

# **Report on the Units**

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**June 2006**

**1900/MS/R/06**

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### GCSE English (1900)

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**English 1900 June 2006**

In total, nearly 71,000 candidates were entered for the various units at this session, with a large number of them completing aggregation for the examination as a whole. Examiners for all units report, in general, that centres appeared to have entered the great majority of candidates appropriately for either Higher or Foundation Tier papers and that the question papers themselves allowed candidates to respond with interest and to achieve results commensurate with their ability. Detailed comments from the Principal Examiners for each unit are to be found elsewhere in this report but the following points of more general interest are relevant to all centres preparing candidates for this examination in 2007:

- Examiners from all units expressed concern over what appears to be an increasing inaccuracy in candidates' basic written expression at nearly all levels. In a significant number of cases, the Examiner's understanding of the candidate's meaning was seriously impeded by such errors of expression which had an inevitably adverse effect on the marks finally awarded. Centres are asked to emphasise the importance of writing accurately to all their candidates and to encourage them to check for mistakes before handing in their scripts.
- A related concern is the increasing illegibility of some candidates' scripts. Again, if an Examiner is unable to read large portions of what a candidate has written, then assessment of such a script is likely to be compromised.
- Another concern raised by Examiners in general was the increase in the use of 'text speak' in candidates' responses to writing tasks in all units. Centres are advised to remind candidates of the requirement that Standard English should be used at all times in this examination.
- Moderators for both Written Coursework and Speaking and Listening have reported that in some cases the marks on their duplicate copies of the MS1 sheets cannot be read. Centres are asked to ensure that these marks are clearly legible before despatching them.

## 2431/01 Non-Fiction Media and Information (Foundation Tier)

### General Comments

Almost all candidates engaged well with each question, and the examination paper gave them the chance to do justice to their ability. Most centres had clearly benefited from excellent teaching by those with an experienced understanding of the examination's requirements.

The reading questions had a gentle and easy lead-in with very simple tasks which gave opportunities for all candidates to gain the confidence to tackle the increasingly demanding Questions 1(c) and 2. The more challenging Question 1(c) was handled well by those who had been well prepared, notwithstanding the fact that a few candidates tried to treat the tourist guide passage as a media text and attempted to analyse the language. This was not warranted by the question which required candidates to focus on details contained in the passage, rather qualities of written expression which were tested in Question 2. The vast majority of candidates, including those from a totally urban environment, seemed to have little difficulty in grasping the concept of village life as described in the Question 2 passage. Indeed, there was an enthusiastic engagement with the liveliness and strong opinions expressed in the passage by Robin Page. The writer's change of feelings from happiness to sadness and anger were quite easily identified. Question 2 did give scope for the more able to show their ability to analyse and interpret.

One feature of the answers to Questions 1 and 2 that examiners have said was again pervasive was the tendency to copy extracts of text. Although this habit does enable some weaker candidates to score some points incidentally, it hinders examiners in their purpose of assessing candidates' understanding of what they have read. Verbatim copying cannot possibly fulfil any of the four criteria for these questions, which are in turn derived from Assessment Objective 2 on page 3 of the mark scheme.

The essay question was often answered too briefly by candidates who had spent too long on Question 2. This therefore indicates that the candidates were running out of time, but the essays were rarely skimmed, which also indicates that there was still a good concentration on the demands of the question. Other responses rambled on formlessly and aimlessly. The task was to write an article with a detailed description of something, together with a careful explanation of why it was valued. Possibly because of the phrasing of the question (the word 'value' was used twice as a verb within two short sentences), the ratio of explanation to description was higher and better this year than in previous years. In many cases, however, candidates made little effort to describe, although the quality of the description was an important factor in the marks awarded at each level. Less successful answers generally followed a narrative course, with the writers simply outlining their career in, for example, playing football.

### **Comments on Individual Questions**

#### **Questions 1 (a) and (b)**

(a) *What does the name 'Lambley' mean, and how is that meaning still shown around the village today?*

(b) *What **facts** about Laxton show that it has a very long farming tradition?*

These questions were answered well, most candidates scoring 4 of the 5 points. These questions were intended to be very easy confidence-builders. Less successful candidates often included far too much detail in these answers, writing at too great a length, and then producing a short answer for 1 (c). They should take note of the mark allocations printed on the question paper.

#### **Question 1 (c)**

*According to the writer, what features of the countryside and of village life make rural Nottinghamshire attractive?*

**Use your own words** as far as possible.

There was a significant number of quite outstanding responses which expressed an understanding and appreciation of the text, focussing on 'attractiveness' throughout and selecting the relevant aspects of the text accordingly. Sadly, there were also some disappointingly short responses and a few which concentrated on persuasive features of the text, as if this were a media task. Other candidates wrote intelligently but used generalities: 'own words' should be used, but specific reference is expected in support of generally relevant points. The majority of candidates, however, produced mechanical answers, which trawled through the passage chronologically, listing relevant features, often lapsing into textual copying without explicitly answering the question. Some candidates really struggled with understanding the passage as a whole. Certainly, this passage did not trigger responses as energetic and intelligent as did the media text in Question 2

#### **Question 2**

*The author of 'Death of the Village' is expressing his feelings about how village life and farming have changed. Show how his article does this.*

*In your answer you should write about:*

- *the presentation of the article;*
- *what used to make the author happy, and what makes him sad and angry now;*
- *the language he uses to express happiness, sadness and anger.*

The passage by Robin Page proved to be a very good vehicle for a media task. It elicited enthusiastic, lively and intelligent responses from the majority of candidates, all of whom appreciated the writer's different moods of happiness, sadness and anger. There were very few candidates indeed who did not show an understanding of the author's general drift.

The range in the quality of the responses made this a successful question. Less successful candidates generally found it hard to comment meaningfully on presentation. They noted that there was a picture, and quoted sub-headings without commenting on either. Indeed, reactions to the picture were amusing: Robin Page was variously thought to be a happy man, an angry man, a young man, 'an old man who had lived in the village for centuries', and even 'a man who had been murdered by politicians'. Some thought the building in the background was the

author's house or the school he attended or even a castle – comments on our changing culture. The least successful responses simply listed the features of the passage without comment.

In the middle range, there were some very good summaries which looked at the comparisons between past and present and noted things such as that carthorses had been replaced by combine harvesters. A pleasing proportion of candidates analysed and explained feelings and often empathised and/or sympathised with the author. A confident analysis of language was less common, and language comments were generally restricted to giving meanings or literal explanations. Nearly all the candidates mentioned how the writer was allowed to leave school and go for a walk outside – clearly a heartfelt wish.

At the top of the range, candidates were able to explain the function of the bold headline and the way the sub-headings organised the material. There were some ingenious thoughts on why the photograph had a church in the background. Figurative language was recognised and the author's use of expressive language to indicate his moods was easily identified. Causes of happiness/sadness/anger were described not just by past/present comparisons or by descriptions of emotions, but there was a synthesis of, for example, children at school (past and present) and the natural world that they could experience then compared with their situation now. Good responses also explained the author's emotions rather than just listing them. 'Harmony' was often quoted and explained, as were 'pace of life', 'spiralling chorus of larks', 'prowl the prairie fields', 'factory farm', 'communities have been torn apart', 'destroyed by the greed of modern life', 'our lifestyles have become poorer'. The very best answers were a pleasure to read. They defined and illustrated irony, hyperbole and personification ('mourning the death of rural England' which had been 'murdered by big business' and 'combine harvesters prowling the prairie fields' – like predators).

### **Question 3**

*A magazine, designed to appeal to all age groups, is publishing a series of articles called, 'It means so much to me'. You have been asked to contribute an article.*

*Write your article. Give a detailed description of something you value very much. Explain carefully why you value it so highly.*

*It could be anything: a personal possession, a hobby that you have, or an activity that you enjoy.*

Despite many short answers to the essay question, the task could hardly have been more inviting, with the range of suggestions given, and it stimulated much enthusiasm. The best candidates wrote most perceptively about their chosen subjects. There was hardly a script which did not have something of interest to communicate. What the writers valued was, perhaps, predictable. There were heirlooms such as a watch or a bracelet, family relationships, pets, friends, the ubiquitous mobile phone, or sport, especially football. What was pleasing was that genuine feelings and appreciation were conveyed in most scripts. Some outstanding candidates were moved to analyse their thoughts and feelings, and the best writers showed passion for their subjects, and coherence and control in the form of their essays.

The answers which dealt with sport sometimes gave a good explanation of its value, but many were narratives ('I started playing at Primary school ...I scored two goals when...'). The 'family/friends/love' group tended to be full of clichés ('They are always there for me when I'm down'), but a proportion of them analysed the strengths of families and friendships without this and without lapsing into too much narrative. There was evidence of prepared responses for another task which did not quite fit this one, but were used in hope. A very small group of essays

described the relationships of the writers with their dogs; these were invariably interesting and got to the heart of what the question was trying to elicit.

There was evidence in some of the best answers that the candidates were able to vary their vocabulary and deliberately adopt an appropriate magazine register, as well as showing a command of formal English. Such essays consisted of well organised paragraphs and properly constructed sentences. Many candidates, however, wrote in a colloquial style, though there was little evidence of 'txt' English: plenty of 'mates' and 'kids', but hardly any 'ur'. Some essays slipped into advice to the reader on how to live his/her life, urging the examiner to 'go for it' and try a new hobby. Spelling maintained its generally poor level of accuracy, but punctuation seems to be disappearing altogether. Apostrophes are sprinkled across the page at random; there is rampant confusion of upper and lower case, and full stops followed by capital letters are, it seems, no longer a convention observed by most of this age group.

However, a pleasing aspect of the writing task each year is the way it illustrates how much better writing is when elicited by real experience rather than by the vicarious experience of a media event.



## 2431/02 Non-Fiction Media and Information (Higher Tier)

### General Comments

In general, Examiners felt that the thematic content (Food) of this paper was accessible to the vast majority of candidates and that they responded well to the tasks in the time available. There was much evidence of engagement and achievement. However, the interest aroused by the material proved, in some cases, to be to the candidates' disadvantage as it resulted in inappropriate responses to the tasks. For example, performance on Task 1, which demands that the candidates demonstrate understanding of what has been read, was occasionally undermined by either personal comment or anecdote or the addition of the candidate's own extraneous knowledge on the subject of food. Another concern expressed by Examiners was the apparently increasing numbers of candidates who are failing to achieve a satisfactory mark for Task 1 through mistakenly adopting an analytical approach to answering the question which is more suited to Task 2 responses.

