

Report on the Units

January 2007

1900/MS/R/07J

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All Examiners are instructed that alternative correct answers and unexpected approaches in candidates' scripts must be given marks that fairly reflect the relevant knowledge and skills demonstrated.

The reports on the Examinations provide information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the syllabus content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

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**English 1900 January 2007
Report for Publication to Centres**

Whilst the majority of the candidates entered for the various units in January 2007 were repeating units from the summer, there was also a significant number of candidates who were completing aggregation for the examination as a whole. Examiners for all units report that, in general, 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 Summer 2007:

- Several Examiners commented on what appears to be a continuing decline in the standard of handwriting, with many scripts, if not being illegible, taking an inordinately long time to decode. The more Examiners have to concentrate on deciphering what is written, the greater the likelihood is they will not fully assimilate what is said – it is very much in the candidates' interests to make their answers as accessible as possible.
- Examiners expressed concern about the failure of many candidates at both tiers to handle key punctuation devices confidently; in particular, the use of the full stop to separate sentences and the use of the apostrophe to indicate omission.
- Many candidates fail to appreciate fully what is required in writing analytically about a text; simply identifying literary devices and explaining their use is unlikely to achieve marks higher than Band 5. Candidates are advised to look closely at the words used by writers and to consider their associations and appropriateness within their context.
- When responding to the extract question on *Opening Worlds*, Centres should note that Task 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. The constraints of time make a response to 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 tale.
- Centres are reminded that coursework tasks based on the *Teachit* material on 'The Assassin' short story make it very difficult to award marks for AO3i and AO3ii as all the structure is outlined on the accompanying work sheet. The *Teachit* website, in fact, contains a warning about this.

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

General Comments

Overall performance was generally in line with previous versions of this Paper, although Section B produced a rather larger proportion of less successful responses which relied heavily on the reading material.

It was clear that most candidates had been appropriately and adequately prepared to tackle the demands of the examination. Systematic preparation must have been the reason for the many plans which preceded full answers – not just for Section B, but also for Nos. 1(c) and 2. Fewer candidates than in previous sessions copied out whole chunks of text in their responses to Questions 1(a) and 1(b). If an answer, which, according to the rubric, should consist of single words or short phrases, is embedded and lost in a long sentence, it is difficult to give credit. Such long sentences contain both fact and opinion, and there is no evidence that the candidate understands the difference between them.

Because the writing task was more generally reflective than usual, the majority of average and lower range candidates took their ideas from the reading texts. The quality of the writing was characterised by an increasing competence in the handling of sentence structures, though punctuation of sentence divisions has still not been mastered by most.

Time management was handled not nearly so well as is usual in this Paper. Many candidates scored highly on 1(c), and it was obvious that they had spent a greater proportion of time on this Question, to the detriment of Question 2 answers. Such candidates either failed to attempt Section B or produced very brief responses indeed. Candidates will gain more marks by attempting all the Questions rather than by spending an excessive amount of time on Section A.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A

Reading: NON-FICTION

Question 1(a)

From paragraph two, give two words or phrases which express opinions about bad weather.

Most candidates knew that they had to pick out and write down specific words and phrases, and they succeeded in a correct selection.

Question 1(b)

From paragraph two, write down three facts about the wet August in East Anglia in 1912.

Answers were even better than in 1(a), because facts are easier to identify than opinions. Most scored full marks, as this is intended to be an easy lead-in to the Paper.

Question 1(c)

Re-read the rest of the passage, **from the start of paragraph three (line 9) to the end.**

- *What evidence does the writer give that climate change is happening in Britain?*
- *What does he think the consequences of climate change will be?*

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

As usual, the weaker candidates did not observe the rubric on the use of their own words and they did little more than copy from the text, for which they gained little credit. Candidates who write in very general terms, without relating their answer specifically to what is required, also received low marks on this Question. Indeed there were long, rambling answers which produced only a few acceptable points amid the generalisations. Almost nobody could resist writing out the entire list of sea creatures, which obviously appealed to them. Many wrote, 'The climate has increased', apparently without understanding that this does not mean 'The weather is getting more extreme' or 'The weather is getting hotter'.

However, most candidates scored well on this Question because their answers were well organised and showed understanding by re-phrasing points from the text. Most candidates are using their own words very well, and some went to extraordinary lengths to do this: 'They will have to use cooling equipment which is electric.' Indeed, the 'consequences' part of the Question was generally answered very well, probably because all the points were in one straightforward paragraph at the end of the passage, which was easy to understand and paraphrase – here 'own words' were of necessity not very different from the original text.

Reading: MEDIA TEXT

Question 2

How does the writer show his readers that global warming is a real threat?

In your answer you should comment on:

- *the **presentation** of the web page*
- *the **information** he gives about Greenland*
- *some of the **words** and **phrases** he uses.*

Candidates who focussed their attention equally on the three aspects of the task were the most successful. This, however, was rare. Most answers consisted of some comments on the presentation of the page and then some consideration of either the information the writer gave about Greenland or identification of some of the words and phrases he used. Few candidates appreciated the importance of thinking and writing analytically.

Many comments on presentation were superficial: 'There is a bold headline...There are pictures...Pictures are well placed...Paragraphs are used.' The presence of pictures was, of course, often mentioned, but few candidates commented on the differences between, and purposes of, the two illustrations. Only a small number of candidates seemed able to comment critically on the words and phrases they listed.

Indeed, there were too many instances of lists of quotations without any comment or with only very generalised comments such as 'strong' or 'negative' words.

Not only was there much generalisation on the language, but also, in this Paper, on the 'information' points. For example, candidates wrote: 'He gives facts and figures'; 'He makes it interesting and tells us a lot about Greenland'; 'He gets straight to the point.' Many wrote long introductions which did not contain anything which gained marks. Nearly everyone quoted the first sentence: 'First you hear a savage cracking sound...rolling crash of thunder.' They recognised it as effective, but few were able to comment meaningfully on it. In order to raise the standard of response to 'media language', it will be necessary to encourage candidates to give genuinely personal and specific responses to words and phrases rather than vague and generalised comments.

A very few candidates tried to evaluate the effectiveness of the web page, using critical comments such as 'The pictures are too small' or 'It is aimed at adults, so it is boring', but these were in a small minority. Obviously, such an approach is not necessary.

'Negative' and 'positive' are popular terms, but are rarely used to good or precise effect, and can be replaced by 'bad' and 'good'. Examples from Question 2 answers were: 'The negativity creates panic' and 'All of the sub-headings he has used are not positive ones but all negative ones.'

Section B

Writing to INFORM, EXPLAIN, DESCRIBE

Question 3

The future of our planet

Write the words of an article on this topic for a magazine aimed at students of your age.

In your article you should:

- ***describe*** some of the problems you think our planet faces
- ***explain*** what you think might happen in the future.

The quality of the answers was very wide in its range. Lower range candidates relied heavily on the printed passages for questions 1 and 2, and their scripts were also characterised by little awareness of audience, purpose and appropriate register (AO3i). Very few candidates went beyond global warming and pollution, some seemed to equate the two and wrote unsuccessfully about litter, smoking and waste paper bins. Many wrote about only this one problem, having ignored the first bullet of the Question. Some of the better candidates had a wider awareness of the impact of carbon emissions and the need to recycle, and also addressed other issues, including war, terrorism, crime, poverty and the finite nature of fossil fuels. However, most preferred to stay with global warming (with variant spellings), often running out of material and resorting to repetition rather than considering a different problem. The least successful substituted 'young people' for 'planet' and wrote anti-smoking pleas. Some candidates gave the impression that they thought they were supposed to write about global warming because that was the 'topic' of the examination. Previous reports on this Paper have stated that, although the Paper is loosely themed, there is no suggestion that Section B has to build on or use the

material from Section A. Question 3 is assessed independently of the reading material.

