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Examiners' Report

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EXAMINERS' REPORT - 1204

Introduction

2F/4H

The major change this year was to Papers 2F and 4H. This was the first year when 'clean' anthologies were used in the examination rather than an annotated copy. Generally, there were encouraging signs that this had helped candidates to focus more on the specific demands of the question rather than reproducing all of the marginal annotation from their marked version.

Work is, however, still needed, especially with Paper 2F, to ensure that all candidates are able to offer a secure interpretation of the poems. Not all candidates focused closely on the language of the poems - perhaps the lack of prepared prompts was one reason for this.

On Paper 4H, most candidates dealt extremely well with having 'clean' anthologies. This produced more evidence of a personal response and independent argument. Because of this absence of unassimilated material, candidates often made a great effort to tailor their answers to the question, and to write rather better organised essays. There was evidence that they had spent time thinking about what was required, and many responses referred to the question throughout. Sometimes the responses seemed a little thinner (in terms of coverage of the texts) than in previous years, but they were more relevant.

There were a number of examples where candidates wrote on only one poem rather than two, or had very uneven coverage. This may result from a failure to read the rubric carefully: questions will always require treatment of two poems.

In Section B, it is necessary to write on both of the stories specified. Answers which dealt with only one of these did not fully meet the requirements of the question's rubric, and hence candidates penalised themselves heavily by omitting the second story.

Particularly because of online marking, Centres should stress to candidates the importance of clear handwriting which is not too small and which is in black, preferably, or blue-black ink.

Many answers showed signs of careful planning, so that candidates were able to maintain a clear focus on the demands of the question. However, it is important to remember not to spend so long on the plan that the answer is not completed.

The importance, especially for Writing questions, of checking work carefully for technical accuracy is something which is stressed annually. The skill of looking over one's writing and making improvements is an important one, and can result in considerable improvement.

3F/5H

In general the **reading questions** were answered well. Candidates in both tiers showed they were capable of reading and understanding the passages, which were accessible and appropriately challenging, and also writing careful commentaries on them. In both tiers the bullet points provided a useful structure and most candidates made useful comments on all of them, including the use of language. They had clearly been taught the skill of making points and supporting them. A key discriminator was the extent to which candidates could make inferences and deductions. These skills were more evident in Higher Tier candidates' work, perhaps unsurprisingly as they were working with a more complex passage. In general, well planned and relevant answers at both levels showed that candidates had been well prepared for these questions.

The **writing questions** were more inconsistently answered and the points made in the introduction to the 1204 report apply here as well. Candidates seem more confident when writing to argue, persuade and advise. The writing in Section C was not as generally competent as for Section B. This may be because this is the last section in the paper and candidates are working at feverish speed. On the other hand it may be that they are less aware of the key features needed for successful writing for this triplet, particularly writing to analyse and review. Balance and objectivity are crucial to successful writing of this kind; it was the lack of these features which most characterised the work of weaker candidates in this section.

Attainment in the writing sections was also sometimes compromised by blatant errors, including the use of lower case "i" for the first person pronoun, and non standard verb formations like "gonna" and "*aint.*" Most answers require formal expression, but even when an informal register or style is appropriate, candidates should remain aware of the examination context and, in particular, should not use street language and text style.

Paper 1A: Speaking and Listening

Centre marking was consistent with last year's standard and there was little need for adjustment. Attainment varied widely across a huge range of centres and candidates. Overall there is abundant evidence that students enjoy speaking and listening and are growing in confidence and skill in this component.

Speaking and Listening was again monitored by two kinds of visit, one advisory and the other moderation. The former, which allows teachers to discuss tasks and assessments in detail with the visiting moderator, is the most welcomed and valued. There is more awkwardness in moderation visits, though most centres acknowledge the necessity for these in ensuring the integrity of the whole process.

Moderation visits were based on a task provided by the board. This was a group interaction task, combining problem solving and a degree of role play with spontaneous discussion. By minimising the preparatory work required by schools and candidates, this system helps to make visits briefer and more targeted. Other key advantages are that visiting moderators can be standardised more effectively to ensure consistency in the application of marks and that it provides a good test of candidates' communication skills in a realistic context.

The main finding of the visits was that marking standards were generally acceptable. In many instances there was a strong correlation between the visiting moderator's and the centre's levels of assessment.

Teacher practice in assessment was often exemplary. First candidates were placed in rank order, then marks were given within each group, and, before a final decision was reached, these outcomes were cross referenced with the marks of candidates in other groups. Some centres also used more than one teacher to establish a consensus. One moderator commented, "I listened to some excellent discussion of marks and grades, all with close reference to the relevant criteria in the marking grids."