Task 2, itself, produced a wide range of responses varying from perceptive and detailed analysis to answers which contained no more than a simple summary of the passage with assertions unsupported by textual references. Centres and candidates are reminded that, as always, the key word in Task 1 is *what* and the key word in Task 2 is *how*.

Task 3, by general consensus, was accessible to all; however, some candidates did not focus sufficiently on the requirement to 'describe' and 'explain' and instead produced responses which fitted more easily into the 'argue, persuade, advise' triplet which is tested by Unit 2. Others showed an uncertain understanding of the word 'diet' and concentrated too much on exhortations to lose weight. Examiners also expressed concerns about the serious limitations of some candidates' technical accuracy in written English expression and a further concern was the apparently increasing illegibility of candidates' handwriting. (These points will be considered in more detail in the appropriate section of this report.)

Overall, candidates were thought to have used their time wisely, with few hurried or incomplete responses to Task 3 and few scripts with only two answers. Centres had mostly entered candidates appropriately for this tier and the paper therefore presented an appropriate challenge.

### Comments on Individual Questions

#### Task 1

*A rotten way to feed the children.*

*From this article, identify which changes in diet would benefit children and explain briefly what those benefits would be.*

This task required candidates to identify and select material contained in the source passage which is relevant to the topic of the question and then to convey their understanding of it concisely through the use of their own words as far as possible. A key feature of those responses achieving a mark in Band 3 or above was clear evidence of the ability to reorganise the material whereas responses at Band 4 tended to follow the order of the passage. Better responses drew the threads of the argument together with precision and clarity, while, on the other hand, less assured responses contained extended and over-detailed accounts in words very close to the original. It is recommended that candidates are encouraged to gain an overview of the material by considering closely the passage in terms of the question asked and then to plan their answers by highlighting key points before beginning to write their response.

One Examiner referred to a centre where candidates had used bullet points throughout their answers. Though this approach might have helped at the planning stage, it made for bitty and disconnected overall responses. It is recommended that candidates are encouraged to write concisely in linked sentences which precisely identify the points asked for by the question without a wordy preamble or conclusion.

The question asked candidates specifically to identify beneficial *changes* in children's diets and then to explain what the effects of making these changes would be. However, a large number of candidates failed to focus closely on this requirement and instead wrote responses which concentrated on what was *wrong* with the diets of the younger generation and the problems resulting from this. Although such responses were not dismissed by Examiners, they could not be rewarded as highly as those which clearly did what the question required and effectively linked benefits with their appropriate changes.

The following features were typical of the responses of many candidates:

### **Higher Level Responses:**

- Candidates were able to identify points easily. Many identified 16 – 20 full points and were largely successful in expressing them concisely in their own words and showed a complete overview of the material. They demonstrated full understanding of the links between changes and benefits, for example in the relationship between the consumption of fruit and vegetables as nutritional sources of vitamins and minerals and their consequent effect on different types of performance and behaviour, and of how different types of nutrition affect different types of cells. Responses at this level contained little or no excess material although, at times, candidates expanded on the text by introducing material from their own knowledge, for example, by offering explanations of the results of calcium deficiencies on the body after point 12.

### **Middle Ability Responses:**

- Candidates were able to identify a fair range of points from both changes and benefits and to show some overview of the material. However, answers were generally very close to the text and in chronological order thus demonstrating some selection skills but less organisational ability. Points were often not linked correctly. Points 12 – 17 and 18 –20 were generally correct.
- Some attempted to write concisely but answers were mostly undermined by repetition, especially of points 4, 8, 10/12 (often merged in the long list of nutrients) and 18 as linking devices. Responses at this level also tended to include lengthy accounts of various experiments, and advice to parents for emphasis, and as a result were frequently very long. Sometimes, this lack of concision led to the award of a Band 3 mark where the range of points by itself was sufficiently wide for a Band 2 mark to be considered.
- Other candidates attempted to write a summary of the whole passage; this approach resulted in some valid points being made but such answers inevitably included material that was irrelevant, or which involved the inclusion of unnecessary details and lacked both focus on the task and the concision required to achieve marks in the highest Bands.

### **Common Misunderstandings.**

- Point 16 - where the specific senses were not always identified, thus denying access to the consequent point 17
- Point 9 - the attribution of the sugar withdrawal symptoms in rats to children's behaviour when the passage states that hyperactive behaviour is derived from inadequate nutrition.

- A significant number of candidates attempted Task 2 style answers commenting on the writer's purpose and presentation. This was often upsetting, as it was clear that candidates had understood the passage very well.

#### **Least Successful Responses:**

- There was considerable lifting from the text and little attempt to organise. There was quite a lot of personal opinion and commentary based on what parents should be feeding their children and some Task 3 type focus on their own personal recommendations. This inevitably resulted in a loss of focus and responses which contained, at best, only a partial overview of some of the material but certainly not of the whole passage

#### **Task 2**

*Everyday Ethics.*

*This advertisement introduces readers to Freedom Food, an organisation which aims to promote healthy and ethically produced food.*

*Explore the ways in which the content, language and presentation of this advertisement set out to persuade the reader to buy Freedom Food products.*

The advertisement proved accessible to nearly all candidates. Although the tendency in recent years has been for candidates to respond to this task by spotting features without explaining their impact on the audience or their contribution to the writer's purpose, Examiners commented on a pleasing decline in this practice for this session. Likewise formulaic answers were less evident and Examiners reported that many candidates responded to the text and question not only in relation to language, content and presentation but also in terms of the overall strategy of the advertisement which was designed to prey on the conscience of potential customers. Many made perceptive and valid comments that were not specifically noted in the mark scheme; this was both pleasing and refreshing, indicating that candidates felt confident to offer their own analysis. Examples of comments made on layout included: describing the layout as 'surgical' in its precision and cleanliness which suggests official standards of health to counter 'food scares' and suggesting that the inclusion of the website would target impulse buyers and would broaden the customer base, leaving the potential customer with 'no excuse'. Examples of comments on language included: awareness that the use of the word 'conjure' would suggest artifice and lying; suggesting that the colloquial word 'goodies' would be a natural incentive to potential buyers to 'treat' themselves; commenting on how the alliterative phrase 'from Cornwall to Caithness' suggests an inclusively rural national idyll for buyers in big cities. Less successful responses tended to describe the content of the text and resorted to superficial comment on layout.

The following features were typical of the responses of many candidates:

#### **Higher Level Responses**

- Candidates at this level dealt in detail with all three aspects of the task, supported their comments with appropriate textual references and then explained their effectiveness with close reference to the requirements of the question. There was perceptive and imaginative appreciation of the use of language in the advertisement with, for example, impressive identification of the use of imperatives, comparatives and repetition for effect.

#### **Middle Range Responses**

- These were mostly of the 'Quote and Comment' variety and consisted of paragraph-by-paragraph exposition of the narrative. They were often very long but understood the writer's

intentions fairly well. Answers were, however, descriptive rather than analytical. Very many scripts consisted of detailed descriptions of content with accompanying commentary on chosen references but very little effective analysis of the intended effects. This was particularly true of the use of name-dropping of the RSPCA and chefs.

- It was in the area of explaining effects that middle range responses most often fell down. Many contained comments such as: *The writer mentions the RSPCA, which is a well-known organisation, and this helps to persuade the reader to buy Freedom Foods.* Although such statements hint at an understanding of a key feature of the writer's technique, they do not succeed in explaining it. Candidates should remember that the Examiner is an intelligent but ignorant being who is capable of perfect understanding if things are carefully and fully explained. In the example quoted there are at least two steps of logic missing, and it begs the question "How?" If the Examiner can write this or similar words in the margin of the response, then it is clear evidence that the explanation is not complete.
- It was common for candidates at this level to offer only two of the three elements usually Content and Presentation but sometimes Content and Language. Unless a glancing comment was made to the missing element it was difficult to award such responses more than a mark on the Band 4/3 boundary, even when the other work was good.

### Least Successful Responses

- Although candidates at this level were able to refer to emotive vocabulary they seldom attempted either to illustrate it with an appropriate quotation or to explain how its emotive effects were achieved.
- A surprising number of responses at this level consisted either of straightforward description or summary of the advertisement or mainly of personal opinions; this revealed some understanding of the material but insufficient understanding of the task.

### Task 3

*Write the words of an article for a teenage magazine in which you describe your own diet and explain whether or not you can recommend it on the grounds of healthy living, or enjoyment or both.*

Overall candidates responded well to this task and wrote with knowledge, enthusiasm and a high degree of personality. Many showed their ability to write fluently and consistently in the teenage magazine format. In general, responses showed an awareness of the need to inform and describe although some responses moved into the territory of 'persuasion' or 'entertainment' or drifted off task (for example, writing about the role of exercise in the pursuit of weight loss). Candidates producing less successful responses gave lists of what they ate with no attempt to assess the diet or make recommendations or, simply produced poorly organised re-hashes of information found in the text for Task 1. Interestingly, although the vast majority of candidates presented themselves as very knowledgeable on the subject of eating too much junk food, almost unerringly, they advised the fictitious readers of their articles that a 'balanced diet' of junk and healthy foods was necessary!

Whilst better responses did in fact make effective use of punctuation for effect, less successful ones showed significant weakness in using punctuation to demarcate sentences. Several common spelling problems were evident across the whole range: 'recommend' (even though it was in the wording of the task), 'healthily', 'dessert' and 'exercise' being the most noteworthy. A significant number of Examiners commented on the illegibility of some of the scripts which they marked: candidates should be reminded that it is in their interests to produce work which can be easily read as anything – be it poorly formed letters, misspellings or incorrect punctuation –

which impedes the reader's understanding of the writer's intended meaning is likely to affect adversely the mark awarded for this task.

The following features were typical of the responses of many candidates:

### Higher Level Responses

- The vast majority established excellent audience awareness and sense of purpose with very good use of genre. The better answers tended to be both very cynical about the current obsession with celebrity diets and spin-off effects and also of the text material, too. One Examiner commented that there is hope that, 'Such candid boredom with the whole topic warrants some confidence that this generation may be less vulnerable to media manipulation than its predecessors.'
- The best answers combined descriptions of candidates' diets over an extended timeframe, usually a whole day but sometimes a week, with comment on availability, preparation instructions and peer reactions to develop the material and cement audience rapport. Some adopted article/column format but most wrote in report style. Opening statements established genre immediately, such as *This week's issue concentrates on....*
- Candidates engaged in the debate of enjoyment versus nutrition with obvious relish but avoided descending into a rant or personal mission to persuade. They made sensible recommendations based on their observations and finished with strong concluding statements often referring to the topic to be discussed in the following week's issue of the magazine. This was evidence of very good organisation skills as well.
- Technical skills were impressive with varied sentence constructions, some sophisticated vocabulary, especially the confident use of scientific/biological terminology and accurate use of punctuation for effect.

