

Report on the Units

June 2007

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

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the Examination.

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Any enquiries about publications should be addressed to:

OCR Publications
PO Box 5050
Annesley
NOTTINGHAM
NG15 0DL

Telephone: 0870 870 6622
Facsimile: 0870 870 6621
E-mail: publications@ocr.org.uk

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

KEY POINTS

- Examiners across all units expressed concern about the increasing illegibility of all or parts of candidates' handwritten scripts; in one case an Examiner reports that she spent an hour attempting to decipher one candidate's response. Centres are encouraged to remind candidates that it is in their own interests to produce answers which are easily legible; with Writing tasks, in particular, words or phrases which cannot be deciphered will inevitably reduce the clarity of communication between writer and reader.
- Candidates are reminded that the second Reading task in Unit 1 and the questions on the set texts in Units 2 and 3 require an analytical approach and that it is important that comments are supported by an apposite and focused use of quotation and reference. Generalisations unsupported by quotations; lengthy paraphrases of the passage or story; random or inaccurate references to linguistic or literary devices - these are unlikely to result in a mark higher than the Band 5 range.
- There has been a consistent increase in the mean mark awarded for the Coursework components (2434 and 2435) over the course of this Specification. Although OCR welcomes the genuine improvement in the work of candidates which is clearly reflected by this trend, there is evidence in some folders of marking which tests the boundaries of tolerance. Where excessive generosity is detected, moderators will apply adjustments to bring marking in line with OCR standards.

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

General comments

Both reading passages were straightforward and candidates' responses, in general, revealed a sound understanding of them. All candidates were able to appreciate what a solo round-the-world voyage was and the challenge that Ellen MacArthur had set herself in attempting to beat the record. There was a good engagement with both passages and with each question, so that all had the chance to do justice to their ability. Despite the apparent accessibility of the paper, candidates' performance eventually proved to be at levels similar to those of previous examinations.

The responses of those candidates who performed well gave evidence of careful preparation leading to their selecting relevant information for Question 1, making appropriate comment on media forms for Question 2 and focusing on the task set for Question 3. Less successful responses lacked incisiveness and concision when responding to Question one, resulting in diffuse, time-consuming answers and responses to Question two which included insufficient support from quotations or appropriate comments. The least successful essays in Section B were rambling narratives, which were not made relevant to the character-testing experience to be described.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A

Reading: NON-FICTION

Question 1

- (a) From Clare's account, which **two words** did Bumble use wrongly, forgetting that she was on a boat?
- (b) List **three words** from Clare's account that show the crew's opinions of Bumble.

These questions were answered well, as was the intention. Almost everybody found three correct words for 1(b), the commonest being 'friendly', 'funny' and 'outspoken', as they occurred together in the same phrase. Some opted for 'first-class' and 'marvellous'. A surprising number of candidates did not find two correct words for 1(a), or thought that the phrase 'smashing kitchen' made up the two words required. As usual, many candidates spent far too long on these easy questions, getting rather carried away and commenting on the words or explaining what a nice person Bumble was.

- (c) What difficulties does Bumble describe in her account?

Explain how she dealt with them.

Use your own words as far as possible.

It was not difficult to locate the difficulties encountered by Bumble, and many candidates successfully identified the more obvious ones. Some of the more subtle points, such as the one about wedging the saucepan, were missed, though some credit was given to candidates for inferring how problems could be overcome when the text did not make solutions explicit. For instance, Bumble was said to have coped well because of her sense of humour, or her tolerance or patience or willingness to 'just get on with it'. On the whole, candidates seemed to be much better this year at writing in their own words, and had evidently been well prepared for this question. The best responses showed selective editing and some adept paraphrasing of the text. Answers that were just copied from the text or were written in narrative style did not earn so many marks. Again, there was a tendency to write too much: it was possible for candidates to gain high marks for a succinct answer written in their own words. Often, those candidates who had made unnecessary comments on the language penalised themselves later when they ran out of time. Strangely, some thought Bumble was a man.

Reading: MEDIA TEXT

Question 2

Show how the article celebrates how much Ellen achieved, and also makes it clear that she does not want all the glory for herself.

In your answer you should write about:

- *the presentation of the article*
- *references to the team and the boat*
- *the words and phrases used about Ellen's character and achievements.*

This proved to be much more challenging, and responses to the article on Ellen MacArthur were variable in quality. Even those whose powers of observation and analysis were limited, clearly appreciated the yachtswoman's character and achievement; their comments were not always relevant to the task, but they showed a pleasing engagement with the text.

Many failed to respond to the requirement to write about presentation, or simply said that the text 'is in columns' or 'is easy to read', and little credit was gained for making comments on the simple existence of a picture or a headline. Candidates who did attempt to gain marks for points on presentation had clearly been prepared for the type of text that they had to write about. However, many relied too heavily on prepared media statements. For instance, they would refer to the use of sub-headings, without giving them textual application. Features mentioned, such as titles and pictures, were generic and could have applied to any media extract. Candidates need to show how these features are used and arranged in the context of the particular article on the paper. More successful responses commented on the visual significance of the photograph and also recognised and commented on the force of the juxtaposition of image and text.

References to the team and the boat were generally in good supply, partly because the relationship between them and Ellen had been, to a degree, explained by the authors of the article. More successful responses attempted to explain Ellen MacArthur's statements, rather than just quoting them. Sometimes, candidates gained credit for their own points on character when they could show that words from the text implied 'loyalty' or 'gratitude' or 'modesty'. Only a relatively small number of candidates was able to make analytical comments about the language, though there are encouraging signs that this is improving.

The bullet on 'the words and phrases used about Ellen's character and achievements' was often interpreted to mean, 'comment on her character and achievement'. This produced many answers which referred to her determination and her ability to endure, giving appropriate examples of sleep deprivation and extreme physical discomfort without analysing the language in which the final section was couched. Less successful responses dissolved into descriptive writing that was not an objective identification or discussion of the features of the text. The least successful copied out large chunks of text, including, almost always, the nightmarish list of problems that Ellen had to contend with.

Section B

Writing to INFORM, EXPLAIN, DESCRIBE

Question 3

Describe how an experience which you know about tested a person's character. You may write about yourself if you wish.

For example, you might wish to describe taking part in a sport, organising an activity or project, achieving a target or ambition, enduring an illness, facing a medical operation, or coping with an emotional difficulty.

The word 'Describe' was printed in bold in Question 3 – and it was about character. It was possible, though, to do well by addressing the task in narrative form and at least implying a test of character. Since it was an experience to be described, a narrative approach was quite acceptable. There were some very strong responses that were about trials, fortitude and learning from experience. There were some essays that were about famous people, but the overwhelming majority of answers were based on personal experience and had a strong ring of truth. Very few came across as fiction. There were some genuinely moving accounts of loss and misfortune.

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There was quite a range of topics, though illness (often terminal) and sporting activities were the most popular choices. Many essays broached uncomfortable personal subjects which were usually composed with restraint, probably concealing any distress by writing in the third person. Many wrote about the suffering and death of loved ones, grandparents or parents or siblings, and found an appropriate style and tone to convey their feelings. The assured control of many sad tales was a tribute to those who chose to write about such subjects. It seemed that some candidates found it almost cathartic to write about some of their most traumatic and dramatic experiences.

Certainly, those who wrote about their own experience were more successful than those who chose someone else's, and this explains why so many boys chose football and sports events. Of these, there were a few presentations which stood out from the rest, but the majority relied on lengthy accounts of soccer matches which were not always engaging for the reader. The least successful managed to write only brief accounts, often lacking the necessary control of structure and syntax.

At every level of performance, however, most candidates seemed at least to enjoy this descriptive task. It proved harder, however, for many to follow the 'explain' requirement, this time encapsulated in the word 'how'. Some ignored it entirely and just wrote a narrative of varying degrees of relevance; others remembered it at the last moment and wrote a final sentence saying, '...and this tested my character a lot.'

Several examiners commented on a puzzlingly large number of candidates who did not attempt Question 3. It would seem that the reasons for this might include lack of time (as a result of spending too long on the Reading tasks in Section A), a failure to read clearly the instructions on the front of the question paper or a reluctance to engage in continuous writing tasks.

Many essays revealed little evidence of careful planning, and one noticeable, common feature was an almost total lack of paragraphing. A good proportion of scripts contained repeated spelling and grammatical errors, which reduced the marks for otherwise promising accounts. Use of tenses has become increasingly insecure, with frequent use of the present tense to describe something in the past, as in, 'Yesterday he calls me and says...'. A major weakness was punctuation between sentence boundaries: many now seem to ignore this entirely, or just use a succession of commas. Apostrophes were scattered at random across the page, and text messages have made capitalisation an almost forgotten practice. 'Also', used incorrectly at the beginning of sentences, seemed to be the connective of choice. 'We was' was ubiquitous and 'freinds' very common, though most candidates preferred to write about their 'mates', which has the merit of being easier to spell correctly. However, the task was to write in essay style – i.e. in formal, Standard English except for dialogue. Therefore, candidates who wrote in a colloquial or over-familiar register about their 'mates' who were 'slagging somebody off', which left somebody else 'gobsmacked' gained far fewer marks than those who wrote in a register more appropriate to that expected in a formal examination.