Centres, however, tended to mark conservatively on visits. There are likely to be disparities between the marks given by the centre to individual candidates during the moderation visit and those ultimately awarded to them, but where this happens to a significant extent throughout the range, concerns are raised and the centre's marking may come under further scrutiny.

There are concerns that some centres over support candidates in speaking and listening in much the same way that they do for the written coursework and it is clear from teacher records that many tasks for speaking and listening are heavily prepared. Centres target the three required activities very carefully and allow candidates plenty of time to prepare for them. Teachers seem nervous about tasks which involve spontaneous discussion because they fear their students will not perform well. Sometimes the reverse is more true - students surprise the teachers with their off the cuff ability to discuss, argue and persuade, often throughout the range. One moderator noted, "School should be encouraged to do less prepared work; candidates often do less well because they are reliant on notes."

Records vary in their form and quality. There are no recommended methods and a variety of approaches is seen - often within centres. The best tended to be those

with centre wide systems, suggesting a clearer centralised control. These are also best from the point of view of the external moderator, especially when they include a written comment on each assessment. **Though not a specification requirement, a centre wide system of record keeping has many advantages** including providing an effective basis for internal moderation and also helping to ensure that comprehensible records are retained, even when there are significant changes in teaching personnel.

Most centres had, as required, clear systems of internal moderation. The new interboard videotape, produced this year by Edexcel, proved helpful in this respect.

There were some administrative weaknesses, the most serious of which was incomplete records. Moderators reported that some teacher examiners had not fulfilled the requirements outlined in the letter sent by the Assessment Leader. This resulted in various omissions, including incomplete top sheets and marks not finalised.

In most instances, however, centres went to considerable lengths to meet the requirements for visits and arranged good accommodation for the task, provided a suitable range of candidates, reflecting the centre's academic profile, and ensured that all records were available.

In general the experience of the visits was a positive one for all concerned - candidates, teachers and visiting moderators - and the standard attained by most candidates was one that was compatible with their level of ability.

One moderator's comment sums up the overall experience: "It was clear that centres took Speaking and Listening very seriously and several mentioned the usefulness of Moderation visits in giving oral coursework a high profile. This was welcomed."

Paper 1B: Written Coursework

- There is little to report that is radically different from last year. **The specification was interpreted appropriately and skilfully by the majority of centres**, who now have a confident mastery of this component and are very good at guiding candidates of all levels of ability to present folders which show their capabilities to the best advantage.
- **The standard of marking remains constant and on a par with last year.** Rank orders were reliable and teacher examiners used the marking grids accurately. There were very few centres whose marking went beyond tolerable limits.
- **The quality of work also remains the same as last year.** One moderator's comment is typical, "Nearly all folders were interesting and enjoyable to read." **Overall there is a solidity of attainment which reflects both the hard work of students and careful, well targeted teaching.** There is less evidence, however, of the innovative and exploratory work that used to characterise the best coursework pieces.
- **Task setting is generally sound.** Writing questions are, in the main, well tailored to the individual candidate. There is also a sound understanding of what texts and topics are appropriate for the reading units.
- Weaknesses remain. **Most centres differentiate in the topics they give to stronger and weaker candidates, but some still rely on limiting and unimaginative centre wide tasks.** There are particular concerns also about whether abler candidates are being allowed sufficient opportunities to address the requirements of the higher bands, whose descriptors include references to 'originality,' 'flair' and 'sophisticated control,' and a capability "to explore alternative interpretations." Some reading topics were particularly narrow in their focus.
- **Teacher annotation was of a generally high standard and often very helpful to the moderator, particularly when comments on whole folders were included.**
- **There were very few examples of blatant plagiarism, though this is still very much an issue. More insidiously worrying is the growth of what one moderator described as "teaching by numbers" and there were other references to "over reliance on teacher notes" and "similar responses within a centre."** In such cases **teacher guidance to candidates stretches what is acceptable to the limit (and beyond) by providing over detailed essay plans, which specify what should go in each paragraph, including the points to be made and the quotations to be used.** This puts candidates into a strait jacket, which stifles any worthwhile individual response and limits accessibility to higher grades. It also makes external moderation very difficult, if not impossible, because it is unclear what work is the pupil's own. There is a heavy risk that penalties will be incurred.
- **Administrative errors seem to be on the increase.** These included incomplete or inaccurate details on coursework front sheets; discrepancies between the OPTEMS and the folder mark, sometimes caused by the centre's failure to record the outcomes of internal moderation; marking folders out of 80 instead of 40; incorrect and /or unclear *pro rata* adjustments for incomplete folders; failures to send the highest and lowest mark folders, if not included in the sample. **At best these**

mistakes create extra work and delay the whole process; at worst they can trigger centre wide adjustments.