### Middle Range Responses

- Many candidates at this level failed to grasp fully the meaning of the word 'diet' and wrote exhortatory accounts of how they changed from a size 16 to a size 10 by following a particular course of abstaining from certain types of food with only glancing reference to the task set.
- There was inconsistent focus on the audience with candidates usually starting in the appropriate register with references to fellow teens or some such but then drifting into a general exposition unrelated to anyone in particular.
- The tone of address was also inconsistent. Some overdid the jocularity and bonhomie of the teen-magazine style forfeiting the possibility of extended writing with over-use of slang, contractions and other colloquial expressions.

### Least Successful Responses

- Very few scripts fell into this category as most candidates had something of some interest to say; however, the least successful responses came from those whose technical skills of expression were so limited that meaning was often in doubt.

Many Examiners expressed concern about the failure of a significant number of candidates to write with the functional skills of expression expected from candidates entered for this tier. Below is a selection of some of the main errors which were reported:

## **SPELLING**

FOOD and DRINK – keish (Quiche); lazanya (Lasagne); stake (Steak); polutry (Poultry); donut/donet (Doughnut); sanguage (Sandwich.....lots of sandwiches/sandwiches too); Choclote/chocklit and choclet (chocolate); colliflower (cauliflour.); smootie; chrips; salard; 5 potions (a day); magananamasaly; throught (throat); ecspically; dinna (a meal); ackeny (spots); squess (squeeze); podrige; spinige; apitied (when you're hungry); biswasif (persuasive)

**REDUNDANT VOCABULARY** – lots of different examples but typical was *occasionally* immediately followed by *now and again*. Another common example was *also* followed soon after by *as well* (*aswell*, more often).

**COMPOUNDS** – *alot*, *aday*, *intake/income* (of food), *infront* (*of*), *inbetween* and *impressively*, *seriosity!* Also incorrect separations: *my self*, *meal times*, *well balanced* and so on.

## **PUNCTUATION**

Even more than ever this year, candidates seemed to have abandoned use of the apostrophe both to denote possession and indicate abbreviation. There was also an increase in use of text messaging expression, for example, *im* and *id* (*I'm* and *I'd*.) Candidates should be aware that in an examination testing Standard English, this is simply not acceptable.

Sentence boundary punctuation was generally better this year with less evidence of complete absence. However, it was still fairly common to see one or two lapses even in better Task 3 responses. This was sometimes the result of candidates failing to check work carefully for just such error.

There were many examples of serious omissions of internal sentence punctuation especially to separate subordinate clauses from the main clause. Candidates often lost control over complex sentences because they failed to include the second halves of parenthetical commas or dashes. The uses of the semi-colon and colon are frequently not properly understood but there was some pleasing correct use of parenthetical brackets as asides to the main point.

Internal punctuation for stylistic effect was very rarely correct, particularly the punctuation of direct speech or the recording of quotation. Even those candidates, who tried to use such stylistic devices as exclamation and rhetorical questions, spoiled their efforts, in the former by overuse of the exclamation mark, and in the latter by omission of the question mark! Sometimes there were whole strings of *?!?!?*

## **CAPITALS**

There was much inappropriate capitalisation as in omission in proper nouns such as *weetabix*, *cadbury's dairy milk*, and *ryvita*.

There were random appearances of capitals in mid-sentence for no apparent reason, such as *on Sundays I have Roast dinner*.

A particularly disturbing error was the frequent use of small case for *I* complete with tiny circle for dot!

## **LINKS**

*So* was often used as the sentence opener rather than a consequent joiner and *though* and *although* were frequently used instead of *however* at the beginnings of sentences. Sentence structures were seriously limited by overuse of *and*, *but*, *then* constructions which often led to excessively rambling and uncontrolled statements.

## VOCABULARY

Adjectival and adverbial content of candidates' writing was frequently limited with common misspellings such as, *realisticly*, *practicly*, *immedately*, *approximatly* and especially *healthly*. Inconsistent use of tenses – *would*, *will* and *shall* were also used interchangeably with corresponding agreement errors.

The above list, although lengthy, is not exhaustive. It appears likely that future revisions of the GCSE English Specifications will involve an increased emphasis on candidates' control of functional skills in written English. It is hoped that these examples of the sort of errors candidates make in the heat of the examination experience, may help teachers in their preparation of those who will be taking examinations in this subject in the future.

Although this report has identified many of the limitations revealed by candidates taking this examination, it should be emphasised that there continue to be many scripts of outstanding quality produced by candidates of all backgrounds and both genders; much of the work produced was a pleasure to read and Examiners commented on the number of responses to all tasks which showed a competence far above that expected of 16 year olds.

## 2432/01 Different Cultures, Analysis and Argument (Foundation Tier)

### General Comments

Candidates performed in line with our previous experience of this Unit in this Specification at this Tier. All Examiners agreed that the paper was set at an appropriate level of difficulty which allowed the candidates to write to the limit of their potential. A few candidates in a few centres chose not to respond to the paper at all, but the number who did this was very small. Even fewer of the candidates had been entered for what was quite obviously the wrong tier and there were other who could have achieved marks in the higher Bands of the Higher Tier had they been entered for it. The full mark range was used thoroughly and the paper differentiated well.

All the questions in Section A were attempted, although by far the most popular text was *Opening Worlds* followed by *The Old Man and the Sea* followed by *Things Fall Apart*. There were many more answers on Question 2 than on Question 1: conversely, the answers on Questions 3-6 fell out much more evenly. Overall, the vast majority of candidates answered Question 2, using "The Red Ball" and "The Pieces of Silver" (or occasionally "Leela's Friend" and "The Young Couple") to support a response on wealth and poverty. Disappointingly, few candidates answered Question 1 on learning lessons and few of those who did made much headway with "The Winter Oak" or "Games at Twilight" both of which provide the choicest subject matter for a relevant response.

In Section B there were many very robust and high quality responses to Question 8, on the campaign to ban teenagers from town centres: this proved to be one of the more successful of the Question 8s we have used during this specification. Even the least successful candidates produced work which sought to argue and persuade. By contrast candidates found Question 7 "Why is it important to have rules in your life?" very challenging both in the task itself and in analysing/reviewing or even commenting. There was little sense of a code of personal conduct and responses were concerned principally with laws governing their alleged lack of rights/freedoms as teenagers. The prompt material was relied on heavily.

For some candidates in Band 6 and below sentence structure remains a major challenge.

### Comments on Specific Questions

*Question 1: How do the writers show characters learning lessons.....? The passage was the concluding paragraph of "The Red Ball".*

As indicated above, this question was much less popular than the one which followed. The best answers had a clear understanding of the passage and confident sense of the lessons learnt by both Bolan and his father. They selected effectively from what precedes the conclusion to put the extract firmly in context. The best had a good grasp of the cultural context presented in the story. Less successful answers lacked a confident and clearly defined sense of what happens at the end; or failed to recognise that it was the end of the story; or had little sense of any lessons being learnt. Some candidates relied heavily on narrative repetition; others talked to little effect about Bolan's school experience. Few candidates chose "The Winter Oak" or "Games at Twilight" the obvious contenders for the second story. Of those who did, few really grasped the lessons Anna Vasilevna or Ravi learn at the end of each story and preferred to describe (in the former) the scene in the School Room at the outset.

More candidates chose the opening of "Leela's Friend" and most with some success; others chose "The Pieces of Silver" but very few of these suggested who might have learnt what at the end.



Overall the response to this question was disappointing.

*Question 2: How are the lives of characters affected by poverty or wealth.....? Write about one character from each story.*

This question elicited a great deal of very pleasing work, which more than compensated for the disappointing response to Question 1.

Almost without exception candidates wrote about Bolan in "The Red Ball" and Clement in "The Pieces of Silver" as victims of poverty which was construed in the first instance as being literal: the better answers went on to draw some explicit conclusions about the social and spiritual poverty that affects them, as well as its opposite at the end of the latter story. In this sense the question differentiated especially well. Even the least successful responses indicated that candidates had been affected by the brutality of Chase's treatment of Clement and the father's treatment of Bolan and were able to make successful connections between this and the grinding poverty the writers present them inhabiting.

Once again there were some candidates who might have done better, even here, if they had given greater thought and/or time to unpacking the question before they started writing. There is a significant difference in *showing poverty* fairly randomly and *showing how the lives of the characters are affected by it*. The prompt allowed candidates to get to the heart of the stories and do more than merely revisit some of their fixtures and fittings. Incidentally, this was true of some Higher Tier answers, too.

There were some high quality responses, too, on the unfortunate Sidda in "Leela's Friend", as well as the odious Sivasanker family, his employers. It was perfectly acceptable to equate Sidda's lowly status as one of poverty as opposed to the other characters and the prejudice which affects his life was clearly linked with this. Less successful were attempts to show the effects of wealth in "The Young Couple". Few candidates managed much more than narrative repetition on this text.

*Question 3: How does the writer show the Old Man's strength and determination here and at one or two other moments in the novel? The passage is from p 84, immediately prior to the final attack the sharks make on the remains of the marlin... "fish that you were.....".*

The essential differentiators here were whether or not candidates could get the context of the extract and place it at the end of the story and the confidence they had in picking their "other moments". Very good answers made excellent use of the moments in which Santiago spears and lashes the marlin to the skiff; his memories of the arm wrestling and the effects on his hands and back wrought by his tenacious hold on the line to which the marlin becomes attached. Candidates who knew the story less well struggled to support more generalised assertions about strength and determination.

*Question 4: How does the writer show the Old Man's understanding of the sea as he returns to port?*

It was perfectly acceptable to go to the successive shark attacks and Santiago's response to them to support a response about "understanding of the sea". Pleasingly, the best answers talked in some detail about his knowledge of the different kinds of shark and their differences from the marlin and their contrasting modes of attack. Some talked confidently about his sense of having gone too far and his growing sense of reassurance about the skiff (first) and his own security (second). The more familiar candidates were with the novella the better, usually, they wrote.

*Question 5: What are the effects on Okonkwo and his people of the changes in village life which take place during Okonkwo's exile? The passage is from p136/7, chapter 18, the penultimate chapter of Part Two of the novel.*

The effects are that things fall apart in Umuofia and having slain the head messenger, Okonkwo commits suicide.