Most of the more successful candidates, however, did show a good sense of audience and adapted with precision and imagination the register of a magazine article: they had read the first sentence of the rubric. Often, though, the chatty style of the teenage magazine led them into 'speech' mode, or, more commonly, into a persuasive tone, with lots of exhortations to walk more, drive less, turn off lights and put litter into bins. They failed to observe the highlighted 'describe' and 'explain' in the Question. They also ignored the triplet printed in bold capitals on the Question paper, and adopted a style more appropriate to arguing and persuading.

The best responses came from candidates who were competent at building a cogent argument with suitable connectives and paragraphing. Indeed, candidates would do well to note that it is easy to gain AO3ii marks if they use paragraphs and indicate them clearly, and if answers have a beginning, a middle and an end, joined by a few appropriate connectives.

Increasing competence in the use of sentence structures by the more able candidates has already been remarked upon, but the use of punctuation remains a problem. The correct use of the apostrophe in 'its/it's' is very rare. There is the perennial confusion of 'there' and 'their', 'affect' and 'effect'. Upper and lower case letters change places at random. Many candidates feel that the ubiquitous '...and stuff' excuses them from any more meaningful thoughts or ideas, and one earnest soul insisted that we must save our planet and 'stop using greenhouses.'

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

General Comments

Examiners felt that the paper was of an appropriate level of difficulty and enabled candidates to perform as well as their abilities allowed. Most candidates attempted all three Questions although there was some evidence of inconsistent performance where candidates spent too much time responding to Question 1 and/or 2 and left themselves insufficient time to produce a sufficiently developed answer to Question 3.

There was also some concern expressed by Examiners that a number of candidates would have been more appropriately entered for the Foundation Tier paper and had significant difficulties in following the argument of passage one, exploring the way the reader was manipulated in passage two or describing an appropriate activity (let alone explaining its contribution to 'healthy living') for Question 3. In contrast to these, a significant number of candidates produced responses which were uniformly very good, and sometimes outstanding. As one Examiner commented, 'Their ability to write accurately and to sustain and control multiple complex sentences was far better than that of the average A Level candidate; their understanding of the Section A passage perfect and complete.' It was, indeed, a rewarding experience to read such responses.

The subject matter of the paper appealed to the whole range of candidates and most engaged enthusiastically with it; the most successful candidates responding perceptively to the implications of the two reading passages. Some candidates, who had either taken the examination in the Summer or who had prepared for this one by practising answers to the Summer paper, could not resist the temptation to reproduce their practice Task 3 response to the question from the previous paper; this was unfortunate as the two questions required different information to be given and the candidates concerned would almost certainly have achieved a higher mark had they read the wording of this session's Question more carefully. Having said this, however, a somewhat felicitous irony should be noticed in that many of the less successful candidates in the summer wrote responses for that paper's Question 3 which were, in fact, more appropriate to the January question; if they reproduced these essays for the January paper, they may, after all, have benefited from doing so! Nonetheless, candidates should be made aware as a general point that no matter how much one examination question may look like another, one year's paper is *never* last year's.

Several Examiners commented on what appears to be a continuing decline in the standard of handwriting, with many scripts, if not illegible, taking an inordinately long time to decode. The more Examiners have to concentrate on deciphering what is written, the greater the likelihood is they will not fully assimilate what is said – it is very much in the candidates' interests to make their answers as accessible as possible. Examiners also expressed concern about the increasing number of technical inaccuracies in candidates' written expression in their responses to both sections of the paper; although these errors are, at present, penalised only in the marking of the writing task it should be borne in mind that when errors of punctuation, spelling and grammar are rife in answers to the reading tasks, they inevitably lead to a blurring of communication which is reflected in the mark awarded.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A

Reading: NON-FICTION and MEDIA

Question 1

Rachael Oliveck was a vegetarian from 1989 to 2003

Outline concisely what her article says about:

- *The changes in peoples' attitudes to vegetarianism since 1989*
- *The changes in Rachael Oliveck's personal opinions about vegetarianism between 1989 and 2003*

Use your own words as far as possible.

To repeat what had been said in previous Reports to Centres: this task requires candidates to show an understanding of **what** the writer has to say about specific points; a successful response to the task, therefore, requires the ability to select relevant details and to reorder them to meet the demands of the question. It is also expected that information is conveyed in a concise way. **There is no requirement at all for the candidates to comment on the writer's technique, her use of language or the structure of her argument. Similarly, candidates are not required to import their own opinions, to include personal anecdotes or to frame their responses within wordy and irrelevant introductory and concluding paragraphs.**

Those who answered this Question most successfully demonstrated considerable skills in selecting, organising and re-phrasing in concise and fully relevant responses; unfortunately, such responses were in the minority. The responses of many candidates revealed an unclear awareness of what was expected of them and often treated the Question as if it were Task 2, including inappropriate commentary and attempted analysis. Possibly, as a result of this misguided approach, many candidates also failed to include more than a handful of the potential 24 points which could have been made in relation to the two aspects of the Question; although the number of points made is not in itself a criterion applied when marking the scripts, it is important that candidates identify clearly a good, balanced range of points to achieve marks in the top bands.

The most successful responses were characterised by an ability to reorder the original material to focus clearly on the question. Such responses revealed a full understanding of the changes in attitudes to vegetarianism between 1989 and 2003 and the writer's own change in her opinions during this period. Mid-range candidates tended to attempt to reorder but not always successfully, although they were able to identify changes in attitudes and opinion. Lower-range responses tended to lose the threads of the argument and to miss the nuances, such as 'Rachael doesn't think she will return to vegetarianism but she can't be sure' which became the firmer, 'she won't be a vegetarian again'. Such candidates also had difficulty in separating Rachael Oliveck's function as the writer from her personal role as a vegetarian. Thus her individual points were wrongly attributed to vegetarians or people in general who were also incorrectly differentiated. An example would be 'People's attitude to vegetarians changed because they missed the taste of meat'.

The following points are representative of the performance of candidates at the different levels:

Higher Level Responses

These were distinguished by consistent attempts to use own words with only occasional 'lifting' from the original passage. The best were clear-sighted and efficient in an attempt to be cogent; they maintained a consistent focus on the Question and conveyed a well-organised and complete overview of the material.

Middle Range Responses

These contained a fair range of points from both perspectives. They were often very close to the original text in expression and in chronological order, thus demonstrating some selection skills but less organisational ability. Points were sometimes not linked correctly and were sometimes wrongly attributed to People rather than Rachael herself. Some attempted to write concisely but answers were mostly undermined by repetition and excessive illustration, for example in the points relating to the range of vegetarian food now available.

Lower Range Responses

Responses at this level were either very short or contained considerable lifting from the text with little attempt to organise random selections and much personal opinion and commentary. There were, however, very few candidates whose responses did not reveal at least some understanding of the passage.