- In general the standard of marking and moderation was excellent, as was the level of assistance provided by the centres to the moderator, particularly in cases where there was a perceived problem.

Personal and Imaginative Unit

- There was a huge variety of approaches including narrative, description and reflection.
- Moderator response was mixed. One commented that “creative writing is now very uninspiring; candidates are not encouraged to use their own voice” whilst another reported that “personal responses were more entertaining and engaging this year.” At its best the writing for this unit was excellent; there were many powerful stories and accounts of personal success and tragedy.

Less successful centres ended to use the same task across the centre, for instance, an extension piece of a literature text, often blandly executed to a common formula. Stronger responses resulted when centres stimulated personal responses from their candidates by the use of tasks which encouraged them to write from their own viewpoint or experience.

Media Texts

- Centres are beginning to exploit the opportunities afforded by this unit in terms of exploring a variety of media, and especially for engagement with the ‘moving image’ in various forms.
- Centres are particularly realising the advantages of considering film as media text and the resultant work is often stimulating and personally engaged. Scenes in a variety of films were compared in their presentations of a theme - teenagers in ‘If’ and ‘Clueless’, the individual in ‘Chinatown’ and ‘Taxi Driver’ - or films were analysed individually, usually with a focus on presentational devices. Another popular topic was the comparison of the opening sequences of Baz Luhrmann’s and Zeffirelli’s film versions of ‘Romeo and Juliet.’
- Some centres encourage candidates to compare and contrast the impact of different kinds of media. Moderators commented approvingly on the outcomes of one task, which involved an analysis of an army recruitment campaign in a number of different media, and another which involved an analytical comparison of the ways in which a news item was reported on television and on a news website
- Tasks were more typically based on detailed comparison of the front pages of tabloid and broadsheet newspapers, or of two or more advertisements.

Shakespeare Unit

- A wide variety of plays are studied, but the favoured texts were unquestionably 'Romeo and Juliet' and 'Macbeth.'
- Task setting was mixed. There was much that was stimulating, but some topics were very narrowly based and did not always allow candidates to consider the text as a whole, as the specification requires. It is difficult to see how the ablest candidates can really show the full extent of their abilities if they are simply asked to write about the role of Capulet in 'Romeo and Juliet.'
- The framework approach (already referred to) was most in evidence in the work submitted for this unit. The same topic was typically used throughout the centre, leading to very similar answers.
- This unit was often - and deftly - submitted for English Literature as well, but centres should note that an empathetic response is unlikely to be sufficient in itself to address the assessment objectives of both specifications successfully.

Paper 2F

Section A

Question 1

Candidates engaged well with the question and could relate to the feelings conveyed. The possible reasons for the child's 'invention' of Brendon Gallagher were explored sensitively by some candidates. However, there were a few who took what was said in the poem too literally: '... his dad was in prison for robbing cats'. Mostly, candidates showed a slightly better grasp of the ideas in this poem, finding it more accessible than 'Lucozade'. The language in this poem was at times found confusing, and this led to some misunderstanding of the context and the mother's situation (with occasional references to her being an alcoholic or having an eating disorder). The final section of this poem was interpreted in different ways: either as a happy ending or one which was still rather bleak. Language comments were often rather restricted (eg to repetition and use of the personal pronoun), but clear points about tone were sometimes made.

Question 2

On this question, candidates generally sympathised with the predicament of the interviewee in 'You Will Be Hearing From Us Shortly', and there was often a strong personal response. However, weaker candidates showed confusion over the speaker - some wrongly assumed that the brief responses came from the interviewee, and failed to recognise that all the words were spoken by the interviewer. A few candidates, aware of recent equal opportunities legislation, pointed out that the personal nature of the questions was now inadmissible. The most common choices for the second poem were 'Hide and Seek', 'Refugee Blues' and 'Wherever I Hang', all of which were appropriate. There were some good responses, picking up on how intonation could convey attitudes. Weaker answers tended to be too narrative.

Question 3

Not all responses showed secure grasp of the content of either 'The Barn' or 'Mid-Term Break'. The language of 'The Barn' posed problems for weaker candidates, many of whom did not grasp what was happening. Better answers were sensitive to language or imagery, revealing understanding of the effect of the barn's interior on the poet as a child, although there were some examples of feature spotting and comments were not always fully supported. The basic situation of 'Mid-Term Break' was mostly found more accessible, although not all realised the identity of the dead child. The majority of answers successfully provided the narrative details, and the best looked closely at the effect of the untimely death on the poet. Weaker responses tended to ignore the evidence about the feelings expressed in an understated way within the poem.