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

General Comments

Overall, Examiners thought that candidates responded well to the theme of this paper, showing considerable engagement with all three tasks. With the exception of a very small number who would have been more appropriately entered for the Foundation Tier paper, all appeared to have at least a satisfactory understanding of the material in the Reading Booklet, although not all demonstrated an equally secure understanding of the requirements of the questions. This point will be dealt with in more detail in the comments on specific questions which follow.

Nearly all candidates completed the paper within the set time, with very few short essays, although there were a few cases where candidates seemed to be under the impression that the questions in Section A were alternatives and that, therefore, it was required to answer only one of them, with the result that the overall grade was inevitably diminished. It was felt that the reading tasks in Section A proved more taxing for most candidates than the writing task in Section B, and that both reading tasks discriminated successfully. However, many of those who found these tasks difficult nevertheless were able to salvage the situation in their response to the writing task in Section B; all Examiners considered that this proved to be a good stimulus which produced many excellent tributes, at times very moving, especially those to close family members. There was also a general consensus of opinion among Examiners that the technical aspects of candidates' written expression were more secure this year than in the past, although some expressed concern that handwriting was very difficult to read in many scripts and that 'despite the best efforts, words or whole phrases remained illegible.' Centres are obviously aware of this problem and Examiners appreciate that the increasing number of word-processed scripts goes some way to reduce it; however, candidates who use such technological aids must also be aware that misspellings and incorrect punctuation which result from limited skills in using the keyboard are indistinguishable from ordinary spelling and punctuation errors and will be treated as such by Examiners.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A

Reading: NON-FICTION

Question 1

By referring closely to Bob Dylan's account of the situation he was in, explain concisely his thoughts about:

- *his private life*
- *fame and its pressures on him.*

Use your own words as far as possible.

Nearly all candidates responded well to this extract even though some successfully demolished Bob Dylan's identity by confusing him with Bob Geldof! However, in general, the passage was well understood and many candidates tried hard to organise the material as guided by the question with some managing this extremely well. The most successful responses came from those who understood the requirements of the question, noted the word 'concisely', and recognised that to identify Dylan's *thoughts* necessitated their making a number of inferences. They also organised and synthesised their points, without sticking slavishly to the chronological sequence of the passage. Where candidates skilfully departed from the chronological order, they showed they were able to develop a convincing perspective of their own on the account which demonstrated a high order of understanding.

Such responses were, however, in the minority as most candidates appeared to have difficulties in focusing their responses closely on the requirement to explain the writer's thoughts. Most middle range responses began with a clearly focused and frequently concise account of Dylan's thoughts about his family and private life and then tended to lose track of the question when dealing with the second bullet point. Rather than concentrating on his thoughts about fame and its pressures, these responses very quickly drifted into a narrative account of his life in Woodstock and the events which occurred there. For example, responses at this level tended to describe – often in great length and detail – the fact that Woodstock had a large number of illegal intruders, rather than identifying succinctly Dylan's consequent thoughts of unsettlement, anger and frustration. Similarly, although they stated that he had guns in his possession but did not use them, only a few candidates saw the significance of: 'it was awful to think about what could be done with those things' and went on to identify the thoughts which this comment revealed. Other examples of such a failure to focus clearly on the task were to be found in the way candidates treated the points about moving to New York City and Dylan's being seen as a spokesman for his generation; in both cases, many candidates did little more than identify the fact rather than mention that, in the former example, his reason for moving to New York was because he hoped that by doing so he could become anonymous and, in the latter example, the key point was that he could not understand ('That was funny.') that he should be looked on in such a way. As always, candidates are advised to take careful note of the key words in the question.

The least successful responses tended to take an entirely narrative approach, write at great length and follow closely the order of material in the original passage, making no attempt to reorganise the material to suit the requirements of the question. Such responses frequently repeated the point that Dylan was hounded by the press and wrote in great detail about the problems that arose at Woodstock, with detailed descriptions, lifted from the passage, of the intruders, the number of police working in the town and the makes and types of guns in Dylan's possession, but with no reference to his thoughts at all.

As has been noted in previous reports, there is still a significant minority of candidates who treat this task as if it is Question 2 and write analytically about the writer's intentions and techniques rather than summarising the details required by the question. There were also those who introduced their own views, for example, 'He wanted to bring up his children in the traditions of freedom and equality. Well, it wouldn't be like that now in America, would it?' (!)

Finally, candidates are reminded that this task requires them to do no more than identify as many points as they can in the source passage which relate to those mentioned in the question itself and then to reorganise them into a coherently focused summary expressed concisely in - as far as possible - their own words; although there is no stated word limit, it is expected that a successful response to this task will comprise between 250-300 words and it is not necessary for candidates to include an introductory paragraph on the lines of 'In this essay I am going to write about the situation Bob Dylan was in and what his thoughts were about...'. Such an introduction is best left in the notes that candidates are recommended to make before producing their final version of the task.

Reading: MEDIA TEXT

Question 2

Explore how the writers present different points of view about the same television programme.

*In your answer consider closely the **content of their arguments** and **their use of language**.*

Again, candidates responded enthusiastically to this task and their responses revealed a good general understanding of the two passages (despite there being a common assumption that Quentin is a female name). All, apart from the best responses, found it easier to comment on the *Compulsive* passage, possibly because it contained more easily identifiable examples of the literary devices which candidates had been hoping to spot. Although there was no requirement to compare the two passages, many candidates, often in the more successful responses, made neat comparative points that illustrated a high level of discrimination – e.g. that whereas Persaud was writing in a more objective, scholarly, or 'scientific' tone, 'Letts is reduced to using the kind of language you would expect to see in "celeb" magazines'.

A key word in the question was 'explore'. Better candidates recognised the difference between *exploring* the views put forward and *how* they were presented, on the one hand, and the alternative of simply summarising the two points of view. The most frequent limitation to be found in candidates' responses was a failure to identify clearly what they understood the writers' purposes to be, with the result that any comments they made subsequently about the techniques used by the writers were lacking in a clear referent, which made evaluation of the validity of their comments somewhat difficult.

The most successful responses were perceptive, closely analysed and characterised by thorough analysis, comparison and clear explanation. These were a pleasure to read. One candidate, wrote for example: 'Letts tries to side with the reader through the use of rhetorical questions in an attempt to form an allegiance, just as Persaud states that celebrities do for "self-affirmation".' Another candidate suggested that the Pot Noodle image conveyed that 'the programme is sickening, full of bad stuff but indeed still addictive'. Such comments revealed both a clear understanding of the writers' intentions and an ability to explain successfully the methods used to convey them to their readers.

Less successful responses tended to rely on describing the content of both articles but sometimes failed to understand Persaud's attitude and concerns, some dismissing his views as 'snobby and sarcastic'. Many missed his use of pseudo-scientific jargon. Some took Letts' comments at face value and believed the statement 'Now she really IS an actress' meant that the woman in question's appearance on Celebrity Big Brother had actually launched her into an acting career. Another misconception frequently encountered was that Letts was grateful to the programme for expanding his knowledge of celebrities. However, most noticed Persaud's more serious tone as compared with Letts' more informal, conversational approach but did not always supply supporting references to illustrate their comments. Candidates at this level were happy to identify rhetorical questions, metaphor (or simile), ascending tricolons and humorous exaggeration but, quite often, made no reference to the effects of these or relied on bland comments assuring the Examiner that these 'drew the reader in/made him read on/emphasised his point'. Some quoted, at length, and then paraphrased the quotation.

The least successful responses struggled to find something to say about Persaud's article, and a few omitted it altogether from their answers. Nevertheless, there was very little suggestion that the Persaud passage had been actually misunderstood, except for a quite persistent assumption that its first sentence was being ironic, because it contained the word 'ironic'. A number followed this up by arguing unconvincingly that Persaud's entire piece was written 'sarcastically'. Responses at this level tended to label linguistic devices without explanation or make vague statements about creating interest. In some cases, this approach showed signs of desperation in which any words in the same paragraph that began with the same letter (vowel or consonant) were immediately identified as *alliteration* with the undeniable effect of 'drawing the reader in' – although, unfortunately, exactly *how* the reader was so drawn in was never adequately explained. As one highly experienced Examiner commented, 'It's a continuing shame that some candidates still don't appear to realise that it is possible to write an outstanding Question 2 answer *without using any technical terms at all*.'

Section B
Writing to INFORM, EXPLAIN, DESCRIBE

Question 3

A magazine aimed at your age group has invited contributions for a series of articles entitled Someone I admire.

Write the words of your article in which you describe a person you admire, and explain your reasons for choosing that person.

As mentioned above, candidates responded well to this task and many Examiners commented on the pleasure they received in reading the responses.

