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Examiners' Report

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## Introduction

### Papers 2F & 4H

This was the second year when 'clean' anthologies were used in the examination rather than an annotated copy. Generally, the encouraging signs noted in the previous year 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, have continued to be seen by examiners.

As in previous years, there were a number of examples where, in Section A, candidates wrote on only one poem rather than two or had very uneven coverage. Such errors may result from a failure to read the rubric carefully: questions will always require treatment of two poems. There was widespread confusion over the difference between poems, plays and stories, with candidates frequently mixing the terms appropriate to each genre, such as 'stanza' and 'paragraph'.

Particularly because of online marking, centres should continue to stress to candidates the importance of clear handwriting which is not too small and which is in black ink. The actual quality of handwriting in some instances is such as to make responses virtually illegible.

The importance, especially for Writing questions, of checking work carefully for technical accuracy is stressed annually. Some candidates have acquired the skill of leaving sufficient time to look over their writing and make improvements, but often this valuable process is not undertaken at all.

### Papers 3F & 5H

Grammatical, orthographical and stylistic accuracy and appropriateness remain matters of concern. In the work of weaker candidates "text" forms routinely appear, sometimes in otherwise meritorious answers, and simple words are mis-spelt. Even the ablest candidates' work is vitiated by careless spelling and punctuation. One examiner asked "How long it will be before the apostrophe is deemed unnecessary through lack of use?"

Some examiners voiced concerns over what they saw as deteriorating standards of handwriting. Candidates need to take care with legibility and bear in mind that their answers are now read and marked on line.



## 1A: Speaking and Listening

Overall, the level and accuracy of centre marking remains at the same level as last year, requiring few adjustments.

Two kinds of centre visits, the advisory and the moderation visit, took place to ensure that centre assessment remains both reliable and consistent.

The administration of the visits was improved this year in various ways, but primarily by the introduction a system whereby the moderator confirms the visit by letter. Last year there was also a problem in some instances when the centre's final OPTEMS mark for a candidate did not correspond with the mark given on the moderation visit marksheet. This procedure was also tightened up and there were no discrepancies this year.

Centres take both training and moderation visits very seriously. The level of organisation is high. Marking is done with close reference to the marking grids, and often with more than one of the English team present. This factor is at least part of the reason why there was very little need to adjust marks.

There is a growing sense of confidence in managing this component. The evidence of the visits shows that teacher examiners are using a wide range of tasks, often closely integrated into their English and English Literature programmes of work, to fulfil specification requirements and are also very proficient in applying the marking grids.

Candidates generally score more highly in their final mark and overall grade than they do on visits; this is explicable for a number of reasons, but particularly because the conditions in which the moderation visit (especially) takes place is challenging, though the pressure is on teachers rather than students.

On the other hand there are always candidates who do better in unprepared tasks, such as are used during the moderation visit, than their final mark indicates. Much oral work is heavily supported by teachers; candidates work within clear frameworks which are usually helpful, but sometimes restrictive. Tasks which require impromptu oral contributions sometimes unlock talent that has been unintentionally suppressed. Teachers should build more opportunities for spontaneous talk into their schemes of work.

The quality of record keeping remains reasonably high. In most instances it was easy for a visiting moderator to track an individual student's progress to the final mark. Many centres keep elaborate and detailed records.

Overall the visits show that the speaking and listening component is being addressed well and that centres are assessing students effectively and accurately.





## 1B: Written Coursework

There is nothing to report that is radically different from last year.

The overall performance of candidates in June 2006 was consistent with previous years.

The coursework folders are, above all, a testimony to the hard work and commitment of most GCSE candidates, and the professionalism of their teachers. Overall they were thorough, carefully presented and well focused on the specification requirements and assessment objectives. Task setting was very sound, as one would expect with a component as long established as this one. One moderator commented on the "range and variety" of student work and another wrote "centres continue to impress with the ways in which they encourage writing from all candidates."

Centre Marking, if inclined to the generous, was again very reliable. The marking grids for both the reading and writing units were used effectively. The comments in teacher's annotations often reflected these in their phrasing and were particularly helpful to moderators.