Question 2

Read Veggie Month from the Animal Aid Website material

*Explore how the **presentation, content and language** of the website try to convince people of the need to become vegetarian.*

At the top of the range, the best scripts were of a very high standard indeed – full, very perceptive and with a highly developed understanding of the writer's techniques of persuasion. Such responses are a pleasure to read and evoke a sense of awe that the writer can be so good at such a young age. Such candidates were able to identify structural contrasts in the text, the most obvious being the placement of the picture of the cow between two pictures of vegetarian dishes, and to go on to identify how this manipulates the reader; to identify the contrasting uses of language when describing the process of eating meat compared to the practice of vegetarianism and to pick up on the connotations of the slogan 'meat kills' and to link it with the 'speed kills' safety campaign!

Middle range responses were usually able to make something out of the content, especially the use of statistics; the use of an external authority and the step-by-step approach advised. Some of the better ones were even able to see the paradox inherent in a piece of writing which is doing everything possible to convince the reader of a particular course of action, while at the same time suggesting that isn't the case. They were often able to see that emotive language is used at various points in the passage, though less sure in explaining its effects, and that there was some use of less formal language. Some also duly noted the use of pronouns for

inclusion. A feature of scripts at this level was often the incomplete comment. For example, in referring to the figures of animals slaughtered annually, comments such as 'and this makes you feel sorry for the animals' were frequently made. However, such an explanation of the effects needs to be extended so that it is made relevant to the purpose of the passage by, for example, going on to suggest that this may be likely to make the reader consider vegetarianism as an option. Candidates need to be fully aware that if the Examiner can ask the question 'and so?' then the explanation is incomplete. A similar point relates to comments on the use of language points. The statement that emotive language is used, followed by a quotation and the assertion that this helps to persuade, merely begs the question 'how?'.

Several candidates interpreted the instruction to explore the writer's use of language as an injunction to write about the sentence structure of the passage and the writer's use of punctuation. Although such an approach may well be appropriate when responding to an 'A' Level English Language question it did not prove successful here, largely because candidates did no more than *describe* these features: correct identification of complex sentences and explanations that semi-colons are used to make the reader pause when reading will not, on their own, gain credit when explaining how language is used to persuade. Candidates would be advised to focus their comments on *how* the implications of the words used by writers help them to achieve their purpose.

Lower range responses often merely described parts of the content and asserted that it was persuasive. There was no evidence that candidates had not understood the text but there was some evidence that they did not fully understand the task. Such responses described only limited features of the presentation such as the use of bold type, pictures and colour, but assertions made were often unsupported by either example or explanation. A surprising number of candidates felt the need to offer personal opinions, maybe because they found the passage so engaging or related to subject matter with which they felt completely at ease, but it was sad that they wrote more about what they thought or felt than what they understood.

Section B

Writing to INFORM, EXPLAIN, DESCRIBE

Question 3

As a GCSE Speaking and Listening assignment, you have been asked to give an informative talk to your class about any activity which comes under the heading 'Healthy Living'.

*Write the words of your talk, in which you **describe** your chosen activity and **explain** its benefits to a healthy life-style.*

As mentioned earlier, some candidates failed to pay sufficient attention to the wording of the Question and produced responses which were not fully relevant to the task; there were others who, having read the word 'talk' in the title, failed to acknowledge the qualifying 'informative' and produced instead an exhortatory speech extolling the virtues of keeping fit but, in the course of doing so, produced pieces of writing which, in their tone, were not appropriate to the *inform, explain, describe* triplet. A significant number of candidates produced responses which failed to meet fully the requirements of the Question as, although they succeeded in identifying a particular activity, they gave insufficient description of it to convince their listeners that it would be beneficial to a healthy lifestyle. The best responses

came from those who gave a detailed explanation of the qualities of a particular physical activity (dancing, swimming, yoga); those who chose to write about healthy eating as an activity were on somewhat more uncertain ground, and although the Examiner who marked the script expressed some sympathy with the candidate who chose to recommend walking to the pub as a benefit to health, it was not possible to reward the argument very highly!

The following are more detailed comments on the features of scripts at the different levels of achievement:

Higher Range Responses

In scripts at this level, the standard of writing was almost universally high. Use of the specified triplet and genre were thoroughly successful, and responses were crafted and developed with consummate style and ease, demonstrating complete control of the material. Vocabulary was very wide and precisely and aptly used. Most scripts contained a wide variety of rigidly-controlled complex sentences, and many showed the ability to vary structures for effect. Technically, a large number were virtually flawless. The only real weakness was that a few candidates at the bottom end of this ability range paragraphed with less certainty. The main problem faced by Examiners was which mark of 18-20 candidates should be awarded for AO3 (i) and (ii), and which of 9-10 for AO3 (iii). The general standard was superb, the writing a pleasure to read.

Middle and Lower Range Responses

Scripts in these ranges were characterised by inconsistent focus on the audience, with candidates usually starting in the appropriate register (with references to fellow classmates or some such) but then drifting into a general exposition unrelated to anyone in particular and without specific oral register.

Many were able to adopt an appropriate format for the introductory and concluding statements, for example, 'Hello and good morning' and 'Thank you for listening. I hope you enjoyed my talk' but some were undermined by incorrect separation of salutation and purpose, such as 'I am going to talk to you about...' without a new paragraph, or 'My name is...' when this would already be known by the target audience. Conclusions did not always include a round-off statement, thus undermining the use of genre, but when they did *thank you* was often run together incorrectly.

The tone of address was also inconsistent. Some overdid the jocular and bonhomie of the teen-talk style (as in the over-used 'Fun activity') forfeiting the possibility of extended writing, with over-use of slang, contractions and other colloquial expressions. Examiners commented on an increase in text language and spelling. Candidates should be warned that writing in a wholly colloquial style will almost certainly limit their ability to communicate clearly.

A wide range of activities was chosen. Swimming was possibly the most popular, but football, running, hockey, cycling, aerobics, yoga and climbing also featured. A surprisingly popular choice was walking – not as in serious cross-country walking, but as in simply walking to school or to the shops; indeed, shopping itself was proposed as a suitable activity by one candidate whose tongue appeared to be firmly in her cheek.

One of the most common limitations of scripts at this level was a failure to describe the chosen activity in any real detail. Candidates seemed anxious to move on to the perceived benefits at the expense of explanation. At the lower end of the scale, answers were sometimes either short or long and rambling, with little control over development. There was also a growing tendency amongst a number of candidates in this range to include bulleted or numbered lists. They should be aware of the importance of writing in continuous prose.

Examiners expressed concern at what they felt to be a continuing decline in technical accuracy. This manifested itself, not just in incorrect spelling and punctuation (one Examiner commented that the apostrophe of omission is now very rare), but also in the increasingly frequent use of the lower case *i* and the use of capital letters in the middle of sentences for randomly chosen words. In particular, the use of full stops to demarcate sentences was generally unreliable and internal sentence punctuation was frequently incorrectly used (or, more frequently, not used when it should have been).

It would be possible to go on at considerable length, detailing examples of the technical limitations revealed by candidates' scripts but this is likely to be something about which Centres are aware. Some assessment of Functional Skills will be a feature of the new GCSE English Specification and both Teachers and Examiners must work at finding ways of ensuring that candidates achieve an acceptable level in this important aspect of the use of English.

