional committed to providing the best possible health care but also profoundly disturbed by Ken's sexual frankness and apparent determination to secure his own death. The tension between her professional ethics and her sympathy for Ken was often powerfully conveyed and her reservations about the Valium prescription and the forced injection often featured in the strongest answers. Some candidates lost the prescribed moment and wrote as if Ken has already recruited Mr Hill and as if Dr Scott has already accepted and supported Ken's course of action. Others implied an advanced intimacy between Dr Scott and her challenging patient by constantly employing his Christian name and by portraying their relationship in overly romantic or sentimental terms.

*Journey's End*

As is usually the case, **Question 10** proved to be the most frequently answered question on the paper but much less markedly so than in previous sessions because the discursive **Question 11** and the empathic **Question 12** attracted many more takers this time round.

An understanding of the context for extract-based questions is always an important pre-requisite for successful answers and for this particular conversation between Stanhope and the Sergeant-Major about the much-anticipated German attack, it proved to be essential. Strong answers conveyed a clear awareness of the seriousness of the attack and of its likely outcome, often referring to previous conversations ("you'll get it-right in the neck...we can't expect any help...We've got to stick it...") to suggest the grim reality of the orders Stanhope is relaying and to contrast this with his apparently breezy confidence. Thoughtful exploration of the Sergeant-Major's tentative attempts to discuss the possibility of retreat and of Stanhope's humorously gung-ho rejection of any kind of Plan B, was often a central feature of strong answers. However some candidates found the low-key and subtle nature of this extract and the unfamiliarity of the

character of the Sergeant-Major who is making his first appearance in the play, particularly challenging and some took Stanhope's confidence and even his pronouncement, "Then we advance and win the war", absolutely at face value. The attempt to contrast the two characters led some candidates to exaggerate the qualities on display so that the Sergeant-Major was occasionally accused of slovenliness or even cowardice. In the absence of an exploration of the scene's ironies and of the deadly implications of the attack that is to bring the play to its tragic end, there was a tendency to devote long sections of the answer to significant but rather more peripheral details (the candle, the sunlight, the Sergeant-Major's physical appearance, the condition of his notebook and pencil...) although there was much intelligent discussion of key issues like duty, self-sacrifice, the chain of command, the dramatic mood shift, the sense of foreboding and of Stanhope's bravery, decisive leadership, pride in his company and his drinking. The concept of military rank confused a number of candidates with some expressing surprise that the Sergeant-Major addresses Stanhope as "Sir" so often, some clearly believing that he out-ranks Stanhope and others becoming bogged down in discussions of social class. Details of strategy also baffled some candidates with the "attack" occasionally thought to be the "raid", or Stanhope's company believed to be going "over the top" to attack the Germans rather than wiring in and defending their position, or Stanhope regarded as a maverick, drunken leader devising his own suicidal plan rather than simply passing on orders, and "plans to retire" misconstrued as a form of pension scheme.

Successful answers to **Question 11** conveyed a confident understanding of the expository nature of the scene between Osborne and Raleigh and often focused thoughtfully on the revealing contrast which Sherriff constructs between Raleigh's naivety and Osborne's avuncular wisdom. The strongest candidates, moved well beyond a series of points about the characters onstage and the revelations about trench conditions, and drew attention to the way in which Sherriff is priming his audience for Stanhope's first appearance. There was much intelligent commentary on the effect of the ironic gap between Raleigh's view of Stanhope and what the audience already knows about him based on Hardy's earlier conversation with Osborne, and on the hints of conflicts to come. Some candidates lost focus on the specified scene, at times, and leapt ahead to other conversations about England caps and trips to the New Forest.

