

Report on the Units

June 2009

1900/MS/R/09

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

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Chief Examiner's Report

Examiners for all units report, in general, that centres appeared to have entered most candidates appropriately for either Higher or Foundation Tier papers. Overall, the question papers themselves allowed candidates to respond with interest and to achieve results commensurate with their ability. Detailed comments from the Principal Examiners for each unit are to be found elsewhere in this report but the following points of more general interest are relevant to all centres preparing candidates for future entries for this Specification:

- Examiners for more than one Unit commented on what appears to be a decline in the standard of legibility in the handwriting of many candidates. Those who mark the papers are fully aware of the time constraints under which candidates are required to work and accept that work will inevitably be rushed and not produced with neatness equivalent to that of written coursework. However, it is important for candidates to remember that one of the basic requirements of an examination in English is that those writing responses should communicate clearly with those reading them; if the response is not easily legible, the time taken by the reader in attempting to decipher what was written inevitably will reduce the ease of communication.
- Examiners, particularly for both tiers at Unit 1, expressed concern that many candidates were not reading either passages or questions with sufficiently close attention; there were many fundamental misunderstandings of key episodes in the reading passages which resulted in incorrect details which, in turn, resulted in a lower mark than might otherwise have been the case.
- Examiners expressed concern that some candidates are using vocabulary and expressions that are inappropriate to an examination in English.
- Examiners for both Units 2 and 3 in particular, remind candidates that short, pithy and appropriate quotations from the texts studied are of greater value than lengthy, unfocused ones.
- The Principal Moderators for both Written and Speaking and Listening coursework report that some centres are submitting copies of the MS1 forms (mark sheets) to moderators on which the individual candidate marks cannot be read. They also express concern that some centres are failing to meet the deadline dates for submission of marks and are not producing the appropriate documentation when required, thus causing problems for moderators, and more importantly, centres run the risk that there could be a delay in the receipt of the final published results.

2431/01 Non-Fiction, Media and Information

General Comments

All examiners agreed that the paper was appropriate to the targeted ability range, that it was of equal interest to boys and girls, and that it provided a very fair test for all candidates. The outcome was a full range of marks and all candidates were able to access the material.

In the reading tasks, more successful candidates were able to answer in detail, mostly in their own words, and to support their points with textual evidence. Question 3 elicited from these candidates many thoughtful and mature, indeed sometimes compelling responses. Less successful candidates, on the whole, were able to write quite full, if not accurate, answers. Therefore, the Assessment Objectives for reading and writing were demonstrated in various degrees.

Candidates seemed well prepared, managed their time efficiently, and there were relatively few who did not answer all the questions. Most candidates answered Question 1 confidently, picking out as many achievements as possible and acknowledging 'qualities', usually in their own words. Question 2, with its focus on language, proved to be the discriminator. The effectiveness of teacher preparation could be seen in the more analytical approach that there was to writing about presentation and the exploration of the implications of the words and phrases used in the article, together with the evidence from or reference to the text to support candidates' observations.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A

Reading: Non-fiction

Question 1

- (a) *Where did Desert Orchid die?*
- (b) **From paragraph three**, beginning 'Dessie spent...', give **three** ways in which Desert Orchid has been honoured at Kempton Park racecourse.

The vast majority of the candidates achieved full marks, many with far too much extra detail. Some came very close to copying the entire relevant paragraphs and thus losing marks. Centres might well remind candidates that verbatim copying is not permissible.

- (c) *From your reading of the passage, what qualities and achievements gave Desert Orchid his reputation as a great racehorse?*

Use your own words as far as possible. **Do not repeat points** made in **1(a)** and **1(b)**.

A significant number of answers were too brief, but the main fault was paraphrasing or narrating much of the text without any reference to the task set, apart from, sometimes, an introductory sentence. Some candidates seem to think that if they copy or closely paraphrase parts of the text in a different order from how they appear on the paper, this does not count as copying or will not be spotted by the examiner.

However, most candidates were able to give a good number of 'Achievement' and 'Quality' points and to relate these to the question. The points tended to arrive in groups, for example,

three of the 'achievement' points relating to the Royal family and four relating to the number of wins/prize money (the three 'qualities' mentioned by the trainer). This was because each group occurred within a small span of the text, and so were spotted all together. Fewer candidates spotted the quality of bravery, mentioned by the jockey in the fifth paragraph, or the ambassadorial quality, probably because the word was not fully understood. Some made commendable attempts to use their own words: 'he was a model racehorse', 'he brought honour to racing' and 'he was a great representative'. Strong candidates also gave the achievements mentioned in the last two paragraphs without resorting to verbatim copying. The more successful responses showed that the candidates understood the significance of Desert Orchid's 'humble beginnings', although this was not easy to explain. Only the most successful were able to describe a full range of achievements, and the concept of range may be a better discriminator here than clarity of focus, as it indicates a more holistic view of praise for the horse.

More careful reading of the text was sometimes required. Common errors were to say that Desert Orchid took part in the Queen's 100th birthday celebrations, that he was voted the most successful horse of all time, and that he was famous for his colours. However, there were very few answers that revealed a complete misunderstanding of the passage.

Reading: Media Text

Question 2

How does the writer celebrate the qualities of Desert Orchid?

In your answer you should write about:

- *the **presentation** of the article*
- *what everyone admired about the horse*
- *the **words** and **phrases** chosen by the writer.*

The majority of answers tended to summarise the presentational features and the aspects of the admiration for Desert Orchid, rather than analysing them. Many such answers clung to the text and produced straightforwardly relevant responses. A significant number of candidates, however, were able to demonstrate their understanding of presentation techniques and apply them to the text. Accordingly, the alliteration in the headline, the rhetorical question at the beginning of the writing, the quality of the photograph and the connotations of the caption, 'White lightning', often attracted appropriate attention and produced some apposite comments by the more perceptive candidates. There were also some excellent inferential points made; for example, the fact that Desert Orchid preferred 'right-handed' tracks suggested that he had a mind of his own or that he had 'character'. These comments were rewarded although they were not specifically mentioned in the mark scheme. Such analytical ability was sometimes sustained throughout the answers to the final clinching selection of words and phrases.

Less successful candidates had prepared themselves with lists of literary techniques, newspaper features or linguistic devices, which often were not present in the passage, but which they applied to it with scant regard for the appropriateness of any quotations they might use. They made undeveloped generalisations such as 'He has used lots of good adjectives and verbs' or 'It is all in columns and short paragraphs. The language is formal with some similes in it.' Comments such as these, without adequate explanation, gain little reward. The least successful candidates sometimes made vague references to emotive language.

Overall, Question 2 was a very effective discriminator.

Section B

Writing to Inform, Explain, Describe

Question 3

Describe an occasion when you were impressed by someone's behaviour.

Explain what you learned from this experience.

Some candidates wrote well-organised and clear accounts of a relevant occasion, followed by a cogent paragraph explaining what had been learned – as the question demanded. Indeed, there were some quite impressive pieces of observation, analytical in tone and showing mature thinking about who was admired and why. Unfortunately, however, for some, the lesson to be drawn was incorporated into a vague or general sentence tagged onto the end of a loosely structured narrative.

In general, there was a good variety of descriptions of occasions concerning siblings, friends, parents and grandparents. There were many weddings or parties with either immaculately or atrociously behaved young siblings. Very few candidates forgot the explanation part of the task. Sometimes, what was learned was the same as what had been experienced ('So I learned that my brother could behave well') but there were often more general lessons ('You can't judge a book by its cover. You have to read it for yourself').

As usual, a minority told the story of a football game and described a hero's 'awesome' performance. These accounts often slipped into a tabloid-style match commentary in the present tense. The Champions' League final between Liverpool and AC Milan was just such a recurring occasion, but many also wrote about a local match where a usually belligerent person refused to react to provocation and walked away from a confrontation. Most descriptions were of those whose behaviour used to be terrible, but who surpassed themselves on a particular occasion. These accounts often worked well, as did the descriptions of a friend who broke up a fight or calmed down a tense situation. There were many heroes who walked away from a fight or who did not rise to the bait.

These responses, which drew on personal situations that candidates had witnessed and were therefore real experience rather than accounts received from the media, were completely genuine and for that reason were often well written and interesting. Although the language was sometimes very restricted in register ('Me and my mates were messing around') there were also adequately expressed mature attitudes to life in general, showing an ability to reflect thoughtfully on the behaviour of others. On the whole, candidates seemed to grasp the demands of Question 3 with enthusiasm and it enabled candidates from the whole ability range to achieve something.

Accuracy, particularly in punctuation, seemed to be less secure this year, after an encouraging improvement last year. Some candidates attempted to use a 'stream of consciousness' approach, but often, a proliferation of subordinate clauses and phrases tended to run out of control and cause the candidate to lose sight of the main clause which would draw them together in a clearly arranged sentence. American spelling ('behavior', and 'center') and the inability to distinguish between upper and lower case letters was common – mobile phones may be partly to blame.

Overall, the paper seemed to have been enjoyed and there were very few who did not attempt all three questions. There was hardly any misunderstanding of the rubric and there was no evidence that candidates had had to rush, but, on the contrary, used the time available quite evenly.

2431/02 Non-Fiction, Media and Information

Non-Fiction, Media and Information

General Comments

Candidates' responses covered the full range of achievement expected for this tier. By far the majority of candidates were entered appropriately at this level and only a very small number indeed failed to achieve the award of a grade for this unit.