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

General Comments

The paper worked well across the relevant ability range, allowing those candidates in the lowest range to achieve something, and several candidates to excel and achieve above band 4. Very few candidates achieved less than Band 8. Only a small number of candidates appeared to have been inappropriately entered for this Tier. In fact, there is increasing evidence that candidates re-sitting a summer Grade D or below from the Higher Tier do well with the Foundation Tier in January. The majority of candidates answered on *Opening Worlds*.

Some Examiners reported that many candidates' writing skills were better than their reading skills. This may suggest that (for, no doubt, a whole host of reasons) knowledge of the chosen text was insecure. In particular, many candidates showed obvious enjoyment of the paper, especially when given the chance to 'have their say' on modern youth in Question 8.

Examiners reported proportionally fewer rubric errors than previously. Correct syntax and accurate sentence structure remain a major problem for many otherwise quite capable candidates in this Tier.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A: READING

Question 1

The passage is the inquisition of Sidda by the inspector from *Leela's Friend*.
How does the writer here and in one other story from the list above show a character being treated unkindly?

In contrast to the summer, this was the most popular and, usually, the best answered question. *The Red Ball* or *The Pieces of Silver* were the main choices for the second story and these would appear to be two of the more accessible stories for this Tier. Strong answers put the passage into the context of the story, comparing Sidda's kindness to Leela with some well differentiated unkindnesses of the three adults. Almost all made the less telling point about the inspector's alleged unkindness to Leela in the passage given. There were well-made points on unkindness in the other two stories: Chase's inhumanity in *The Pieces of Silver* drew much effective commentary as well as the failure of Clement's parents to support him. Much the best focus on *The Red Ball* was on the words and deeds of Bolan's father, who in the early and central stages of the story is unkindness personified. Less effective were comments on the behaviour of the other boys in the opening scene of the story which focuses on Bolan and his feelings rather than (wholly) on his reaction to them.

Attempts to write about Savushkin in *The Winter Oak* were less successful and those on Cathy in *The Young Couple* were even more limited. Some candidates had more success in writing about Ravi at the end of *Games at Twilight* indicating that, even with the short stories, the judicious selection of particular scenes/episodes can be successful.

Question 2

How do the writers of two of the stories from the list above show how plans can sometimes succeed and sometimes fail?

Fewer candidates answered this Question than the first Question: and many fewer than those who had chosen the equivalent question in June. Those who did were generally successful. Candidates enjoyed writing about the way Evelina guides Clement's response to his pecuniary needs in *The Pieces of Silver* in the light of their parent's refusal to pay up the threepence. The outcomes of Bolan's taking his parents' savings were similarly popular and were analysed effectively. There were some more successful responses to *The Young Couple* than in Question 1, with some successful writing on the failure of Cathy and Naraian's youthful idealism turning to dust and ashes. Some candidates enjoyed writing about the lamentable failure of Ravi's plans to win the game of hide and seek in *Games at Twilight*.

Question 3

The passage is from the early part of the Old Man's voyage not long after the marlin has taken the bait.

How does the writer show the importance of the Old Man's skills as a fisherman here and in the rest of the novel?

The importance of the Old Man's fishing skills is that they enable him to hook the marlin, catch it, strap it to the side of the skiff and attempt to sail it back to Havana. They are also important because they enable him to survive the repeated attacks of the sharks. There are numerous examples of Hemingway's meticulous and authentic descriptions of them. They are the building blocks of the story.

Unfortunately, however, few candidates (of the relatively few who answered on this text) went outside the passage: this was a shame, because in the immediately preceding pages there are some choice examples of Santiago's skills. Better answers at least gave a careful analysis of all that is in the passage and made mention of other moments in the story which were relevant. Disappointingly, less successful responses wrote a little on the passage and either stopped or went into "one that I prepared previously" mode and went off task.

Question 4

How do the Old Man's thoughts of his past help you to understand why it is so important to him to catch the marlin?

In your answer you should write about:

- *his success at arm wrestling*
- *his love of baseball*

Again, the response to this was disappointing. Candidates who chose the Question could usually do little more than describe the given episodes in the story, and struggled to make sense of their wider importance; namely that after his conspicuous success at arm wrestling he decides to stop, so that he can concentrate on his fishing, because "he decided that he could beat anyone if he wanted to enough." Fishing, and this fish which becomes an emblem of ALL fish, is not, therefore, a parallel challenge but a superior one. His close association with "the great Di Maggio" starts with his identification with the latter's father, who (it is

alleged) was a fisherman, and becomes subsumed in the sense of an injured/failed hero reclaiming his rightfully successful, heroic status.

As opposed to Question 3 there was more evidence that candidates could go beyond what was given and there were references to his relationship with Manolin, with his wife and with the younger fisherman. Few, however, were developed in any detail.

Question 5

The passage is from the climactic conclusion of the novel: Okonkwo's beheading of the court messenger in the penultimate chapter.

Show how the writer presents Okonkwo as a violent man here and in one or two other moments in the novel.

Few candidates answered on this text but the few who did wrote more effectively than those who answered on Hemingway. This Question appeals both to the candidate who has an overall knowledge of the book but also to those whose knowledge is more episodic. Hence there were well explained references to Ikemefuna, to the scene which predicates Okonkwo's exile, to Ekwefi and Nwoye and so on. Some explored the reasons for his violence, namely the central obsession of Okonkwo with not appearing weak as his father had done and were well rewarded for doing so.

Question 6

How does the arrival of the white men affect life in Umuofia?

Things fall apart and the culture presented in Part One of the novel disintegrates.

There were even fewer answers to this Question than to Question 5 but most showed a fair understanding of the parts of the novel selected. Most answers focussed on the effects of the missionaries and the slow conversion of the Ibo to Christianity, with the transition of Nwoye to Isaac as the prime example. There were some references to Enoch's unmasking of the *egwugwu* but with little sense of the episode's wider significance. Fewer concentrated on the District Commissioner and his bureaucracy and none on any other aspect, for example, the increasingly unveiled sense of physical violence.

Section B

In this section, it was clear that candidates found the slimmed down prompt material easier to assimilate than previously and, generally, better use was made of it.

Question 7

Writing to ANALYSE, REVIEW, COMMENT

Write about what makes you the person you are.

This was widely abbreviated to the neat "what makes me me?" It proved to be a successful prompt because few candidates strayed off task or out of format and almost all candidates produced very effective responses which featured an admirable degree of consistency. It produced, unusually, the more successful responses of the two Questions in this section.

Question 8

Writing to ARGUE, PERSUADE, ADVISE

Your local newspaper has published an article saying that young people only care about themselves.

Write a letter arguing your point of view.

Answers covered the full range of bands and marks. In the lower ranges some candidates mistook hectoring, insulting and threatening for persuasion and argument but in an obviously enjoyable and sometimes humorous way. The most successful responses made pertinent and detailed use of well-selected examples as well as a wide variety of rhetorical devices to produce effective work. Many simply argued the case for young people; others agreed with the "article." Some saw both sides of the argument and this was a perfectly acceptable approach. Some weaker responses were very generalised and rather bland, which limited their persuasive appeal.

In terms of what is stated in the band descriptors, spelling in all but a few cases was satisfactory. What was unsatisfactory is the increasingly widespread inability of otherwise competent candidates to write sentences and to use correct syntax. Some candidates use inappropriate vocabulary in what are reasonably formal tasks.

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

General Comments

Examiners reported that the performance of candidates in this examination was generally good. The entry consisted principally of centres familiar to OCR who are using the flexibility of entry, in terms of Tier and time, to their advantage. Certainly evidence from Examiners indicated that candidates had been thoroughly prepared and coped 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 reported that virtually all candidates made good use of their time in dealing with their three chosen tasks.