**Question 12** generated a great deal of work which Examiners described as "excellent" or even "very moving", and in several Centres this empathic option became the most popular and successful Sherriff choice. Very many candidates offered a viewpoint which was absolutely focused on the prescribed moment and which concentrated selectively on the conflicting feelings (embarrassment, guilt, apprehension, fear, grief, determination...) produced in Raleigh by the awkward parting from Stanhope, by the previous evening's row with him after the "celebration" dinner, by the loss of Osborne and by the prospect of the German attack. Shame, regret and embarrassment (at doubting the strength of Stanhope's feeling for Osborne), grief for Osborne, a fearful acknowledgement of the terrifying reality of warfare and an impression of lost innocence, a strong sense of patriotic duty and a deep desire to make his hero proud, often dominated the strongest answers. Less successful answers tended to lose the focus on the particular moment and launch into a chronological account of Raleigh's experiences, at home, school and war, or survey each character in turn, sometimes losing Raleigh's limited point-of-view and revealing details about Hibbert, for instance, which Raleigh could not possibly know. Some unfortunate mis-readings of the question placed Raleigh's reflections before the raid, rather the attack, as if the scene reference in the question had been completely ignored and the prescribed moment not checked out in any detail. The "Dear Diary" approach which some candidates still insist on adopting, proved particularly inappropriate for this action-packed moment and some answers extended so far forward that they became a running commentary on the German attack and occasionally included Raleigh's injury and death-bed scene, thereby inventing a whole new genre – the posthumous empathic response.

## 2442 Poetry and Prose Post – 1914

As expected, the number of candidates entered for this Unit at both Foundation and Higher Tiers was comparatively low, and the choice of texts very limited. Most, though not all, candidates had been entered at the appropriate Tier. There were very few rubric infringements, and very few damagingly brief responses. The best responses focused on the question, discussed language without paraphrasing, and supported ideas with textual detail and quotation.

### POETRY

Examiners again noted that candidates are often unaware of the gender of the poets whose work they have studied. Selima Hill and Agnes Grozier Herbertson were often referred to as "he". Some candidates also feel they are on Christian name terms with Agnes, Vera and Wilfred, although such familiarity extends only to the poets. Ernest and George meet with far greater respect.

Few candidates chose to answer on the poems in the *How It Looks From Here* section in the OCR Anthology. Good responses to *In Your Mind* and *The Hare* focused closely on the wording of the question and selected striking images of nature for discussion, teasing out the ways in which the poets make such images striking. Weaker responses limited discussion to explaining what some of the lines meant or paraphrasing the poems. Responses that show understanding of what a poem is about will be rewarded appropriately but responses that engage with how the writers use the language in their poems will be well rewarded.

There were some good responses to *Mirror*, paired with *I am a Cameraman*. The Plath was well understood and candidates were able to discuss in some detail exactly what the mirror was reflecting. The Dunn was often less well handled; although responses often drew attention to the inability of the camera to capture anything other than the surface, there were often digressions to paparazzi intrusions into the lives of "celebrities", ignoring the true victims of the lens and those "robbed ... of privacy" on whom Dunn focuses.

There were too few responses to *Things* and *Bedfellows* for any valuable comment to be made.

The majority of poetry responses were to the war poetry in the OCR Anthology *Opening Lines*. The most popular question involved the pairing of *Recruiting* and *Joining the Colours* and thoughts and feelings about going to war. There were good responses at both tiers, with candidates discussing in detail Mackintosh's views of war propaganda and Hinkson's description of the gaiety of "golden boys" being giving a rousing send-off. The best answers supported their discussion/analysis with textual detail and based their response on the language the poets use. Weaker responses tended to paraphrase the poems or simply to respond to the situation the soldiers are in and not to the language. There were some quite widespread misunderstandings: Mackintosh was sometimes said to be encouraging the lads to go and help, thus being in sympathy with the propaganda and bellicose attitudes of people like the fat civilians, journalists and harlots that the poem attacks; sometimes there were strong assertions that not only did the "mothers' sons" not know what awaited them, but neither did the narrative voice in *Joining the Colours*.