There was a wide range of objects of admiration drawn from a wide range of occupations; David Beckham and Lance Armstrong were both popular choices as were Martin (Martian!) Luther King, Nelson Mandela and Tony Blair. Perhaps a little more surprisingly (or perhaps as a result of topics studied for a GCSE History course), both Stalin and Hitler had their champions (as did Genghis Khan); to counterbalance these figures, Jesus Christ and other religious leaders also featured. There were comparatively fewer examples taken from media celebrities – many candidates eschewed writing about people from this sphere as, despite their prominence in our televisual lives, we don't actually know them. However, Katie Price (the person formerly known as Jordan) and, for obviously different reasons, Ian Hislop also had their admirers. Musicians, both living and dead, provided many examples and also gave encouraging evidence of the wide and catholic tastes of the present-day 16 year old; although there were some contemporary names which (to quote Quentin Letts) did not touch the radar of most Examiners – fortunately most candidates were aware of the requirement to describe their chosen subject – there were also others such as Mozart and Jimi Hendrix who proved that tastes cross the generations. However, by far the most popular choices were non-celebrities such as family members comprising older and younger siblings, grandparents, fathers and, overwhelmingly, mothers; it would appear from the evidence of this examination, that tales of the decline of respect for the family have been greatly exaggerated. Other popular choices were unnamed heroes and heroines (fire fighters, the armed forces) and schoolteachers, either individually or collectively; a few candidates, usually with tongues firmly in cheeks, chose to admire themselves. Sadly, there were no reported cases of Examiners having been chosen as objects of admiration!

The overall impression given by responses to this task was that candidates were able to do full justice to their potential. The most successful responses were both fully engaged with the topic and engaging to read. At this level, candidates clearly understood the requirement both to describe and explain; wrote in a tone completely appropriate to the required genre and suggested audience, and gave focused and detailed accounts of the subjects' achievements and their reasons for admiring them while maintaining an objectivity of approach which nevertheless conveyed sincere admiration and respect – in fact, after reading such a response, one Examiner was moved to comment that, 'this is the person I would like to write my obituary!'

Middle range responses tended to be less aware of the type of writing being tested and although starting off with the intention of describing and explaining, very soon moved into a more creative, lyrical mode and as a result adopted a register not fully appropriate to either the task or the intended audience. Such responses were often enjoyable to read, but, unfortunately, penalised themselves by writing in a style more suited to the writing tasks in other Units of this examination.

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The least successful responses were those which adopted a somewhat perfunctory approach to the topic and chose either to write about figures about whom the candidate had only very limited knowledge or did little more than give a potted biography of the chosen person without providing any explanation as to why he or she was to be admired. Such responses very often contained a very limited and imprecisely used range of vocabulary which was dependent on a not particularly enlightening use of cliché; parents were nearly always 'there for their offspring' and this presence was, more often than not '24/7'. There were also a few extremely brief responses which appeared not to have been the result of time pressure, which failed to fulfil the requirements of the task.

It was also felt by Examiners that there had been some overall improvement in candidates' linguistic competence and that there were fewer examples of blurred communication due to syntactical and punctuation errors than in previous examination sessions. Having said this, it should, nevertheless, be recorded that many of the 'traditional' problems with written expression were still apparent: although most candidates were aware of the need to paragraph their writing, there are still a large number of responses where paragraphing is haphazard and does little or nothing to help shape the reader's response. At the other extreme, Examiners also report that some otherwise extremely well-written and lengthy responses consisted of only one paragraph; although such responses are rewarded for their other obvious merits, it is likely that the failure to write in paragraphs will preclude a mark in a higher band when an Examiner is making a choice between marks. Spelling was certainly no worse than it has been in previous years and some Examiners felt that there had been a distinct improvement. More candidates appeared to be aware of the importance of using punctuation positively and it would seem that there has been a revival in the awareness of the semi-colon which was used more frequently than previously and, quite often, was used correctly. However, there remains a fairly general failure to use correctly the apostrophe of both omission and possession, and the comma splice appears to be firmly entrenched.

In conclusion, there was much to be credited in the responses of many candidates and, as already mentioned, the quality of the best scripts was of a very high standard indeed. Both teachers and their candidates should be congratulated for the hard work and effort they have put in to achieving what in many cases will be a well-deserved, successful result. It is hoped that the comments and advice contained in this report will help in producing even better performances in the years to come.

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

General Comments

With few exceptions, Examiners reported that candidates performed at least as well on this paper as in previous years and, in a significant number of cases, better. The paper was set at an appropriate level of difficulty and allowed candidates to write to the limits of their knowledge, skill and interest. There were very few candidates whose response was minimal or non-existent: we wonder if a more auspicious use of the Entry Level examination accounts for this. Nor were there many candidates who would have achieved better grades in the Higher Tier. The paper provided differentiation across the ability range although there were few responses which fell into Band 8 or below.

The majority of answers in Section A were on *Opening Worlds*. In contrast to previous years, candidates were attracted equally to Questions 1 and 2 and there was, pleasingly, less reliance on the passage to support a response. Some Centres had studied *The Old Man and the Sea* (and many had spent time teaching the alleged symbolism of the story); few had studied *Things Fall Apart* and most of those who had, had not made a judicious choice for this tier. The inclusion of shorter passages for Questions 1, 3 and 5 was obviously helpful to candidates.

Section B, the letter to the friend, elicited some of the best work we have seen on Question 8: many candidates regarded a letter as the 'last straw' beyond talk, text or email to put their friends' problems to rights. They enjoyed this task, with girls generally advising girls, and boys advising ... girls. Question 7, analysing independence, was more challenging and some answers were couched in acceptable anecdotal or narrative frameworks. A major difference in this paper was the way in which the prompt material was used; it provided the basis for more seamless and well developed responses than in previous years when it was used principally to pad out otherwise slim answers.

Examiners in this session felt that spelling errors were less of a cause for concern than syntactical errors arising from incorrect or absent punctuation.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A: READING

Question 1

*The passage is the conclusion of "The Winter Oak".
How do the writers in this and in **one other story** ... show how children are different from what the adults expect?*

Most answers reflected a sound grasp of the story and compared Anna's earlier attempts to deal with Savushkin in school with the role reversal with which the passage concludes. There was some pleasing and well supported work on the description of the forest and of Anna's reactions to what Savushkin reveals of it; responses suggested that most candidates had been taught and had retained sufficient knowledge of parts of speech to make the point about Savushkin's concept of nouns. The most successful responses went on to develop comments on *The Pieces of Silver* (which was the most frequently used story in Questions 1 and 2). Better answers traced the outcomes of the grim school and home sequences in this story and compared them with the carol singing and the triumphant conclusion. There was some pleasing work on the *presentation* of this scene and emphasis on the language by which it was conveyed. Answers which used *The Red Ball* dealt with Bolan's father's violent reaction to his larceny and compared it with the reaction of his mother. Some candidates used *The Young Couple* fairly unsatisfactorily but without the extreme difficulties a lot of candidates found when they chose *Games at Twilight*

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(there is insufficient *relevant* material in this story to do anything of any substance in relation to this question: hence answers contained much irrelevance or were of extreme brevity). The problems with *Leela's friend* stemmed from confusion over Sidida: child or adult, both or neither? It's a perfectly relevant story and was used well by the candidates who saw that the task required them to focus on Leela and her parents first and Sidida as a means to the end of developing the story.

Question 2

*How do the writers of any **two** of the stories ... show a character facing up to difficult circumstances?*

Some candidates disadvantaged themselves by focusing their responses on 'facing' rather than 'facing up to' difficulties. There was some excellent work here on *The Pieces of Silver* which gave exhaustive explorations of Evelina and Clements' reaction to the challenges of his experiences at home and at school and on Ravi's contrasting experiences in *Games at Twilight*. *The Winter Oak* was less frequently but equally well used and there were some excellent essays dealing with Cathy's difficulties with Narayan and his parents in *The Young Couple*. The problem with *The Red Ball* is that there is less to say which is relevant here, and in *Leela's Friend* there is even less than that. Sidida runs away and makes one remark. Not a lot to go on.

Candidates appeared to have experienced greater problems in matching stories to task this year but displayed more empathy for the characters they wrote about.

Question 3

The passage is from the opening of the story.

*How does the writer show the Old Man's bad luck here and at **one** or **two** other moments in the novel?*

Responses to this task split Examiners who commented on it: some thought it was easier than the tasks on *Opening Worlds*; some thought it was more difficult. There were many effective analyses of the passage itself and, in some cases, what immediately surrounds it in the text. However, these comments were then followed either by nothing, or a much more generalised account of the loss of the marlin in the latter third of the story. Upper band answers were marked by a more detailed, analytical account of the attacks by the sharks and/or the conclusion of the story. Investigating the concept of 'luck' as in 'fate or fortune' proved to be a difficult concept and accounts of Santiago's failure to improve on his miserable 84 day record were perfectly acceptable.

Question 4

*Show how the writer presents the Old Man's suffering. You should refer to **one** or **two** moments in the novel.*

There were about the same number of responses to this as to Question 3 and the better ones dealt in detail (and some times exclusively, which was fine) with Santiago's physical suffering (the blotches/ his hands/ back, and so on). Few saw suffering as undergoing a test or trial of any more metaphysical kind. The best answers did, however, give a clear account of the final moments of the story, alluding to the symbolism attached to the carrying of the mast. Others dealt with Santiago's history, especially the alleged replacement of his wife (as companion) by Manolin.