The vast majority of centres had decided to use the *Opening Worlds* anthology to prepare candidates for this examination. Although this involved working on two stories, responses revealed a genuine grasp of the writers' skill in their portrayal of the impact of a place upon an individual and the relationship between adults and children. Once again, 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 make a response to 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 tale. Question 2 proved equally popular, perhaps because the candidates were given the opportunity to select texts that they had personally enjoyed, revealing a genuine understanding of the relationship between adults and children. Similarly, good answers came from candidates who attempted Question 1 where they were able to draw upon the suffocating effect of her life in India upon Cathy, so skilfully articulated by the writer, as well as selecting a character from a second story where place had clearly impacted upon the individual. Indeed, all six tales were successfully used in responses to this Question.

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 most popular, although the nature of both tasks encouraged the vast majority of candidates to respond with insight and understanding.

Examiners were pleased to note that *Things Fall Apart* had been chosen by a significant number of centres for study. Question 6 was by far the more popular as it enabled candidates to focus on the central character, Okonkwo. However, those who attempted Question 5 were rewarded with the opportunity to analyse closely a specific extract that clearly had significance for the whole 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.

Although Section A produced many worthy responses, Examiners did note a rather worrying tendency to follow a strict formulaic method of analysis that was not appropriate to the requirements of questions at GCSE level. Of course, it is entirely

appropriate for candidates to make points, provide evidence and offer further explanation, but Centres would be advised to note that long tracts of discussion regarding the effects of the writers' words upon audience, followed by detailed examination of what the reader consequently feels, is really suited more to the style of questions at Key Stage 3 than here.

The performance of candidates on Questions 7 and 8 was extremely good. The opportunity to write a speech in which they argued a point of view regarding the proposal that 'Zoos are of benefit both to animals and to people' produced animated responses, with candidates split very evenly in their opinions. The opportunity to consider the relationship between human beings and animals produced many engaging responses in which candidates drew upon personal experience, as well as that of a more universal nature. Certainly, the issue was one that was particularly familiar to them, giving candidates considerable material for discussion regarding their perceptions of our relationship with animals.

There was some evidence that candidates had been entered for the wrong tier of the examination for this session. 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

Section A: READING

Question 1

*How do the writers capture the impact of a place upon an individual, here and in **one other** story from the list above?*

and

Question 2

*How do the writers portray the relationship between adults and children in **two** of the stories in the list above?*

Candidates who produced the best responses 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 impact of place upon the individual and the powerful portrayal of the relationship between adults and children, supported by brief, appropriate references. Indeed, Examiners felt that a tight focus on the passage in Task 1 produced many excellent responses without the candidate having to go beyond the confines of the passage before moving on to their second choice. They certainly grasped the writer's fine portrayal of Cathy, a character trapped by the suffocating confines of her in-laws' house as well as the cultural expectations imposed upon her by place and people, with candidates drawing heavily on the writer's powerful symbolism. Task 2 enabled candidates to spend their time very profitably in responses that revealed genuine analysis of the relationship between adults and children. Certainly the very open nature of the task encouraged an examination of some of the candidates' favourite individuals.

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 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 the 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 a few candidates were struggling under the misconception that they would have time to re-read the full 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 is 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 candidates did not select stories for analysis outside the six identified at the top of the Task 1/Task 2 page. Centres are advised that such responses would inevitably be self-penalising and that for future examinations candidates *must* respond to questions using the specified stories for the paper.

Question 3

What do we learn about Santiago from his thoughts and his conversations with himself, here and elsewhere in the novel?

and

Question 4

How is Santiago's view that the sea is 'something that gave or withheld great favours' developed in the novel?

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 Task 4 were detailed and perceptive, particularly in dealing with the complex relationship between Santiago and the sea, citing its potential for great generosity and great cruelty, the "fishless desert" that could still bless you with "big ones every day for three weeks," Santiago's existence set amidst a benign, yet unforgiving force of nature, the sea. Task 3 proved more popular, with candidates successfully focussing in on the stream of words and thoughts that capture Santiago's optimism regarding the landing of the fish in the passage, combining this

with a thoughtful examination of the words and thoughts that sustain him in his times of great solitude at sea.

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. Conversely, a small number of candidates focused almost entirely on the rest of the novel to the exclusion of so much relevant detail in the passage.

Weaker candidates 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 Santiago from his thoughts and conversations with himself, or indeed the sea's potential to give or withhold great favours.

Question 5

How does the writer explore the relationship between the people of Umuofia and nature, here and elsewhere in the novel?

and

Question 6

How does Achebe present the decline of Okonkwo?

There were many excellent responses to these tasks. The best explored Okonkwo's fall from grace in considerable detail, perceiving that the seeds of his decline were sown from the very outset of the novel in his fear and brutality, traits that had ironically helped him to become a commanding presence in village life. Candidates also cited the irony in the fact that a man who had been so controlling should mark his public decline in the accidental shooting of Ezeudu's son. Here there was a genuine engagement with the text through short, pertinent references which were invariably focused on the Question. The less popular Task 5 produced some good responses with candidates examining how the people of Umuofia embraced the power of nature in both their physical and spiritual existence. Explicit references abounded with short pertinent use of quotations.

Middle range candidates had a genuine grasp of the themes in this novel 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 and their lives are so clearly drawn for the reader.

Candidates who produced the least successful responses struggled to find useful references in the extract and text. Their scripts were almost invariably marked by superficial analysis that lost focus of both tasks. Unsupported narrative was much in evidence in responses that were frequently very short.

Section B

Question 7

Writing to ANALYSE, REVIEW, COMMENT

Comment on the relationship between human beings and animals.

The responses of the best candidates were tremendously wide-ranging, analytical and thought provoking. Many good responses went on to examine how enormous was the impact of humans upon the lives of animals, both positively and negatively, drawing upon the invitation in the task to go beyond the merely personal, presenting their work in virtually flawless English with a mature range of vocabulary and expression. Such candidates invariably introduced a variety of 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.

There were many commendable responses to this task in this session with candidates effectively analysing our relationship with animals, commenting powerfully on our capacity for understanding the needs of animals whilst at the same time being able to deny them the most basic of rights. This was clearly a topic which touched the lives of candidates.

Candidates from the middle and lower ranges, on the other hand, tended to offer a very superficial examination of our relationship with animals which relied heavily on the material provided. Many answers in this range lacked structure. A significant number of candidates appeared to lack knowledge of how to construct an analytical response. Consequently, there was considerable repetition of a few simple points. Such candidates would clearly benefit from help with connectives to rationalise their considerations.

Question 8

Writing to ARGUE, PERSUADE, ADVISE

'Zoos are of benefit both to animals and to people.'

Write the words of a speech to your class arguing your point of view.