Inflation in marks seemed to occur in specific circumstances. In reading units, essays which amount to little more than lengthy paraphrases or narratives with embedded, sometimes irrelevant, quotations, and which pay little attention to the writer's use of language, are sometimes rewarded with excessive marks, flouting the marking grid descriptors for the higher grades. A similar tendency is apparent in the assessment of the writing unit, which is complicated by the need to use two marking grids to cover the assessment objectives. Though, in general terms, teachers are applying these with increasing discrimination, some work, which is careless in the extreme (for instance, with endemic omission of the apostrophe), is awarded marks in the upper bands of the second grid.

Plagiarism remains an issue and moderators were urged at the standardisation meeting to refer any work which they thought was not the student's own to the appropriate Edexcel department. There were few such referrals, probably because centres screen work carefully. Occasionally folders were forwarded to the moderator without the required authentication, because the teacher examiner was unprepared to verify the folder as the student's own work. This is not acceptable. The centre must make the decision as to whether to accept or reject folders.

Increasingly moderators are commenting on the degree to which teachers support candidates' work by the use of "scaffolding" or detailed notes. This may help some students but it also inhibits the brightest and, in some instances, confuses the weakest. One moderator referred to the "slavish use of frameworks for almost every candidate whether strong or weak... for the former these became a hindrance and for the latter a double hindrance."

This is often coupled with the use of common tasks across the year group. This can work well, if candidates are encouraged to explore their own ideas, but all too often it leads to similar points, repeated quotations and uniform conclusions - virtually the same essay is submitted by the entire centre.

Administratively things went smoothly. Most samples were sent promptly. Some centres, however, still do not send the top and bottom folders, or fail to complete topsheets or, more surprisingly, total the marks inaccurately, but there were fewer

discrepancies this year between folder marks and optems marks. The new authentication sheets caused some problems; moderators are grateful to centres for their cooperation in resolving these.

Overall folders were produced in a thoroughly professional way and addressed the specification requirements skilfully. Most student work showed personal engagement in both writing and reading tasks. There was little, however, that was either experimental or innovative.

### **Personal and Imaginative Unit**

This again produced the widest range of writing, including narrative, autobiography and empathetic extensions of literary texts. At best the writing was powerful and personal and there were many well crafted - and often very violent - stories ("The Assassin" was a popular title) but there was little that was really explorative or original. Some centres still tend to use a "one title suits all" system with a common task, which is often blandly executed to a common formula. As already stated, such approaches handicap students, particularly brighter ones. Moderators noted that the 'Diary of Eva Smith' is making a comeback.

### **Media Texts**

Many centres still rely on the comparison of two newspaper front pages or two advertisements. Most were thoughtful and thorough, but did not exploit the potential, which coursework provides, of analysing media other than print. It was pleasing, however, to note that more centres seem to be exploiting the possibilities of making comparisons across media.

### **Shakespeare**

Essays on 'Romeo and Juliet' and 'Macbeth' again predominated, with some excursions into the world of 'The Merchant of Venice.' The work of most candidates showed whole text awareness, but there were some whose knowledge was limited to one scene, or who seemed to be writing entirely about a film version, assuming for instance that Shakespeare used a swimming pool as a setting. On the other hand there were often detailed and thoughtful essays on the plays by candidates, who were not necessarily the ablest.

## Paper 2F

### Section A

Candidates had responded to the materials, often quite well, but it remains important that they should follow the specific demands of the question. The failure to deal adequately, or at all, with two poems is particularly marked in the responses on this paper, and seriously affects the outcome for candidates. The greatest differentiator in this section is the extent to which candidates deal explicitly with the language of the poets. It is impossible to overstate the importance of quoting and commenting on actual examples from the text.

#### Question 1

This question asked candidates to consider the child's life in *Yellow* and one other poem which looks at life from a child's point of view. There was a good response from many candidates, who often sympathised with the position of the girl in this not very affectionate family. The better scripts commented on the girl as an observer and picked up on the aggression and hostility typical of the family. There was some sensible speculation on the causes of the mother's behaviour. Many, understandably, saw a military side to the father. On the whole, candidates showed a reasonable understanding of the first poem, although there were some interesting interpretations of 'budgies born in my curls'. A few commented ably on the use of the bird images and of the colour 'yellow'. The most popular, and fully appropriate, poems chosen for the second poem were *Half-past Two*, *Hide and Seek* and *Brendon Gallagher*. Candidates must be sure to cover all of the bullet points.