Questions 5 & 6

*How is a traditional story used to teach a lesson here, and at **one** other occasion in the novel?*

In the title of his book, the District Commissioner refers to Okwonko and his people as one of the 'Primitive Tribes'. How does the writer show that the District Commissioner is wrong?

There were very few answers to either of these questions. Candidates had little idea of the place of fables ('traditional stories') in the work. What was substituted was a paraphrase of the story and little else. A few answers managed to see round this and talk about the story of the tortoise but with very little sense of the reasons for the telling.

Candidates found it a good deal easier and more inviting to ignore the second question and write about why Okonkwo and his people were one of the 'Primitive Tribes' rather than the opposite which was asked for.

Section B

Writing to ANALYSE, REVIEW, COMMENT

Question 7

How independent do you think you are? Do you want more or less independence in your life?

This double-headed task provided a clear structure for candidates if they chose to respond to it, which most did. The quality of the writing was, in many cases, in inverse proportion to the amount of independence the candidates thought they possessed! The best work was from those who questioned the whole concept of independence and saw it as neither the life enhancing elixir nor the society/family imploding malign influence most believed it to be. The weakest work, which was generally very (and on occasion richly) anecdotal, claimed considerable degrees of personal autonomy and liberation from parental stranglehold. There was much concern with labelling and stereotyping, as might be expected from adolescents. On balance some Examiners felt that this was a difficult task for candidates entered for this tier, especially in terms of defining *independence*, and one on which they performed less well than they did in Question 8. This, however, was not necessarily any less well than previous cohorts have performed on Question 7 generally.

The word *independence* was treated to a wider variety of misspellings than could be imagined.

Writing to ARGUE, PERSUADE, ADVISE

Question 8

A friend of yours is paying too much attention to someone you think is a bad influence. Write a letter persuading your friend them to think again about this situation.

This task elicited such a warm and enthusiastic response. Even the least successful candidates evinced palpable enjoyment from what they wrote. Once again we were shown the (considerable) extent to which PSHE is alive and well in Schools, with very detailed accounts of the dangers of smoking, drinking and illegal substance abuse. Other bad influences were not going to school, not doing homework and staying out late (although the same candidates often remarked this as an example of their independence in Question 7); cheating on boy/girlfriends and schoolgirl pregnancies.

All in all this question invited candidates to respond to the triplet warmly; their writing was insightful, purposeful and confident as a result.

Report on the Units taken in June 2007

The tasks in this section set, one Examiner said 'exactly the right tone.'

A feature of Section B was the benefit to the candidates provided by the shorter, more coherently linked prompt material: we will endeavour to sustain this trend in the future.

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. The entry of approximately forty three thousand candidates consisted principally of centres familiar to OCR. The entry clearly reflects the intentions of most centres to use 2432 for the terminal examinations, but we were pleased to note in the January session that centres are increasingly using the flexibility of entry, in terms of tier and time, to their advantage. This is the fourth year of this 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 be rewarded 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 working on two texts, responses revealed a genuine grasp of the treatment of the young by their elders and the characters' experience of unfairness and their reactions to it. 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 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 tale. 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 unfairness is exploited by the writer in their chosen stories. Similarly, good answers came from candidates who attempted Question 1 where they were able to empathise with the characters of Bolan and his parents in their struggle to find acceptance and a new life whilst preserving a sense of 'family'. Indeed, all six tales were used in responses to this question about the treatment of the young by their elders with much perceptive analysis regarding possible reasons for this. It was clear, however, that some stories were 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, 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 differences between Mr Brown and the Reverend James Smith. However, those who attempted Question 6 were rewarded with the opportunity to analyse closely two significant female characters in the novel, moving away from the heavily involved Okonkwo. This was clearly useful to candidates, given the time constraints of the paper. The very precise nature of the tasks produced a wide variety of thoughtful responses.

The performance of candidates on Questions 7 and 8 was generally very good. The opportunity to write a speech for a class in which they argued for or against the topic *Always be yourself, no matter what*, produced excellent responses. Only rarely did candidates feel that they had to surrender totally to the pressure from peers or the media to conform; indeed they were most robust in their defence of individuality and the joys of self expression. This bodes well for the future of our paper! The responses were frequently passionate and convincing. Equally, the opportunity to muse upon how independent they believed they were and their desire for more or less independence in their lives, 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

Section A: READING

Question 1

*Explore the treatment of the young by their elders and the possible reasons for it, here and in **one** other story from the list above?*

and

Question 2

*How do the writers show characters' experience of unfairness and their reaction to it in any **two** of the stories from the list above?*

The best responses revealed that 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 the treatment of the young by their elders and the possible reasons for it, or the characters' experience of unfairness and their reaction to it, supported by brief, appropriate references. Indeed, Examiners felt that the powerful moment captured in the passage in Question 1 produced many excellent responses, with the candidate very clear as to the underlying reasons for the actions of characters, before moving on to their second choice. They certainly grasped the writer's excellent portrayal of a family struggling to come to terms with a new environment. Question 2 enabled candidates to spend their time very profitably in responses that revealed genuine analysis of the unfairness experienced by characters and their reaction to it. Certainly all six stories provided rich material upon which candidates might draw, with the very open nature of the task frequently encouraging a personal and original response.

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 a range of misconceptions regarding the nature of the characters and the significance of events in the stories chosen. Invariably such responses were relatively short. Centres must ensure that the short stories are not seen as an easy alternative to the study of a full novel/novella. Candidates must experience an engaged study of all six stories if they are to be fully prepared for this examination.

A further limitation 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 selecting stories for analysis outside the six identified at the top of the Task 1/Task 2 page was extremely rare indeed. Centres are advised that such responses, when they occur, will be penalised. Candidates *must* respond to questions using the specified stories for the paper.

Question 3

How does Hemingway reveal Santiago's powers of endurance, here and elsewhere in the novel?

and

Question 4

'I am only better than him through trickery,' says Santiago. How does the writer show the importance of Santiago's skills, or 'tricks,' in his pursuit and conquest of the marlin?

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 tremendous experience of Santiago which has created this individual so steeped in skill which makes the novel such a powerful read. His intimacy with the world at sea and his knowledge of the art of fishing were drawn upon extensively in such responses. Question 3 proved more popular with candidates, perhaps because of the opportunity to narrow the focus on to the physical, mental and spiritual powers of endurance so evident in the novel. Those who attempted this task frequently responded particularly well to the passage through tremendous empathy with the old man.

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, although much was implied rather than being made explicit. Equally, a large number of candidates failed to go very far beyond the passage, which was evidently self penalising.

The least 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 highlighted Santiago's powers of endurance, or that Santiago had any genuine skills or 'tricks' to help him in his pursuit and conquest of the marlin.

Question 5

How does this passage help you to understand the differences between the ways in which Mr. Brown and his successor, the Reverend James Smith, bring Christianity to Umuofia?

and

Question 6

How far does Achebe succeed in bringing the characters of Ekwefi and Ezinma to life for you?

There were many outstanding responses to these tasks. The best examined in considerable detail the very obvious differences in the nature of the characters and tactics employed by Brown and Smith, represented so powerfully in the passage and the next section of the novel. Candidates drew upon the sensitive work so carefully engineered by Brown, contrasting so markedly with the arrogant Smith who believed he could impose his will upon the villagers through his destructive zeal. Equally, an understanding of Ekwefi and Ezinma, drawn from Achebe's ability to bring these characters to life, particularly with regard to their relationship with one another, revealed genuine engagement with the whole text through short, pertinent references which were invariably focused on the question.

Middle range responses revealed a genuine grasp of the characters and the relationship between Ekwefi and Enzinma, and indeed the differences between Brown and Smith, but comments were frequently not supported with pertinent reference and quotation. These accessible tasks should have encouraged a very close study of the text where the characters are so clearly captured for the reader.

The least successful responses struggled to find useful references in the extract and text. Scripts at this level were almost invariably marked by superficial analysis that lost focus of both tasks. Unsupported narrative was very much in evidence in responses that were frequently very short.

Section B

Writing to ANALYSE, REVIEW, COMMENT

Question 7

How independent do you think you are? Do you want more or less independence in your life?

Examiners reported 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 most successful responses were tremendously wide ranging, analytical and thought provoking, balancing the need for independence of spirit with the importance of family dependence through mutual support, particularly at this time in their lives. Many good responses went on to examine how both are vital to the growth of the individual, 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. However, one particular candidate certainly alarmed her Examiner with a passing reference to the question which stated, 'I will be independent when I am old enough to drive. At the moment I am only allowed to take the car if it's to pick up a takeaway.'

Candidates from the middle and lower ranges, on the other hand, tended to rely heavily on the importance of a few very obvious examples of their independence, in practical terms, or did little more than paraphrase the stimulus material provided. Weaker candidates frequently fell into a discussion of whether they were independent or not, without any clear direction as to the point they were trying to make.

Question 8

Your class is discussing the topic 'Always be yourself, no matter what'.