High level candidates revealed a confident, persuasive tone, frequently marked by a confident use of rhetorical questions and a well-judged application of punctuation marks to enliven their work. Here responses were very convincing in their address to an audience who were skilfully drawn into the debate. Such work was invariably influenced by cogent argument either for or against the benefits of zoos to both animals and humans, and frequently examined the importance of zoos in raising public awareness on a whole range of conservation issues, or attacked them as no more than heartless commercial enterprises with no interest whatsoever in the lives of the animals they ruined. Clearly the topic had engaged candidates; indeed one gave a lively example of engaging her audience: 'Cow! Now that I have your attention, do you really feel that a zoo is the best way forward?' 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 an address to a receptive

audience which should have opened up many opportunities for persuasion. However, at the lowest level, candidates merely saw the task as an opportunity to list the advantages and/or disadvantages of zoos with little attempt to persuade the intended audience. This year's task allowed candidates to argue both for and against the statement in the task. We hope to make this a feature of future tasks in this triplet, but advise candidates to strive to follow a line in logical, persuasive argument that does not confuse the intended audience as to their actual point of view.

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 the supposed benefits of zoos both to humans and animals, together with considerable maturity of thought and expression.

Unit 2433/01 Literary Heritage and Imaginative Writing (Foundation Tier)
Unit 2433/02 Literary Heritage and Imaginative Writing (Higher Tier)

General Comments

Examiners encountered the full range of ability, including some scripts of exceptional quality. Evidence suggests that candidates were largely entered for the correct tier with most Foundation Tier answers reflecting Band 5 qualities and below, and most Higher Tier reflecting Band 5 and above, but there were a number of Band 6, even Band 7 answers in the Higher Tier. It would appear that these were mainly due to an inadequate grasp of examination techniques rather than a lack of understanding of the literary texts. Success in these papers depends on a disciplined approach that ensures a wise allocation of time and a strict consistent focus on the question.

Section A: Writing

Question 1

Writing to EXPLORE, IMAGINE, ENTERTAIN

Copy out the sentences below, and then continue the story, building up a strong sense of atmosphere or tension.

Higher Tier

Appearances can be so deceptive. Everything seemed...

Foundation Tier

So far, everything appeared to be going according to plan. There was only one dark cloud on the horizon.

In assessing narrative skills across both tiers, Examiners are essentially looking for the ability to organise and structure ideas into a coherent piece of writing that communicates clearly and is convincing and controlled in its development of a chosen genre. Although the creation of a sense of mystery and the build-up of suspense can be the means of engaging or entertaining the reader, the effectiveness is marred if the result is confusing. Some plots proved too complex, flashbacks too bewildering, or the necessary clues at convenient stages were omitted so that the reader could make no sense of what was actually happening in places, even sometimes throughout the whole piece. In developing a suitable mood or atmosphere, continuations that ventured yet again into haunted houses, ghoulish vampires, and alien invasions were rarely convincing. Similarly, those who ignored atmosphere to concentrate on an action-packed plot, complete with superman feats, not only failed to signal an appropriate genre but also often lost all credibility.

The most successful responses tended to be those who developed the situation in terms of relationships going wrong through initial misconceptions, or who wrote empathically' for example, about a First World War situation in the trenches. Appropriate 'atmosphere' could range from comic/ entertaining, to sad/moving or horrifying/thought-provoking, but it needed to be sustained throughout. Sadly, some of the least successful responses appeared to be prepared essays that bore little or no relationship to the opening sentence given. Few took advantage of the opportunity to treat the 'dark cloud' metaphorically, and many ignored the implications of 'so far', and interpreted 'one dark cloud' as being of very little

significance. Many, however, successfully used the opportunity to create atmosphere and tension in the scenario of an approaching storm or hurricane.

The least successful responses lacked overall control, often becoming too chatty, rambling, or over-reliant on dialogue. Technically, this resulted in erratic or non-existent paragraphing, even where there were constant changes of speakers, and a failure to recognise, let alone punctuate, sentence endings correctly. Other weaknesses included too little development (under 200 words) to demonstrate the ability to sustain an appropriate mood, no sense of direction so that the ending appeared too abrupt or contradictory to what had gone before or, conversely, going on to such a length that the quality showed a marked deterioration. Those who produced 4 - 5 sides, ignoring the recommendation to work on only a section or mini chapter of a story (2-3 sides), not only succeeded in weakening the good impression created by their best sections of writing, but also left themselves seriously short of time to devote to the literature questions. Many such scripts had to leave out one question altogether, and several produced short, superficial responses, or tackled only one poem.

Section B: Reading

SHAKESPEARE.

In both tiers, most candidates were able to engage with the question, some with pleasing enthusiasm, and gave evidence of some thought and planning. Many, however, wasted valuable time explaining laboriously in a lengthy first paragraph what they were intending to do, then repeating this in similar form as a conclusion, without developing the middle section in any real detail. Others, similarly, under-achieved through adopting a wide-sweeping generalised approach, with little attempt to support their ideas with some detailed reference to the text. While background information on Shakespeare's ideas and beliefs, his time, and audience expectations can be invaluable in enabling the candidate to reach a more perceptive understanding of the play, candidates cannot afford to produce whole paragraphs on this instead of focusing immediately on the demands of the question.

Much Ado About Nothing:

There were no answers on this text from the Foundation Tier, and only one example of a candidate mistakenly trying to adapt a question to fit the wrong play, *Romeo and Juliet*. Most Higher Tier candidates showed an impressive knowledge of the play, and were well-trained to support their answer with regular and apt choice of quotation.

Question 2a

Higher Tier

'A tragic heroine'

'A weak woman with no mind of her own'

What is **your** view of Hero and her role in the play *Much Ado About Nothing*?

The best answers produced a fairly balanced view, indicating that although, as expected of women in that society, Hero said and did very little to promote or even defend herself, her situation was tragic and unwarranted. The best answers were able to analyse her role thematically and/or in terms of the dramatic effect on the audience. Less successful answers concentrated on what happened to her rather than analysing her role.

Question 2b

Higher Tier

*Explore the way in which conflict between any **two** characters is presented in the play *Much Ado About Nothing*.*

Most answers focussed on Beatrice and Benedick, a few on Claudio and Hero. Most commented on the dramatic or comic effects, some with pleasing attention to detail in the verbal exchanges in the 'merry war', and the language used by Claudio to insult Hero, but few extended their exploration to show perceptive understanding of the thematic significance of these conflicts.

Romeo and Juliet

Question 3a

Higher Tier

*Explore the role of Friar Lawrence in *Romeo and Juliet*.*

Question 3a

Foundation Tier

*Why is Friar Lawrence an important character in the play *Romeo and Juliet*?*

In your answer you should write about:

- *the importance of what he does and says*
- *the effect he has on the outcome of the play*

Most centres had studied this play and the majority of candidates, regardless of tier, chose the question on Friar Lawrence, although many directed their response into an assessment of his share of the blame for the tragic outcome, rather than looking at his role in its entirety. The least successful answers tended to give a narrative account of every scene in which he featured, forgetting the need to analyse his importance or role. The best saw him in the context of the lovers' Fate, as outlined in the Prologue, a well-intentioned, unwitting instrument in bringing about their deaths. Some spent a disproportionate amount of time discussing his religious importance, and the significance an Elizabethan audience might attach to that.