#### Question 2

This question proved equally popular. Candidates who chose it related well to the two poems. Many wrote with genuine personal engagement when commenting on the mixed emotions of the 'grimly gay' soldiers as they left for war in *The Send-off* or the horror of the gas attack in *Dulce et Decorum Est*, where candidates often used the bullet points to develop their responses. Better candidates commented on the meanings of the title and caught the sense of conspiracy in *The Send-off* by analysing particular images.

#### Question 3

Whilst this was not attempted quite as frequently as Question 4, many candidates wrote on it, as *Identity* was the most frequently studied of the three groups of poems. In general, there was a good response to this question, with some appropriate writing, particularly on the first poem. Candidates often seemed well-prepared, with an awareness of detail. The demands of the question were addressed carefully and candidates showed a clear awareness of the change in people's feelings as the events unfolded. On the whole, the language of *Death of a Naturalist* was dealt with more fully than that of *Miracle on St David's Day*. The atmosphere in the first poem was often well captured, with sharp comment on the setting and the different characters. The weakest candidates sometimes confused the different people or the time sequence, but there was clearly much interest in the nature of the 'miracle'. The second poem received some good answers, too, which were able to track the change/development of feelings. Weaker answers often failed to see any progression. Again, more comments on particular images - for example, showing the child's fear - would have enhanced the quality of the responses.

#### Question 4

By far the greatest number of candidates answered this question, with some thoughtful comments on the effects of growing old. On the whole, the contrasts shown between the younger and the older central character in *Old Man, Old Man* were well documented, although some found the language occasionally difficult, such as 'recalcitrant' and the reference to 'a cloud'. *Warning* was frequently used for the second poem, which gave plenty of opportunities for comment, with the latter poem also receiving an enthusiastic response. *At Grass, Follower, Mirror* and *Once Upon a Time* were also dealt with appropriately. Many added reflections on the physical and mental effects of growing old.

Candidates had little difficulty relating to the subject matter of old age; they found plenty on which to comment. A few were carried away into offering advice or personal experiences in dealing with the elderly; however, at least this indicated considerable enthusiasm. On a negative note, hardly any candidates seemed to understand the harder words of the Fanthorpe poem. Comment on words like 'connoisseur' was a rarity at any level. However, many answers worked systematically through the evidence, and in general candidates seemed well prepared.

#### Question 5

Fewer candidates chose this section, and of the two questions in *Nature*, this was the one attempted more frequently. Candidates on this question seemed well prepared, and there was some sensitive analysis of images in some papers. The somewhat complex scenario of the first poem was well handled by competent candidates. Some showed a sound knowledge of the background to *Keeping Orchids*, and these offered interesting interpretations of 'buds remain closed as secrets'; others, however, struggled with the poem and wrote only very briefly. *The Flowers* was handled in a more straightforward manner, with clear reference to the love shown by the granddaughter as she tended the grave.

#### Question 6

Again a minority choice, this question clearly appealed to some candidates who wrote about the stealthy activity of the mushrooms with enthusiasm. Candidates mostly wrote rather selectively about *Mushrooms*, although some used their evidence fully. When choosing a second poem, some candidates showed a good awareness of imagery. Many chose *Nettles*, and there was some effective comment on the parent's feelings and actions. Others opted for *Thistles* or *A Blade of Grass*, a poem which they found hard to analyse effectively. There were also some who failed to choose a second poem at all.

### Section B

#### Question 7

The best candidates did extremely well with this question, selecting appropriate stories for their own choice. Many dealt successfully with the journeys, showing awareness of what had been learnt by the characters. In writing about *The Gold Cadillac*, the majority of candidates showed good understanding, and their engagement with it was reflected in their writing. The personal response was very much 'he shouldn't have had to sell it', but 'it made them a family again'. Only the better candidates pointed out that Lois had learnt a lesson too. Some referred to the

significance of its being a mental as well as a physical journey. *The Gold Cadillac* was linked to *Vendetta*, *Veronica* and *A Stench of Kerosene*, and the choices were clearly justified. For example, in writing about *Veronica*, some candidates touched on the idea of a personal journey. There is still some tendency to tell the story: greater planning will improve the focus, and candidates must be sure to avoid an approach that is too general. They can do this by including more detailed reference and quotation. The most significant weakness on this question was that some candidates failed to write on a second story, even where they wrote on *The Gold Cadillac* at length. **Candidates should note that they will always be asked to write on two stories, and Centres should continue to remind candidates of this fact.** There were also a few candidates who did not choose a story to accompany *The Gold Cadillac*, but chose a poem from Section A, such as *The Road Not Taken*.