There were some pleasing responses to the invitation to explore how the poets movingly convey the grief of those left behind in *Perhaps*- and *The Seed-Merchant's Son*, the latter poem being generally better understood than *Perhaps* -. Candidates were able to make something of the son's youth, and how his death had extinguished the last glint of his father's youth. Strong candidates integrated the last four lines of the poem into their discussion, showing how the Seed-Merchant's final words were a response to his son's loss. *Perhaps* - on occasion seemed to have been mistaken for *Reported Missing*, with a number of candidates arguing that the

woman in the poem is questioning whether her loved one is dead, this despite the dedication that follows the title. However, there were responses that discussed the grief in the poem, linking it to the seasons and her year-round sense of loss.

There were few responses to *Lamentations* and *The Parable of the Old Man and the Young*. Stronger candidates were able to distinguish between the officer and Sassoon, and dissociate the poet from the "voice" of the poem. Weaker responses thought the voice was Sassoon's and that he had no compassion for the soldier so devastated by the loss of his brother. Candidates knew the Abraham and Isaac story but often switched to narrative mode and recounted it, occasionally pointing out Owen's deviations from it, without focusing on the "innocent victims of war" referred to in the question.

### **Poems 2: Larkin and Fanthorpe**

There were too few responses to this text for any comment to be useful.

### **Touched with Fire**

There were too few responses to this text for any comment to be useful.

## **PROSE**

The most popular of the prose texts was the OCR Anthology *Opening Worlds*.

There were plenty of responses at both Foundation and Higher Tier to the extracts from *The Tall Woman and Her Short Husband* and *Snapshots of a Wedding*. Responses picked up on the obvious discrepancy between the heights of the wife and husband and, but not always, her scrawniness and his rotundity. Satisfactory responses discussed their differences in some detail, whilst the best focused closely on Feng Ji-cai's language, analysing some of the many similes and their effect and noting that this apparently odd couple are "inseparable". The best also integrated the neighbours' response to them into an appreciation of what brings the couple alive. Good responses to *Snapshots of a Wedding* looked closely at Head's description of Neo's behaviour, her condescension, and the opinions of her family. Strongest responses recognised that discussion of bringing the characters to life involves close attention to the language the writers use. There were few attempts to compare the extracts (comparison is not required in prose responses) not least, perhaps, because comparison of three such different characters is almost impossible, and the writing styles so contrasting.

A significant number of candidates responded to the question of the unfairness of life for Nak, Ravi and the old man selling the lion. Most were able to show how life is unfair for Nak, citing, and illustrating, his poverty, his dilemma, his treatment by officialdom, the death of his son, the neighbour who values cash above a son's life ... The unfairness of life for Ravi was sometimes limited to his being bullied by his elders and not winning the game when he was the clear winner. More extensive responses included his sense of insignificance at the story's end: his discovery of the painful, perhaps unfair, truth that the importance an individual attaches to his/her life and achievements is of no consequence to others or the indifferent world. The old man in *The Train from Rhodesia* was rarely considered; responses were usually to the poverty in which he lives, and rather less so to his treatment by the purchaser of his lion.

The question about the vivid portrayal of unhappy relationships between parents and children attracted a number of candidates. The best responses focused on the relationships and did not stray to apparently irrelevant areas of the story. They found much to say about Bolan's relationship with his father in *The Red Ball*, considering the beating in some detail. Weaker responses to *The Red Ball* sought to explain the father's, poverty, his drinking and his disappointment with his new life in Port of Spain as the causes of his unhappiness, but did not

consider the portrayal of his relationship with his son. *Two Kinds* was often well discussed, especially by candidates who included Jing-mei's cruel reminder of the mother's loss of two babies in China. Leela's relationship with her parents in *Leela's Friend* was often well understood, but a number of candidates lost focus on this relationship by illustrating how Leela's parents treat Sidha (who, of course, is not their son).

There were no responses to any of the questions on the D.H.Lawrence short stories.

There were a few responses to *Empire of the Sun*, these mainly to the extract-based question where candidates were often able to demonstrate understanding of Ballard's portrayal of Jim, noting particularly all the action in the second extract.