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

High level responses revealed a positive, persuasive tone, frequently marked by a confident 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 peer and media pressure. Such work was invariably influenced by cogent argument, almost all candidates supporting the view that it is vital to be yourself if you are to be truly comfortable and fulfilled, whilst at the same time recognising that certain occasions do require a modicum of decorum if we are to avoid offending those we share this world with. Clearly the topic had engaged candidates, many of whom were determined to encourage others to be as genuine as possible in communicating thoughts and values. The majority found an appropriate tone of address, a rational development of ideas and a powerful conclusion suitable for the purpose of the task. One such candidate simply concluded, 'My life "rocks my socks" because I am me!'

Candidates producing responses at the 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, the least successful responses merely saw the task as an opportunity to embark on a rather superficial examination of the writers not giving in to following trends in fashion, or following their friends into petty crime, ignoring the requirement to argue their 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 importance of individuality and the worth of celebrating our diversity and unique natures, cogently brought together with considerable maturity of thought and expression. 'So go on ... dare to be different ... dare to be yourself.'

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

General Comments

At Bands 4 and 5 there was evidence of sound 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 simply had not prepared the literary texts. There were a few examples of candidates simply copying out large sections of the play or poems with no comment of their own.

Writing to EXPLORE, IMAGINE, ENTERTAIN

Question 1

Copy out the sentence below and then continue the story, showing the thoughts and feelings of the person telling the story.

My heart beat faster as I listened anxiously to hear the long-awaited words: 'And now for our next contestant...'

This question established the focus for the writing as the thoughts and feelings of the person telling the story. The wording, changed from 'thoughts and feelings of the narrator' as set in June 2006, caused confusion for some candidates who believed that they needed to explore what it would be like to write such a story. For Bands 4 and 5 the situation and feelings need to be at least convincing at times, and this was achieved more readily by those who based their stories around situations which had an element of personal experience, or a knowledge of television quiz shows (*Who Wants to be a Millionaire*) and talent competitions (*X Factor*). 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 simply replicate the television show on which their narrative was based; these responses tended to become straightforward and often very lengthy narratives which lost structure and focus on the question. It was evident that not all candidates understood the word 'contestant' which then caused them some difficulties in knowing how to continue. Some answers created a situation where the narrator was a participant in a gruesome and/or sinister test and these often became 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 where candidates moved from the past tense of the opening sentence into the present and then were unsure of how to progress. 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, to score a mark in Band 4.

Section B: READING

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 a film version of the play, 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 2

- (a) Choose the **male** character in *Much Ado About Nothing* whose behaviour interests you the most. Write about what you find interesting in:
- what he says and does
 - how his behaviour affects other characters.
- (b) Why do you think Don John is important in the play *Much Ado About Nothing*? Write about:
- how his behaviour affects other characters in the play
 - the effects on the audience of what he says and does.

There were very few responses to this text. For 2a) candidates either selected Benedick or Don John. They were able to make straightforward points about what the characters say and do, supporting them with factual, if rather lengthy, quotations. In response to 2b), the effect Don John has on other characters tended to lead candidates into a narrative account of what was said and done. The effects on the audience elicited simple comments of anger and disapproval.

Romeo and Juliet

Question 3

- (a) Choose the **female** character in *Romeo and Juliet* whose behaviour interests you the most. Write about what you find interesting in:
- what she says and does
 - how her behaviour affects other characters.
- (b) Choose one moment in *Romeo and Juliet* where Shakespeare creates a tense or violent atmosphere. Write about:
- how what the characters say and do creates this atmosphere
 - how this moment affects what happens later in the play

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, and the number of references used was often impressive in the time available. The best answers to 3a focussed on the character of the Nurse, who clearly proved memorable to candidates. They mainly focused on her role as a substitute mother to Juliet and messenger/go-between for the lovers and were able to provide straightforward and relevant quotations to support their points. There was a tendency to over-exaggerate her effect on other characters, 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. Some of the best responses considered the impact of her advice to Juliet to marry Paris. Juliet was the other character chosen and candidates focused on her love for Romeo in terms of what she was willing to do for her love and/or her

relationship with her parents. Responses which focused on Juliet tended to be more likely to become narrative in approach.

Responses to 3b made apt choice of moments of violence and tension, often selecting to explore Tybalt's reaction to Romeo at the ball, the opening scene of the play, the killing of Mercutio and Tybalt or Lord Capulet's treatment of Juliet when she refuses to marry Paris. They were able to see how the feud created the violence and saw the consequences of the fighting and deaths; the best began to see how tension was built up while the less successful responses tended to narrate what happened after the selected moment or became lost in supposition of the 'if Romeo had not killed Tybalt then...' variety.

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

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 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.

SECTION C: War

Question 4

*How do the poets use words and images to show the importance of soldiers doing their duty, in **two** of the following poems?*

(page 34) Lovelace *To Lucasta, Going to the Wars*

(page 35) Newbolt *Vitai Lampada*

(page 36) Tennyson *The Charge of the Light Brigade*

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). Consequently, the level of understanding of these poems was limited with only a little sense of appreciation of the feelings about war being conveyed. Candidates were able to identify the references to soldiers behaving in a heroic way in these poems. While there was some confusion with regard to *To Lucasta* in terms of the references to love, they were able to appreciate the soldier's belief that it was the right thing for him to go and fight. The notion of sportsmanship in *Vitai Lampada* was understood and some reference made to how this could apply to war. In Tennyson's poem, the danger the soldiers faced was grasped; a sense that they were therefore behaving heroically was implied and sometimes directly stated.

SECTION D: Town and Country

Question 5

*How do the poets use words and images to show peaceful and pleasant aspects of the countryside, in **two** of the following poems?*

(page 47) Keats *To Autumn*

(page 49) Kipling *The Way Through the Woods*

(page 51) Yeats *The Lake Isle of Innisfree*

Town and Country was the more popular of the two pre-1900 sections and candidates were able to make comments at all band levels which indicated some understanding of the feelings the

poets have about the places. Responses to Keats's poem focussed on his references to fruit, flowers and bees and some candidates referred to a relaxed mood in the poem, taking the references to a woman in the second stanza literally, rather than seeing it as the personification of Autumn. The references to the other seasons in the poem caused some confusion. Yeats's strong desire to go to Innisfree was understood but at a simple level, with many candidates mainly focusing on his desire for peace and the use of repetition in describing this. Some made reference to the natural elements at Innisfree which made this a pleasant place to be. In response to *The Way Through the Woods*, candidates commented on the sense of peace in the wood and the freedom for animals to roam. Some responses took literally the references to the sounds of a horse and a skirt in the second stanza, and candidates were not always clear as to whether the poet was being positive or negative about the closing of the road. In general, they did not seem to grasp the sense of mystery in the poem.

SECTION G: How It Looks From Here

Question 6

Show how the poets use words and images about animals to express thoughts and feelings, in **two** of the following poems.

(page 89) Thomas *The Cat and the Sea*

(page 90) Porter *Mort aux Chats*

(page 91) Logue *Rat, O Rat...*

There were very few responses to this section and candidates who did so were only able to make some simple comments about the poets' use of animals in terms of how they felt about them.

SECTION H: Poetry of the 1914-1918 War (ii)

Question 7

How do the poets use words and images to show different reactions of soldiers to war, in **two** of the following poems?

(page 105) Owen *Spring Offensive*

(page 106) Gurney *The Bohemians*

(page 106) Sassoon *Lamentations*

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 focused 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'. Responses to *The Bohemians* showed a simple understanding of the idea that not everyone behaved in a heroic and patriotic way in war, but tended to focus mainly on the refusal to dress correctly and not grasp the message that, whether or not soldiers conformed, they still died. Owen's poem was rarely used and responses tended to make simple comments about descriptions of nature which were unrelated to the question.

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

General Comments

While acute pressure of time continues to make this a particularly challenging paper, the number of intelligent, sensitive and highly skilled responses in some of the best scripts was gratifying and even astounding. Also pleasing was the evidence of enjoyment seen, not only in the Shakespeare tasks but also in some of the responses to poetry.

However, enthusiastic engagement with the writing task led many candidates into the trap of serious mismanagement of time, to the detriment of the rest of the paper, which is still worth 50% of the total marks available. Although few rubric errors were evident in this session, there were still some candidates who wrote on 3 poems instead of 2, immediately leaving themselves little time to show any depth of understanding or language analysis. There was a concerning increase in the practice of devoting an entire opening paragraph to a statement of what the candidate intended to do and show, which amounted to little more than a repetition of the question. With a maximum of 30 minutes for each question in Section B, including the essential time for thinking and planning, this and similarly wordy introductions are luxuries most candidates can ill-afford. It is sufficient to refer either to the title of the poem, or to the surname of the poet. In this examination we do not require both. Neither is an introduction to the political or social mores of the time looked for here. Such understanding is best implied through snippets of comment incorporated within the main body of text analysis.

Writing to EXPLORE, IMAGINE, ENTERTAIN

Question 1

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

My heart beat faster as I listened anxiously to hear the long-awaited words: 'And now for our next contestant...'