## Section C

### Question 8

'My Room' proved a very popular and successful question. It allowed a meaningful response at all levels. Most wrote a letter to a friend, giving close details about their usually well-equipped bedrooms. Others chose a lounge, games room or computer room. Some candidates, more boldly, linked the room to particular personal experiences - for example, a death in a family. A number showed their ability to adapt the question in an interesting way, for example writing about prison cells imaginatively. This line of approach was refreshing and showed the possibilities of the question. There were many strong responses, giving a clear insight into fashionable trends in colour schemes, electronic equipment and state-of-the-art décor; others focused on the need to have a place of their own in which to 'chill'. However, many weaker responses ignored the second bullet point, more or less excluding all feelings and opinions. Sometimes, candidates failed to deal with the possibility of improvement, or stated that the room was perfect. The style of writing was mostly appropriate, but some felt the need to write 'Yours sincerely' - or 'sincerely' - in a letter to a friend. A number of common errors were in evidence, including the misuse of the comma, the effect of 'texting', and the failure to use capital letters or paragraphs.

### Question 9

Question 9 asked candidates to write a magazine article with the title 'How I like to be treated'. This task invited a wide variety of treatment and revealed strong feelings in teenagers about their wish to be respected, to be treated seriously, and to be given more responsibility. Some complained that older people thought that all youngsters were loud 'yobs' who were out to cause trouble. They were eager to show that not all teenagers are the same. Other candidates wrote about the problems of bullying or teasing at school, and of peer pressure. Most remembered the magazine format, but others forgot to write in an appropriate register. Some used the topic to explore issues like racial discrimination. In a small number of cases, quite harrowing personal experiences were described that were more focused on mistreatment. The best answers, which made interesting reading, were able to relate any moral or social issues to specific personal experiences, with examples of how they would have liked to be treated differently. Such candidates had the ability to detach themselves a little, and were mindful of the context and the audience.

In general, candidates on this Tier would be well advised to check their work really thoroughly at the end of the examination. **Such attention to editing would improve**

the technical accuracy of candidates' work and, with 8 of the 25 allotted marks going to Assessment Objective 3 (ie, a third of the marks), this is an important consideration.

## Paper 3F

The Question 1 extract was more challenging this year in terms of both content and language, whilst the writing questions in some instances were more accessible.

The answers to Section C were noticeably better this year. Question 5 produced some strong answers.

### Section A

#### Question 1

The extract and question produced a range of answers. The question discriminated well.

The bullet points helped candidates to structure and develop their answers. Most could distinguish between the roles of son, father and mother, though some very weak responses confused the father with the fishmonger. There was much recounting and narrating, but the majority of candidates were able to comment in some detail on the relationship between the father and son. More successful answers analysed more fully the impact of the mother's death, and a few even speculated about details like the father's late arrival home and his "newly cut hair" and after shave.

Language was the key discriminator. Many candidates identified figures of speech without offering a comment on the specific effect for which they were intended. Stronger candidates were able to comment on the significance of the description of the meal, some even bringing out the symbolism: "the way the fish was described, when his father finally arrived, as "dull", "cold" and "dead" is a metaphor for their lives without the mother's presence." Few, however, commented on the effect of the change of tense (from past to present) in the middle of the passage.

### Section B

#### Question 2

There were some strong responses to this question. This topic is obviously one which is much discussed in schools and colleges, as most answers were thoughtful and reflective.

Weaker answers simply expressed or asserted an opinion, though there were relatively few that made trite references to male and female stereotypes. Stronger answers began to explore a modern view of jobs and gender, commenting on the need for equal opportunities, but also recognising the validity of some traditional viewpoints.

Most candidates had some idea of structuring an argument and making verbal links between points. More successful answers were soundly supported with detailed evidence.

### Question 3

This question also worked well. Candidates engaged with the task and had much to say about it, often drawing directly on their experience. There was much comment on school dinners, and the impact of Jamie Oliver's contributions to the debate was clearly evident.

The letter was competently handled in most cases; the focus of a clear audience also helped. Organisation was sound even in weaker candidates. The bullet points provided candidates with an obvious structure, though some used them in a mechanical way, which detracted from the overall impact of the letter. More successful candidates were able to select key details and use language persuasively to convey their viewpoint. Ideas were clearly - and in abler candidates' responses - thoughtfully expressed, with some interesting suggestions, including parentally condoned smoking areas in schools. A few were, however, able to see beyond their own immediate perspective to wider educational and social issues.