Responses to *Things Fall Apart* tended to choose the extract-based question. Best answers here focused closely on the extract and what it reveals about life in Umuofia; they explored the tribe's fondness of traditional stories (the disappearance of the locusts) and contrasted the tribe's jubilant reception of the locusts with the devastating news of Ikemefuna's impending death. There were some very engaged and knowledgeable responses to Okonkwo's death at the end of the novel, with the very best remembering to comment on some of Achebe's language.

There were some sensitive responses to the extract-based question on *The Old Man and the Sea*. Some demonstrated that the old man goes through the same kind of experiences as the fish and the bird and thus is their equal. Most candidates understood Santiago's respect and love for all creatures and used the extract well, though weaker answers here tended to paraphrase the extract without considering how Hemingway's writing makes the relationship vivid. A few lost focus on the creatures and wrote about the bird being a substitute for Manolin, launching into a commentary on the old man's relationship with the boy. Most candidates who responded to Question 26 found much to admire in the old man and were able to utilise quotations and detailed textual references in support. However, weaker responses offered a general character study of the old man without addressing what might be admirable about the qualities of character identified. There were few responses to Question 27 and one or two moments when the old man is in real danger. Most simply narrated/paraphrased, overlooking the requirements to look at Hemingway's writing and to engage personally with the writing.

There were several responses to the questions on *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Most candidates looking at the extract-based questions considered aspects of the writing: for example, the list of tortures; "they can't get inside you" said "hopefully"; and the meaning of "We are not human". Most were also able to explain how one or two of Winston's or Julia's predictions were right and wrong when the ending of the novel was considered. A number of candidates chose to answer on how Orwell makes Parsons and his family both memorable and significant. Some focused only on the first appearance of the Parsons family, in the shape of Mrs Parsons and the children, but never went beyond this episode. An extract-based question set in a previous year used that episode, but candidates should have noted that Parsons himself was referred to in this January question and to omit any mention of him was therefore self-limiting.

There were no responses to *Modern Women's Short Stories* and too few on Palin and Hornby for any valuable comment to be made.

## 2444 Pre-1914 Texts

### General Comments

There was again a small entry this January, but a pleasing one; examiners reported that candidates at both Tiers showed that they had been well taught and well prepared. There was a generally good knowledge of the texts studied, and almost without exception answers were supported by some, often ample and mostly relevant quotations. As is the case in every session, many answers took the route of paraphrasing either the set passage or those parts of the text which are focused upon by the question, rather than directly and immediately answering exactly what is asked; candidates will often begin their answers by saying exactly how they intend to address the question, but quite often they then fail to do so, and fall back into simple narrative and supportive illustration; for higher band marks much more is needed than this – the exact terms of the question must be tackled, combined with more than purely illustrative quotation.

There were no rubric infringements, and almost all candidates had clearly timed their writing well, so that all three answers were completed and of good length.

### Comments on Individual Questions

Only a few texts were used this session, so where a text is not mentioned it is simply because there were no answers to the questions on it.

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

1 This was by far the more popular of the two questions on the play, and in most cases it was addressed with some vigour and authority; candidates were almost invariably aware of its context – which was sometimes explained and established at rather too great a length – and most too were well able to say what they found to be amusing in the extract, though not all were confident enough to explain *why* they found it so. Benedick's constant exaggeration of Beatrice's barbed comments during the masked ball – which, incidentally, was quite emphatically not a disco, as more than one candidate asserted – and his later desperate and even more exaggerated requests to Don Pedro in order to avoid actually confronting her again, were noted, listed and in many cases sensibly commented upon. Most also noted how Don Pedro humorously adds to Benedick's frustration by refusing to allow him to leave. Several candidates commented on the dramatic impacts of the scene, its comedy lying in actions as well as words. Many talked sensibly enough, but sometimes too much, about later events in the play, when Benedick's love for Beatrice comes to the surface, instead of being hidden at this point. There were many sound responses, and some well-detailed ones.

2 There were a few responses to this, and most of these few showed a reasonably confident ability to catch at least something of what Borachio might have been feeling, supported in most cases by apt reference to what has happened in the play.