Essentially this was a question on the brief, explicit final section of the novel and asked candidates to take the story of Okonkwo as a way into writing about the changes. Answers from the relatively small proportion of candidates who had studied this text and the even smaller proportion of those who chose the question spread right across the available Bands. Very effective answers made a series of well developed and well supported links between the white men's church and government and place of judgement with the growing degree of seriousness with which they are taken by Okonkwo and his clan, right up to the climax of the story. These were few in proportion, however, to those who struggled to make clear and supported links. The least successful answers attempted something on the passage without any seeming awareness of where it came and what its importance in the narrative might be.

*Question 6: Why does Okonkwo treat his real son (Nwoye) and his adopted son (Ikemefuna) differently?*

There were some better answers on this question, possibly because the issues it raises are dealt with at a much earlier stage of the novel. Almost all the writing saw that Nwoye reminded him of Unoka and this resemblance shamed and scared Okonkwo, whereas Ikemefuna was a far closer representation of the character Okonkwo aspired to. Stronger answers dealt with Okonkwo and the two boys in some depth: some of these made much of the botched attempt at the murder of Ikemefuna and contrasted this with the very real terror Okonkwo's physical assaults on Nwoye elicit. Weaker answers made more general comments on Okonkwo and his behaviour.

Of the three texts set for study it is becoming apparent that *Things Fall Apart* is proving a very challenging text for many candidates entered for this tier.

*Question 7: Why is it important to have rules in your life?*

As mentioned above there was a more perceptible difference in the quality of the outcomes from Question 7 and Question 8 than last summer and much more than in January. There was hardly any analysis or review or even comment on a personal code of conduct or morality and few candidates talked directly or explicitly about their personal experiences. Few attempted to start from basic principles which proved to be the most profitable approach to the task for those who did.

What was offered in most cases was an attack on or justification of laws governing what teenagers could or could not do with regard to smoking, drinking, and having sex (on all of which all are well informed) and on behaving generally. All were only too familiar with the ASBO and most were familiar with the notion of the "chav" culture which exalts it: some supported this; some abhorred it. Only those seeking further inspiration (and there were few) used the fourth prompt by contrast with the many who relied on the first two. Few candidates had much to say outside of what was given.

*Question 8: A local newspaper is campaigning to ban teenagers from the town centre at weekends. Write a letter to the newspaper arguing your point of view.*

This must have come as a welcome relief to candidates after the challenges of Question 7. It was very well answered, even by those whose responses fell in the lower Bands and whose work was constrained by mechanical limitations. The separation of the marks for AO3 1 & 2 and

AO3 3 was never put to better use. Pleasingly full and well developed answers *either* bemoaned and deplored the whole concept, subjecting it to ridicule and making some very persuasive points about the local economy, the views of the shopkeepers and their own rights and freedoms *or* supported the ban, often very wittily, by the adoption of an alternative *persona*, often that of an older person. The ability of all but the very weakest candidates to write using persuasive rhetoric when the prompt is this stimulating was pleasing.

Some work in the lower Bands is seriously hampered by candidates' inability to construct the most basic, simple sentences.

## 2432/02 Different Cultures, Analysis and Argument (Higher Tier)

### General Comments

Examiners reported that the performance of candidates on this year's examination was particularly good. This is the third year of the new specification being offered to centres and the size of the cohort for the examination has now stabilised and is clearly representative of what the future may hold for GCSE English at OCR. It certainly looks hopeful! Evidence from Examiners indicated that candidates had been thoroughly prepared and coped very successfully with the demands of the paper.

The time available to candidates in the examination did not appear to affect their ability to offer responses of sufficient length to reward positively. Examiners had been advised not to penalise concision, but most candidates made good use of their time in dealing with all three tasks.

The vast majority of centres had decided to use the *Opening Worlds* anthology to prepare candidates for this examination. Although this involved referring to two texts, responses revealed a genuine grasp of the experience of learning and the effects of poverty and wealth. Centres should note that Question 1 no longer requires the candidate to explore both the passage and the rest of the story it is taken from. They must, however, continue to examine a second story from the list specified at the top of the page. Many candidates will feel that further exploration of the text from which the passage is taken is most useful in responding to the task, but the constraints of time makes the study of all three elements, passage, rest of text and second story, very demanding. Consequently, there is no penalty for the candidate who selects references exclusively from the passage, or indeed the rest of the story, before going on to deal with a second story. Question 2 proved particularly popular, perhaps because the candidates were given the opportunity to select texts that they had personally enjoyed, revealing a genuine understanding of how the effects of wealth or poverty were represented in their chosen stories. Similarly, good answers came from candidates who attempted Question 1 where they were able to empathise with the characters Sidda and Leela in a passage packed with examples of both positive and negative experiences of learning. Indeed, all six tales were used in responses to this question on learning, although it was clear that some stories were clearly more accessible than others, highlighting the requirement for centres to ensure that they have studied all six stories in some detail in preparing candidates for this examination.

Questions 3 and 4 were tackled confidently by a smaller number of candidates, the short novel enabling centres to prepare individuals thoroughly for the demands of the questions. Certainly Question 3 proved by far the more popular of the two, although the nature of both tasks encouraged the vast majority of candidates to respond with insight and understanding.

Examiners were pleased to see that *Things Fall Apart* had been chosen by a significant number of centres for study. Question 5 was by far the more popular as it enabled candidates to focus on the relationship between Okonkwo and his eldest son. However, those who attempted Question 6 were rewarded with the opportunity to analyse closely a more specific section of the novel. This was clearly useful to candidates given the time constraints of the paper. The very open nature of the tasks produced a wide variety of thoughtful responses.

The performance of candidates on Questions 7 and 8 was good. The opportunity to write a letter for a newspaper in which they argued for or against the need for schools in the face of information technology produced excellent responses. Only rarely did candidates call for the end of formal schooling, indeed they were most robust in their defence of their schools and colleges. How gratifying! The responses were frequently passionate and convincing. Equally, the opportunity to muse upon the most important things learned in or out of school produced many engaging responses in which candidates drew upon personal experience and the stimulus material that Examiners felt was particularly helpful this year.

There was very little evidence that candidates had been entered for the wrong tier of the examination for this session. Nevertheless, centres are advised once more that they should not risk entering their candidates where performance is likely to fall below what is required for an award at this tier.

### **Comments on Individual Questions**

*Question 1: How do the writers present the experience of learning here, and in **one** of the stories from the list above?*

*and*

*Question 2: How do the writers show the effects of poverty or wealth in two of the stories from the list above?*

The best candidates were able to relate their knowledge of the text to the main thrust of the questions and provide coherent, structured and sometimes incisive analysis, characterised by comments referring back to the ideas of learning experiences and how the effects of poverty and wealth are shown, supported by brief, appropriate references. Indeed, examiners felt that a tight focus on the passage in Question 1 produced many excellent responses without candidates having to go beyond the confines of the passage before moving on to their second choice. They certainly grasped the writer's excellent contrast of Leela and Sidda as both teachers and learners. Question 2 enabled candidates to spend their time very profitably in responses that revealed genuine analysis of the effects of poverty and /or wealth. Certainly the very open nature of the task encouraged a more personal and original response than some that have gone before.

In the middle range, candidates, even when their knowledge of the texts was very sound, sometimes found it difficult to shape what they knew to the needs of the question. Often, what were appropriate and quite sharp insights lost their immediacy because their relevance to the question was left implicit rather than being explicitly stated. Centres need to be advised to impress on their candidates that any comments must be directly related to the question if they are to make the most of their obvious understanding of texts. Similarly, an imbalance in the quality of analysis between the two stories was a feature of responses which showed promise only to disappoint, particularly with a poorly chosen second story. Centres would be well advised to encourage candidates to spend their time evenly over the two stories.

At the lower end of the range was a minority of candidates who had clearly struggled to see beyond the mere narrative; indeed, they reproduced much of it in their attempts to formulate a relevant response to either task. Once again Examiners were concerned that some candidates were struggling under the misconception that they would be able to read the texts in the examination and produce a satisfactory answer. Invariably such responses were very short.

Centres need to remind candidates that in an examination situation the text is no more than an aide-memoire to assist with the selection of appropriate references, and that there will be insufficient time for any substantial reading.

A further weakness of scripts in the middle and lower ranges was over-long quotation. Candidates should be advised that Examiners are looking for succinct references and are not in the habit of awarding high marks to scripts which pad out an answer with quotations spanning six or seven lines. It is rare that such responses genuinely focus on the task.

Examiners were pleased to note that only a handful of candidates selected stories for analysis outside the six identified at the top of the Question 1/ Question 2 page. Centres are advised that such responses are penalised. Candidates must respond to questions using the specified stories for the paper.

*Question 3: How far does the relationship between Santiago and Manolin here, at the end of the novel, confirm what you have learned earlier?*

*and*

*Question 4: How does the writer show what Santiago has learnt from his intimate experience of the sea itself and of the creatures that live in and over it?*

The best responses offered a genuine engagement with the text and a keen eye for short, pertinent references to back up comments which were entirely focused on the question. Answers to Question 4 were detailed and perceptive, particularly in dealing with the relationship between man and sea that makes the novel such a powerful read. His intimacy with the creatures was carefully interwoven with a sense of how much Santiago had learned from this incredible experience. Question 3 proved more popular with candidates, perhaps because of the opportunity to narrow the focus on to the opening and end of the novel and the few instances where Santiago misses the boy whilst at sea. Those who attempted this task responded particularly well with sensitive analysis of their tremendous bond.

Middle range candidates had a clear understanding of the general themes in *The Old Man and the Sea* and were able to provide sufficient textual support for their answers. Some candidates were determined to include their thoughts on the novel generally and there was some bending of ideas to fit the task. Equally, a large number of candidates failed to go very far beyond the passage which was evidently self penalising.

Less successful responses frequently fell into a narrative which was seldom supported by explicit textual reference. Responses at this level were brief or extremely repetitive, failing to convince the Examiner that there was any genuine understanding of how the passage confirmed anything learned earlier or that Santiago had any more than a general, passing relationship with the sea and its creatures.