In general, candidates were engaged by the subject matter of the reading passages (fitting in with and understanding societies and cultures different from your own) and responded to it with interest. Most appreciated the problems faced by George Alagiah during his early days at an English boarding school and successfully identified appropriate points exemplifying these problems. However, as in previous series, a significant number of candidates appeared to misunderstand the precise requirements of this task and wrote at some length about how Alagiah conveyed his experiences to the reader (complete with the obligatory attempts to spot figures of speech such as tricolons, alliteration and similes) rather than simply stating clearly in their own words exactly what his problems, thoughts and feelings were. Such misguided approaches, nevertheless, revealed that their writers had acquired a clear understanding of the passage and examiners tried to reward this as fairly as possible. However, it must be emphasised that such responses, which show a misunderstanding of the task, are unlikely to achieve more than Band 4 marks at the most as the requirement to show concision and clear focus and overview (which are features of the Mark Scheme descriptors for the highest bands) is unlikely to be apparent.

Similarly, with Question 2; many candidates showed an at least sound appreciation of Peter Mayle's attitude towards the French and the ways in which he tried to encourage the readers to share them. However, a significant minority of candidates did little more than summarise or paraphrase the passage and appeared to be of the view that an explanation of his technique should involve no more than generalised statements such as 'this passage contains much strong language which entertains the readers and makes them want to read on'. It should be emphasised that such statements unless they are supported by a precise textual quotation or reference and contain a clear explanation of why the strong language should make the reader read on, are highly unlikely to achieve marks higher than Band 5. A further point to be made in relation to candidates' achievements in Section A is that Examiners reported that a large number of responses to both tasks revealed some misreadings of some quite straightforward statements which would suggest that a fair number of candidates either read the passages in a cursory way or began them with preconceived notions as to what the writers intended to say. As a result, they made their understanding fit these preconceptions, rather than looking closely at what the writers actually said. Candidates are reminded that this first section of the paper tests their understanding of what they have read and that they are advised to spend an hour and ten minutes answering the two questions that it contains; it is most important that a significant proportion of that suggested time should be spent in actually reading and understanding the source passages. These issues will be considered more fully in the comments on individual questions which follow.

The writing task (to describe an occasion when they felt like an outsider) in Section B was generally well received by candidates, most of whom wrote convincingly from their own experiences of starting new schools, joining new clubs and societies, visiting foreign countries as part of a school exchange programme and so on. Many of these accounts were enjoyable to read and contained not only effective descriptions of the awkwardnesses and embarrassments experienced by the writers, but also some mature reflection on how the situations might have been better handled and, in the most successful responses, a clear explanation of how they

were dealt with by the writer. Some examiners reported, however, that a number of candidates treated this as a fictional, imaginative writing task which was not fully appropriate to the 'Inform, Explain, Describe' triplet. Most candidates used their time well and succeeded in producing responses of adequate length to all three tasks.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A

Reading: Non-Fiction

Question 1

Outline concisely the problems George Alagiah encountered while at school and his thoughts and feelings about them.

Use your own words as far as possible.

As stated above, most candidates understood the main problems referred to in Alagiah's account and appreciated some of his thoughts and feelings about them. What distinguished the more successful responses was the ability to focus consistently on the requirements of the task: to include a comprehensive range of specific details taken from the passage; to illustrate and explain these problems and feelings; to reorganise the material in order to present both aspects of the task clearly, thus conveying a clear overview of the relevant aspect of the passage. Ideally, what is being looked for here are responses which, if read in isolation, convey fully the details requested to a reader who may not have read the original passage from which the points were taken.

Middle range responses tended to reveal an incomplete understanding of the passage and of the task itself. Rather than focus clearly on the precise details, responses at this level took a more leisurely, narrative approach (sometimes written in the first person) and contained much unnecessary detail and digression, consequently not achieving the instruction to convey the main points concisely. One of the key points causing the problems experienced by Alagiah derived from an inability on both his and his fellow pupils' parts to understand each other's cultures – this was a relevant point in terms of the Mark Scheme for this question; however, although the way his fellow pupils reacted to the way Alagiah exemplified these differences may well have reflected their incipient racism, this point was not relevant to the requirements of the task. If this passage had been set for Question 2, then comment on how such an attitude was conveyed and appreciated by the author would have been perfectly relevant, but as has been stated regularly in these reports, Question 1 requires simply an identification of what the writer experienced and thought.

A further feature of many responses in the middle range was a misunderstanding of key points in the passage, in particular, those related to the experience in the communal shower. A disappointingly large number of candidates were under the impression that it was Alagiah himself who refused to lend shampoo to another boy and was consequently teased for being over-dependent on his mother's orders. A more careful reading of the passage would have made it clear that this most certainly was not the case and that Alagiah's problems arose from the fact that he offered his own shampoo to the boy and consequently and unintentionally made himself the centre of attention which led to questions about his non-existent tan line and inability to explain the differences between the culture in which he was brought up and that of his peers (or 'piers' as many candidates seemed to think).

A large number of responses fell into the category described in the previous paragraphs and although they showed a general understanding were kept to Bands 3-5, mainly as a result of

containing too much unnecessary detail and/or evidence of some misreading and an incomplete focus on the task, thus presenting an incomplete overview of the material. Encouragingly, there were very few responses that fell below Band 5 and which revealed significant misunderstandings, but, disappointingly, there were only a small number who made the most of their understanding and included sufficiently precise details and clarity of organisation to achieve marks in the top two bands.

Reading: Media Text

Question 2

How does Peter Mayle persuade the reader to share his view of the French?

In your answer you should refer to the way he presents his argument and the tone created by the language he uses.

As always, this task produced a wide range of responses ranging from those which were little more than a brief comment on Mayle's perceived viewpoint (usually wrongly understood as being that of a Francophobe - which, perhaps, reflected the views of the candidate rather than of Mayle himself) containing mistaken assertions and completely lacking in textual references, to detailed and perceptive analytical commentaries on the structure of his argument and convincing explanations of how the tone of his writing successfully encouraged the readers to share his point of view. Overall, examiners felt that there was less aimless identification of literary devices as an end in itself than in previous series, which was no doubt largely due to the fact that the passage did not contain that many such figures of speech! The positive outcome of this was that candidates were able to concentrate more closely on considering how the content of the article helped to encourage the readers to understand and appreciate Mayle's argument. Many candidates commented on the way in which the writer successfully ingratiates himself with the reader by initially talking about the widely perceived and commonly shared clichés about the French and then, through showing an understanding of the French character (resulting from having lived in the country for fifteen years), moving on to explain why the French hold the views that they do by valuing what they have and reinforcing this through anecdotes which both show an understanding of the nature of French bureaucracy (and the attitude of Frenchmen towards it) and which also reveal the French attitude towards the English as being far more sympathetic and friendly than may initially be thought by those who do not know France as well as Mayle himself does. Similarly, many candidates successfully identified Mayle's tone as being lightly humorous and generally colloquial and informal, as a means of quickly establishing a rapport with the reader.

What distinguished the successful from the less successful responses was the quality of the explanations as to how the points made above were conveyed to the readers. The most successful answers identified, for example, that Mayle used a list of qualities of France which, although representing the views of the French themselves, nevertheless successfully conveyed the essential qualities of the country to their neighbours across the channel. Less successful responses referred to the list but either made no comment as to its purpose or simply claimed it to be Mayle's own view without appreciating the subtlety of his taking the French point of view. Similarly, successful responses not only talked of Mayle's humorous tone, but also quoted examples – the inclusion of Catherine Deneuve, for example, in the midst of the list of the country's physical glories – and attempted to explain why the addition of human beauty to a list of geographical ones should be seen to be so. Less successful responses tended to make general references to the fact that the French really do say 'Ooh la la!', without any attempt to explain why this is amusing other than to make some vague comment that it's said by Rugby commentators and will therefore interest Rugby players who may be reading the article and make them want to read on; some seemed to assume that Catherine Deneuve was a particularly attractive French town! Generalisations about the supposed target audience of the passage

were a feature of the less successful responses; in particular, many candidates made reference to the fact that Mayle used some long words ('idiosyncracies', 'preconceived') which showed that he must be intellectual and therefore, was writing for a middle-class audience, whereas, in fact, such comments tended to be more a reflection on the limitations of the candidates' vocabulary recognition. Finally, Mayle's use of anecdotes was another means by which the more successful responses were distinguished from the less successful ones. The former were able to explain that the anecdotes, such as those referring to the Parisian waiter and Mayle's neighbour, were an effective means whereby the writer was able to show that not all Frenchmen are the same and that many of our prejudices are formed by experiences in the capital city which are atypical of the country and people as a whole. Less successful answers tended to link the anecdotes with the use of a rhetorical question (about France being the capital of bureaucracy) without explaining how such references furthered Mayle's argument; many responses at this level considered the need to present an electricity bill as evidence of identification as being a positive comment about French society and clearly did not either Mayle's ironic attitude towards this aspect of French life or the fact that his attitude is also likely to be shared by the average Frenchman.

Section B

Writing to Inform, Explain, Describe

Question 3

Describe an occasion when you felt like an outsider. **Explain** how you dealt with this situation.

As stated above, candidates responded well to this task and produced a range of informative and convincing descriptions covering a wide range of experiences. By far the most common topic was that of moving to a new school – either transferring from primary to secondary or moving into a new school in the middle of a year when friendship groups were already established. However, other equally traumatic experiences were convincingly recounted to the reader. Overall, this was the question which was answered most successfully by candidates, and many were able to make up for disappointing performances in Section A with thoughtful and pertinent responses to this task.

The most successful responses showed a clear awareness of the two requirements of the task and not only described their experiences vividly but were also able to provide a clear explanation of how they coped with the problem (or, equally acceptably) of how the problem eventually resolved itself. Less successful responses frequently ignored or dealt in an over-perfunctory way with this second aspect of the question. Very few candidates appeared to be lacking in any experience of something relevant to write about and the heartfelt way in which most approached the task gave examiners a clear appreciation of the difficulties undergone by many young people in what would seem to be unexceptional situations. Another pleasing feature of responses to this task was that in some cases, candidates felt confident in describing their experiences with an effective use of rueful humour – in particular, accounts of exchange visits to other countries contained many wry descriptions of problems resulting from failure to understand either language or customs and showed that the reading of both texts in Section A had clearly had a positive effect on the writing of many candidates.