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

3 The two questions on the play were addressed more or less equally; candidates writing about Lady Capulet and Juliet were in most cases aware of the deliberate ambiguities in what Juliet says, in contrast to the very determined and real hatred shown by her mother towards Romeo. Surprisingly, not all candidates appeared to be aware that Juliet is already married to

Romeo at this point, and many also seemed to think that Lady Capulet knows, though certainly disapproves, of this relationship – two quite major gaps in basic knowledge of the play.

**4** Most answers on Mercutio showed a sound if not always good knowledge of his character and of what he does and says in the play, though a very surprising feature common to many of them was a complete lack of discussion of his death, and of what he does and above all what he says just beforehand. The focus tended to be upon his role early in the play, his humour and liveliness, and his determination to make Romeo forget all about Rosaline – all good and perfectly valid points, and certainly addressing the question that was set, but his fight with Tybalt, and his death at Tybalt's hands, is surely particularly memorable.

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

**9** This was by a small margin the more popular of the two War poetry questions; answers tended to focus a little more on the guilt and hesitancy of Hardy's speaker than upon the dreadful emptiness and grief conveyed by Dobell, but candidates were all aware of what each poem is about, and answers were aptly illustrated, with some useful critical comments about the language and phrases used by each poet. The two poems were thoughtfully compared and contrasted by most, and the sympathy asked for by the question was often well expressed.

**10** All three poems were used here in roughly equal numbers, and in all cases the shock and/or horror presented was understood and described; Kipling's is the most openly shocking, perhaps, but rather curiously more answers found Byron and/or Housman's feelings to be horrific, in different but thoughtful ways.

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

**11** This pair of poems led to plenty of full and often quite thoughtful comparisons, and most candidates certainly understood very well what each is saying – though a surprising number seemed to believe that Wilde is describing a countryside scene, despite the mention of the Thames, and indeed the Temple; those who noted that he describes some of his city views, the "everyday things" of the question, in terms of natural objects (a butterfly, midges, jade) were of course making a very good and perceptive point, but not many made much of this. Wordsworth's poem was rather less well managed, with more answers simply paraphrasing it, or picking out just one or two isolated lines and phrases, instead of doing what the question asks.

**12** All three poems were addressed, but rarely with much detail or language discussion. Blake's was the most confidently managed, with quite a lot of apt comment on his use of dark and disturbing images, together with the insistent and almost hypnotically repetitive rhythm that he uses. Rossetti's dual view of the world was noted by most – with a disappointing number appearing to think that the poem is about a woman rather than about the world itself – though the horrific and very personally-felt imagery of the second half was not so well understood. Keats' poem, perhaps because much longer, tended to lead to much generalisation and assertion rather than any critical discussion of the effects of his language.

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

**19** A popular question, often leading to the best answers in the scripts; Tom's bullying tactics, both verbal and physical, were well noted by many candidates, with plenty of good quotation from the passage, though many failed almost entirely to address the word "despicable" in the Higher Tier question, simply – though often very aptly – explaining how his behaviour towards

the naïve and helpless Stephen Blackpool is so utterly foul. There was a lot – often too much – of contextualising of the passage within the novel as a whole, with a good deal of narrative accounting of both Tom's and Stephen's futures.

**20** Without exception those candidates who tackled this question felt real sympathy for Gradgrind at the end of the novel, citing a range of events and discoveries that lead to his moral and physical collapse; most spent at least some time establishing his character and behaviour at earlier points in the text, which was probably a necessary tactic, but those who in effect told the whole of his story in *Hard Times* wasted the opportunity to focus properly and effectively on what was asked.

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

**23** This was by far the more popular question, and most answers had no difficulty at all in saying what they found moving in the passage, but while humour is undoubtedly a very individual and personal matter, some of the assertions here were not convincing, and not well justified: for example, the fact that Silas accuses Jem Rodney in an almost blind panic is surely not particularly humorous? There is no doubt a certain black irony in his making this unjust accusation here, in the light of what happened to him so many years ago in Lantern Yard, but it is not a comic moment. What may more reasonably be seen as humorous is Jem's indignation, his comment about the parson's surplice, or the landlord's curt "Hold your tongue, Jem"; the landlord's insistence that they should all listen to Silas is possibly a sarcastic comment, but equally possibly a moving one, as marking the first time that any of the villagers have taken any real or warm notice of the miser.