### Section C

#### Question 4

Relatively few candidates attempted this question, but those who did showed that the topic was one that concerned them greatly. Candidates had strong views on the importance of presenting themselves as themselves, rather than adopting false personas. They acknowledged the influence of celebrities and peers, but were, in the main, disparaging about the influence of parents and teachers.

Most wrote appropriate commentaries, which were adequately focused on image and showed a reasonable grasp of context. The bullet points helped candidates by providing points to address. Weaker candidates tended to rely on them too much, and to dwell on details like clothes; there was also little sense in such responses of a talk delivered to a camera. More successful candidates on the other hand used the bullet points merely as a stimulus, and were able to create a more convincing effect of talking spontaneously. They were also able to analyse in more depth the pressures to conform and be part of the group.

#### Question 5

This was the more popular of the two questions in this section.

Candidates seemed to enjoy writing about this; the bullet points in most cases became prompts rather than props. A wide range of meals, locations and occasions featured, including MacDonald's, the local pub, Italian restaurants, celebrations of anniversaries with girl/boy friends, a children's birthday party in a shared bedroom, the last meals with grandparents *inter alia*.

Weaker responses tended largely to describe, whilst more successful responses attempted to review the meal, bringing out its special features and significance. Such answers were more able to focus on why the meal was memorable, whilst weaker ones recounted every course in detail. The best answers also conveyed the atmosphere, sometimes with pathos, very occasionally with humour.

Romantic cliché abounded, but there was also a sense that candidates were revisiting an experience that was fresh and important to them.



## Paper 4H

### Section A

This Section elicited much extremely thoughtful writing, with the best of it being exceptional in its full, mature response to poems and written with a strongly personal voice that revealed candidates' close engagement with the texts and their sensitivity of analysis. It was clear that many had thoroughly enjoyed reading the poems and thinking about the themes, and their capacity in some cases to synthesise ideas and back these with confident quotation from the poems was impressive.

Within this generally positive scene, there were a number of points where improvement would have been possible. Occasionally, candidates either do not read the question properly or set out determined to write an appreciation of two poems whatever the question requires. This sometimes resulted in the choice of an unsuitable second poem.

Some answers were blighted by a determination to dwell on technical terms, in a way which impeded any real engagement with the poems. Occasionally, in answers that were barely adequate, there was a sudden reference to 'syntactical parallelism', 'binary opposition' or 'visual cinematic effect'. The reference to 'euthanasia' rather than 'euphemism' gave a distorted slant to one response. There also seems to be a current obsession with 'enjambement', one answer wading straight in with: 'There is a lot of enjambement in this poem'.

Mostly, the lack of prepared annotations continues to prove highly beneficial, even though on a few occasions partly understood notes, presumably learned by heart, gave rise to sentences which the candidate plainly did not fully grasp. The admirable statement 'the silence of the interviewee is the voicelessness of the disenfranchised' was made by a candidate who could barely understand the poem.

There is some tendency to provide a great deal of background material, eg on Nazi Germany. Other candidates offered a sense of moral outrage, for example about biased interviewers or parents who did not prevent their children going into the road and being run over. These can show evidence of engaging with the issues, but can never be a substitute for considering the texts themselves and their language and ideas.

### Question 1

This was considerably more popular among candidates than Question 2. Candidates generally engaged effectively with the two chosen poems and often made thoughtful points. Many misinterpreted the monosyllabic replies made by the interviewer in *You Will Be Hearing from Us Shortly* as replies made by the interviewee, and this led to some misunderstanding in their response, although the more skilled responses commented on the single voice. A few were under the impression that this was a telephone interview. There was, however, some good analysis of the treatment of discrimination in this poem. Many were aroused to righteous indignation at the way the interviewee was being treated. The word 'handicap' led a few candidates to believe that the interviewee was also discriminated against on the grounds of some kind of disability, a view for which there is no actual evidence.

Sound understanding of the position of the two people in *Refugee Blues* was mostly shown. Some candidates made valid points about the significance of the word 'Blues' in the title, even analysing the poem's rhythm in relation to that of a blues song.