Question 3b

Higher Tier

*From the play *Romeo and Juliet*, choose **one** or **two** moments which you find entertaining or exciting and explore their dramatic effect.*

Question 3b

Foundation Tier

*From *Romeo and Juliet*, choose **one** example of a conflict or confrontation. Give the reasons for this conflict or confrontation and show how it is important in the play.*

Although few examiners would share the candidates' enthusiasm for death scenes as a choice of entertainment, they were heartened by the engagement with the language used, and the skilful handling and maturity of understanding shown of the love scenes, and the scenes involving Mercutio. Whereas most responses did try to analyse what made these moments exciting or entertaining, only the best went on to explore the dramatic effect. Again, there is only time to include this if the candidate sustains an analytical approach, confident that the Examiner is sufficiently familiar with the play not to need a narrative account; however, points

made must be rooted in the text and supported by close reference and/or apt choice of short snippets of quotation and comment. There were many pleasing Foundation Tier responses that demonstrated sound understanding of the reasons for the opening fight between the two Houses, or the fights between Tybalt and Mercutio or Tybalt and Romeo. Not all went on to outline the importance in the play, which is their opportunity to demonstrate understanding of the play as a whole and the important themes (Band 4 and above); again an indication, perhaps, of examination technique.

POETRY pre-1914 or post-1914: Opening Lines (OCR)

Regardless of the tier entered, to achieve a Band 4 mark, candidates must be able to show a straightforward understanding of the two poems selected, a generally consistent focus on the question, and the beginnings of a response to the poet's use of language/techniques. Although credit is given for any attempt to analyse language as relevant to the question, answers that fail to show understanding of the ideas/feelings/tones of the poem as a whole are self-limiting. Although there were some impressive responses, too often Examiners were disappointed by the considerable misunderstanding shown, giving the impression that these poems had not been recently revised, if studied at all during the course, or that candidates had mistakenly turned to Section C (Question 4) war poems when they had been prepared for Section H. Some responses made a valiant attempt to look at structure and other devices, but often lacked the overall understanding or confidence required to explain their effect on the reader. Others produced a sound synopsis of the views offered by anti-war poets in Section H, often including unnecessary biographical detail, but failed to look closely at any aspect of the poems themselves. Another weakness was to supply several lines of quotation followed by a simplistic 'translation', which showed at best a very basic understanding of the poet's views. Answers offering only one poem had to be penalised. The few who offered all three were usually self-limiting in that there was insufficient time to demonstrate the ability to analyse in detail. Although answers were received from sections C, D and H in the Higher Tier, by far the most popular was Section H: *Poetry of the 1914-1918 War (ii)*. A few candidates made an impressive attempt to compare their two poems with others in the Section. Although this demonstrated a scholarly grasp that would be admirable in Coursework, and augurs well for their future studies, it is a concerning technique in this exam where they need to provide an in-depth analysis of their two poems in barely thirty minutes' preparation and writing time.

OPENING LINES - SECTION C: WAR

Question 4

Higher Tier

*Explore some of the ways in which the poets convey the effects of war on those who enlist as soldiers, in **two** of the following poems:*

Question 4

Foundation Tier

*How do the poets use words and images to show the effects of war on those who enlist as soldiers, in **two** of the following poems?*

(page 34) Asquith *The Volunteer*
(page 43) Housman *On The Idle Hill*
(page 43) Scott *The Drum.*

The best answers demonstrated a clear to perceptive understanding of the sense of greatness and fulfilment experienced by a very ordinary man as expressed through the contrast between the description of The Volunteer's clerical job and his dreams of war, although few were able to analyse key words in any depth. Although most responses to Housman and Scott commented with some success on how the rhythm reflected the beat of the drum, few explored details of language sufficiently to demonstrate the ominous, nightmarish qualities of the summons to war or the feelings of carnage and waste as expressed in the contrast between 'lovely lads' and 'dead and rotten', and the descriptions of 'ravaged plains' and 'mangled limbs'.

OPENING LINES - SECTION D: Town and Country

Question 5

Higher Tier

*Explore some of the ways in which the poets express their thoughts and feelings about particular scenes in London, in **two** of the following poems:*

Question 5

Foundation Tier

*How do the poets use words and images to express their thoughts and feelings about particular scenes in London, in **two** of the following poems?*

(page 51) Wilde *Symphony in Yellow*
(page 53) Wordsworth *Composed Upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802*
(page 53) Meynell *A Dead Harvest in Kensington Gardens.*

Most answers chose to compare the poems of Wordsworth and Meynell. Those who attempted *Symphony in Yellow* rarely picked up the feelings of peace and harmony, an absence of hurry and noise, as expressed through the descriptions, although most appreciated the emphasis on colour. The best responses to Wordsworth were able to demonstrate how language and structure are used to convey his admiration for the majestic beauty of London. Even the least successful responses could refer to ideas of peace and beauty, though most relied heavily on a simple 'translation' of the text to convey these. Few answers clearly identified Meynell's feelings about the futility of life in London and her nostalgia for a more rural way of life; however, several picked up on a dislike of the town from 'graceless grass' and the funereal images used. Some were misled by the references to red and brown leaves to think of happy colourful images, ignoring the emphasis on 'rows of dead' that introduces them.

OPENING LINES - SECTION G: How It Looks From Here

Question 6

Higher Tier

*Explore some of the ways in which the poets make us question the way we look at things, in **two** of the following poems:*

Question 6

Foundation Tier

*How do the poets use words and images to make us think about the way we look at things, in **two** of the following poems?*

(page 89) Smith *Oh Grateful Colours, Bright Looks!*
(page 94) Reed *Judging Distances*
(page 99) Cope *Engineers' Corner.*

There were no responses to this question apart from one or two Foundation Tier candidates who mistakenly tried to answer all four poetry questions, with just one statement about each, and a lengthy quotation. It was clear that they had not been prepared for this section.

OPENING LINES - SECTION F: Poetry of the 1914-1918 War (ii)

Question 7

Higher Tier

*Explore some of the ways in which the poets convey thoughts and feelings about the sending of young men to fight a war, in **two** of the following poems:*

Question 7

Foundation Tier

*What feelings about young men being sent to war are expressed by the words and images used in **two** of the following poems?*

<i>(page 102) Mackintosh</i>	<i>Recruiting</i>
<i>(page 103) Hinkson</i>	<i>Joining the Colours</i>
<i>(page 99) Owen</i>	<i>The Send-Off.</i>

This was by far the most popular section across both tiers. Although only the best answers were able to analyse how Mackintosh's anger is directed against the methods used for recruitment rather than the war itself, most were able to make some comment on how the structure emphasised his belief that soldiers would die if they signed up, and that they were all young. Disappointingly few looked closely at the implications of 'fat' civilians, 'vulgar' songs and 'washy' verse, or at the contrast in the reasons he would like to offer potential recruits for joining the war. Weaker answers thought the over 40's wanted to fight/ should be allowed to fight, or gave general comments on the posters and white feathers used to put pressure on young men, without paying much attention to the actual wording of the poem itself. Similarly, only the best responses to Owen's poem looked closely at the significance of the ironic references to the flowers given by women, and the impact of 'grimly', even when they could identify the oxymoron. Many responses successfully compared Hinkson and Owen, but often spent too long considering the influence of gender instead of significant detail, such as 'wedding day', and 'careless-gay', and 'food for shells and guns'. However, many Higher Tier candidates were able to comment on how the structure of the poems emphasised the feelings of sorrow and disillusionment and shame, and most responses successfully picked up on the emphasis on youth, beauty, naivety and loss, and the implications of darkness and mist. Again, the hallmark of lower band responses was the propensity to paraphrase rather than to identify the poets' thoughts and feelings. To be awarded marks in Band 1 and 2, responses needed to provide an immediate overview that clearly identifies these feelings, before going on to select details of use of language and structure that conveys these, with comment on their effectiveness throughout.