The instructions specifically directed candidates to explore the thoughts and feelings of the narrator. Although clearly these and all relevant narrative skills could only be demonstrated within a framework involving situation, atmosphere and, to some extent, plot, those responses that leapt rapidly from the opening sentence to an action-packed storyline involving the well-worn favourites – the haunted houses, kidnappings, drug barons, and vampire scenarios – could not be seen as convincing continuations, nor as totally suitable to the question. Nevertheless, examiners enjoyed the variety of fresh responses seen this year, ranging from clearly much-loved television game and talent shows to very sensitive, poignant accounts of vital auditions for music, ballet, or gymnastic positions, or, conversely, leaping forward or back in time to gladiatorial combat, unevenly waged boxing matches, or man pitched against aliens or mythological creatures. Although some of these responses remained largely derivative, some equally splendid answers effected a pastiche of a well-worn genre wholly convincingly. The most successful employed a full range of narrative skills, using figurative and descriptive language to convey setting and characters in sufficient detail to engage fully the interest of the reader in the situation. They explored the narrator's feelings of nervous apprehension followed by the sense of fulfilment, and were also aware of the artificiality and exploitation involved in the television world, and of the psychological effects of sparring against a worthy opponent. The least successful responses tended to degenerate into a blow by blow account of each stage of the contest, paying scant attention to choice of vocabulary and sentence structures for effect.

Candidates are well-advised to plan carefully before they commence writing, aiming for quality, not quantity. It is not necessary, even desirable, to complete the whole story. All that is required is sufficient development to fulfil the band criteria – for most candidates this entails, at most, two sides of average handwriting and spacing. Significantly, the least successful answers were frequently the longest. AO3ii requires a deliberate organisation of material into an overall structure, including paragraphs. Many answers caused unnecessary confusion to the reader by failing to paragraph dialogue adequately, and some forgot about paragraphing altogether. Others marked out each section through the use of paragraphing but failed to direct the overall structure, which resulted in unnecessary, even distracting, additional developments or sub plots, which weakened the build up of atmosphere or sympathy with the narrator. Some even lost sight of the narrator altogether. Others tried unsuccessfully to interweave narration with stream of consciousness writing, which often resulted in tense confusion except for the most skilled writers. Although responses to this task were marked as first draft writing, marks for AO3iii were lost where spelling errors were frequent and wide-ranging rather than occasional slips, and there was little evidence of control over the structuring and punctuation of sentences. Conversely, however, Examiners give more credit to the candidate who makes mistakes through attempting ambitious writing, varying sentence structures and using a wide, more complex range of vocabulary for effect, than to the careful, simple account that shows very little awareness of the need to entertain or move the reader.

Section B: Reading

SHAKESPEARE

This year there was an alarming tendency in many responses to provide a resume of the mores of Shakespeare's time and audience, or sponsor's expectations, before focusing on the question, again a luxury considering the time restraints. As always, the best answers for the Shakespeare questions were planned to be strictly relevant to the question, hence geared to the key elements: 'role' requiring some kind of overview and a development beyond mere character analysis, and 'the way he/she is presented' leading on to explore how this role is put across to the audience through language used, comments by other characters, juxtapositioning of events, etc. Similarly, the importance of conflict involves more than an account of the fighting scenes; again it requires an overview to establish its thematic significance as well as its importance to the plot. All points raised needed supporting evidence from the text, the best in the form of short snippets of quotation interwoven into the fabric of the answer rather than several lines of text at a time, relying on the Examiner to identify the significant elements.

Much Ado About Nothing

Question 2

- (a) Choose one **male** character you find particularly interesting in *Much Ado About Nothing* and explain what interests you about his role and the way he is presented.

Regardless of the choice of character, the hallmarks of the best answers were:

- the ability to make relevant use of more than one scene in the play – hence, for example, if choosing Benedick, not just one instance of the 'merry war' with Beatrice, but possibly his reaction to the accusations against Hero, and to the dilemma presented by Beatrice's command to 'Kill Claudio'.
- the ability to identify his role in terms of a source of humour, a parallel and foil to the relationship between Claudio and Hero, and a key element in the recurring theme of deception and misunderstandings
- the ability to focus on *how* he is presented rather than merely narrating what happens to him – hence possibly referring not only to Beatrice's comments but how the other male characters regard him and how he views his own situation in soliloquy.

Similarly, for Don John, a full exploration of his villainy as expressed in his own words, the comment by Benedick after the accusation of Hero, and the suffering caused, could merit a mark at Band 4 or 3, but for Bands 2 and 1, Examiners were expecting some understanding of his contribution to the theme of deception, and how his actions exposed the weaknesses in Claudio as a lover, Leonato as a father, and indeed a society that would rather listen to the words of a known trouble-maker than his female victim of hitherto virtuous reputation. There were also some excellent responses to Dogberry that focused on his comic role, his part in exposing Don John's plot, and his thematic significance in the way he exposed the weaknesses of his so-called superiors.

(b) *Explore the role of Don John in Much Ado About Nothing.*

Whereas the least successful answers rarely achieved more than a character study and/or a narrative account of Don John's actions, with often very little understanding shown of the social repercussions of his bastardy, and hence his source of bitterness, there were many who were able to show a clear understanding of his role in bringing suspense to the plot, as well as his thematic importance. He could be seen as a force for evil working against good, using deception by other characters in the play as a means of wreaking revenge on Claudio and his brother, Don Pedro, rejoicing in the suffering caused, in contrast to the examples of deception arising out of good intentions. His actions expose the weaknesses in Claudio and possibly the etiquette of courtship in that he is so easily deceived about the woman he 'loves', and also the weaknesses in Leonato that he can turn so bitterly and swiftly against his beloved daughter at another man's word. This exposure in turn enables the love between Beatrice and Benedick to flourish and appear infinitely more attractive.

Romeo and Juliet

Question 3

(a) *Choose one **female** character you find particularly interesting in Romeo and Juliet and explain what interests you about her role and the way she is presented.*

In effect there were only three possible choices of female character, the most popular by far being Juliet, closely followed by the Nurse. Most responses to Juliet were structured on her change of character or maturity so swiftly during the play, contrasting her modesty and obedience as a dutiful daughter shown in the opening scenes with her scheming to marry in secret, culminating in her faking her own death, and ultimately defying Friar Lawrence and taking her own life. Good answers looked at key words said during the courtship, or on hearing that Romeo had killed her cousin, or when facing her fears prior to taking the potion as one means of showing how she is presented. The best answers looked at her thematic significance in terms of the fated victim of the feud, destined to die to bring reconciliation to the two families, or as the symbol of true, pure love as supported by the imagery used in courtship, the use made of contrasting light and darkness, and her contrast to the earthiness of the Nurse and Mercutio.

Similarly, most candidates could show a fairly wide knowledge of the play by outlining the actions of the Nurse on different occasions, although too many covered little more than the early scenes where her love for Juliet and her bawdy sense of humour are first apparent. It was disappointing when answers actually mentioned that she betrayed Juliet by advising her to marry Paris, yet failed to see here her role as a catalyst that forced Juliet to turn to Friar Lawrence for help, ultimately resulting in her death. The best answers analysed her role in terms of how she provided essential humour, as seen in her rambling, bawdy conversations, her exchanges with Mercutio, and her teasing of Juliet; as a foil to the more spiritual, pure love of Romeo and Juliet; as a possible instrument of Fate to fulfil the warnings of the Prologue, as well as her contribution to the plot as the go-between, the bringer of bad tidings, and the betrayal of Juliet.

A few candidates chose Lady Capulet, but as she appears infrequently in the play, it was important to recognise the significance of each occasion and to look closely at evidence from the text. Although most answers confidently showed how she did not share a close understanding relationship with her daughter (some betraying their limited understanding of the custom of the time by condemning her for not breast feeding her baby), few looked closely at her efforts to prevent her husband from joining in the brawl, contrasting with her extreme bitterness when Tybalt is killed and her determination that Romeo should pay the price, a clear example of how the feud could never die down without the intervention of Fate. Many commented on her callous attitude towards Juliet when she refused to obey her Father and marry Paris, another factor contributing towards Juliet's desperation and ultimate death, but few commented on how she expressed her grief on believing her daughter was dead.

(b) Explore the importance of conflict in Romeo and Juliet.

This question gave scope to candidates to show their appreciation of the play as drama, (although still too many referred to it as a novel, or to the effects on the reader), and to show a perceptive overview by tracing how the warning from the Prologue of what must happen to the lovers as the only way in which the feud can be healed is rapidly exemplified in the words of hatred and the acts of violence ensuing from the brawl between the servants in the opening scene. Some of the best responses saw how the nature of conflict broadens out: into the old versus the young, in the confrontation between Capulet and Tybalt; into the demands of love versus hatred and a sense of family honour, in the conflict between Tybalt and Romeo; in Romeo's internal conflict of loyalty between love of Juliet and loyalty to his friends; in Juliet's love of family yet renunciation of her name for love of Romeo; in Juliet's debate between love for her slain cousin and love for her husband. Most responses could identify a causal link between the conflict between the families and the danger to the lovers and their ultimate demise. The least successful produced largely a narrative account, and clearly saw conflict as merely synonymous with fighting. If they did refer to the Prologue, they were unable to explain the thematic significance of their warning. Better answers focused on how conflict brought suspense and dramatic tension to the play, although some merely repeated the same idea in different forms or examples. Others chose apt quotations to demonstrate the extremes of hatred and significant or ominous moments such as the dying Mercutio's curse on the two families. A few responses still showed some confusion between modern film versions and the text, with references to guns and petrol stations.