## Question 2

Candidates were asked to look at *Death in Leamington*, by Betjeman, and one other poem. Many candidates seemed to find Betjeman difficult to interpret and rather missed his subtleties, with weaker candidates finding the focus on physical environment and events challenging. There were some misinterpretations, as in the case of a candidate who wrote about the way that 'Betjeman shows the typical behaviour of modern society towards the historical monuments like Leamington Spa.' Words such as 'chintzy' and 'crochet' were often misunderstood, which again led to unwarranted interpretations. Those who commented on 'Do you know that the stucco is peeling?' showed an appreciation of how the use of the rhetorical question related to the focus of this answer. Often the choice of poem with which to compare the first poem was tenuous - those who chose *The House* made a reasonably secure interpretation but a number of those who chose *Yellow* or *Electricity Comes to Cocoa Bottom* found it more difficult to address the question.

## Question 3

*Identity* was the most frequently answered poetry section, and within this Question 3 was the more common response. This was a very popular choice and many candidates approached it imaginatively, indicating engagement with both texts. However, there was a wide range in the quality of answers. Better scripts were clearly focused on the significance of the events and their comments on imagery reflected understanding and response. Many seemed to enjoy Heaney's sensuous language and a number identified his subtle linguistic nuances. Some candidates spent too much time when writing about *Death of a Naturalist* in talking about Heaney as a 'lover of frogs' and too little on how he makes the reader aware of the significance of events. Weaker candidates did not realise the dramatic change in Heaney's attitude in the middle of this poem. Some realised that he felt repugnance, but attributed this to his discovery of the mating habits of frogs, or of sex in general. Many had at least some understanding of the role reversal of *Follower* and some handled this aspect with maturity and sensitivity.

## Question 4

This was generally well done - candidates responded effectively to the prompt 'how does the poet bring to life...?'. There was often evidence of a good ability to analyse the contribution that the poet's language made to the emotions evoked in *Mid-Term Break* and in the other chosen poem. Usually they made a good choice for their other poem - often *Death of a Naturalist*, *Follower* or *The Barn*, which, again, was apparently universally enjoyed and easily understood. Other excellent choices which showed real engagement with text were *Miracle on St David's Day* and *An Unknown Girl*. There were some choices, such as *At Grass*, *Once upon a Time* and, in one case, *Not My Best Side*, which did not allow the candidate to explore the question easily.

## Question 5

A smaller number of candidates answered this question on *The Horses* and *The Storm*. They mostly did so quite well but often, it seemed, without much apparent enjoyment. This question had many key words to bear in mind: 'waiting', 'watching', 'listening', 'changes', 'mood', 'atmosphere', which the most successful answers responded to effectively. One examiner noted that the question became something

of a magnet for weaker candidates, who found difficulty in dealing with the significance of *The Horses*. Most coped better with *The Storm*.

#### Question 6

This was another less popular question which many did not quite get to grips with. *Iguana Memory* was tackled rather sketchily by some - as if its brevity was off-putting. However, some candidates were able to pinpoint the significance of the meeting between the writer and the iguana and to make sensible comments on the language. The choice of second poem, often *The Thought-Fox*, *An Unknown Girl* or *Roe Deer*, was not often explored fully, although the better scripts showed the ability to use the material from this second poem to good effect. **The fact that at least one candidate chose *Nettles* as the second poem is a reminder of the importance of reading the question carefully.**

### Section B

#### Question 7

This question was often attempted well, with detailed analysis. However, there were some who wrote on only one story, which immediately reduces the maximum marks available by half. Candidates similarly forfeited marks by writing on the wrong story. Some misread *Vendetta* as *Veronica*, and hence commented on the wrong woman. Whilst some candidates showed an awareness of the implications of apartheid and the Immorality Act in South Africa, others wrote more vaguely about 'whites being more important than blacks in this culture'. The best were able to show how the two central characters' moral values and attitudes were influenced by their cultures. In *Vendetta*, candidates wrote vividly on the attack launched by the widow's dog, but could have focused more on themes such as loyalty, religion, lawlessness and the deep-seated exacting of revenge in traditional Italian society, normally carried out by men.

### Section C

This section had obviously struck a chord with many candidates, who responded to the tasks with verve. Examiners often found the responses amusing, touching and even humbling. They noted how important a sense of audience was, with the right register struck consistently, as a marker of answers of the highest quality.