*Question 5: How far does this extract help you to understand the relationship between Okonkwo and his eldest son as related elsewhere in the novel?*

*and*

*Question 6: In Part One (Chapters 1-13), Achebe presents many characters apart from Okonkwo. How far does he succeed in bringing some of these characters to life for you?*

There were many outstanding responses to these tasks. The best examined in considerable detail the relationship between Okonkwo and Nwoye, represented so powerfully in the passage. Candidates drew upon the changing nature of their relationship, from Okonkwo's early concerns, hopes of a more 'manly' son under the influence of Ikemefuna, and finally to the 'shame' of a son under the influence of the white men's god. Equally, an understanding of their relationship from Nwoye's point of view revealed genuine engagement with the whole text through short, pertinent references which were invariably focused on the question. The less popular Task 6 produced a few excellent responses with candidates examining how rich the characters were in diversity and nature. Explicit references abounded with short pertinent use of quotations.

Middle range candidates had a genuine grasp of the characters and the relationship between Okonkwo and Nwoye but often failed to support their comments with pertinent reference and quotation. These very accessible tasks should have encouraged a very close study of the text where the characters are so clearly drawn for the reader.

Less successful responses struggled to find useful references in the extract and text. Such scripts were almost invariably marked by very superficial analysis that lost focus on both tasks. Unsupported narrative was very much in evidence in responses that were frequently very short.

*Question 7: What have been the most important things you have learnt - in or out of school or college?*

Examiners reported a much improved performance on this task when compared to previous years with many more candidates constructing engaged, analytical responses. The use of connectives to structure thought and expression, suggested in previous reports to centres, benefited candidates considerably in rationalising their considerations.

The responses of the best candidates were tremendously wide ranging, analytical and thought provoking, balancing the varied opportunities for learning in school or college with the infinite scope for learning in the outside world. Many good responses went on to examine how both are vital to the growth of personal enlightenment, presented in virtually flawless English with a mature range of vocabulary and expression. Such candidates invariably introduced their own viewpoints which they interwove with the stimulus material in a logical structure with a clearly identifiable effective opening and a strong personal summation. One particular candidate entertained her Examiner with a passing reference to lessons learned in school regarding the importance of a healthy diet,

“One of the most important lessons that my school has taught me is eating properly. Our Headmaster is particularly nutritious, encouraging us to stick to unmodified foodstuffs.”

It is nice to see that cannibalism is alive and kicking in the leafy suburbs of English towns and cities, as well as the selflessness that some of our colleagues display!

Responses from the middle and lower ranges, on the other hand, tended to rely heavily on the importance of a few very obvious things learned in school or at home, or relied heavily on the material provided. The least successful frequently fell into a discussion of where candidates learned most, school or home, rather than focusing upon important lessons learned, without any clear direction as to the point they were trying to make.

*Question 8: A recent newspaper article has claimed that in the age of information technology we no longer need schools. Write a letter to the newspaper arguing **your** point of view. Begin the letter ‘Dear Editor’.*

High level candidates revealed a confident, persuasive tone, frequently marked by a good use of rhetorical questions and a well-judged application of exclamation marks to enliven their work. Here responses were very convincing in their address to an audience who were drawn into the debate through their own experience of school. Such work was invariably influenced by cogent argument, almost all candidates supporting the view that schools offered students far more than any personal computer could. Thank goodness we are appreciated by our students, even if some are a little reluctant to admit it! Clearly the topic had engaged candidates, many of whom were outraged at the thought that their own children would be denied the schooling opportunities afforded to themselves.

The majority found an appropriate tone of address, a rational development of ideas and a powerful conclusion suitable for the purpose of the task.

Candidates at middle and lower levels were at ease with the subject matter of the task but frequently failed to convince examiners that their arguments had any persuasive merit. The instructions clearly asked for a targeted, personal response which should have opened up many opportunities for persuasion. However, at the lowest level, candidates merely saw the task as an

opportunity to embark on a rather superficial examination of how important discipline and paying attention are in school and that computers are for playing games on! Centres are advised to ensure that candidates are aware that the appropriate tone and form are key indicators to examiners with regard to the award of marks in such tasks.

This task enabled candidates to give a very clear indication of their abilities and examiners noted that a significant majority of responses revealed genuine engagement with the issues surrounding what a school may offer, in terms of learning for life, that information technology may never hope to match, cogently brought together with considerable maturity of thought and expression.



## 2433 Literary Heritage and Imaginative Writing

### General Comments

Examiners felt that most centres had judged accurately which tier would offer their candidates the best chance to demonstrate their full potential. Whereas the writing task is almost identical for both tiers, the Literature questions for the Foundation Tier do offer additional support to less secure candidates in the form of bullet points, in some of the Shakespeare questions, and through a simpler, more direct wording of the poetry questions to ensure that all candidates, including those with English as a second language, are in little doubt as to what is required.

Although Examiners reported that, overall, candidates displayed a better grasp of how to approach this paper than in previous years, timing is still a key issue: candidates who spend too long on the writing task may well be disappointed by their results as full credit cannot be given for incomplete answers to the Literary Heritage questions; the absence of one poem incurs a rubric penalty of 2 marks; a hurried Shakespeare response that has been unable to include a sufficient number of quotations or, at least, recognisably precise and detailed references to the text in support of points made, rarely achieves more than a Band 5 mark, regardless of other merits. Some candidates choose to solve the timing problem by tackling the Literature questions first. Nevertheless, no matter in which order the questions are tackled, all benefit immeasurably from careful planning and a direct, disciplined approach. There is no place for vague generalisations: these should never be confused with the thoughtful overview that immediately establishes the context and/or the thematic issues inherent in the task.

This year there were fewer examples of candidates misreading questions, although one candidate misinterpreted question 3b and wrote an empathic response in the character of the nurse instead of analysing her role in the play; empathic responses to Drama texts are set only in the 1901 English Literature Specification. Although poetry tends to produce the least successful responses, there was evidence that more candidates did sufficiently understand the poems this year to be able at least to begin to respond to the tasks set.

### 2433/01 Literary Heritage and Imaginative Writing (Foundation Tier)

#### General Comments

At Bands 4 and 5 there was evidence of some improved examination technique with a clear attempt to focus on the question set and, in response to the Literary Heritage, to use textual evidence to support points. However, rubric errors were frequent, with candidates either answering one or no questions in the Literary Heritage section or attempting more than one question in a section. In the poetry section, candidates often based their answer on one or three poems rather than the specified two. It was very rare that the imaginative writing was not tackled and candidates either ran out of time by writing narratives which were too long, or had not prepared the literary texts.

*Question 1: **Writing to EXPLORE, IMAGINE, ENTERTAIN.***

*Copy out the sentences below and then CONTINUE THE STORY, exploring the thoughts and feelings of the narrator.*

***Approaching the door, I told myself that this time it would be different. This time...***

This question established the focus for the writing as the thoughts and feelings of the narrator. For Bands 4 and 5 the situation and feelings need to be at least at times convincing and this was

achieved more readily by those who based their stories around situations which had an element of personal or indirect/second-hand experience such as job interviews, taking part in sports or drama, confronting bullies or friends/relatives with whom they had fallen out and parents being reunited with children. These situations enabled candidates to establish some rapport with the reader through expressing feelings of anxiety, fear, excitement and at times humour, whilst establishing some tension and anticipation. Less convincing were those narratives which moved quickly past any expression of feelings to develop a crime or haunted house scenario; these responses tended to become simple and often very lengthy narratives which lost structure and focus on the question. Many candidates wrote about abuse situations, usually of wives/girlfriends confronting husbands/boyfriends, or children confronting parents either at the time of the abuse or many years later. Characters experiencing alcohol or drugs problems were often built into such narratives and the stronger answers of this type were able to express thoughts and feelings in a very moving and convincing way, while less successful ones became very quickly full of violent action with little expression of feelings. Dialogue was often handled well in the Band 4 and 5 answers and such candidates were also able to set out and punctuate dialogue with some pleasing accuracy. Narrative standpoint was generally consistent with candidates clearly feeling comfortable with writing in the first person. There were some difficulties with tenses and many initially wobbled with the use of “would” in the opening sentences, moving on to “will” before re-establishing use of the immediate past tense. Candidates are advised to plan carefully before they start writing, aiming for quality rather than quantity; the instructions do make it clear that a complete narrative is not required and that they can end at any appropriate point such as a cliff hanger or definite stage in the narrative. If candidates focus on this instruction as they plan, they will be able to work more on choosing vocabulary and sentence structure for effect and remembering to paragraph their responses. Although some allowance is made for the fact that this is first draft writing, candidates are instructed to allow time to check and correct their work; only a low mark can be given for AO3(iii) where there is no variety in sentence structures and punctuation is minimal and uncertain. There must be evidence of the ability to use punctuation that recognises sentence boundaries, and to spell complex regular words accurately, apart from the occasional slip, in order to score a mark in Band 4.

## TEXTS FROM THE ENGLISH HERITAGE

### SHAKESPEARE

*Romeo and Juliet* proved overwhelmingly to be the popular choice of text and candidates showed that they could respond to the questions across all the bands. There was less evidence of understanding simply being based on the film, but lower band responses often relied on simple narration or assertions which were unsupported by direct textual evidence. Candidates are well advised to make use of the bullets which reinforce the key words.

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

*Question 2a. Write about **one** or **two** moments in Much Ado About Nothing which show you that Beatrice and Hero are two very different women.*

*In your answer you should write about:*

- *the ways Beatrice and Hero speak and behave*
- *what other characters say about them.*

*Question 2b. Write about **one** or **two** moments in Much Ado About Nothing where characters are tricked into believing something that is not true.*

*In your answer you should write about:*

- *the reasons why they are tricked*
- *how the characters are affected.*

There were very few answers to the questions on *Much Ado About Nothing* at Foundation Tier which is disappointing since responses at Band 4 and 5 on Higher Tier indicated that the play is accessible to candidates and that they enjoy the comedy and strong characters such as Beatrice. Those candidates who chose 2a were able to identify clear differences in the two characters, being able to refer to their views on men and willingness to obey them. They showed some sympathy for Hero but clearly responded well to Beatrice's humour and strength of character, supporting ideas at Bands 4 and 5 with straightforward quotations. The best answers showed some appreciation of context through comments on the expectations of women. In responding to question 2b, candidates tended to focus more on the first bullet point and what happens when characters are tricked; there was little comment on the ways in which characters are affected.