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

With some very honourable exceptions, this section of the paper frequently produced the least successful responses from candidates. There seem to be three main reasons for this: first, lack of time management, resulting in a very rushed, thin, or unbalanced response, if present at all; second, inadequate revision resulting in basic misinterpretations of the poems, or a transparently generalised approach showing general knowledge of the main themes in the section (for example, in Question 7 the contrast between the realities of war and the picture painted by the propagandists, with no attempt to look closely at the text); third, the approach that turns the question into a formulaic exercise designed to spot as many techniques or devices as possible without being able to explain their effects, or how they relate to the question. All too often the answer launches straight into an examination of structure and rhyme scheme with either no comment on the effect on the reader, or such a vague comment that could apply to almost any poem or question (for example, 'it makes it more emphatic' (of what?), 'it organises the poet's thoughts' (which are?)). Similarly, enjambement is recognised as 'making the poem flow', 'increasing the pace', but still not related to the question and the particular effect on the reader at that moment in that context. However, there were many answers showing an engaged, intelligent and sensitive response to the poems, and a consistent attempt to explain the effects

of language without necessarily being able to use the correct technical terms. Some candidates tackle the poetry question first, perhaps to ensure they do it justice.

To achieve their full potential, candidates are strongly advised to identify the key words in the question, and to choose the two poems out of the three that they feel most confident in using in response to this (which may not necessarily mean the two they know most about). Their response would be made clear to the Examiner if they showed how the content of each poem related to the question, before looking at the devices used for effect. If choosing to compare the two poems throughout, which is not a requirement for this paper, it is important not to strain to find similarities, as this can lead to a very superficial approach (for example, Kipling is describing a woodland scene; Yeats, an island; Lovelace refers to warfare using a horse and sword; Newbolt's soldiers are facing guns). Where a short poem has been selected, for example, *The Cat and the Sea*, a close analysis of all the text will be relevant and expected. Conversely, a long, dense poem, such as Owen's *Spring Offensive*, requires the candidate to ignore elements that are not relevant (e.g. a detailed response to the vivid portrayal of the horrors of the battle scene), but it offers scope to select and comment on only those examples of the use of language about which candidates are most confident. Whether the question wording is 'Explore' or 'Discuss some of the ways...', a full answer should be using the opportunity to look at how content, tone and language devices are used as 'ways'. When running out of time, it would be wise to demonstrate perceptive understanding of the more complex parts of the poem where possible and relevant, for example, the significance of the closing lines of the poems in Question 7. Having established what is being shown, it is always better to select and analyse in detail a few examples of how the language used conveys this, rather than paraphrasing the whole poem or repeating the same ideas in slightly different wording. The least successful answers still tend to explain or translate the text, using lengthy quotation as padding and showing very little real understanding. Others look too hard for subtleties or significance in the choice of rhyme scheme that are not convincing.

SECTION C: WAR

Question 4

Explore some of the ways in which the poets show the importance of honour and duty in **two** of the following poems:

(page 34)	Lovelace	<i>To Lucasta, Going to the Wars</i>
(page 35)	Newbolt	<i>Vitai Lampada</i>
(page 36)	Tennyson	<i>The Charge of the Light Brigade</i>

Examiners were looking for an understanding of how the importance of honour and duty were conveyed. Although most answers recognised that the young man's devotion to honour must be strong if he felt the need to abandon his lover, Lucasta, few explored the concept of war becoming his new 'mistress', or how the two 'loves' were intertwined. Although some commented on the likelihood that he would die in battle, few picked up the contrast between the implied gentle nature of their courtship suggested by 'chaste breast', 'quiet mind' and 'nunnery' and the adventure offered by war in 'fly', 'chase' and the strong emphatic monosyllabic listing of the traditional instruments of war, 'sword, horse and shield'. The least successful responses showed some confusion, for example, some thought he had been living in the nunnery; others merely rephrased the same idea several times, or identified rhyming patterns and examples of enjambement, but were unable to give a convincing explanation of their effect. Those who chose *Vitai Lampada* mostly understood the cricket analogy, although there were a few who thought the game was football. Likewise, the vivid description of the realities of war in the 2nd stanza was seen as emphasising how strong the sense of honour had to be to press on, regardless of the dangers. However, few were able to explore the effects of interweaving the two situations, and, despite identifying the repetition of the refrain at the end of each stanza, few could offer comment on its effect. Nevertheless, even where the complexities of the poem were beyond their understanding, many answers scored at least a Band 4 by appreciating the motivation of

'his Captain's hand on his shoulder smote', and commenting on the effect of the imagery used in 'The sand of the desert is sodden red' and 'The river of death has brimmed his banks'. Most responses to Tennyson's poem understood the situation faced by the Light Brigade and the extraordinary courage and dedication to duty it took to obey such a foolish order without question. Again, the discriminator lay in how convincingly answers could comment on the devices used to emphasise this; most common were references to the repetition of, yet with significant changes in, the refrain, and the repetition of 'cannon' and 'flashed', and the image used of 'the jaws of Death' and 'the mouth of Hell'. Only the best could follow through the linguistic devices that heightened the dramatic effect, or fully appreciate the effect of the rhetorical question in the final stanza.

SECTION D: Town and Country

Question 5

Explore some of the ways in which the poets create a strong sense of atmosphere in **two** of the following poems.

(page 47)	Keats	<i>To Autumn</i>
(page 49)	Kipling	<i>The Way Through the Woods</i>
(page 51)	Yeats	<i>The Lake Isle of Innisfree</i>

Answers needed to identify the kind of atmosphere conveyed in each poem: the rich plenty, pleasant warmth, soporific sensation in Keats, the mysterious as well as the pleasant, peaceful atmosphere of Nature reclaiming her own in Kipling, and the peace and simplicity in Yeats. Many answers strayed from atmosphere to a journey through three different seasons, one per stanza, in Keats, listing the details from nature that could be seen, and possibly recognising examples of personification and alliteration, but not their effects. The best looked closely at the text to identify the rich harvest implied in 'swell the gourd', 'plump the hazel shells', the slow, almost drugged impression given by 'drowsed with the fume', and 'last oozyings', and the harmonious atmosphere at the end of the day with 'rosy hue', and the 'music' provided by so many different creatures. Similarly, responses to Kipling often did no more than itemise all the sights and sounds of nature, even confusing the ghostly 'swish of a skirt' and 'beat of a horse's feet' with signs that nature had completely taken over the woods. Some even thought the poet mourned the closing of the road. However, good answers engaged with the build up to the mysterious ending, from the use of the anonymous 'they', the almost fairytale quality of the narration, 'Only the keeper sees', the ominous hissing sounds in 'swish of a skirt' and 'misty solitudes', and the use of the ellipsis before the final line. The best responses to Yeats's poem analysed his list of wants to see the idyllic return to a natural simple way of life; the emphasis on gentle harmonious sounds and light and colours and the strong contrast between 'purple glow' and the 'pavements grey' of the town to show the beauty, peace and freedom of Innisfree.

SECTION G: How It Looks From Here

Question 6

Explore some of the ways in which the poets use animals to express their thoughts and feelings, in **two** of the following poems.

(page 89)	Thomas	<i>The Cat and the Sea</i>
(page 90)	Porter	<i>Mort aux Chats</i>
(page 91)	Logue	<i>Rat, O Rat...</i>

Although only a small number of candidates attempted this question, there were some spirited responses to *Mort aux Chats* and *Rat, O Rat...* that enjoyed exploring possible social and political implications, and fully recognised the heavy irony used to signal the poets' true feelings.

However, few were able to analyse in any depth or detail some of the language used, most, at best, merely paraphrasing the text, and stating, without comment, that there was an absence of rhyme scheme, a frequent use of brackets and enjambement. Although *The Cat and the Sea* is a short poem, there is still scope to comment on the incongruity of a cat, normally associated with a cosy interior or hunting through undergrowth, pictured here on a 'bare' cliff top, in cold, grey, glassy surroundings, the only colour suggested in the cat's eyes, a hint of the gorse to come. The use of 'bare', 'domestic', 'sea's mirror', and 'cold interiors' offers ample opportunity to comment on the poet's choice of language.