#### Question 8

The majority of candidates attempted this question, on 'Hopes and Dreams', rather than Question 9. There were some very good responses. The less able often found it difficult to know how formal or informal they should be - as very few candidates will actually write letters but all will text and email; this sometimes influenced their responses in a negative way. Some answers were very short: **candidates perhaps need to be reminded that an examiner needs an answer to be of a certain length to make a real assessment.** However, the hopes and dreams of many made for reassuring - and often touching - reading!

A variety of hopes and dreams were expressed, with some candidates differentiating the two ideas and writing both about their far-fetched fantasies and their more realistic aspirations. While many answers showed adventurous career ambitions, it is

notable that a desire to settle down and get married (or have a 'partner') continues to feature largely in the responses of both boys and girls, and candidates from all ethnic groups: one girl, typical of many, wrote: 'As long as I get a decent man I will be happy till I die'.

Some writers wrote with a sense of moral fervour: 'My best wish is to see an outbreak of world peace', wrote one. Some pointed out that money does not buy happiness and gave a blueprint of how they thought life ought to be lived. A few became quite carried away: 'What is success if it is bound by the blood of the oppressed?'

Despite these high-minded individuals, achieving fame and riches was a common aim, and many of the answers were full of a desire for the trappings of material success - large houses, yachts and flash cars, swimming pools and world cruises. However, a number of candidates kept in touch with reality even when writing of speeding along on a motorbike with the wind blowing their hair: 'although I would have to shut my helmet as a fly would probably [sic] fly into my mouth or eye.' Some writers, it seems, would remain thrifty even after scaling the heights: 'And you will be welcome to a lift in my Mercedes as long as you pay for the petrol'.

Some candidates entertained more modestly achievable hopes: one wished 'to start eating healthily and having five fruits a day instead of just two'. A few really had no ideas, and said so: this seemed a perverse reason for choosing the question.

#### Question 9

Less popular than Question 8, this was probably mostly tackled by candidates towards the upper end of the range, and often completed to a high standard. Usually the register was well chosen and language was used carefully to suit the task. A few candidates slightly misinterpreted the word 'entertain' and wrote about disasters which had occurred whilst singing, dancing or otherwise performing for relatives - these were, however, amusing and well written and could be credited within the mark scheme. Those that took a seasonal approach were often particularly entertaining, with burnt turkeys for Christmas and brilliant barbecuing tips for the summer. Some candidates lost out by not covering the whole question, and ignoring the quotation with which it began. This meant that their answers lacked focus and direction, and were often on subjects quite unrelated. A number lacked the added dimension that dealing with relatives would give. However, the nature of the task encouraged candidates of all abilities to be more ambitious with their sentence structure and the organisation of their material.

This question produced some delightful, original responses which were a pleasure to read, showing an apt use of vocabulary and well-developed ideas. There was much effective use of humour, even if this was perhaps unintentional at times: 'Make sure your house doesn't have rising damp or asbestos which could damage their health', warned one candidate apparently in all seriousness. Another wrote: 'Don't be afraid to host a game of charades, it always goes down well at all family gatherings - except funerals!'

There were some well-focused answers that reflected the authentic register of a magazine article, including such features as 'interviews with readers' and the opinions of a psychologist. Examiners noted a large number of witty and extremely well-written answers that fully met the required register: indeed, some thought the best seemed to be of publishable quality.

## Paper 5H

The demands of both writing and reading questions were similar to last year.

The challenges of the Question 1 reading passage compared favourably with last year's extract both in terms of content and the nuances of meaning that needed to be drawn from it.

All writing questions were accessible and there were outstanding responses to Questions 2 and 4. The majority of responses displayed some structure and most answered the question as set, addressing both audience and purpose. The comment in the past has suggested that candidates are weaker at writing "to analyse, review, comment" but this year there was no significant difference between the quality of writing for Section B and Section C.

### Section A

#### Question 1

The passage, which allowed candidates to address the issue of racism in an unfamiliar context, clearly engaged candidates, many of whom wrote detailed and developed commentaries.

The majority of candidates understood Will Ferguson's reactions to being called a foreigner and how his attitude developed; abler candidates grasped some of the more complex points of his presentation of the Japanese people, and the ablest explored the ironies of the passage, particularly in terms of language.

Many candidates did not develop their comments on the use of language bullet point sufficiently. Many understood that 'It's like a dog whistle' was a simile and others that adjectives featured in the writer's description of his former neighbours in Canada, as did first person pronouns and direct language. Comments that went beyond 'feature-spotting' were rarer. The best answers, however, were highly sophisticated and included perceptive interpretative comments on language, in particular bringing out the humour of the passage.