**24** There were a few responses to this question, more often than not simply outlining what happens between Silas and Dolly throughout the novel, with relatively few managing to say what is touching about their relationship. This was implicit in a few answers, but what the question asks must be addressed.



## 2445 Drama Pre – 1914

### General Comments (see 2441 Section)

There was a much smaller entry for these papers than for 2441, and a very small entry for Foundation Tier which makes generalised comment difficult. *Romeo and Juliet* was, once again, the most popular text by far with *Much Ado About Nothing*, attracting a small but enthusiastic following. The two non-Shakespearian choices, Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People* and Wilde's *An Ideal Husband* were so rarely attempted that secure conclusions about the general characteristics of candidate performance are difficult to reach. Candidates were very well prepared, often conveying exemplary knowledge of the text and there was a great deal of perceptive response, but the remarks in the *General Comments* (2441) section of the report on the use of over-generalised introductory paragraphs including the unnecessary use of historical detail, and on the importance of identifying the exact context for extract-based and empathic questions, are particularly relevant to the 2445 Shakespeare answers, and some candidates continue to be distracted from the question by a rather mechanical logging of technical features .

### Comments on Individual Questions

#### *Much Ado About Nothing*

**Question 1** was the most popular *Much Ado About Nothing* option and the strongest answers conveyed a clear understanding of the dramatic context and genuine enjoyment of the entertaining features of the extract. There were some subtle arguments about audience knowledge and dramatic irony in relation to: Margaret's witty role in this scene set against her unwitting involvement in Don John's villainy, the portrayal of Hero's joy and exuberance which is about to be undermined and the impact of the gulling on Beatrice's character and demeanour. The most successful candidates were able to comment in detail on the language and get to the sources of the humour by unpicking some of the wordplay. Generalised comments about comic relief and sexual innuendo were much less effective and there was a tendency to spend too much time categorising literary devices and divorcing them rather artificially from character and situation.

**Question 2** was attempted by a small minority of candidates but often with great assurance and wide-ranging textual support. The best tended to focus their argument on Beatrice's developing relationship with Benedick to demonstrate an evolving view of love and marriage, but the steely determination and seriousness which emerge in her staunch support of Hero was also effectively employed. Most candidates were able to avoid the trap of simply summarising her involvement in the play or of trotting out a conventional character study, in order to foreground the question and the idea of "change".

**Question 3** was rarely attempted but a believable happiness, a willingness to endure and overcome the mockery of his friends, natural ebullience and good humour, and love for Beatrice tended to characterise the most convincing responses.

#### *Romeo and Juliet*

**Question 4** was the most popular question on this text and on both tiers of this paper. Many candidates managed the difficult balance between close attention to the printed extract and an evaluation of the dramatic context very effectively. The strongest candidates explored Romeo's language carefully and were able to convey the extent of his suicidal desperation. The contrast

between the extremes of his young passion and the mature (but in this extract largely ineffectual) counsel offered by Friar Lawrence, was often examined in some detail. Most candidates understood Romeo's pain, the different perspectives of Romeo and the Friar and the impossibility of reconciling the rational and sober thoughts of the brain with the agonised feelings of the heart; there were many signs that the young candidates identified very strongly with Romeo's rejection of the Friar's calm advice, especially the line, "Thou canst not speak of that thou dost not feel." A few worked almost line by line through the passage with little sense of the broader dramatic context, some were confused about the order of events and were uncertain as to Romeo's marital status at this point, some thought Romeo was already attempting to kill himself in the passage, and others spent so long outlining the consequences of Romeo's banishment and the Friar's planning or explaining how the banishment had come about, that the passage received scant attention. Close and sensitive exploration of language, situation and feeling, rather than decontextualised feature logging tended to characterise the strongest answers.