In general, what distinguished the more from the less successful responses were the linguistic qualities of candidates' attempts. The more successful were marked by thoughtful and precisely chosen vocabulary, well structured and linked paragraphs and a concern for accuracy in spelling, punctuation and expression; in other words, they showed an awareness of their readers and a genuine desire to entertain them through a positive attempt to write stylishly. Less successful responses were written in a semi- or wholly colloquial tone which was not appropriate to the task, contained vocabulary which was unimaginative and imprecise, and showed a

general disregard for the basic rules of orthography, grammar and punctuation. The random use of capital letters at the start of common nouns and the use of the lower case 'i' for the first person pronoun singular are features remarked upon in previous reports and which appear to be becoming endemic in the writing of a sizeable minority of candidates. All those taking this examination would be helped to bear in mind that, on the whole, examiners enjoy reading their responses to the writing task and it is appreciated when candidates provide this enjoyment for the examiner (through showing a genuine attempt to value the language in which they are being examined).

Conclusion

In conclusion, responses to this paper reflected the whole range of ability expected from this tier. There was much good work seen by examiners and the quality of the most successful scripts was very high indeed. Nearly all who sat this paper treated it seriously and responded to the tasks conscientiously. The main message for teachers to convey to future candidates is the importance of reading the unseen passages carefully and of being fully aware of the different approaches required by the different tasks in Section A: Question 1 is primarily a summary of the aspects given in the question, whereas Question 2 requires an explanation of the ways in which writers attempt to influence their readers; as always, the key words relating to these tasks are *what* and *how* in that order. It is important for candidates to keep this distinction clearly in mind when they are in the examination hall.

2432/01 Different Cultures, Analysis and Argument

General Comments

Candidates' performance was generally consistent with what we have seen before and expect at Foundation Tier: very few, if any, who did not engage with the tasks and get into Band 8 (and most usually above) and some work at the top of the tier which would most certainly not have been out of place in the Higher Tier. By far the majority of candidates approached the paper with confidence, aiming to achieve the best grade of which they were capable. In the opinion of examiners, many of those candidates who produced the most successful responses did so as they found the tasks of the Foundation Tier paper both accessible and conducive. Centres are encouraged to bear in mind that, when making decisions about which tier is more suitable for their students, those in the 'grey area' of potential grades C-E, on the evidence of this series' (and previous series') performance, are unlikely to be at a disadvantage if they are entered for the Foundation Tier.

Section A, typically, was more challenging for most (but by no means all candidates). One examiner observed, trenchantly, that he had seen "a lot of capable writers who did not know the books very well." The truth of the matter is that knowledge of the texts varies very considerably among candidates. There were rubric errors: some examiners reported the same problems of more than one response to Section One, one response only in Section B and so on: but some reported a diminution of these from previous series. There were certainly fewer examples of bits of writing tacked on as extras to responses than in previous years. A number of examiners suggested that from the script evidence, at least, some candidates appeared to be uncertain as to exactly how the different tasks should be addressed.

Of the three set texts, once again the least successful responses were those on *Things Fall Apart*. There were more responses to *Opening Worlds* than *The Old Man and the Sea* this series, though there was some particularly good work on the latter, especially Question 4. The responses were generally evenly split between Questions 1 and 2 and 3 and 4, again showing less reliance on/ disposition towards latching onto the passage. Conversely candidates choosing Question 1 found it easier to select an appropriate second story than did those who answered Question 3 in their attempts to look for something 'elsewhere in the novel'. One examiner astutely commented that whilst candidates could select apt quotations to support what they had to say, analytical comments about language choices and writing technique were few and far between.

Section B was, again, a success. Candidates plainly liked writing about something on which they, rather than adults, were the (acknowledged) experts and several examiners reported that they had enjoyed reading much of what had been written. 'Popularity' was clearly something much on their minds: an endearingly large majority of candidates spoke glowingly to the younger students joining their school.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A

Reading: Texts from Other Cultures and Traditions

Opening Worlds (OCR)

Question 1

How does the description of a place help you to understand a character, here and in **one other story**?

The passage is from the central section of Games at Twilight in which Ravi is, by his own will, incarcerated in the shed.

This asked for an exploration of the two sides of Ravi's character: real terror and yet the determination for 'laurels'. It was gratifying, therefore, to see the number of candidates who could get well beyond one or the other (usually the former) with some references to spiders and smells. It certainly differentiated candidates' performance very successfully. A large number of candidates wrote about *The Young Couple* as the second story. This worked well when they wrote in detail either about Cathy's reactions to her in-laws' house or compared the earlier and later experiences in the flat (or both in the very most successful responses). Less successful answers concentrated on a little detail from the opening of the story: "Cathy was thrilled...". All the other stories worked well so long as what was said was relevant, especially *The Winter Oak* and especially on Anna Vasilevna in the forest; *The Pieces of Silver* comparing school/home life for Clement and *The Red Ball* which proves increasingly to be as much about Bolan's father as Bolan himself.

Question 2

What does the ending show you about a character in any **two stories**?

There was some very good writing on this topic which, fairly obviously, concentrated on the end of the two chosen stories and retrospect, one way or another, on how things ended up as they did. Responses which insisted on relating the story from the beginning and making brief comments about the conclusion worked less well. The degree of relevance (a key band descriptor in Bands 4-6) was critical here. Many candidates chose *The Pieces of Silver* and *The Winter Oak*. The success of the writing was therefore determined by how much of the end the candidate covered: Anna's triple response to Savushkin/to her former self/to the "wonderful future citizen"; similarly, in *The Pieces of Silver* the visit to Megahey/the eight pieces of silver/Chase's reaction. Some ambitious candidates tackled *The Red Ball* with conspicuous success, and others *Leela's Friend*. One impressive response which would have graced any Higher Tier answer gave a meticulous analysis of the closing scene of *The Young Couple*, taking the image of the picture frame as an emblem of the story as a whole.

***The Old Man and The Sea* (Hemingway)**

Question 3

How does the writer show that Santiago understands what is going to happen, here and at **one or two other moments in the novel**?

(The passage is from page 77 of the Heinemann edition and comes between the first and second assault made by the sharks on the marlin's flesh.)

The passage is one of many moments of reflection given to Santiago in the course of the destruction of the 'great fish'. What was required by this task was that candidates linked action to reflection here and once or twice elsewhere in the story. Many did this successfully and explored Santiago's views and feelings as his voyage draws to a close and as the inevitability of his triumph turning to disaster unfolds. Others found it more difficult to move from the passage to the rest of the text, perhaps because of their uncertainty as to its context in the novel as a whole.

Question 4

What do you find to admire about Santiago?

Candidates responded very well to the opportunity to select details from the whole of the story and some pleasing responses were produced. Indeed, they found much that they admired. As one senior examiner reported “there was an evident sense of admiration for his physical strength, skill, mental fortitude, indomitable spirit and general decency.” This was a popular question almost universally enjoyed by candidates and examiners alike.

Things Fall Apart (Achebe)

Question 5

*How does violence make things fall apart, here (p167/8, the destruction of reverend Smith’s Church) and in **one** other moment in the novel?*

Question 6

*Okonkwo has high expectations of Nwoye. How does Nwoye fail to live up to those expectations on **two** or **three** occasions in the novel?*

Very little work was seen on this text, as has been the case in previous series. What did appear was evenly spread between the two options, both of which were, essentially questions about Okonkwo. All but the most successful responses struggled to get beyond simply making some relevant comments about the passage or Nyowe.

Section B

Writing to Analyse, Review, Comment

Examiners felt that both candidates and their teachers have welcomed the reduction in the amount of stimulus material. Some candidates made very good use of this in one or both questions: some made it a millstone rather than a prop. Neither outcome is unusual. Some candidates became so involved in question 7 that they left themselves little time for question 8. However, many wrote convincingly and at length on both topics. As we have seen before, some candidates confused the questions, seeing 8 as an extension of their musings on popularity in 7.

Question 7

Why are some people more popular than others?

This proved to be a successful task with which candidates engaged with interest and some enthusiasm. Wealth, good looks, academic and (especially) sporting ability/talent were cited as reasons for popularity. Less attractive areas included physical ‘hardness’, willingness to break school rules (smoking and drinking especially) and, above all alleged attractiveness to the opposite sex. Girls had more to say about the popularity of other girls because of what they saw as attractiveness in this respect and the peer group rivalries that are driven thereby. One examiner talked of the “the cynical advocacy of peer compliance”. Strong answers (and there were many) successfully compared and contrasted different views on this. As stated above, there was a real sense of the examiners deferring to the experts here and much confident work ensued.

Writing to Argue, Persuade, Advise

Question 8

Write the words of a talk you would give to new students advising them how best to fit in to the school or college community.

The main differentiator here was whether candidates actually did as requested and wrote a talk directed at the defined audience or not. Those who did not tended to focus mainly on popularity without reference to prompt/triplet/genre, or by including an introductory statement such as “If I were advising new students I would say...”.

Those who were on task almost invariably encouraged students to “be themselves”, to be proactive but not ostentatious in seeking friendships and activities, and to expect support and warmth from the teaching staff – all in all a very encouraging picture.

Overall, it would appear that both candidates and those who marked their papers found this to be a successful and enjoyable question paper.