Unit 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. Schools have again worked hard to apply the marking criteria consistently and teachers seem confident in finding an overall mark that reflects the standard of the work of their students. The presentation of a great many folders for this entry reflects the continuing hard work of the vast majority of teachers who are conscientiously delivering the coursework component in their schools

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 might consider:

- **MS1 Mark sheets.** 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 different mark on the MS1 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.
- **Carrying forward coursework marks.** This is a continuing problem for all the Moderators in January, where Centres make entries for the coursework unit for candidates who, in fact, wish to carry forward marks. Very often Moderators have to contact centres several times to establish whether or not they should be receiving mark sheets or indeed folders.

Please note that where coursework marks are being carried forward, no entry for the coursework unit needs to be made.

Re-sitting candidates must fulfil the terminal rule and enter 50% by examination but, as long as that is done, and the aggregation code (1900) is entered, then the coursework mark will be automatically carried forward.

- **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.

- **Meeting deadlines.** A number of Centres were very late this year in meeting the deadline for sending marks to Moderators. As the moderation process has to be completed in a very short time frame, this causes a number of problems when marks and then folders arrive, in some cases, more than two weeks after the deadline. Centres would be advised in future January entries to complete all their internal moderation and administration before the Christmas holidays, so that MS1s can be despatched immediately the new term begins. Many Centres had clearly tried to mark folders and enter marks on MS1s at the start of the new term and then had difficulties in meeting the deadline for despatching marks and folders to the Moderator.

AO 3.2 READING.

A0 3.2 (iv) and (v) again proved to be the biggest differentiators. 3.2 (iv) 'selecting material and making cross references', was something only seen in the most successful responses.

Response to Shakespeare.

The majority of centres again chose *Romeo and Juliet* or *Macbeth*, but there was increasing evidence that centres were studying a wide range of plays including *Henry V*, *The Tempest* and *Othello*.

Candidates seemed generally confident in understanding plot, themes and character, and the more able candidates demonstrated the ability to comment on language and its effect. However a number of Moderators commented that Centres were still not paying enough attention to 'stagecraft' and 'dramatic effect'.

There was increased evidence that a larger number of candidates submitted detailed responses to specific scenes often making detailed and specific comments on dramatic effects. Centres are reminded that as long as candidates are able to meet all the assessment objectives and as long as their understanding of the play as a whole is apparent, then this approach is acceptable. However, Moderators are increasingly concerned that candidates have studied only one scene, and lack sufficient reference or understanding of the rest of the play to justify the mark they have been awarded.

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 a task on *Twelfth Night* which led to some excellent responses on structure, comedy and use of contrast:

"I am what I am." How far does this theme of illusion and disguise both create comedy and provide a comment on human behaviour?

It was again 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 previous sessions, candidates are still showing their expertise in identifying structural and presentational devices but cannot always then go on to show their effects upon the reader. Many candidates have lost sight of the real impact of a poem as they spot oxymorons, enjambement, metaphors, similes, ABAB rhyming patterns, without any real understanding of how these devices are effective.

The majority of Centres in this entry had clearly responded to previous reports and chosen to compare only two poems, which led to much more effective and detailed responses.

The most popular poets were again Blake, Wordsworth, Browning and Tennyson. *Dulce et Decorum Est* and *The Charge of the Light Brigade* were not as popular this time round.

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 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 are still a number of Centres who seem to favour the very popular response to "The Assassin". This resource is readily available on *Teachit* and it is very difficult to award marks to it 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 both 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.

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.

Unit 2435 Speaking and Listening

The trend continued from last year's January session, with a number of Centres entering an entire cohort of candidates, rather than just seeing this session as a 're-sit' session *per se*. However, for many Centres, the January examination is still an opportunity for candidates to improve on their June result, often working in remodelled groups and on different activities.

The activities covered by many of the January candidates crossed over with their Sixth Form studies, giving a relevance and immediacy to their performances; this often resulted in a marked improvement in achievement. There was evidence, therefore, of a range and variety of appropriate activities having been undertaken, many based on non-literary material. Often the added boost came from developed confidence with a more sympathetic and responsive audience, and with extra maturity, an ability to analyse and reflect on experience and handle challenging material, synthesise complex items, organise points and challenge assumptions. Comments from Centres on candidates' performance often highlighted added skills in sensitive and sympathetic listening as a factor in improvement and a willingness to encourage quieter members to participate and then build on their contributions.

The drama-focussed context was often more successful. Candidates having been through the process seem to be clearer of what was required and more skilled in adopting and sustaining a role realistically and convincingly.

This underlines the advice to Centres, to teach the skills needed for this component and to give candidates opportunities to develop and hone their skills. Many Centres now refer to Speaking and Listening as an integral part of KS3 work feeding into KS4.

A key part of the process is record-keeping. The majority of Centres maintain careful, thorough and clearly presented records, with a detailed and informative picture of progress achieved during the course; teachers' judgements are criteria-referenced and marks accurately awarded. A standard format for record-keeping places the process within a systematic framework and ensures that all the required information is supplied to the moderator. The vast majority of Centres use the OCR form; those Centres which did not, nevertheless, supplied the necessary information.

Some Centres still need reminding that one context should be matched to one range of purpose 'triplets': this is the primary focus, even though there may be elements of other strands. The assessment criteria have been drawn up to be applied in this way.

Internal standardisation procedures continue to be secure and in many instances, rigorous and thorough. Attention nevertheless is drawn to the latest Inter-Board Training and Guidance DVD; this together with previously-issued videos, should be used by Centres to confirm their own internally set standards and are vital support material for small Centres and teachers working in isolation.

As regards the administration of this component, the majority of Centres were problem-free, but there was a sizeable minority where all the relevant paperwork was not in place by the published deadline. As Centres move to systems where non-specialist examination officers are increasingly the point of reference and dispatchers of coursework material to moderators, it is important that descriptions of procedures are read, understood and carried out by all relevant parties.

Report on the Units taken in January 2007

Departmental co-operation in assembling and checking the documentation is gratefully acknowledged and greatly facilitated the process of moderation, enabling Moderators to meet their deadlines.

Finally, this component is often a real strength for candidates and this is a testimony to all the hard work and dedication of the teachers involved in preparing their students; many thanks as always for your continuing commitment.

**General Certificate of Secondary Education
1900 English
January 2007 Assessment Series**

Unit Threshold Marks

Unit		Maximum Mark	a*	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	u
2431/1	Raw	63				49	41	33	26	19	0
	UMS	62				54	45	36	27	18	0
2431/2	Raw	90	73	67	61	55	48	44			0
	UMS	90	81	72	63	54	45	41			0
2432/1	Raw	63				56	48	40	33	26	0
	UMS	62				54	45	36	27	18	0
2432/2	Raw	90	78	71	63	55	47	43			0
	UMS	90	81	72	63	54	45	41			0
2433/1	Raw	41				34	28	23	18	13	0
	UMS	41				36	30	24	18	12	0
2433/2	Raw	60	53	47	40	33	27	24			0
	UMS	60	54	48	42	36	30	27			0
2434	Raw	40	37	33	28	23	17	12	7	2	0
	UMS	60	54	48	42	36	30	24	18	12	0
2435	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)

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

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

	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U	Total No. of Cands
	2.7	10.5	22.1	51.7	78.9	88.4	93.5	97.6	100	3212

3212 candidates were entered for aggregation this series.

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

Statistics are correct at the time of publication.

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