Question 4

Most candidates grasped the central symbolism and metaphor of 'The Road Not Taken', seeing this as a reference to life's journey. The more successful responses explored how this idea was developed, but candidates did not always take their analysis as far as they might have done, by examining closely the way in which the two possible paths are presented, together with the poet's choice. A variety of relevant choices were selected for the second poem: 'Warning' and 'I Shall Paint my Nails Red' were the most popular, but 'Not My Best Side' and 'Digging' were also used. Occasionally, candidates penalised themselves by selecting poems which did not evidently deal with critical choices, such as 'Mid-Term Break'.

Question 5

The best of those candidates who chose this question (still a small minority) showed a laudable grasp of both Hughes's and Patten's intentions, commenting on the link between poetic inspiration and Nature. However, there were some candidates who found it difficult to go beyond a synopsis of the two poems, 'The Thought-Fox' and 'A Blade of Grass'.

Question 6

There were some good responses to this question, although it was again answered by relatively few candidates. 'The Storm' was most commonly linked to 'Wind' - perhaps the predictable choice - as the second poem. Better candidates explored imagery and language, making sound textual references and engaging well with the subject. In general, candidates discussed the often vivid language of these poems more successfully than in other sections.

Section B

Question 7

There were many good attempts at this question, with some sound handling of the bullet points, through which many worked systematically, to prompt responses. The best candidates referred closely to the question and included personal judgements and comment. One observed of Ines that: 'She had no remorse', and went on to comment on the widow: 'I felt sorry for the woman in this story because she was old and alone and her son was the only person she had left and he was taken away from her.' Weaker candidates were inclined to slip into a narrative account of the two stories, 'The Schoolteacher's Guest' and 'Vendetta', ignoring the need to pick out striking and interesting features of the presentation of the two mothers, as the question asked them to do. Some candidates dealt with only one of the stories.

Section C

Some examiners felt that this year they had encountered an improvement in the overall structure of candidates' writing, while others commented on a lack of paragraphing. Many reported the by now commonplace confusions over homophones (their, there, they're), use of inappropriate colloquialisms (ain't, gonna), text messaging devices (m8, u), use of capital letters and incorrect word divisions. Spelling in general is inconsistent, and variety of vocabulary and of sentence structure is often limited. Punctuation errors continue to be widespread, with the absence or misuse of the apostrophe a recurrent problem. Legibility of handwriting is at times problematic.

Question 8

The question was found accessible by most candidates who attempted it, and the best achieved a good journalistic style, sometimes capturing the flavour of a local newspaper effectively by the tone and register they selected. Reports on dramatic sporting fixtures (especially football) were frequent, with some capturing the excitement within a credible reporting style. Not all handled the newspaper format so effectively: some pieces were in more of an oral register, and some had the character of a marketing or advertising piece. The word 'event' was not always

registered: some wrote about a topic such as climate change and pollution or capital punishment - a feature rather than a report.

Question 9

By far the more popular choice of question in this Section, many candidates clearly appreciated the chance to think about and explain what they hoped to do in ten years' time. There was some lively writing, and the bullet points were found helpful in enabling candidates to structure their responses logically. The most successful answers were genuinely interesting to read, with insights into young people's aspirations. Some candidates opted for the 'fantasy' lifestyle of the wealthy celebrity; others were grounded in a more limited vision, often having a touching sense of realism and honesty. Some explored both possibilities: 'I have always wanted to be a model or a well-known actress, if not something quiet like a pharmacist.' The answers provided a fascinating dossier of the media-fed views of the young and changes in social attitudes to relationships and children. Answers reflected an increasing preoccupation with fast cars, large mansions, swimming pools and international jet-setting travel: many intended to finance these dreams as budding Bransons, professional footballers or owners of such businesses as hair and beauty salons.

Paper 3F

Section A

Question 1

The passage was accessible to the candidates and they responded well to it. Most candidates showed a clear understanding of the difficulties and challenges faced by the prisoners in the camp. The bullet points helped the candidates to focus on key elements of the text to demonstrate their understanding. Candidates were generally skilled at making points and supporting them with quotation or textual reference.

The best comments were on the mother and her role, the problems with food and the rats, but straightforward, appropriate points about language were made by most candidates. Stronger candidates were able to extend these. Weaker candidates tended to describe the conditions, or paraphrase the passage, without showing how the writer brought out the challenges of living in the camp. The strongly female perspective of the passage did not seem to disadvantage boys.

Section B

Question 2

All candidates had strong views on this subject and most showed a reasonable grasp of what a magazine article entailed. There was a strong consensus that young people have too many examination and social pressures to give them the easy life implied by the statement. Some candidates argued that it applied more readily to adults.