2432/02 Different Cultures, Analysis and Argument

General Comments

Examiners reported that the performance of candidates in this year's examination was particularly good. 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 series that an increasing number of centres are using the flexibility of entry, in terms of tier and time, to their advantage. 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 which could be positively rewarded. Although examiners had been advised not to penalise concision, most candidates made excellent 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 significance of the place where characters lived and what made the endings particularly effective for them. 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 from the rest of the story, before going on to deal with a second story. Question 1 proved particularly popular, perhaps because the candidates were given the opportunity to explore a very powerful passage with considerable scope for analysis of the language used by the writer in two heavily descriptive paragraphs, as well as a story of their own choice. Similarly, Question 2 was well tackled with candidates able to select texts that they had personally enjoyed, revealing a genuine engagement with writers who had created poignant endings to their work. Indeed, all six stories were used in responses to this question on the effectiveness of the endings with much perceptive analysis of language. Although it was clear that some stories were potentially more accessible than others, examiners were instructed to be generous towards the candidates' interpretation of where they may decide the endings actually began, and indeed the candidate's interpretation of the word 'effective'. Equally, in Question 1, examiners were advised that the significance of place could include the physical environment, or indeed the emotional or cultural setting, to help candidates access all six stories. Nevertheless, this does highlight the requirement for centres to ensure that they have studied all six stories in some detail in preparing candidates thoroughly 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 most popular, although the nature of these very open 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 violent events in the novel, so frequently, but not exclusively, related to the person of the central character, Okonkwo. However, those who attempted Question 6 were rewarded with the opportunity to analyse closely the range of emotions in this complex individual, selecting those

events that they felt were most revealing of his inner conflicts. The very precise nature of the tasks produced a wide variety of thoughtful responses.

The performance of candidates on Questions 7 and 8 was very good. The opportunity to write a speech for a class in which they argued their point of view regarding the statement, 'Life was simpler in the past, so people must have been happier', produced many excellent responses. There was clearly a divide between those who derived joy from their i-pods and mobile phones, believing that the simplicity of the past equated to mind-numbing boredom, and those who found the trials of modern life all too much and desired a return to more traditional pursuits and values. However, robust arguments were promoted by both camps who frequently explored definitions of 'simpler' and 'happier' in articulating their thoughtful responses. Consequently, work was frequently passionate and convincing. Equally, the opportunity to muse upon how candidates believed we could all take better care of our planet produced many engaging responses in which candidates drew upon a global perspective before moving on to their potential personal contribution. Examiners felt that the stimulus material was particularly helpful this year.

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

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A

Reading: Texts from Different Cultures and Traditions

Opening Worlds (OCR)

Question 1

*Explore the significance of the place where the characters live, here and in **one other story**.*

and

Question 2

*In any **two** of the stories, what makes the endings particularly effective for you?*

The most successful responses were able to relate their knowledge of the text to the main thrust of the questions and provide coherent, structured and sometimes incisive analysis, characterised by comments referring back to the ideas of the significance of the place where the characters live and their perceptions of the effectiveness of endings, supported by brief, appropriate references. Indeed, examiners felt that the powerful sense of place captured in the passage in Question 1 produced many excellent responses, with the candidate very clear as to the techniques used by the writer to present the extreme poverty of the whole family, captured perfectly by their meagre, wretched home, with the second paragraph exploring its impact on each of the Dovecots in turn, before moving on to their second choice of story. They certainly grasped the writer's excellent portrayal of a family trapped in their poverty, particularly Mrs Dovecot, whose emaciation is so shockingly detailed at the end of the passage. Question 2 enabled candidates to spend their time very profitably in responses that revealed genuine analysis of what made the endings effective for them, whether that came in the form of a challenge to previous expectations, or a further development of character, theme or mood. 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. In dealing with the passage in Question 1, candidates frequently made reasonable use of the first paragraph of the passage, but failed to use the second at all, losing out on the opportunity to explore the impact of place upon the family.

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 less well understood second story. Centres would be advised to encourage candidates to spend their time evenly over the two stories.

At the lower end of the range was a minority of responses which 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 or merely described the places where the characters lived or events at the end of the stories without reference to the significance or effectiveness respectively. Such responses could be quite lengthy with little to reward. 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.

A further concern felt by examiners about responses in these middle and lower ranges was specifically evident in comments relating to the writers' use of language in creating the setting for Question 1. There was a marked tendency towards technique spotting, with candidates confidently identifying similes, metaphors etc, but then being unable to explain how they created a specific effect.

Examiners were pleased to note that candidates selecting stories for analysis outside the six identified at the top of the Question 1/Question 2 page was extremely rare indeed. Centres are advised that such responses would be penalised. Candidates must respond to questions using the specified stories for the paper.

The Old Man and the Sea (Hemingway)

Question 3

How does Santiago reveal his respect for the sea, here and elsewhere in the novel?

and

Question 4

How does Manolin support Santiago during the course of the novel?

The most successful 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 range of support offered by Manolin, from the physical and practical, to the emotional and psychological, making his involvement in the life of Santiago so critical to the old man, as well as making the novel such a satisfying read. The love of Manolin for his mentor was drawn upon extensively in such responses. Question 3 proved more popular with candidates, perhaps because of the opportunity to narrow the focus on to Santiago's tremendous respect for the sea and all its creatures in the passage and the rest of the novel. Those who attempted this task frequently responded particularly well to the passage through tremendous empathy with the old man, then going on into the rest of the novel to reveal a genuine understanding of his respect for this unpredictably beautiful 'woman' who gives and takes in equal measure.

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 – an approach which was evidently self penalising.

Less successful candidates frequently fell into a narrative which was seldom supported by explicit textual reference. Responses at this level were brief or extremely repetitive, failing to convince the examiner that there was any genuine understanding of how the passage highlighted Santiago's respect for the sea, or indeed how Manolin supported Santiago beyond the merely practical.

Things Fall Apart (Achebe)

Question 5

How do moments of violence influence events, here and elsewhere in the novel?

and

Question 6

Explore the range of emotions Achebe reveals in Okonkwo during the course of the novel.

There were many outstanding responses to these tasks. The most successful examined in considerable detail the moment of violence in the passage that was so pivotal in the fortunes of Okonkwo and the huge irony of this 'inadvertent' act by a man whose violence is so frequently premeditated, before moving out into the rest of the novel to examine the impact of violence on events generally. Certainly this passage enabled candidates to examine how Achebe powerfully foreshadows the killing of the boy. Many candidates perceived that the Ibo people abhorred violence and that Okonkwo, as the principal perpetrator, was alienating himself from the culture of his people whilst he believed he was championing the needs of the tribe! Equally, candidates drew upon the whole range of complex emotions that drove Okonkwo, a man so fearful of following his father's 'womanly' traits, that he suppressed his love and allowed free reign to anger and pride that resulted in sense of loss, disappointment and finally isolation from his people. In both cases, candidates revealed genuine engagement with the whole text through short, pertinent references which were invariably focused on the question.

Middle range candidates had some grasp of how far the violence of the passage is reflected elsewhere in the novel, or indeed managed to identify some of the emotions that drove Okonkwo, but often failed to support their comments with pertinent reference and quotation. These very accessible tasks should have encouraged a very close study of the text in which Okonkwo and the moments of violence are so clearly captured for the reader.

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

Section B

Writing to Analyse, Review, Comment

Question 7

How do you think we could all take better care of our planet and the people on it?

Examiners reported very good performance on this task with candidates constructing engaged, analytical responses. The use of connectives to structure thought and expression, suggested in previous reports to centres, benefited candidates considerably in rationalising their considerations.

The responses of the most successful candidates were tremendously wide-ranging, analytical and thought-provoking, balancing the global perspective they have learned at school with intense personal observations of the contribution they could make to the quality of life for family, friends and community. Many good responses went on to examine the relationship between the needs of the planet and those of its peoples, one candidate stating, "A child living on the streets of Mumbai, unable to feed himself or lift himself out of poverty, will not benefit from us reducing our carbon footprint". Another, in a similar vein, reflected: "We must be careful that we do not overlook the needs of our planet's population in favour of seeing to the needs of the planet." Such responses were frequently presented in virtually flawless English with a mature range of vocabulary and expression. At this level 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.

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 how we might take better care of our planet and its people, or did little more than paraphrase the stimulus material provided.

Writing to Argue, Persuade, Advise

Question 8

Life was simpler in the past, so people must have been happier.

*Write the words of a speech to your class 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 a careful comparison of modern living and perceptions of what life must have been like for generations past. Such work was invariably influenced by cogent argument, with as many arguing for as against the statement. Indeed three very discrete camps emerged: one populated by those who believed that life might have been simpler, but immensely dull (one candidate suggesting, "In the past hobbies were limited to milking cows and playing cricket!"); a second camp certain that the past was anything but simple, with the evils of the Industrial Revolution and the ravages of disease, and noting how much happier we must be in a world that takes so much care over the rights of the individual; and a third, full of those who yearned for a

Report on the Units taken in June 2009

relatively crime- and invasive technology-free past, where they might reconnect with nature in pursuit of real happiness.

The majority found an appropriate tone of address and a rational development of ideas. Certainly the task encouraged many outstanding responses with much reflection on what brings genuine happiness, an able student concluding, "Love from family and friends, pleasure in the beauty of nature and feelings of belonging are emotions that bring true, untainted happiness and I would challenge you to find a period in history when such feelings and emotions were not self evident." Clearly the topic had engaged candidates, many of whom were determined to encourage others to share their passionate views.

Candidates at middle and lower levels were at ease with the subject matter of the task, but frequently failed to convince examiners that their arguments had any persuasive merit. The instructions clearly asked for a targeted, personal response which should have opened up many opportunities for persuasion. However, responses at this level frequently concentrated on what the modern teenager needs to guarantee happiness, one explaining, "I know we'd have a lot of stropic teenagers if our hair straighteners weren't around."

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 human happiness, celebrating all that might lead to it, cogently brought together with considerable maturity of thought and expression.