### **Romeo and Juliet**

*Question 3a. Write about how **one** or **two** moments in the play show you that Romeo and Juliet's love is bound to end in tragedy.*

*Question 3b. Why is the Nurse an important character in the play Romeo and Juliet?*

*In your answer you should write about:*

- *the importance of what she says and does*
- *the effect she has on the audience.*

Both questions proved to be equally popular and accessible to candidates, and it was pleasing to note an increased willingness to use quotations to support answers. The best answers to 3a showed an ability to link selected moments in some way to the play's main events and ending, candidates at Band 4 and 5 often choosing the Prologue with its indications of tragedy or referring to moments when either Romeo or Juliet show an awareness of their fate. Less successful answers focussed simply on the lovers' need to be together and therefore asserted that they were bound to kill themselves, or gave a predominantly narrative account of Juliet's decision to take the potion and subsequent events which led to the lovers' deaths. References to the feud tended to focus on the killing of Tybalt, but only to link this with Romeo's banishment. The character of the Nurse clearly proved memorable to candidates and they mainly focussed on her role as a substitute mother to Juliet and messenger/go-between for the lovers. They were able to provide straightforward and relevant quotations to support their points. There was a tendency to over-exaggerate her function, many asserting that their love would not have existed without her or that she encouraged Juliet to fall in love with Romeo. Band 4 and 5 answers often showed some appreciation of the comedy she brought to the play, but were not really clear as to how this was created. The second bullet point was often either ignored or elicited simple comments as to how the audience would feel towards the Nurse such as liking her for caring about Juliet or being angry when she betrayed her by advising her to marry Paris.

### **POETRY**

The three main strands examiners were looking for were: firstly a straightforward understanding of each poem; secondly a focus on, and understanding of, the question; thirdly the beginnings of an ability not only to identify key phrases and techniques, but to appreciate the effects. Candidates who gave a relatively full response to the poetry, within the time constraints of the paper, showed less of a tendency than in previous years to identify number of stanzas, rhyme schemes and various technical devices without any specific relevance to the question. However, many candidates still felt they had to translate quotations, particularly if they were answering on a pre-1900 section. It was clear that a few candidates this year were confused between the two war sections, discussing the poems relating to Question 4 (War pre-1900) in the context of trench warfare.

Question 4 SECTION C: War

How do poets use images from the natural world to show feelings about war, in **two** of the following poems?

Dobell *Tommy's Dead*  
Bronte *Song ('We know where deepest lies the snow')*  
Kipling *The Hyaenas*

There were very few responses to this section and it was clear that some were by default, with candidates believing they were responding to Section H (The 1914-1918 War) and attempting to make their knowledge of trench warfare relevant to these poems. In consequence, the level of understanding of these poems was limited with only a little sense of appreciation of the feelings about war conveyed in the poems. Candidates either wrote about the references to nature in the poem with quotations used to confirm factual information, or identified the sense that war was something to be feared or regretted without any explicit links to, or understanding of, the imagery.

Question 5 SECTION D: Town and Country

How do the poets use words and images to show strong feelings about places they have known, in **two** of the following poems?

Hardy *Beeny Cliff*  
Hopkins *Binsey Poplars*  
Yeats *The Lake Isle of Innisfree*

This section was the more popular of the pre-1900 poems and candidates were able to make comments at all band levels which indicated some understanding of the feelings the poets have about the places. The best answers on the Hardy poem were able to link his feelings with those for his late wife, although most were only able to identify either happy or sad feelings and became confused when trying to explain more complex emotions. Candidates did make some pleasing attempts to show how the descriptions of Beeny Cliff showed his feelings, with Band 4 and 5 answers starting to link these to a simple appreciation of techniques, such as jewel imagery, and language which evokes mood "laughed light-heartedly" and "cloud then cloaked us". The environmental issues behind Hopkins' poem enabled candidates to appreciate his feelings for the destruction of the trees and there was some commentary on language which showed his anger, particularly of techniques such as repetition and alliteration. Yeats' strong desire to go to Innisfree was understood but at a simple level, with many candidates mainly focussing on his desire for peace and the use of repetition in describing this. Some answers became more involved in debating how well he knew the place with literal responses to his references to such things as cabins and bee hives being used to support their ideas.

Question 6 SECTION G: How It Looks From Here

How do the poets use words and images to describe unpleasant or disturbing experiences, in **two** of the following poems?

Adcock *Things*  
Hill *The Hare*  
Paterson *Bedfellows*

There were very few responses to this section and candidates who did so were able only to make some very simple comments about the poets' feelings of fear or what they saw as confusion without any real grasp as to what caused these feelings or appreciation of the language being used to convey them. In response to the Adcock poem there was some comment made on the repetition of "worse" and, in Band 4 and 5 answers, awareness that her fears were those of the night. Hill's poem clearly caused much confusion with the powerful

imagery often being taken literally, but there was some simple understanding of the fear felt by the woman. Very few candidates used *Bedfellows* and it was evident that those who had did not understand the title which then impeded their ability to move beyond a simple expression of the writer's fear.

Question 7 SECTION H: The 1914-1918 War (ii)

*How do the poets use words and phrases to show that people can react to war in different ways, in two of the following poems?*

Sassoon *Lamentations*  
Letts *The Deserter*  
Sassoon *The Hero*

There was evidence of some real engagement with the chosen poems, supported by a simple grasp of the horrors of trench warfare, and a straightforward understanding of the feelings about war that the poets were conveying. In response to *Lamentations* there was some appreciation of the brother's grief even if the causes of it were not fully grasped with the phrase "gone west" causing some of the confusion. Comments on language focussed on the powerful verbs used to describe his feelings, but only a few answers at Band 4 and above referred to the callous view expressed in the final line and understood the irony of the use of "patriotic". Candidates understood the fear which drove the man in *The Deserter* to run away and often gave their personal response as to whether it was right to shoot him for doing so. Most responses were able to use some quotations to demonstrate this fear with some commenting on the description of him as a "frightened child" and seeing the effect of the repetition of "An English bullet" with Band 4 answers occasionally seeing the irony or additional horror of the reference to "English". Candidates often combined a discussion of this poem with *The Hero* linking them through the way in which both mothers were lied to about the circumstances of their son's death at war, and straightforward use of quotation was made to support this understanding. In writing about *The Hero* the poet's description of the reality of the son's reaction to war was often left out and therefore the opportunity to explore a different reaction to war from that of the mother. Occasionally, candidates simply took the title literally and believed that the soldier actually was a hero.

### **2433/02 Literary Heritage and Imaginative Writing (Higher Tier)**

Question 1. **Writing to EXPLORE, IMAGINE, ENTERTAIN.**

*Copy out the sentences below and then continue the story, exploring the thoughts and feelings of the narrator.*

***Approaching the door, I told myself that this time it would be different. This time...***

We were delighted to find that the writing task clearly engaged candidates' interest: the opening words led successfully on to some superb examples of controlled, sustained narrative, skilfully establishing links between past and current situations, and exploring the narrator's thoughts and feelings with considerable empathy. The use of rather melodramatic situations such as alcoholism, wife-beating, and vampire chasing, where the focus clearly became the often violent action rather than thoughts and feelings, rarely achieved better than a Band 5. However, other candidates, even with only modest technical skills, were often able to produce moving, poignant, or even highly entertaining accounts of scenarios gleaned from personal or close second hand experiences, such as confronting the Headmaster, facing up to bullies, chasing up long absent parents, even accepting treatment for anorexia, or braving a visit to the dentists. Candidates

should, however, guard against over-exaggeration to the point where credulity (e.g. with the dentist from hell, or the bodies in Bluebeard's cupboard) is stretched beyond tolerance. Many of the least successful responses seemed to have a storyline in mind already, as evident from the very weak link between the opening words and the continuation, the sometimes very abrupt change in narrative voice, or the remarkable similarities to tasks set on previous papers, including the waiting room scenario and the door opening on to haunted houses, Narnia-type worlds or even the Last Judgement.

Similarly, less successful responses lacked an explicit sense of purpose and direction, at best meandering towards a resolution, at far too great a length, where a shorter, more tightly controlled 'chapter' in the story would have been far more effective in maintaining the interest of the reader. In addition, narrative structure features heavily in the band criteria for AO3 ii: to demonstrate the skill required for Bands 2 and 1, candidates must be able to organise their material into effective, linked paragraphs; the failure to paragraph dialogue clearly signals at best a Band 5 response. In AO3 i, the judicious choice of vocabulary and other narrative devices for effect is a key feature; the stories that abounded in repetitive basic vocabulary and sentence structures betrayed lack of thought and care. Although we bear in mind that this is first draft writing, Examiners cannot ignore widespread error and carelessness. Correct punctuation is essential to facilitate clarity of communication on a first reading, in particular the use of helpful end-stopping. Far too many scripts lost dramatic effect, at times becoming very confusing when a series of sentences were strung together, relying at best on random use of commas for separation.

## TEXTS FROM THE ENGLISH LITERARY HERITAGE

### SHAKESPEARE

Whatever the text, or even the question, essentially we are looking for signs of the ability to produce a focused analytical rather than narrative response, exploring three to four points in detail, or a wider range slightly more superficially, and constantly using aptly selected quotation and/or precise, detailed reference to the text for support. The best answers should begin to offer some critical response to the language and/or dramatic devices where relevant to the question. Credit is always given for evidence of familiarity with the whole play rather than just key scenes, and an appreciation of the likely audience reaction to the play as performed on a stage.

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

*Question 2a. Explore some of the different ways in which Shakespeare presents women in Much Ado About Nothing.*

*Question 2b. Explore **two** moments in Much Ado About Nothing which show how deception can have very different consequences.*

In *Much Ado About Nothing*, both questions provided the opportunity to explore the wider issues underlying the plot, and elicited a range of responses. The key focus in 2a needed to be on the 'ways in which Shakespeare presents women'. Whereas a straightforward character study of Hero and Beatrice could, if developed in sufficient detail, achieve a Band 4 for straightforward understanding of the text and development of the response, the question wording invites candidates to explore *how* their characters are made clear and the significance of their presentation. Hence the more sophisticated responses compared how Beatrice is presented through her lively verbal exchanges with Benedick, whereas Hero says very little and is generally seen through the comments of others; Beatrice calls for action, Hero faints in distress; our sympathy for Hero is caused by her predicament and the cruel way others treat her rather than her personality. In addition the best answers assessed the presentation of these women in

the context of Shakespeare's time, and their contribution to the underlying ideas in the play relating to love, honour, and the nature of relationships.

*Question 2b* invited an explanation of the *different* consequences of deception, which allowed ample scope to analyse why certain characters are so easily deceived, the need for deception, the thematic significance, and the effect on the audience. Hence, some of the best responses questioned whether Claudio's relationship with Hero, broken and then restored by acts of deception, could bring a truly happy ending, or saw the irony in the deception required to make Beatrice and Benedick recognise the love that was so obvious to their friends, or saw the flaws in Leonato, Don Pedro, and indeed a society that could so readily judge Hero on the word of a renowned trouble-maker.