Most candidates showed an ability to develop an argument, linking points by words and phrases and using the bullet points as a framework. The best answers showed individuality in both argument and expression. Stronger answers were better structured and showed a good grasp of what was appropriate for a magazine article. Weaker candidates tended to use the bullet points in a formulaic way, with brief unsupported comment on each; their answers tended to be loosely structured and showed little grasp of the magazine context.

Question 3

This question proved very accessible to candidates, who seem to enjoy writing letters. Most answers showed at least some awareness of audience and purpose, though the command of style was much less consistent. A disturbing number of letters related to violence of some kind, usually involving bullying, or to unwanted pregnancies. Most candidates gave clear, sensible advice. More successful answers supported this advice with reasons and showed sensitivity to the recipient. Weaker answers tended to be very poorly structured and over used speech register or text style (e.g. 'mate', 'hi ya'). Candidates should be aware that informal examination letters should not be written in an excessively conversational style and street language should be avoided.

Section C

Question 4

This question built on the climate created by the Question 1 passage. Candidates throughout the range seemed interested in the topic and many wrote thoughtful, sensitive responses, offering a variety of reasons for the popularity of war as a theme. Candidates supported their ideas by reference to a range of texts. Many cited the passage from Question 1; some referred to classroom texts like 'The Diary of Anne Frank' and 'Goodnight Mr. Tom', whilst others wrote about films ('Saving Private Ryan'; 'Pearl Harbour') and the many T.V. programmes on war. Answers were also coloured by concerns about the Iraq war and awareness of the D day anniversary.

Stronger answers were well developed and often based on specific texts; these also provided a balanced analysis. Weaker answers were brief, expressive rather than analytical, and lacked supporting references.

Question 5

Most candidates had few problems in writing about the two venues in some detail. A wide range was covered from village halls to expensive restaurants. They were less at home with the process of reviewing the venues, particularly in balancing the pros and cons. Stronger answers outlined the advantages as well as the disadvantages carefully and also showed an awareness of the intended audience in the choice of language. Weaker answers tended to be lists of points, with little attempt to review the venues objectively. Some candidates also promoted the venues rather than reviewed them.

Command of language was weaker in this question. Candidates are less confident in using an appropriate style for this triplet than for the "argue, persuade, advise" triplet.

Paper 4H

Section A

Question 1

Most candidates made a reasonable attempt at the question, which was far the more popular choice in this Section, and often included a personal response to the poems, 'The House' and 'Wherever I Hang'. On the latter poem, many looked closely at the nature of the writer's choice of language - noting, for example, the change to 'my' in the final line.

On 'The House', several candidates referred to the effect of alliteration ('sending scouts under the stairs', 'cockroaches/came from under a cupboard') in conveying the 'horror' of the house - the 's' sound emphasising the organised intentionality of the rats, their military campaign to take over the house; the hard 'c' evoking the horrible scuttling of the cockroaches. Candidates emphasised the 'gothic' dimensions of the house (usually not defining 'gothic'); it was indeed, thought some, a house of horror - 'cold', assailed by the wind, 'dark', full of 'corpses' (there was some confusion over where these came from), watched by 'crows'. A few commented on the way that creatures and natural forces were given intentionality - the wind attacking the house, 'sunlight' trying to enter but daunted by the gloom of the house, the Atlantic delivering its dead to the house, the crows 'planning' to take over the chimneys. The force of the last two lines was interpreted variously. The reversal was noted, especially the switch to the first person. Some thought that a child forced to grow up in such a terrible house would be traumatised; others thought that the 'but' meant that we should re-interpret the preceding lines; perhaps it was not so horrible; perhaps the piano meant that there was music and enjoyment in the house and that the poet is telling us that, whatever the condition of a house, if one grows up there, it is actually 'home'.

Question 2

Candidates were asked to look at how the poets of '*From War Music*' and one other poem handled the reality of war. 'Dulce et Decorum Est' was the most common choice, with 'The Send-off' also frequently chosen. Some also chose 'Refugee Blues' - seeing the real effect of war as displacement and hopelessness.

There were some interesting and well-sustained answers. Some candidates dealt with the poem of their choice more fully, although the most successful candidates engaged fully with the language and imagery of '*From War Music*'. A number commented on how '*From War Music*' showed the horror of war. The graphic description (Ajax's cheeks 'slapped ...to soft red pulp', his head forced 'back and forth' by his exertions, the 'air... thick with arrows') demonstrated the ferocity of the attack. Others thought that the language was too light-hearted to convey 'reality', and noted comic elements, such as the head moving like a 'clapper inside a bell', the 'staged' nature of the combat between the dancing Hector and the lumbering Ajax (Ajax 'lunged'; Hector 'jived'), the humour of 'Ajax and his spear, both empty topped'; perceptive candidates occasionally commented that these were deliberate distancing devices, inviting us to watch the combat as if it were a show.