2433/01 Literary Heritage and Imaginative Writing

General Comments

This series saw the continuation of good practice with many candidates planning each of their tasks. This was particularly noticeable - and helpful, for both candidates and examiners - in the Literary Heritage Section, with candidates generally producing answers that covered a good range of material and ideas. It was pleasing to note that since the introduction of the title of the play in the main stem of each question, there has been no confusion as to which Shakespeare play is being addressed. Rubric errors, however, were wide ranging in the Poetry section: many candidates answered either on the 'wrong' war section, or on poems not specified in the exam paper, or on all four sections. Very few candidates, however, failed to offer two poems in their answers. In the 'Explore, Imagine, Entertain' writing task, stories were often appropriately sequenced. In only a few cases this task was not attempted at all but this year saw a notable increase in candidates failing to incorporate the given sentence into their story. Such 'prepared' answers often did not fulfil the instruction to create a sense of atmosphere. This year saw a drop in the number of instances where only the opening sentence had been copied out, which suggests a greater sense of familiarity with the question format and an acknowledgement that this question is worth 50 percent of the total marks.

Comments on Individual Questions

Question 1

Writing to Explore, Imagine, Entertain

*Copy out the sentence below and then continue the story.
Create a strong sense of **atmosphere**.*

At that moment the screen went blank.

This opening was given so that a sense of atmosphere could be established straightaway. For responses in Bands 4 and 5, the specified genre needed to be used at least in a straightforwardly consistent way. This took many forms with the most successful, as is usually the case, being centred around situations the candidates were familiar with, including: going to the cinema, watching a football match, playing computer games, finishing coursework. An imaginative element was obviously needed here as well, linking to direct or second-hand knowledge and experience. More successful answers were immediately focused and enthusiastic with well-paced story lines, while less successful ones were very over-dependent on dialogue, often unpunctuated. Generally, the use of the first person narrative voice meant that candidates were more able to control the material and less likely to change direction unintentionally. Stories which were relevant to the opening sentence and which introduced a strong sense of atmosphere, either positive or negative, and were clearly developed were more convincing, while less successful answers relied on a pedestrian version of events or, conversely, violent action for no apparent reason. The second bullet point reminds candidates that they 'do not have to write a complete story'. An 'appropriate point' was achieved in most cases with the use of a cliff hanger or an attempt to solve the 'mystery' of the sudden disappearance of the image on the screen. It was pleasing to see that very few candidates this year resorted to the anti-climactic 'it was only a dream' ending, obviously realising the less successful effect this can have in an attempt to achieve an appropriate ending.

There were problems with the use of the correct tense across all the bands. The opening sentence, although clearly in the past tense, led some candidates immediately into the present

tense. If a consistent and plausible narrative is to be established then the use of the past tense is advisable. Some candidates made the occasional slip, generally with 'don't', 'won't' or 'can't', but these were not serious errors. The consistent misuse of tenses and uncontrolled sentence structures rendered the answer unsuccessful in controlling the material.

Many candidates attempted, with varying degrees of success, to use engaging and interesting vocabulary. All attempts were credited as far as possible and the benefit of the doubt given. Candidates should be encouraged to be ambitious, even if the spelling may not be secure. A successful story, establishing atmosphere, will necessitate the use of varied vocabulary. Regrettably, there was a marked increase this year in the use of coarse slang which was always gratuitous and therefore inappropriate for use in an examination.

Paragraphing was frequently omitted or, if present, then not always secure; this applied, in particular, to dialogue. A very high proportion of answers in the higher bands did not understand the importance of correct paragraphing and this led to many answers being marked as 'Best-fit'.

Although it is understood and accepted that this is first draft writing, candidates are instructed to leave time to check and correct their story. If the sentence structure is consistently repetitive, mainly simple, lengthy or uncontrolled, a mark cannot be given above Band 6 for AO3(iii). Similarly, if punctuation is basic and generally insecure between sentences, then only a mark in the lower bands can be awarded. The secure spelling of complex, regular words is needed, apart from an occasional slip, to score a mark in Band 4.

READING: TEXTS FROM THE ENGLISH LITERARY HERITAGE

SHAKESPEARE

Although *Romeo and Juliet* was, once again, the choice of the vast majority, candidates submitted a wide range of answers to both questions on *Much Ado About Nothing*. More successful responses, to both plays, were able to demonstrate a straightforward understanding with apt quotation and textual support, rather than just comment or provide inappropriate reference to the films. Lower band responses relied heavily on narrative and assertions, often misunderstood, with overlong quotations, very little textual support or none at all. Most candidates, however, this year realised the necessity of using the bullet points as a guide for their answers.

Much Ado About Nothing

Question 2a

Write about **two** moments in *Much Ado About Nothing* which show you different sides of Beatrice's character.

Write about how her character is shown by:

- what she does and why
- the words she uses.

Question 2b

Write about **one** moment in *Much Ado About Nothing* where something is overheard or misunderstood. Explain how it affects what happens later in the play.

The responses to Beatrice (Question 2a) were mostly competent, relating 'what she does and why' to what it shows about the different sides of her character. The more successful responses were able to understand the main aspects of Beatrice's character and were able to link her with other characters and to provide apt quotation, comment and textual support. Less successful

responses invariably did not make good use of the bullet points, which would have assisted candidates in answering the question rather than simply retelling the plot.

Question 2b was the more popular of the two. It was pleasing to see that the majority of candidates really knew what happened in the play and clearly understood the deliberate set ups and misunderstandings. The scene involving Beatrice and Benedick overhearing their friends discussing them was popular, as was the use of Borachio and Margaret by Don John to deceive Claudio.

Romeo and Juliet

Question 3a

What makes the Nurse an important character in the play Romeo and Juliet?

Write about:

- *what the Nurse says and does*
- *how her behaviour affects other characters.*

Question 3b

*Choose **one** moment in the play Romeo and Juliet when a character shows anger or hatred.*

Write about:

- *what the character does and why*
- *what you learn about this character here.*

Both questions were equally popular but Question 3a appeared to be more accessible. The importance of the character of the Nurse encouraged a wide range of responses. The better answers in Band 4 and Above Band 4 discussed both bullet points, supporting their apt comments by appropriate reference to the text. Such answers discussed the main aspects of the Nurse's role but then went beyond the caring, motherly figure to realise the vital role she played which, arguably, contributed to the inevitable tragedy. Less successful answers concentrated exclusively on the Nurse's role as a most successful friend and substitute mother.

Question 3b was dealt with in a number of different ways. Some candidates used more than one character who showed anger or hatred and they were not penalised for that, although this led, in some cases, to there being a lack of depth within the answer as a whole. The most frequently chosen characters were Lord Capulet and Tybalt. Some also chose Romeo, provoked to violence by the death of Mercutio and his reaction to finding Paris in Juliet's tomb. Although most answers used apt quotations, not all quotations were necessarily pertinent to the comment they were meant to be supporting.

Once again a small number of candidates produced a purely narrative response with no quotations at all from the text

Poetry pre-1914 or post-1914: *Opening Lines* (OCR)

The three main elements the examiners were looking to reward were: a straightforward understanding of each poem; a focus on the task; the beginning of an ability to identify important words or phrases and to illustrate their effects. Candidates who gave a relatively full response to each chosen poem showed less of a tendency to identify number of stanzas (frequently referred to as paragraphs), rhyme schemes and various technical devices without any particular reference to the question. However, many candidates still felt the need to 'translate' or paraphrase each quotation, particularly in the Pre-1914 sections. It was clear that, yet again this year, a few candidates were confused between the two War sections and answered the Pre-1914 War section either by using First World War poems or with reference to trench warfare. For the first time quite a few candidates took the word 'images' in the question to mean the

illustrations which accompany some of the poems and commented at length on the graphics used in the anthology. Such comment was considered irrelevant and could not be credited. There was a significant drop in the number of candidates who discussed all three poems; however, as in previous years, a penalty was imposed on answers which offered only one poem. There were a few instances where candidates merely copied out a poem or poems with no comment at all. Regrettably, these responses could not score any marks at all.

SECTION C: War

Question 4

How do the poets use words and images to present death in battle, in **two** of the following poems?

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

(Page 37) Byron *The Destruction of Sennacherib*

(Page 41) Kipling *The Hyaenas*

There was a significant increase in the number of responses to this section but with some, as mentioned above, possibly answering on the 'wrong' War section. The level of understanding was generally very limited but some candidates grasped the main ideas stated in the poems, notably the wholesale destruction of the brigade, faced with courage and honour, as portrayed by Tennyson. These points and comments on the use of nature to depict life and death and the pitiable image of the 'steed' in *The Destruction of Sennacherib* would have qualified for a mark at least in Band 5. Some understanding of the suffering and sacrifice leading to death in battle would have been typical of a Band 5 response. A 'little understanding' could be applied to most of the responses to Tennyson and Byron but the responses to Kipling hardly produced even a 'few straightforward points'.

SECTION D: Town and Country

Question 5

How do the poets use words and images to create impressions of London, in **two** of the following poems?

(Page 51) Wilde *Symphony in Yellow*

(Page 53) Wordsworth *Composed Upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802*

(Page 56) Blake *London*

This was the more popular of the Pre-1914 poetry sections and there was an indication of some understanding of how London was portrayed by the poets. The most successful answers were those that remained focused on the question and found examples in their chosen poems to show how the poets expressed their impressions of London. Most candidates across the bands understood the need to try and quote from the texts to support each point made but did not always include a relevant or apposite comment. *Symphony in Yellow* was discussed by only a few candidates but they did not always comprehend the ideas expressed in the poem. Blake was similarly treated by candidates who could illustrate only a basic understanding, usually of the setting of the poem in London, but there were many historic misconceptions and the more complex images were very difficult for the lower band candidates to grasp. There were, however, some comments made, occasionally with support, on the sorrow in people's faces, the fear in the infants' cries and the extremely unpleasant jobs that some people had to do. Wordsworth was generally understood and some reference to language was made, even at the lowest level, notably the use of positive images and peacefulness of London in direct contrast to Blake's

ideas. Although there is no element of comparison in this examination, most candidates who do this generally show a more accurate and relevant overview of the poems.