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

*Question 3a. Explore one or two moments in the play where Shakespeare makes you most powerfully aware that Romeo and Juliet's love will end in tragedy.*

*Question 3b. Explore the role of the Nurse in Romeo and Juliet?*

Where invited to choose 'moments', candidates are advised to ensure that their choice allows them to demonstrate an understanding of the relevant thematic issues and of the play as a whole. Those who chose extracts from The Prologue were in a position to assess the audience reaction to the solemn warnings, but needed to link this with reminders in the play of the strength of the feud, and/or the intervention of Fate at key points in the lovers' brief affair, as manifested through dreams, premonitions, ironic statements, Mercutio's curse, or the string of later coincidences, to be convincing. The least successful responses merely gave a narrative account of dramatic moments in the play such as Romeo and Juliet's first meeting, or the banishment of Romeo, using at best a simplistic form of logic to establish relevance to the question; some even focused on the tragic outcome itself in Act 5 instead of the events foreshadowing this.

The key word in *Question 3b* was 'role'. This encompasses not so much her character as her various functions within the play. Although some of her role was sufficiently present in a character study of the nurse by implication to achieve a possible Band 4, the best responses tended to analyse three or four main areas: her comic role, with examples, and how it affected the audience; her role in the plot as essential confidante and go-between, resulting in the secret marriage and wedding night; her role as an instrument of Fate, particularly as the catalyst that sent Juliet to Friar Lawrence for the potion; her contribution to the theme of love, her understanding contrasting so starkly with Juliet's idealism, and sharing something in common with the outlook of Mercutio. The least successful answers concentrated almost exclusively on her job as wet nurse, her fondness for Juliet, and possibly her fulsome lamentations at Juliet's 'death'.

### **POETRY**

On the whole, this was the section least well done, either through lack of time or perhaps suffering from lack of practice in revising a whole section of poetry for an examination in which there is a limited choice within the question. Where candidates were struggling to find much to say on two poems, there was no advantage in therefore attempting all three. As in the Shakespeare questions, we are looking for the ability to analyse rather than narrate, to explore rather than to translate, and to look at language, form and structure only in the context of the question, that is, how feelings/ attitudes are conveyed or experiences presented. It is more effective to identify these feelings before analysing how they are conveyed. Many responses to question 5 referred in only general terms to 'strong feelings' throughout. Again, three or four points fully made about each poem, with illustration and comment on how the language helps

produce these feelings, would be sufficient for Band 4 and above. Merely copying out several lines from each poem interspersed with translation or narration rather than comment is not a

helpful technique. Although there is no requirement to compare poems in this paper, some candidates found it easier to retain focus by structuring their answer as a comparison, with considerable success. However, those who therefore hunted for trivial or peripheral similarities, or made sweeping generalisations rather than closely analysing each text, were disadvantaged. We are not necessarily expecting equal treatment of both the chosen poems. Provided there is sufficient reference to the second to show understanding in terms of the question, we accept that some candidates may best be able to show signs of their full potential by devoting more attention to the poem which they find the more inspiring.

Question 4 SECTION C: War

Explore some of the ways in which poets use images from the natural world to express feelings about war, in **two** of the following poems:

Dobell *Tommy's Dead*  
Bronte *Song ('We know where deepest lies the snow')*  
Kipling *The Hyenas*

The least successful answers identified descriptions from the natural world, but failed to relate these to feelings about war. This was particularly true of *Song*, where the significance of even the analogy of the hare and the hounds was not understood in terms of warfare in some responses. The most confident analyses tended to be of *Tommy's Dead*, with secure understanding of the tone of the poem, and sufficient examples of the use of descriptive detail, alliteration and repetition to explain how the feelings of deep sadness and hopelessness are conveyed. Most answers could say something about the use of hyenas to express feelings of the wastefulness and loss of dignity and glory in war, but only the best went on to explore the philosophical implications of the poet's reflections on shame.

Question 5 SECTION D: Town and Country

Explore some of the ways in which poets use convey strong feelings about places they have known, in **two** of the following poems:

Hardy *Beeny Cliff*  
Hopkins *Binsey Poplars*  
Yeats *The Lake Isle of Innisfree*

The response to this question was largely encouraging, with many candidates clearly engaging with Hopkins's feelings of anger/distress/horror at the destruction of his "aspens dear" and exploring with confidence his use of repetition, internal rhyme, and harsh sounds to convey these feelings. The most successful responses could also compare the language used to describe the beauty of these trees. Similarly, most responses to *Beeny Cliff* could access Hardy's use of colour and memories of light-hearted times to express his love for the place, but only the best could fully understand the change of feeling later in the poem and precisely how his sense of loss was conveyed. Yeats, perhaps, presented the most difficulty in that few responses managed to advance beyond a narrative account of his wishes and perhaps a brief comment on his use of colour. Only the most successful analysed how he portrayed a personal relationship with nature, a determination to achieve his idyll, and his choice of simple detail, use of sounds and regular rhyme to enhance the longing for peace and beauty there compared to 'the pavements grey'.



Question 6 SECTION G: How It Looks From Here

Discuss some of the ways in which poets explore unpleasant or disturbing experiences, in **two** of the following poems:

Adcock	<i>Things</i>
Hill	<i>The Hare</i>
Paterson	<i>Bedfellows</i>

This proved to be the least popular section. Whereas most candidates were able to make some straightforward comments about the poet's feelings of fear, or what they saw as confusion, few had any real grasp as to what caused these feelings, or appreciation of how language and other devices were used to convey them. There was some awareness in *Things* that Adcock's fears were those of the night, and comment was made on the repetition of "worse", but few commented on the use of the emotive imagery of being hunted and held captive, or of the contrast between the comparatively light-hearted opening line and the use of 'icily' with the repetition of 'worse' to end on a very disturbing note. Although most responses recognised that Hill's *The Hare* conveyed feelings of mystery and fear, many took the powerful imagery literally. Very few commented on the judicious use of similes ('panic like trapped flies') or the use of contrast ('darkened...light' and 'silence...bell') to enhance the mythical qualities or recognised the nightmarish elements in 'panic' and 'wild cries'. The disturbing experience of lying every night in a dead man's bed in *Bedfellows* was at best partially understood; hence few responses were able to comment on how a sense of the unexpected/ uncertainty was conveyed through the use of half-rhyme ('hovers...flowers', 'rest...wrist'). Again, few detected a hint of the mysterious, even sinister reason why the 'last incumbent' was no longer there.

Question 7 SECTION H: The 1914-1918 War (ii)

Discuss some of the ways in which two of the following poems explore different reactions to war:

Sassoon	<i>Lamentations</i>
Letts	<i>The Deserter</i>
Sassoon	<i>The Hero</i>

This proved the most popular section and some strength of feeling was expressed in protest against the lack of sympathy towards deserters, the way the relatives were deceived about the way deserters died, and the official condemnation of the lack of patriotism displayed by the grieving soldier, even though the use of irony was only understood by the most successful responses. Although 'gone west' caused some confusion in *Lamentations*, most responses were able to comment on the effectiveness of the powerful verbs used to describe the brother's grief. Candidates empathised with the fear that drove the deserter to run away; the better responses were able to explore the emotive vocabulary, and some of the devices used to convey this, such as the internal rhyme ('throbbing and sobbing'), the personification of fear, and the repetition of 'wild', and the ominous repetition of 'An English bullet in his heart'. Many responses seized the opportunity to compare *The Hero* and *The Deserter* to explore the effects of viewing the same situation from different angles, the best looking closely at the different reactions of the 'Brother Officer', the mother, those who condemned Jack as 'useless swine', and Jack himself, as gleaned through a detailed analysis of the text (e.g. the mother's true feelings betrayed by 'quavered to a choke'). Weaker answers spoke in general terms about the feelings of the wastefulness/futility of war, which appeared to be gleaned from their general knowledge rather than an exploration of the text. Few looked at the significance of the titles, except some who failed to see the irony in *The Hero*. Many waxed eloquent on the plight of mothers and the morality of army policy/propaganda; sadly a more disciplined approach is required in an examination which allows barely 25 minutes in which to analyse two poems. Having produced an overview of the different reactions to war, responses should next look at some precise details within the text and comment on their effect in order to be awarded more than a Band 4 mark.

## 2434 Literary Heritage and Imaginative Writing (Coursework)

### General Comments

Once again it is pleasing to report the general hard work of both teachers and students in completing the coursework component. Generally schools have worked hard to apply the marking criteria consistently and teachers seem much more confident in finding an overall mark that reflects the overall standard of the work of their students. Fewer centres required changes to their marks and this demonstrates the confidence of teachers in applying the assessment criteria.

In terms of general administration centres had tried hard to meet deadlines, although some still struggled to get folders promptly to Moderators. In the majority of cases the coursework assessment forms were filled in accurately, and detailed teacher comments were helpful to Moderators in establishing what mark had been awarded. Most centres did show the breakdown of marks for the writing piece, and this made the moderation process much easier than in the past.

Some general points that centres will need to address in the future are as follows:

- **MS1's.** Many centres are still sending carbon copies of marks to Moderators that are illegible. These have to be returned to schools for marks to be indicated clearly, before the moderation process can begin. It would be helpful if centres checked the legibility of mark sheets before despatching them to Moderators.
- **Transfer of marks.** Again a number of Moderators commented that when they received their samples of coursework, a few centres had entered a mark on the MS1 different from the mark that had been awarded on the folder. This led to an increased number of CW Amend forms being sent to schools to change marks.
- **Deficiencies.** A number of centres were still not able to apply the correct mathematical formula to reduce the mark for deficient folders. Often there was no indication in the final mark on the folder as to how the deficiency had been calculated and Moderators could only guess at it.
- **Internal moderation.** Overall it was pleasing to report the vast majority of centres had carried out a rigorous internal moderation of marks, which was evident on the folders in a majority of cases. However, there were some worrying signs that not all English departments are being allowed time for thorough standardisation and this is evident in the number of centres where issues have arisen over the order of merit. The regulations in the English specification state that **“all staff preparing coursework meet to discuss and agree their marking of examples of work, and to ensure that their marking is to a common standard.....and the internal moderator must internally moderate the centre's folders. This should be done by comparing a sample of folders across the teaching sets and across the full range of marks awarded.”**

Where centres are having difficulties in being allowed time for internal moderation, perhaps they might use the above reference from the specification as an argument for teacher release when the moderation process is about to begin in the next session.