SECTION H: Poetry of the 1914-1918 War (ii)

Question 7

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

(page 105)	Owen	<i>Spring Offensive</i>
(page 106)	Gurney	<i>The Bohemians</i>
(page 107)	Sassoon	<i>Lamentations</i>

Again, many answers immediately referred to technical devices, including organisation into stanzas and rhyme schemes, without first identifying the different reactions of soldiers to war, prior to attempting to analyse how these reactions were being explored. It would be impossible in the time allowed to do full justice to Owen's poem. The most successful answers identified the contrast between those who 'carelessly slept', seizing the momentary respite, with the 'many' who believed their death was imminent, and experienced a range of emotions including fear, awe and a sense of unreality conveyed through references to 'the end of the world'/'stark blank sky' and 'fearfully flashed the sky's mysterious glass'. They showed perceptive understanding of how Nature appeared to be both trying to ease their 'pains' and prevent them from continuing on over the ridge to their death ('clung to them like sorrowing arms') and later 'set sudden cups in thousands for their blood', a reflection of the mixed feelings within each man's heart, both before and, for the few who survived, after the battle. The dramatic descriptions of the battle were too numerous to allow exploration in detail, but they helped provide the insight to explore the most complex reaction of all implied by the use of the question at the end. Less successful answers fell into two main categories: either narrating the soldiers' experiences in general terms, with little or no close textual analysis, or device spotting (e.g. alliteration in 'fearfully flashed', enjambement, similes, metaphors and personification). Most responses to *The Bohemians* were able to identify the two main reactions: those who tried to ignore army regulations as much as possible and continue with the process of extracting the maximum possible enjoyment out of life via Bridge, smoking and 'jesting' versus those who earnestly 'earned promotions' and 'argued of army ways'. However, many thought the rebels died off 'one by one' as a direct consequence of their negligence, and were being criticised by the poet. The discriminators were twofold: firstly, the perceptive understanding of the poet's implied criticism of the effect of army life on the dutiful soldiers ('wrenched what little soul they had still further from shape') and the significance of the final line 'In Artois or Picardy they lie – free of useless fashions'; secondly, the ability to choose and comment on some of the poet's use of language, such as 'Certain people', 'after latest fashions', 'hours that sped like evil for quickness', 'burnished brasses', 'wrenched'.

Report on the Units taken in June 2007

Again, *Lamentations*, though short, is rich with examples of careful use of language and provides three different reactions: the wild grief of the bereaved soldier; the 'puzzled' incomprehension of the sergeant who has become only too used to death in war, and the poet's reaction that it is impossible to go on believing in the value of fighting for your country when experiencing loss on such a scale. Most answers understood the grief, though not all recognised the euphemism for death, and how the description of the grieving soldier's behaviour suggested he had been reduced to the level of a child or animal, or actual insanity by the intensity of his feelings. Many commented on the use of 'bleeding war'. However, some tried to answer more from general knowledge than examination of the text, explaining his behaviour in terms of shell shock, or through being tortured in a form of prison or internment camp.

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 worked hard to apply the marking criteria consistently and teachers seem confident in finding an overall mark that reflects the overall standard of the work of their students. In this exam session it was particularly noticeable that marking was much more in line with standards than in recent years

In terms of general administration, several Moderators reported that some centres found it difficult to meet the designated deadlines, and this did not help the overall moderation process as many Moderators received folders as much as two weeks late after the May half term. The majority of Centres did manage to meet the May 15th deadline, however, for sending off MS1 Mark Sheets, and a number of centres sent coursework and MS1s well in advance of this deadline which was really helpful.

Some general points that Centres might consider:

- **MS1 Mark sheets.** Many Centres are still sending to Moderators carbon copies of marks 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.
- **Centre Authentication forms.** Only a few Centres failed to send these with their initial sample. A number of Centres misunderstood the requirement and sent one copy per folder/teacher, or indeed just one copy, when one copy for each of 2434; 2443 and 2447 was required.
- **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.
- **Coursework Assessment forms.** Sometimes the Moderators were hampered by the lack of useful information on these forms. Tasks are still not always fully written out on the assessment form, and the Moderators were faced with general titles like 'Macbeth' or 'War poetry', and then had to work out what the task might have been. Some Centres are still not clearly indicating the breakdown of marks in the Writing piece into a total for A03 i and ii and A03 iii. Where internal moderation had taken place and marks had been changed, some Moderators found it difficult to ascertain what the final mark was and what had led to it being changed.

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*, but *The Merchant of Venice* was more popular this year, as well as *Much Ado*, *Othello* and *Henry V*.

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

Task setting seemed generally to have been much better in this session, and more candidates were commenting not just on language and characters but also on 'stagecraft'.

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. Moderators reported stimulating responses to tasks such as 'Is Henry a good king, or merely a successful one?' (*Henry V*) and 'Discuss the presentation of conscience in *Macbeth*.'

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, many candidates are still demonstrating spurious expertise in identifying structural and presentational devices – spurious because they are unable to go on to show the effects of these upon the reader. A number of Moderators reported that candidates were still ignoring structure and form in their responses.

Again the majority of centres in this entry had clearly responded to previous reports and had only chosen to compare two poems, which led to much more effective and detailed responses. There was increasing evidence that some candidates are comparing pre and post 1914 poetry, but giving limited response to the pre 1914 poem.

The most popular poets were again Blake, Wordsworth, Browning and Tennyson, and some of the poets from *Opening Lines* were also popular this time round.

Some of the best responses to poetry were from candidates where they had been invited to respond to the poems through tasks that specifically addressed the criteria and remembered that they were writing about poems and not stories!

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.

AO 3.3. Writing

Again it was encouraging to see the diversity of responses with some candidates clearly taking the opportunity to display their creative talent. Generally pieces tended to be shorter and more crafted, with lots of well developed narrative voice. One Moderator reported that writing your own obituary was an interesting piece, though clearly this presented challenges which might lead to a restricted style. There was also again evidence of empathic responses as characters in plays and novels, and again the danger with this type of task is that the more able candidates may be too derivative and create an 'imagined situation' that is not entirely their own.

Report on the Units taken in June 2007

'The Assassin' seemed to be on the run(!) and was, happily, much less popular in this examination.

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 is 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. Repeatedly candidates have achieved their potential and for many this Unit has been their most successful one. 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 to be tighter as regards the associated administration. The majority of Centres met the coursework deadline date, sent all the relevant paperwork and the centre-chosen sample and did all that was possible to aid the Moderator and the moderation process. Unfortunately, these Centres were in marked contrast to those which required moderators to do a great deal of chasing up: of Centre Authentication forms and Internal Standardisation forms, together with requests for the sample, which is selected by the Centre and should accompany the MS1 mark sheets. So despite procedures and proforma letters sent by Moderators to assist centres with the process and to act as reminders, a great deal of time was spent on administrative problems; this inevitably led to a slowing down of the process. Attention is therefore strongly drawn to the Administration Guidance Booklet sent to all centres to help with this aspect of the Unit.

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 their 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. As always, the vast majority of centres presented full and detailed records, but there were several where (sometimes because of problems with staffing) assessment forms had not been maintained as an on-going record; these Centres found they were unable to provide evidence of candidate achievement. It is a Centre's responsibility to have procedures in place which are sufficiently rigorous to mitigate against staff absences, changes of staff and the like. Many centres now maintain an on-going, centrally-held, electronic data base of marks for candidates, together with written records.

Some Centres continue to submit details for only 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 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. If records are full and descriptions clear, this leads on to Moderators being given an opportunity to comment on the appropriateness of tasks set..

Centres have continued to set tasks appropriate to their candidates, but it is worth emphasising that for the higher bands, candidates must be set challenging tasks and be moved out of the familiar – material, situation and audience. The converse is also an issue, with weaker candidates being set tasks which are self-penalising. Candidates with little empathy for Literature may well achieve greater success with non-literary tasks.

Report on the Units taken in June 2007

Some Centres are still having problems with the drama-focused context. Tasks do not have to be based on a drama text or even a literary one; indeed more scope may be granted if candidates are freed to create independent roles.

In the majority of Centres Internal Standardisation procedures continue to be thorough and professional. However, for a small number of centres, their attention is drawn to the three available Training and Guidance videos/ DVDs.

Advisory and Moderation visits were successful, providing on-going support and guidance for centres. Visiting Moderators witnessed much excellent work being done with candidates and as always these visits provided teachers with an opportunity to discuss the application of the criteria and the appropriateness of task setting.

Finally, Centres giving cause for concern are thankfully a small minority; most teachers are, as always, to be congratulated for their continuing commitment in preparing candidates and assessing them for this Unit 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 2007 Assessment Session**

Unit Threshold Marks

<i>Unit</i>		Maximum Mark	a*	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	u
2431/1	Raw	63				53	45	37	29	21	0
	UMS	62				54	45	36	27	18	0
2431/2	Raw	90	75	69	62	55	46	41			0
	UMS	90	81	72	63	54	45	41			0
2432/1	Raw	63				57	49	41	34	27	0
	UMS	62				54	45	36	27	18	0
2432/2	Raw	90	78	71	63	56	46	41			0
	UMS	90	81	72	63	54	45	41			0
2433/1	Raw	41				32	26	21	16	11	0
	UMS	41				36	30	24	18	12	0
2433/2	Raw	60	52	46	39	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
	5.9	21.8	45.1	68.2	84.5	92.8	96.8	98.9	100.0	61655

61655 candidates were entered for aggregation this session

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.

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations)
1 Hills Road
Cambridge
CB1 2EU

OCR Customer Contact Centre

(General Qualifications)

Telephone: 01223 553998

Facsimile: 01223 552627

Email: general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk

www.ocr.org.uk

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Facsimile: 01223 552553