SECTION G: How It Looks From Here

Question 6

How do the poets use words and images to present memories or personal experience, in **two** of the following poems?

(Page 92) Duffy *In Your Mind*
(Page 93) Larkin *Wedding-Wind*
(Page 97) McGough *Defying Gravity*

There were very few responses in this section. Candidates who chose it usually offered more than one answer in the poetry section. There was much confusion as to the ideas embedded in each poem. Duffy was mentioned by a few and the idea of a holiday was referred to but the implications not understood. Larkin and McGough were attempted by only a few and there was clearly much misunderstanding, leading to the thought that this section, once again, had possibly been attempted by mistake or as an unseen.

SECTION H: The 1914-1918 War (ii)

Question 7

How do the poets use words and images to express anger or bitterness about war, in **two** of the following poems?

(Page 102) Mackintosh *Recruiting*
(Page 107) Letts *The Deserter*
(Page 107) Sassoon *The Hero*

This was the most popular section of poetry and produced, therefore, the full range of responses. In response to *Recruiting*, candidates were generally able to grasp the idea that the young men were 'wanted...[to] go and fight the Hun' and the 'fat civilians' were in an enviable position. More successful answers saw the contrast between the propaganda and the reality and the hidden message of the war posters – 'poor devils...waiting to be killed by you'. Less successful answers concentrated on the need of the country for the young men to go to war. Anger and bitterness were both felt by the poet. *The Deserter* was generally understood, although some candidates thought that the soldier referred to really was a child. Answers rewarded with a mark in Bands 4 or 5 were able to refer to the repetition of 'An English bullet in his heart' and the devastating effect this would have had on the soldier's mother had she been told the truth. *The Hero* was often paired with *The Deserter* and some grasped the significant similarities between the situations of the two mothers. The idea of the women in the poems being deceived by high ranking officers was condemned but a common error was to confuse the voice/attitude of the poet with the voice/attitude of the characters within the poems. Some candidates could see beyond the anger and bitterness and could refer to heightened emotions that were felt by all involved in the war, often finding apt quotations to support this idea.

2433/02 Literary Heritage and Imaginative Writing

General Comments

Examiners were impressed by the quality and depth of the most successful answers produced under such rigorous time constraints, and the freshness of response evidenced at all levels. While it was heartening to see the level of engagement with some questions, there was a marked imbalance observed in the narrative skills required for the imaginative writing question and the analytical skills required for the Literature. This was particularly pronounced at the Band 4/5 borderline where many papers achieved an overall Band 4 mark through very competent writing despite limited reading skills, and at the Band 1/2 borderline, where, conversely, good reading skills added significantly to sustained but not entirely convincing writing skills.

Although the candidates from some centres had clearly mastered the technique, examiners' major concern was the allocation of time to each question. It cannot be emphasised too strongly that in this examination, within the limitations of first draft writing, we are looking across all the questions for samples of the quality expected in coursework, but not the length. In whichever order candidates choose to tackle the questions, it is essential that they allow sufficient time to plan and develop each answer and that their aims are realistic given the time allowance clearly indicated at each stage of the paper. This also means that introductions and conclusions to the literary tasks should be brief and strictly functional. Too many candidates were forced to leave out a question, or were too rushed to do justice to their last response, because of what was apparently failure to manage their time efficiently.

Comments on Individual Questions

Writing to Explore, Imagine, Entertain

Question 1

Copy out the sentence below, and then continue the story, establishing a strong sense of atmosphere.

At that moment the screen went blank.

The generic mark scheme for imaginative writing clearly places great emphasis on structure, coherence and paragraphing – hence the wisdom of careful planning before commencing writing. Rambling at will, however fluent in expression, rarely holds the interest of the reader for long. Similarly, going off on a tangent, or losing control of narrative standpoint, weakens focus and the intensity of atmosphere. Similar emphasis is given to establishing the genre, and engaging the reader through choice of vocabulary and the use of other appropriate narrative devices in the development of an effective mood or atmosphere. Although the opening sentence is given as stimulus material, the development should be constructed as a convincing extension, and not give the impression of a previously written story very loosely connected. Many candidates excelled, producing imaginative scenarios ranging from political meetings, sporting events, earthquakes and hospitals to living room television viewings and mobile phones. Inevitably, many candidates seized on the opportunity to describe one of the most memorable football matches they had seen - or missed, because of a break in transmission. The most successful were skilfully crafted, capturing in original detail the mood swings of the spectators, the associated noise, smells and even tastes of such an event; the least successful instantly launched into an action-packed account of the match, often little more than a basic football commentary. Another, all too common response, was a horror scenario where the victims were sucked into a television programme or film, or were attacked by aliens pouring out of the screen.

The most successful versions proved that this genre can work, but narrative detail has to be skilfully employed to make the situation credible, let alone convincing or entertaining. Again the complexities of plot tended to predominate rather than assist in the creation of atmosphere.

Examiners were pleased to find many candidates are now familiar with the concept of producing a workshop exercise, a section or chapter, not a whole convoluted story. While an exceptional response can produce more than 3 sides of skilfully crafted writing, even within the tight time allowance, it still cannot score more than full marks: normally 2 sides of average handwriting and spacing are ample to demonstrate the quality of coherence, organisation, and sustained development required to achieve a Band 1. Sadly, less successful responses tend to perform in inverse proportion to the quantity they write: vocabulary tends to become ever more bland and repetitive, sentence structures more rambling and confused or, conversely, increasingly simple or even in note form, the more pages that are produced. Although examiners bear in mind that this is first draft writing, a number of marks were needlessly lost for failure to control sentence structures (in particular sentence endings), failure to punctuate or even paragraph dialogue, and for an abundance of spelling errors. Candidates are advised to allow time to check their work for accuracy. Although technological practices may have resulted in paragraph openings no longer being indicated by indentation, candidates would be well-advised to leave a space between each paragraph. Hedging of bets by giving a full stop a tail, or following a comma with a capital letter, only confirms the examiner's impression of an insecure grasp of basic punctuation. Nevertheless, in assessing the seriousness of errors, examiners bear in mind the ambition of the vocabulary and sentence structures attempted; simple writing, however accurate, receives limited reward. Some responses were impressive in their level of ambition in terms of structure, breadth of vocabulary and range of sentence types, all used to good effect.

READING: TEXTS FROM THE ENGLISH LITERARY HERITAGE

SHAKESPEARE

In this section, questions 2 and 3, examiners are looking for an analytical rather than narrative approach, some evidence of a sound understanding of the whole text including plot, themes, structure and characterisation, and sufficient familiarity with the text to be able to produce apt and pithy quotation and/or textual reference in support of points made. As there are barely 30 minutes allocated to this question, hence at best 25 minutes' writing time, we would expect only 3 to 4 points to be made fully per answer or a wider range at a slightly more superficial level, but all directly focused on the question. Examiners have accordingly tried to set questions that will enable candidates either to concentrate on one character, in the context of the whole play, or one theme, or on one or two scenes/moments that offer opportunity within a limited section for close textual analysis together with a recognition of how these contribute to the play as a whole. The best responses avoid repetition and develop points by as wide a range of illustration as possible, and by establishing links to thematic issues where relevant, to demonstrate perceptive understanding. It is important that candidates avoid choosing quotations that merely confirm narrative events, but learn to select a few very short snippets that show motivation, characterisation, or hold thematic significance; it is good practice always to provide a short comment that explains how the language conveys this. Most candidates are to be congratulated on knowing their play thoroughly, and largely understanding the issues involved. Some still evidence confusion between the text and film productions they have studied.

Much Ado About Nothing

Question 2a

In what ways does Shakespeare show different sides to Beatrice's character in Much Ado About Nothing?

*You may choose to focus your answer on **two** occasions in the play.*

Although few centres offered *Much Ado* for this examination, the answers to this question were largely well done, most choosing to compare her behaviour towards Benedick and her comments on marriage before and then after she 'overhears' her friends discussing his love for her. Straightforward responses merely produced a character study and relied on quotation to imply a response to the 'how' element in the question. Successful answers focused from the outset on how her spirited words and actions, as well as other character's comments on her, showed the different sides to her character. The most successful showed a perceptive understanding of her unusual qualities as a woman for the society of Messina as well as for Shakespeare's audience, the use Shakespeare made of deception to show these different sides, and how her qualities are heightened by the contrast presented with Hero and Claudio.

Question 2b

*Explore the use Shakespeare makes of deception in Much Ado About Nothing. You may choose to focus your answer on **one** or **two** occasions in the play.*

The few who chose this question tended to concentrate on the well-intentioned deception of Beatrice and Benedick by their friends, showing a clear understanding of each character's defence mechanism against possible loss of honour or being hurt. Others explored the deception of Claudio and Don Pedro by Don John leading to the shaming of Hero and her subsequent deception of Claudio, also showing a clear and thorough understanding of each situation and the ease with which they were deceived. However, only the most successful were able to identify thematic links to demonstrate a perceptive understanding of the whole play.

Romeo and Juliet

Question 3a

How does Shakespeare make the Nurse an important character in the play Romeo and Juliet?