- **Plastic wallets.** Centres have been urged after every examination not to use wallets but rather use the cover sheets or tags to hold work together. Removing plastic wallets from every piece of work in a set of 20 folders is unnecessarily time consuming before moderation can even begin.

- **Help with work.** Some Moderators were concerned again this year at the similarities of some units of coursework written by different students. Clearly some candidates had presented as their own work notes or introductions from the internet often which had no bearing on the question, and made references which were clearly beyond their experience or even understanding. Clearly this is an issue that the school must resolve at internal moderation, and one which on which Moderators must not be expected to make a judgement. Centres must be rigorous in situations of possible internet plagiarism, particularly where plagiarism is evident in the work but the source has not been found and the candidate protests innocence. QCA have now issued very clear guidelines that specify that where the candidate has signed the authentication form and there is evidence or suspicion of plagiarism, then the **centre** should report this to the board. QCA have also provided some clear advice about how to identify plagiarised work.

### **AO 3.2 READING.**

AO 3.2 (iv) and (v) again proved to be the biggest differentiators. 3.2 (iv) *selecting material and making cross references*, was something only the most able candidates could do.

### **Response to Shakespeare.**

The majority of centres again chose *Romeo and Juliet* or *Macbeth*, but a few were more ambitious and chose *Much Ado*, *Hamlet* and even *Othello*.

Candidates seemed generally confident in understanding plot, themes and character, and the more able candidates were able to comment on language and its effect.

Centres generally demonstrated a better appreciation of 'Shakespeare's stagecraft' although in a minority of cases this sometimes led to a creative response about directing a specific scene with very little reference to the language or themes of the text. Again some centres were still interpreting 'stagecraft' to mean 'design some costumes' or 'tell me about the video' and were not enabling candidates to access the assessment criteria for the higher Bands. Centres are again reminded that 'theatricality' is an awareness of the whole play. However, candidates who submitted detailed responses to specific scenes, considering dramatic effects, were able to meet all the assessment objectives, as long as their understanding of the play as a whole was apparent.

Generally, an increased number of candidates demonstrated an understanding of language and form and the range of more challenging tasks which had been set helped to encourage candidates to move away from more narrative responses. A good example of this was the task on *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, "Lord what fools these mortals be". *Commenting on language and actions, how true is Puck's statement?* This led to some excellent responses on structure, comedy and use of contrast.

There was evidence of empathic responses from some candidates, the most popular being Romeo or Juliet's diary. Centres are again advised that more able candidates who attempt such tasks cannot meet all the assessment criteria necessary to achieve marks in the upper Bands. Where empathic tasks were set they were matched with generous marking which rewarded effort and presentational skills.

It was encouraging to see many examples of challenging and exciting tasks, and teachers are to be congratulated for the wide range of stimuli that they have clearly developed to make the coursework unit on Shakespeare as interesting and demanding as they have.

### **Response to Poetry.**

Despite observations from the last three exam sessions, candidates are still showing their expertise in identifying structural and presentational devices but cannot always then go on to show the effects of these upon the reader. Many candidates have lost sight of the real impact of a poem as they spot oxymorons, enjambement, 2 metaphors, a simile, ABAB rhyming patterns but without any real understanding of how these devices are effective.

Some centres are still attempting to compare and contrast too many poems leading to a superficial response, and this often detracts from the more succinct analysis of two or three poems. Again, the best responses were those that invited candidates to respond to poems through tasks that specifically addressed the criteria.

The most popular poems were again *The Charge of the Light Brigade* and *Dulce et Decorum est*, as well as comparing love poetry or Blake's *London* and Wordsworth's *Westminster Bridge*.

Generally, centres are to be congratulated for the stimulating and challenging responses that they have enabled candidates to achieve. Some of the best responses were from candidates who had clearly been able to comment critically on both structure and effect.

### **A03.3. Writing.**

Again it was encouraging to see a pleasing diversity of responses with some candidates clearly taking the opportunity to display their creative talent. Centres seem to have encouraged more candidates to be aware that quality of response is not always commensurate with the length of it. As a result there were fewer lengthy mini-novels and more succinct, sharper pieces. Task setting seemed much more secure this year and candidates responded well overall.

There were still a number of candidates who seemed to favour the very popular response to 'The Assassin'. This resource is readily available on *Teachit* and it is very difficult to award marks for AO3i and AO3ii as all the structure is outlined on the accompanying work sheet. Interestingly, *Teachit* now have included a rider with this piece which states, 'This structured task asks pupils to consider and create detailed characters and settings in the context of a given plot. It includes a check list for effective writing and a paragraph plan. Warning. Exam Boards have commented on the popularity of this task for coursework.'

This time there were fewer autobiographical pieces and also empathic responses to texts. This led to more candidates attempting tasks where they could demonstrate a response which could meet the whole range of assessment criteria.

Some centres are still favouring the 'crime thriller' piece of writing, which does not always enable candidates to demonstrate their full potential. Plots tend to be too long and difficult to control, as candidates describe an imaginary feature film, rather than concentrate on the shape and form of their writing.

Overall, centres are to be congratulated for their generally consistent application of the assessment criteria in relation to a range of interesting and demanding tasks. The coursework folders not only demonstrate the hard work and interest of a wide range of students but also the hard work of teachers who have maintained the importance and relevance of this option. The detailed annotated comments that are evident on folders, and the care and thought taken with stimulus material and support for students are evidence of the continued hard work of teachers in delivering and supporting the coursework option.

### **2435 Speaking and Listening (Coursework)**

This component continues to be successful, with centres maintaining or adopting good practice, with clear reports and judgements, firmly rooted in the assessment criteria; appropriate tasks being set and secure internal moderation procedures in place. Visits to centres have been profitable with centres approaching this requirement in a positive and professional manner working happily with the criteria and processes and acting upon the advice given.

However, there are some points to note, to sharpen good practice and be tighter, as regards the associated administration. The majority of centres met the coursework deadline date, but a number failed to send all the relevant paperwork and the centre chosen sample. Problems seemed to be worse this session with moderators having to do a great deal of chasing up of Centre Authentication Forms and Internal Standardisation Forms. Attention is therefore drawn to the administration guidance booklet sent to all centres to help with this aspect of the course.

Similarly the quality of the MS1 mark sheets seems to be an on-going problem, with the Moderator's copy often being difficult to read. Therefore it is important that Examination Officers or the designated person in charge of this aspect of administration, checks that the copy is clear and legible, before sending it off. This is obviously not a problem for centres that submit marks electronically and provide moderators with a print-out.

As regards the candidates' assessment records, it is important that all the necessary information is included and all relevant sections completed. Individual centres will have had very specific feedback, in the form of the Report to Centres, where there may have been shortcomings; however again a check before records are dispatched to moderators would help the whole process. The Internal Standardisation process could be extended to include record keeping; the writing of reports and how records are presented.

Some centres continue to submit only the details for the final three activities used for assessment, rather than using the records as just that, a record of major assessment opportunities throughout the course, and then selecting the final three to form the basis of the overall mark. Centres may mistakenly think that moderators require a 'best' or clean version of the records and that weaker, earlier assessments may be detrimental to their candidates. The opposite is in fact good practice; a moderator is able to gain a full picture of a candidate's work and progress and it helps in understanding the final mark awarded, where strengths and weaknesses have been balanced out.

This now leads on to task setting and Moderators being given an opportunity to comment on the appropriateness of tasks set, if records are full and descriptions clear. Centres have, however, continued to set tasks appropriate to their candidates, but it is worth emphasising that for candidates to achieve in the higher Bands, they must be exposed to more challenging material and assignments. Those always based on the familiar or immediate experience can be limiting for those aspiring to the higher Bands of achievement.

Some centres are still having problems with task setting in the drama-focused context. Centres need to be careful, perhaps particularly with activities based on a literary text, that candidates are in fact developing a role, rather than taking part in a group discussion per se. Centres should reassess their task setting in this context to check if the outcome is still valid. Drama-focused activities do not have to be based on a drama text; indeed, more scope may be granted if candidates are freed from such texts to create independent roles.

Internal standardisation procedures, as described and witnessed, continue to be in the majority of centres thorough and professional. However, for a small number of centres, attention is drawn to the two training and guidance videotapes, produced to help with the marking and task setting for this component; a third will be issued next academic year. But with all centres, as teachers have become more confident in the application of the assessment criteria, then task setting should become more of an issue for department discussion, and effective record keeping, as noted previously.

Finally, as always, teachers are to be congratulated for their continuing commitment in preparing candidates and assessing them in this component and for the objective, professional manner, in which once again, the whole assessment process has been approached.

**General Certificate of Secondary Education  
1900 English  
June 2006 Assessment Series**

**Unit Threshold Marks**

		<i>Unit</i>	<b>Maximum Mark</b>	<b>a*</b>	<b>a</b>	<b>b</b>	<b>c</b>	<b>d</b>	<b>e</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>g</b>	<b>u</b>
<b>2431/1</b>	Raw		63				50	42	35	28	21	0
	UMS		62				54	45	36	27	18	0
<b>2431/2</b>	Raw		90	75	69	62	55	47	43			0
	UMS		90	81	72	63	54	45	41			0
<b>2432/1</b>	Raw		63				55	47	39	31	23	0
	UMS		62				54	45	36	27	18	0
<b>2432/2</b>	Raw		90	77	70	62	55	45	40			0
	UMS		90	81	72	63	54	45	41			0
<b>2433/1</b>	Raw		41				32	26	21	16	11	0
	UMS		41				36	30	24	18	12	0
<b>2433/2</b>	Raw		60	52	46	39	33	27	24			0
	UMS		60	54	48	42	36	30	27			0
<b>2434</b>	Raw		40	37	33	28	23	17	12	7	2	0
	UMS		60	54	48	42	36	30	24	18	12	0
<b>2435</b>	Raw		40	37	33	27	21	16	11	7	3	0
	UMS		60	54	48	42	36	30	24	18	12	0

**Specification Aggregation Results**

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

	<b>Maximum Mark</b>	<b>A*</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>U</b>
<b>1900</b>	300	270	240	210	180	150	120	90	60	0

The cumulative percentage of candidates awarded each grade was as follows:

	<b>A*</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>U</b>	<b>Total No. of Cands</b>
	5.2	19.6	42.3	65.2	82.4	92.0	96.7	98.9	100	71622

71622 candidates were entered for aggregation this series

For a description of how UMS marks are calculated see;  
[www.ocr.org.uk/OCR/WebSite/docroot/understand/ums.jsp](http://www.ocr.org.uk/OCR/WebSite/docroot/understand/ums.jsp)

Statistics are correct at the time of publication.







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