In writing about 'Dulce et Decorum Est', many brought out the contrasts in treatment, seeing the Owen poem as presenting the harrowing experience of war more strongly. On 'The Send-off', candidates saw the 'reality' as the presentation of the quiet resignation, the anonymity of the soldiers as opposed to the heroics of Hector, for instance.

Question 3

This question generated a number of extremely interesting and thoughtful answers. There was some careful analysis of 'Mirror', although weaker candidates tended to find this poem difficult. Better responses emphasised the mirror's acquiring the depths of a lake, and the woman's reaching beyond appearance to search for 'identity' ('searching my reaches for what she really is'). These candidates thought that the poem raised the issue of appearance (the mirror as reflecting only the surface) and identity (the lake offering insight into the depths of the self). Some concluded that the woman does not acquire this insight and does not ultimately grasp the distinction - her 'tears' at the approach of the 'terrible fish' are evidence that her 'identity' is expressed by her appearance, and that she cannot see beyond this.

The situation in the poem 'At Grass' was in general rather better understood. Occasionally, candidates assumed from the title that the subject-matter was the grass itself, rather than the horses. A number of very thoughtful responses were offered, often looking at the human implications of the way in which the horses were presented. The better candidates dealt well with the challenges posed by the question. Opinion divided neatly into two: the horses regret the passing of their glory days; the horses are happy to be in retirement. Whatever the interpretation, candidates managed to use language evidence ('cold shade', 'wind distresses tail and mane' and 'anonymous' are taken as indications of the unsatisfactory nature of retirement; on the other hand, 'memories plague', and 'gallop for what must be joy', and the heat and bustle of the race days (third stanza) led others to conclude that retirement for the horses is a relief. The most effective responses, however, noted Larkin's reluctance to present a definite opinion - noting that the language reflects what could possibly be ambivalence. These commented that part of Larkin's intention is to raise the issue of human tendency to project onto animals their own concerns and ideas - humans might assume that the horses regret the passing of their fame, but fame and glory are human constructs; the horses may be simply glad to be left alone. Occasionally, the poem's language led candidates astray, including those who inferred a marriage from the word 'groom'.

Question 4

This question produced many appropriate choices of a second poem to put alongside 'Miracle on St David's Day'. (Popular choices were: 'Old Man, Old Man', 'Warning', 'One Upon a Time' and 'An Unknown Girl'.) Candidates often produced careful and thoughtful analyses of the two poems, looking closely at the ways in which the poets presented issues concerned with a person's identity. Good use of quotation to support the points made was a feature of the better responses.

On 'Miracle on St David's Day', there was a general assumption that the labouring man, in reciting the poem, had recovered his identity, that hearing the poem had triggered his childhood memory and that he had become 'himself' again, had recovered the lost years of silence and 'misery'. Some, perhaps more sophisticated, analyses doubted this: these saw Clarke's 'miracle' as more tentative. These explored what 'identity' might mean, and concluded that the silent years were possibly lost, suggesting that the return to childhood recitation constituted only an automatic, instinctive impulse to speak - a 'miracle', indeed, given the years of silence, but what was spoken was only that which was 'safe', could be spoken 'by rote'; it was not the man's own 'text'. There was a good deal of sensitive comment on the language of this poem - the hush and awe of nature ('daffodils ... still as wax', the 'flowers' silence'), and nature's applauding of the

miracle ('A thrush sings/and the daffodils are flame'). This poem clearly touched the emotions of many candidates.

On the other poems chosen, there were some subtle interpretations of 'Warning', focusing not just on the 'identity' one might adopt when old, or on the shedding of one identity for another, but on the way in which identity is itself a shifting and elusive concept. Analyses of 'Old Man, Old Man' were generally quite straightforward: the old man has lost his power and authority; he is no longer a 'lifelong adjuster of environments' and is no longer useful ('missing crusted streaks/Of food on plates'). The contrast with 'Miracle' was seen by many as a straight opposition: the labouring man recovers, the old man loses, his identity, 'Once Upon a Time' also proved a good choice, if handled well. Analyses were sound - 'identity' (equated with the sincerity of 'the heart') is gradually lost as we grow older and learn to dissemble.

Question 5

There was some perceptive work on 'Keeping Orchids' and 'The Flowers', although this was not a question chosen by large numbers. Most of those who attempted it showed good understanding of how flowers were used in the two poems to explore human emotion, but some could have extended their range of points and comments on language. Weaker responses lacked sufficiently clear focus on the demands of the question, tending to pick out examples without relating them to people's feelings.