The most successful answers focused immediately on the role of the Nurse in the play as friend and adviser to Juliet, and the go-between for the lovers. Few, however, used the opportunity to explore thematic issues such as the Nurse highlighting a different approach to love, or acting as an instrument of Fate, or her very important function of providing some comic relief. Many less successful responses lapsed into narrative mode, or spent far too long on her knowledge of Juliet as demonstrated in the scene with Lady Capulet, neglecting the more important aspects of her supporting and encouraging the marriage to Romeo, and then leaving Juliet no option but to turn to Friar Lawrence when, having failed to avert Capulet's wrath, she advises Juliet to marry Paris. This, arguably proves a strong factor in bringing about the tragic outcome. While many candidates were interested in her reasons for this change in advice, most lost sight of the question, and therefore the importance of this change, and there was considerable misinterpretation, some even claiming that she was in on Juliet's plan to fake her death.

Question 3b

Explore how anger or hatred contributes to the tragic outcome of the play Romeo and Juliet.

Most responses produced strong examples of hatred, ranging from Tybalt's aggravating the street brawl, Tybalt's objection to Romeo's presence at the ball, to Tybalt's challenge to Romeo and Mercutio, and Capulet's anger against Juliet. Some omitted to establish the causal link between the anger and the outcome; others gave too detailed a narrative account of the chain reaction leading to the lovers' deaths. The most successful answers drew attention to the thematic issues as introduced by The Prologue, providing a perceptive overview of all examples

of violence relating to the feud as being evidence that peace can be achieved only through the sacrifice of the children. This view was reinforced by the Prince's statement at the end. There were some excellent answers that impressively referred to, not only the chain reaction of hatred, but also the apparent workings of Fate that together caused the death of the lovers, thus demonstrating an accurate knowledge of the whole play. Less successful answers produced a narrative account of the fighting and the deaths of Romeo and Juliet, without analysis of motive or effect, or benefit of supportive quotation. Others merely relied on several lines of quotation to make a point for them.

POETRY pre-1914 or post-1914: OPENING LINES (OCR)

This was the section that provided the greatest variation in standards, as here it was essential to be able to understand how some of the language works, if not the form and structure of the poems, to be able to answer the question at the highest levels. The wording of all the questions invites an analysis of how elements are portrayed or presented: it is not asking for a narrative account of what is actually happening in the chosen poems or a translation of what the poet is saying. The most successful responses have to be sharply focused and concisely worded; there is no time to give a biography of the poets or a synopsis of the society of their times.

Clearly, in each question, the poems vary in the richness of opportunity offered to explore the use of language and form, but in the time allowance candidates can only aim to make 4 to 6 fully developed points across the two poems of their choice. Candidates, therefore, needed, first and foremost, to show they fully understood the tone and authorial purpose of each poem, as related to the question, and how this was conveyed, always looking closely at the text to identify clear examples of precise use of language and other techniques employed by the poet. There is neither the need nor the time to refer to every possible example, and candidates are well-advised to choose the ones they are most interested in, or familiar with. Examiners were pleased to encounter fewer cases than in previous years of a formulaic approach, naming techniques employed (or even not employed) without providing examples and explaining their effect, and sometimes without ever identifying the main purpose of the poem. However, there was an increase in the number of candidates that gave just a very generalised response without ever selecting examples from the text.

Although many candidates may find it easier to sustain an analytical approach by structuring their answer as a comparison, especially in Question 5, there is no requirement in this unit to compare the two poems, and some may well prefer to tackle each entirely separately, even though thematically they will share some similarities or contrasts. Neither do we expect each poem to be given equal treatment: often candidates will best be able to demonstrate their true potential by devoting more time to the poem that more inspires them, provided that they give the second poem sufficient attention to show some understanding of the themes and techniques used as relevant to the question. Conversely, there is no advantage in referring to all three, as this tends to dilute the effectiveness of the analysis: three poems are included solely to provide some element of choice.

SECTION C: War

Question 4

Explore some of the ways in which the poets present death in battle, in **two** of the following poems:

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

(Page 37) Byron *The Destruction of Sennacherib*

(Page 41) Kipling *The Hyaenas*.

The response to this question was often disappointing as many candidates revealed considerable misunderstanding of the poems, particularly of *The Hyaenas*. The few responses that could identify the futility of war, not only through the fate of the dead soldiers and the attitude of the hyaenas but also through the significant comment on those who start the wars (Kipling's last two lines), gained full credit. Less successful responses to Byron praised the splendour of the Assyrian army, totally missing the point that, far from inflicting death in battle, it was instantly destroyed. The most successful responses made excellent use of some of the rich descriptions and imagery to show the speed and completeness of the victory, the contrast between the threat posed and the humbling, fearsome nature of the defeat. Most candidates understood Tennyson's poem, but many kept repeating themselves rather than selecting a few clear 'ways' in which death was presented. The most successful wrote well about the dramatic effects of linguistic devices such as the repetition of 'cannon' and 'flashed', the active verbs 'stormed', 'plunged', and the effects of the shorter final line of each stanza. Noticeably, many responses selected 'jaws of Death' and 'mouth of Hell' as examples of effective imagery, but few explored the actual associations between 'jaw' and 'mouth' that make death seem inevitable in those circumstances.

SECTION D: Town and Country

Question 5

How do the poets convey impressions of London, in **two** of the following poems?

(Page 51) Wilde *Symphony in Yellow*

(Page 53) Wordsworth *Composed Upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802*

(Page 56) Blake *London*

The most successful answers tended to seize the opportunity to use contrasting poems, hence choosing Blake's dark, depressing picture of London in contrast to the serenity, the colour, the beauty and richness suggested in the other two. Many appreciated the peaceful, almost rural scene presented by Wilde, with even the barges and omnibus being a cheerful yellow in colour or contents, and despite signs of autumn in the falling leaves and the thick fog, the over-riding impression is of richness ('like a yellow scarf'; the Thames 'of rippled jade') and gentle movement or stillness ('hangs', 'flutter', 'lies'). Although everyone understood that Wordsworth believed London was beautiful, few managed to develop a full answer on how he conveyed this. There was mention of the use of the sonnet form to show love and praise, but references to personification were not helpful without examples and an exploration of the effect on the reader. Sadly, attempts to explore 'like a garment, wear...' proved unconvincing. However, most responses showed understanding that it was early morning, and looking to the outskirts of a smaller metropolis than that of today, hence the absence of noise, smoke and movement, and some did attempt to explore the concepts of 'majesty', 'mighty heart' and the river's 'own sweet will'. This freedom was compared to Blake's references to 'chartered Thames' and 'chartered street' to give an impression of control and exploitation. Those who really understood *London* were impressive in their analysis of 'mind-forged manacles', 'every blackening church', the 'blood

down palace walls', and the significance of the whole of the final stanza. Conversely, attempting to use the last stanza instantly betrayed those who were out of their depth, with confusion over whose infants shed tears, and a medieval type plague. However, most responses could be rewarded for identifying the focus on the inhabitants of London, the impression of universal misery, the exploitation of human labour, and the state and/or church being to blame.

SECTION G: How It Looks From Here

Question 6

Explore some of the ways in which the poets evoke memories or personal experiences in **two** of the following poems:

(Page 92)	Duffy	<i>In Your Mind</i>
(Page 93)	Larkin	<i>Wedding-Wind</i>
(Page 97)	McGough	<i>Defying Gravity</i>

Some candidates are to be congratulated on how well they understood these difficult poems, but responses were often disappointing, especially to McGough where the extended metaphor clearly was not appreciated, nor the positive, optimistic view of death. Most seemed to enjoy *Wedding-Wind* and were comfortable exploring the extended metaphor. Most responses engaged with the contrast between Duffy's normal English workday setting and her memories of warmer, brighter places, but few looked in any depth at details from the text or seemed to appreciate the general impression of a kaleidoscope of memories, so many snippets all overlapping and inter-playing.

SECTION H: The 1914-1918 War (ii)

Question 7

Explore some of the ways in which the poets convey anger or bitterness about war, in **two** of the following poems:

(Page 102)	Mackintosh	<i>Recruiting</i>
(Page 107)	Letts	<i>The Deserter</i>
(Page 107)	Sassoon	<i>The Hero.</i>

This section proved the most popular choice and produced some strongly engaged responses. Many enjoyed identifying Mackintosh's anger against the media, the 'fat civilians' and the propaganda luring young men to their deaths, and Letts' disgust that deserters were shot by their own side, but few looked closely at each text to see *how* this anger was conveyed. Only the most successful candidates showed they understood that Mackintosh was not entirely against the war itself, but more against the dishonesty of the picture presented, and the hypocrisy of those who claimed a share of the credit while relieved they could stay in the comfort of their own homes. Many neatly referred to apt snippets of text, such as 'fat civilians', 'vulgar songs', but few analysed how our associations with 'fat' and 'vulgar' help us share the poet's bitterness. Many commented on his sarcastic tone, but few gave a convincing example of this, or looked beyond the use of 'damned' and 'blast' as expressions of anger. Whereas the most successful responses to *The Deserter* showed how the emotive descriptions of the man's fear, combined with the rhetorical question 'who can judge..', fuel anger at the Army's insensitivity to the suffering of young soldiers, less successful ones seized on 'it shames one's soul to see..' as evidence that the poet was angered by the cowardice. Few analysed the use of 'dogged' and 'gripped' to convey the stranglehold of fear, or the effectiveness of the comparisons to a frightened child and a hare. Though most responses identified the Officer's anger in *The Hero*

Report on the Units taken in June 2009

through his dismissive 'cold-footed, useless swine', few understood the poet's anger at the suffering at home and the wastage of life, and the dishonesty of the military, even if well-intentioned, exposed through the 'gallant lies', the patronising 'poor old dear' and his obvious embarrassment as he 'coughed and mumbled'. Less successful answers tended to produce a general synopsis of the consequences of war on women, and assumed the mothers must be angry at the deaths, with very little close reference to the text. There was confusion between officer and brother ('Brother Officer'), and more seriously over who was angry: many explicitly stated that Sassoon hated cowardice. Others merely paraphrased the poems, or relied heavily on the text to express any understanding, without any reference to the question so that anger or bitterness was at best implied in the response. As always there were a number of valiant but misplaced attempts to analyse rhyme schemes and structure without any real understanding of their effects.