Tybalt was the subject of much intelligent comment in answer to **Question 5**, although this was a minority choice. There was a tendency to construct a full analysis of his character without fully focusing on his "dramatic impact" or to drift into a narrative approach to explain the effect of his interventions on the course of the story, but strong answers were able to foreground audience response and the effect of his malevolence in generating conflict and dramatic action ("He's a catalyst...he makes things happen even when he's dead...").

In order to adopt the voice of Friar Lawrence in the custody of the Watchmen for **Question 6**, successful candidates had clearly returned to the final scene to check the details and to immerse themselves in the language, feeling and tone of the Friar's long speech of explanation to the bereaved parents and to make shrewd selections of appropriate quotation to integrate into their answer. The best answers managed to convey the intensity of the moment as he "trembles, sighs, and weeps", a variety of feelings (fear, shame, disbelief, grief, despair...) and the Friar's anguished recollection of what he has just witnessed in the tomb. There was a tendency, however, to lose the moment, to overlook the fact that he has deserted Juliet, to ignore the death of Paris completely and to launch into a long account of the misfiring plans which have led to this point. His prime hope of bringing peace to the city through the marriage was infrequently expressed. Some candidates also got rather bogged down in theological debates about suicide (Romeo's, Juliet's and possibly his own) and the afterlife which have little basis in the play.

## **2446 Poetry and Prose Pre – 1914**

There were too few candidates for this session to make general comments on performance and so teachers are referred to the report on this paper for May 2010.

## **2443/7 Pre/Post – 1914 Texts (Coursework)**

The January 2011 entry comprised Centres entering large numbers of candidates so that they can concentrate on the examinations in June and a small number of single or very small entries of re-sitting candidates.

Given the difficulties with the severe weather this year, Moderators were grateful to Centres for the efforts made in getting work to them on time.

Moderators appreciated the thorough marking, the time taken over standardisation and task-setting, and the considered comments on the cover sheets that relate the assessment specifically to the criteria.

Candidates had been very well prepared and this was reflected in the marks awarded. It was pleasing to see that the vast majority of candidates achieved grade c and above. There was evidence of rigorous internal moderation and moderators were impressed by Centres' work in this area.

The majority of Centres present the work well and clearly but, in a few cases, there were points which could help for the future:

- it is important to ensure that Centre and candidate numbers are filled in on cover sheets;
- it is important, following internal moderation, to make clear which is the agreed mark.

Moderators have tried this year to use e-mail more to request samples and other documentation. Where this has worked matters have been considerably expedited, but some delays did occur when e-mails did not reach their destinations. These problems should be minimised in the future as exam administration becomes electronic.

There was some very impressive work from candidates who had clearly enjoyed the texts they had studied and were able to respond sensitively and with insight and imagination.

It may help to point to some features, drawn from this and previous sessions, where improvements could be made. There was occasional evidence of scaffolding of answers which limits the scope to achieve and demonstrate original insights. Some tasks, such as 'Who is to blame in Romeo and Juliet' do not offer the focus and direction that will enable candidates to produce quality answers. There can be a tendency to simply spot which literary devices are present, rather than using them as a vocabulary with which to frame an appreciation. Social context needs to be integrated into the response and be relevant to the points made. Extensive biographical detail at the opening of the response inevitably gains little reward.

Since the inception of the current syllabus centres have consolidated their tasks and texts, availed themselves of the opportunities on offer and put into place rigorous assessment procedures. Moderators have come to admire the skills and hard work of teachers and the fairness and accuracy with which they have applied the assessment criteria. In the vast majority of cases folders are well constructed, stimulating and accurately marked and contacts with centres have been professional and amicable.

Moderators have remarked on the fine quality of teacher annotations, providing incisive commentary, indicating the application of the assessment objectives and giving much constructive and encouraging advice to candidates. Such students have been truly privileged.

## **2448 Post- 1914 Texts**

There were no entries for this unit in January 2011.

**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](mailto:general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk)

**[www.ocr.org.uk](http://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**