Question 6

Candidates answering this question - a minority - were mostly able to make an appropriate choice for the second poem (such as 'Iguana Memory', 'Roe-Deer' and 'The Thought-Fox') and offered thoughtful comments on the way the different creatures in their two poems were portrayed. Some sensitive comments on language were included, though a small number found it harder to offer relevant observations.

Section B

Question 7

There were many good attempts at this question, although a number of candidates revealed some uncertainty about the moral issues, with the result that this question proved to differentiate effectively. Some candidates appeared both to condemn and respect the mothers in 'The Schoolteacher's Guest' and 'Vendetta' simultaneously; others approved one murder but condemned the other. The best candidates often drew together their reflections on these issues in a strong conclusion, with penetrating and personal comment. 'This lack of sympathy - and the sympathy evoked by the descriptions of the widows' grief, and Ines' close bond with her son - serves to make me feel even more that both characters deserve respect for their actions.' However, in weaker responses there was often little attempt to offer such an evaluation. There were also examples of candidates who failed to address the requirements, and who wrote on only one story or offered very little on the second. Some candidates whose argument was well-expressed and clear did less well than they might have done because of a failure to back up their points with evidence from the text.

Section C

There were a number of factors which led to unevenness in the quality of response to the Writing question. These include the fact that some candidates do not plan their time sufficiently well to ensure a full and careful answer in this Section, which they have time to check through at the end in order to improve clarity and accuracy. Not all candidates are equally successful in selecting an appropriate register and vocabulary for the specific task, with a marked tendency to increasing colloquialisms in inappropriate contexts. At best, however, candidates see this question as an opportunity to combine wide-ranging ideas with a strong personal voice, subtle and flexible vocabulary and a clear sense of writing that is fit for its intended purpose and audience.

Question 8

This question about the life of a refugee, which encouraged candidates to think outside their immediate experience, elicited some superb responses - creative, imaginative, sensitive, structured and choosing vocabulary well. Examiners were encouraged to look positively at letters which looked sensitively and thoughtfully at the feelings of being in a different country: some candidates drew effectively on their reading (for example, 'Refugee Blues', 'Wherever I Hang' or 'Once upon a time') as a stimulus for their response, offering appropriate information and description about their new situation. There were some excellent evocations of the difficulties of adapting to a strange environment. Many candidates were successful in capturing the right tone for a letter to someone back at home, although at times too formal a register was adopted and some letters to a close friend or relative ended with 'Yours faithfully'. Comparisons between the old and new life were common, as were problems of being accepted. Quite a large number of those dealing with this aspect seemed to understand and recount in detail the problems of encountering racism. Almost all (except the few who were 'on holiday') described their homesickness (often evoking in touching detail what they missed about their homeland - the mother's cooking, the landscape, the friends, the customs, for example). Some gave detailed accounts of the journey to the new land, obviously drawing on what they knew (or had experienced?) about how one becomes a refugee, and about the process of seeking asylum.

Question 9

Candidates mostly responded effectively to the requirement to suggest improved facilities for young people, although not all managed to strike a register which was right for such a letter to a newspaper. Suggestions ranged widely, from Youth Centres with adult volunteers or councillors to manage them to a number of specific leisure activities such as skateboarding, bowling, swimming, cinemas and free tennis courts. A number lamented what they perceived to be a real dearth of such activities in their area, and this lent a sense of passion and commitment to their responses. A few adopted a persona - usually an older person, deploring the behaviour of unoccupied young people, but feeling that better facilities would curb their troublesome activities.

The best responses had a well-judged tone and some excellent phraseology. Almost all wrote in a suitable register. Various tones were adopted. Some were rather pleading ('please understand young people'), others were outraged at the lack of facilities ('warning - if we do not provide for young people now, they will not become productive members of society'), and others again appealed to a sense of community ('let's do something for the young people so that they are not

marginalised and so that our local community is not divided'). Many captured the required spirit well.

Where answers were less effective, the vocabulary often lacked ambition and ideas were not always presented in a clear and cogent structure. A few were a little muddled as to the audience, writing as if they were addressing the council, for example.

Paper 5H

Section A

Question 1

The extract, whose theme was fortuitously linked with the 'Make Poverty History' campaign, which was reaching its height as the candidates sat the paper, stimulated candidates, whose engagement and empathy with the journalist's experience was reflected in thoughtful answers throughout the range. Candidates had clearly been well prepared for this question. Most were able to grasp the challenges and dilemmas that Alagiah faced and to write at significant length on the bullet points. Stronger candidates were able to explore the complex relationship between writer, subject matter and audience, and, in particular, to comment in detail on the significance of the smile. They were also able to deal more fully with the significant features of the style of the passage. Weaker answers tended to drift away from the question into emotional responses rather than an analysis of the writer's thoughts and feelings. These also tended to approach the bullet points in a formulaic way, especially the one on language, and failed to integrate comment and textual reference.