2434 Literary Heritage and Imaginative Writing

General Comments

Again it was generally pleasing to see the diligent and conscientious approach of centres to applying the assessment criteria. Teachers seemed confident in the application of assessment criteria, and the detailed annotated comments on coursework showed the hard work of the majority of teachers in delivering the coursework component.

In terms of general administration, many centres had submitted marks to moderators by the allocated deadline of 15th May, but several centres were over a week late in despatching marks and this led to considerable delays for moderators obtaining the relevant folders. Where centres were late a number of moderators reported that it had been difficult to contact centres and even when a number of messages had been left on answer phones of exams officers or Heads of Department, there was little attempt to acknowledge or justify why the deadline had not been met.

In the majority of cases the coursework assessment forms were filled in accurately, and detailed teacher comments were helpful to moderators in establishing what mark had been awarded. Most centres did show the breakdown of marks for the writing piece, and this made the moderation process much easier.

It is pleasing to report that the vast majority of centres had marked coursework within the tolerance of OCR and required no change to their marks. Only a very small minority of centres had to have marks scaled to bring them into line with the accepted standard.

Some minor points that centres might like to address in the future are as follows:

- **MS1s (mark sheets).** Many centres are still sending carbon copies of marks to moderators that are illegible. These have to be returned to schools for marks to be indicated clearly, before the moderation process can begin. It would be helpful if centres checked the legibility of mark sheets before despatching them to moderators. A number of centres had transferred to the MS1 a mark different from that on the candidate's folder, and this led to delays as the moderator had to establish which was the correct mark.
- **Centre Authentication Forms:** A number of moderators reported that centres had not included these with the sample, and then had to make a number of phone calls to remind centres that they needed forms for the different components (2434, 2443, 2447).
- **Plagiarism of material for assignments:** There was a very small minority of instances when moderators spotted assignments that had clearly been downloaded either entirely or in part from the internet and these had escaped the notice of the teacher at the centre. This was taken up with the centre and appropriate action was taken. However, centres need to be aware that in the first instance it is very important that they have the responsibility for checking students' work and verifying that what they have submitted is their own, unaided work. The moderator's role is not to check for this practice, but to establish that assessment criteria have been applied consistently.
- **Application of assessment criteria:** Most teachers are now very skilled at applying the assessment criteria accurately, and fewer centres than ever had mark changes. Most teachers applied the criteria consistently and paid attention to the full range of marks within each band. However, some centres are still submitting coursework assignments where there is no evidence of any marking at all, or comments which bear no relationship to the assessment criteria.

AO 3.2 READING

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

Response to Shakespeare

The majority of centres again chose *Romeo and Juliet* or *Macbeth*, but there were also some interesting responses to the *Merchant of Venice*, *Twelfth Night* and some excellent responses to *Richard III*, *Othello*, *As You Like It* and *Much Ado about Nothing*.

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

Centres demonstrated a varied approach to the interpretation of 'Shakespeare's stagecraft'. Centres are reminded that 'theatricality' is an awareness of the whole play, and candidates who submit detailed responses to specific scenes with no reference to the context of this scene, are often disadvantaged when applying the assessment criteria for higher bands, if they cannot make some reference to a specific scene in the context of the whole play.

A small number of centres still submitted tasks that were very broad in context and for some candidates this could only lead to a very general narrative response.

Generally, however, 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 these more narrative responses. There was little evidence this time of empathic responses. Centres are again advised that more able candidates who attempt such tasks are unlikely to meet all the assessment criteria necessary to achieve marks in the upper bands.

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

Response to Poetry

Again, as in June 2008, 3.2 (v) was the greatest differentiator. Candidates are still showing their expertise in identifying structural and presentational devices but cannot always then go on to show their effects upon the reader.

It is pleasing to report that centres are studying a greater variety of poems this year, although Tennyson and Owen are still popular, as is Wordsworth. Nearly all centres are now comparing only two poems and the most successful responses were those from candidates where the task set invited a response linked to specific assessment criteria.

Generally centres are to be congratulated for the stimulating and challenging responses that they have enabled candidates to achieve. Some of the most successful responses were from candidates who had clearly been able to comment critically on both structure and effect, and showed appreciation of the function of form and language in a way that was personal and enriching for the reader.

AO3.3. Writing

Again it was encouraging to see the diversity of responses with some candidates clearly taking the opportunity to display their creative talent. Centres seem to have encouraged more candidates to be aware that quality of response is not always commensurate with the length of it.

Some centres are still including an empathic response to a text, such as 'Eva Smith's Diary', and this often prevents some candidates achieving a high grade as they cannot demonstrate an 'imagined situation that is inventive and entirely convincing'. Increasingly centres are enabling students to write with engagement and originality and on this entry there was very little sign of 'The Assassin'.

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. It would seem that more and more centres have embedded effective means of teaching coursework into their long term planning at Key Stage 4, and there is extensive evidence of effective implementation of assessment criteria and internal standardisation. Teachers are to be complimented for their hard work in providing practical and supportive feedback in their detailed annotation of students' work and for their dedication in making the coursework component an interesting and challenging element of the GCSE course.

2435 Speaking and Listening

General comments

This component continues to be successful, with centres maintaining or adopting good practice, producing clear reports and making judgements firmly rooted in the assessment criteria, setting appropriate tasks and ensuring secure internal moderation procedures are in place. Repeatedly, candidates have achieved their potential. Visits to centres have been profitable with centres responding to the requirement in a positive and professional manner, working happily with the criteria and processes and acting on the advice given.

A growing number of centres are using the modular nature of the specification to enter candidates at different stages, rather than at the end of the course.

Task setting

As we are well into the life of this specification, it is easy to become complacent and not revisit or question the practice of previous years. This seems to have become a feature of task setting. The specification allows for the selection of the final activities for assessment from a number of tasks, given the fulfilment of the basic requirements, but some centres seem to be treating this unit in a similar way to coursework for Reading and Writing. Good practice is rather to build up a profile of a candidate over the whole course, covering a number and range of tasks and then select the final three for assessment on a more individual basis. In adopting a 'one choice fits all' approach, centres may be disadvantaging their candidates.

This last point underlines the advice to centres, to teach the skills needed for this component and to give candidates opportunities to develop and hone their skills. Many centres now refer to Speaking and Listening as an integral part of Key Stage 3 work, feeding into Key Stage 4.

Record keeping

A key part of the process is record keeping. The majority of centres maintain careful, thorough and clearly presented records, with a detailed and informative picture of progress achieved during the course. Teachers' judgements are criteria-referenced and marks accurately awarded, both for the separate activities and for the final mark. A standard format for record keeping places the process within a systematic framework and ensures that all the required information is supplied to the moderator. The vast majority of centres used the OCR form, designed to cover all the necessary elements. It is a centre's responsibility to ensure that moderators are supplied with a comprehensive set of records; this unfortunately is not always the case and much time is wasted as a result.

The Application of the Criteria

Centres continue to display confidence and competence in assessing their candidates. Here good practice in awarding the final mark balances strengths and weaknesses rather than just recording strengths. An explanation is given as to why candidates have failed to achieve the next band. This aspect of the application of the criteria is particularly important to distinguish where there is bunching of marks.

Internal standardisation procedures

These continue to be secure and in many instances, rigorous and thorough, using cross moderation of groups, joint marking, reorganising of groups for assessments and departmental Inset using filmed evidence. Attention, therefore, is drawn to the Inter-Board Training and Guidance DVDs, which should be used by centres to confirm their own internally-set standards. This material provides vital support for small centres and for teachers working in isolation. With the recently issued latest DVD, centres now have a bank of support and guidance material to draw on.

Administration

As regards the administration of this unit, the majority of centres were problem-free, but there was a sizeable minority where all the relevant paperwork was not in place by the published deadline; these deadline dates have now been unaltered for a number of years. As centres move to systems where non-specialist examination officers are increasingly the point of reference and dispatchers of coursework material to moderators, it is vital for the smooth running of the process, that descriptions of procedures are read, understood and carried out by all relevant parties. This series the moderation process was protracted unduly by centres waiting for moderators to select the sample and not having records and forms ready for a prompt dispatch. Attention therefore is strongly drawn to sampling procedures for this unit in *Advice to Centres*.

However, grateful acknowledgement is made to those centres, where co-operation in assembling and checking the documentation enabled moderators to meet their deadlines.

Conclusion

This unit continues to be a success and is often a real strength for candidates. All this is a testimony to all the hard work and dedication of the teachers involved in preparing their students; many thanks as always for your continuing commitment.

Grade Thresholds

General Certificate of Secondary Education
English (Specification Code 1900)
June 2009 Examination Series

Unit Threshold Marks

Unit		Maximum Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
2431/1	Raw	63				52	44	36	28	20	0
	UMS	62				54	45	36	27	18	0
2431/2	Raw	90	74	68	62	56	48	44			0
	UMS	90	81	72	63	54	45	41			0
2432/1	Raw	63				56	48	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				34	29	24	19	14	0
	UMS	41				36	30	24	18	12	0
2433/2	Raw	60	52	46	40	34	28	25			0
	UMS	60	54	48	42	36	30	27			0
2434	Raw	40	38	34	29	24	18	13	8	3	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
	6.8	24.7	48.9	74.2	88.8	95.3	98.6	99.8	100.0	46,978

46,978 candidates were entered for aggregation this series

Statistics are correct at the time of publication.

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