### Section B

#### Question 2

This proved a popular question. Opinion was very polarised on this issue; most candidates had no problems with aligning themselves with one side or the other and were able to develop strong arguments. Those against computer games cited issues that included addictiveness, health problems (for instance obesity), violence, financial cost and the negative effect on homework and more worthwhile activities. Those in favour pointed out the entertainment value of computer games, the opportunities they provided for learning, and for improving hand-eye co-ordination and memory skills. The social benefits of interacting with other gamers were also stressed. Abler candidates on both sides of the argument explored the potential fusion (or confusion) of virtual and real worlds in relation to morality, violence and crime.

Candidates used techniques like rhetorical questions, citing statistics and deploying quotations with varying degrees of effectiveness. Weaknesses included the use of an over conversational style (“I mean” “O.K?” “Like I said before”) but many developed complex and convincing arguments with some flair of expression.

### Question 3

The letter to a local newspaper article about environmental issues produced a range of concerns, including litter, car pollution, loss of open spaces and the melting of the Greenland ice cap. The link with local concerns was not always clear.

Most handled the letter and the context with some competency. A significant minority of candidates, however, had such a limited sense of context that they assumed that the recipient of their letter (in this case the editor) had the power to enforce their suggestions.

Most candidates clearly identified problems and suggested solutions. The best answers adopted an appropriately formal tone, were extremely well informed and used sophisticated arguments, discriminating clearly between local and global issues. Weaker candidates used simplistic arguments, for instance that problems with litter could easily be solved by the provision of more litter bins.

## Section C

### Question 4

The topic of “being an outsider” led on from the Question 1 extract and produced some engaging and highly personal writing.

Most wrote about being in Year 7 at a new school, but others wrote moving accounts of families in exile or about cultural, social or linguistic exclusion. Some candidates also wrote about bullying. Whether the accounts were true or not, the standard of such writing was high. The wording of the question prevented candidates from making a purely narrative response.

Most candidates were able to describe and also analyse their thoughts and feelings with some clarity. In weaker candidates’ responses the analysis was more limited and the structure often reduced to a single block of un-paragraphed writing.

## Question 5

There were some lively responses to this question, drawing on varied and rich personal experience.

Weaker answers tended simply to express personal likes and dislikes, typically listing the things the candidate would like (or not like) in the 'makeover' of a bedroom, without giving reasons for the choices. Better answers were more developed and analytical; the most successful were often those which used wit and humour.

Most candidates tried to explore the wider issues of peer pressure, media influence and the celebrity culture in their commentaries. The extent to which a candidate could develop comments on these factors often determined the level of mark awarded. This was most evident in responses on image, which drew strong comments on the individuality and integrity of one's features and body, often citing religious reasons. This concern was also reflected in some answers on room 'makeovers'; more thoughtful candidates analysed whether a room was an extension of oneself.





## Statistics for GCSE English 1204

### Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Unit/Component	Maximum Mark (Raw)	Mean Mark	Standard Deviation	% Contribution to Award
Paper 1A	40	25.5	7.0	20
Paper 1B	40	24.2	7.5	20
Paper 2F	75	28.6	9.1	30
Paper 3F	75	26.6	6.8	30
Paper 4H	75	48.7	8.5	30
Paper 5H	75	45.7	8.2	30

### Option 1 -Paper 1A, 1B, 2F, 3F

Grade	Max. Mark	C	D	E	F	G
Boundary mark	100	58	47	36	26	16

### Option 2 - Paper 1A, 1B, 4H, 5H

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E
Boundary mark	100	84	73	62	52	41	35

	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Cumulative %	3.3	19.8	43.2	64.8	83.1	93.2	97.0	98.6

### Notes

**Boundary Mark:** the minimum mark required by a candidate to qualify for a given grade.

### Change in Maximum mark on the Foundation Tier papers from 75 to 60

The mark schemes are common to Foundation and Higher tier papers but the top marks are expected to be accessible to Higher tier candidates only. It follows from this that the top Foundation tier candidates normally access only 75% of the available marks, and the change in maximum mark recognises that they can access 100% of the marks available to them. However, the current mark scheme structure will be retained to allow Foundation tier candidates who outperform the expected maximum for their tier on a question to be given the credit for doing so. The total marks for each question will remain the same, so if a candidate on the foundation tier performs exceptionally well on one question they will be rewarded.

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