Section B

Question 2

Candidates seemed to relish this question. Answers throughout the range were relevant and focused and showed a good grasp of audience. This high level of engagement suggested a wide awareness, and often practical experience, of charity work, much of it operating in the candidate's own centre. An impressive range of charities was recommended, with Cancer Research, the NSPCC and Oxfam being particularly favoured. Candidates made compelling cases for their chosen charity and showed a good sense of audience. There were also some unusual charities nominated and occasional attempts at irony and satire; this can be a very high risk strategy in the examination room, but there was one advocating a society "For the Protection of Slugs, Worms and other Abused Insects" which was particularly effectively sustained and included a help line for traumatised worms. Successful answers - and there were many impressive responses - displayed a wide range of persuasive techniques and supported ideas with sound reasoning and evidence. Weaker answers tended to be brief and assertive, with little attempt to persuade or support the ideas.

Question 3

This question was almost as popular as question 2, reflecting teenagers' concern and interest in this topic. Personal engagement enhanced the quality of answers. Candidates were well aware of the dangers and social issues involved and reflected on these in a mature and thoughtful way, giving sound advice to their peers. Overall the quality of expression was also impressive, particularly when the candidate was addressing his or her friend directly. Advice was expressed clearly and in language tailored to the context, without excessive recourse to over colloquial language. Stronger answers demonstrated this sensitive grasp of both purpose and audience. The best advice was structured, reasoned and showed understanding and empathy. Weaker answers tended to be abrupt, assertive, and often insensitive.

Section C

Question 4

This question produced many fascinating answers. The powerful effect created by the question 1 passage spilled over into this question. The quotation from Alagiah's book intrigued and stimulated candidates; many frankly commented that they had never thought of wealth in these terms before. Thoughtful ideas about the meaning of the word 'rich' were expressed and many drew comparisons between the Western world and that described by Alagiah, reflecting on the poor/rich divide (and on their own profligacy) with sensitivity. Stronger answers were well focused on the question and balanced, for instance weighing arguments for and against materialism or spirituality. Passion sometimes clouded precision and sometimes structure suffered. Some lost sight of the basic question - "What makes you rich?" - and entered into a debate about the Third World. Weaker candidates tended to interpret the question literally and did not grasp the meaning of the phrase "in global terms." At this lower level, too, there were problems of limited vocabulary; typically the word "rich" might appear as many as three times in the same sentence, each with a different connotation.

Question 5

Relatively few candidates answered this question, but those who did produced lively, engaged answers throughout the range. Candidates' choice of programmes was varied and most made a clear contrast between what they considered to be serious and what, in their view, was trivial. 'Big Brother' was the programme most often cited as the epitome of the worst in television, though the occasional maverick saw it as the most relevant. More successful answers were well organised and detailed. These showed a good grasp of what a review meant and provided some degree of balanced analysis, using specific and precise detail to illustrate points. Weaker answers tended to be brief, subjective responses, lacking any depth of justification.

Statistics for GCSE English1204

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Unit/Component	Maximum Mark (Raw)	Mean Mark	Standard Deviation	% Contribution to Award
Paper 2F	75	28.0	9.0	30
Paper 3F	75	27.0	7.7	30
Paper 4H	75	49.6	8.9	30
Paper 5H	75	45.3	8.9	30

Paper Boundaries - Foundation Tier

Grade Boundary	Max. Mark	C	F
Boundary mark - 2F	75	39	17
% of candidates		11.1	89.0

Boundary mark - 3F	75	37	21
% of candidates		8.8	80.9

Paper Boundaries - Higher Tier

Grade Boundary	Max. Mark	A	C	D
Boundary mark - 4H	75	57	39	31
% of candidates		22.2	90.4	97.8

Boundary mark - 5H	75	53	37	30
% of candidates		21.0	83.9	96.6

Option 1 - Speaking & Listening, Written coursework, Paper 2F/3F

Grade	Max. Mark	C	D	E	F	G	
Boundary mark	100	51	41	31	21	11	
% of candidates		17.2	58.9	83.1	93.8	98.6	

Option 2 - Speaking and Listening, Written coursework, Paper 4H/5H

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E
Boundary mark	100	85	74	62	51	40	34
% of candidates		4.8	27.6	66.0	92.6	98.7	99.1

Overall

	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Cumulative %	2.9	16.9	40.4	63.3	83.2	92.9	97.1	98.9

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