

Report on the Units

January 2010

1900/MS/R/10J

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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

The number of entries for this series represented an increase over that of previous years, with over 6,000 candidates completing aggregation for the examination as a whole. Examiners for all units report, in general, that the candidature covered the full range of achievement expected from students at this level, although, as is inevitable at this time of year, it would appear that a significant number were re-sitting the examination with the hope of gaining a higher grade than that which they achieved in the summer. In general, Examiners felt that the question papers allowed candidates to respond with interest and to achieve results commensurate with their ability. Detailed comments from the Principal Examiners for each unit are to be found elsewhere in this report but the following points of more general interest are relevant to all centres preparing candidates for this examination in June 2010:

- Centres are advised to think carefully about entering their candidates for the appropriate tier. Although the majority of candidates were correctly entered, it would appear that a significant minority were entered for Higher Tier units when their performance suggested that they would have found Foundation Tier papers to be more appropriate to their abilities. It is, of course, perfectly acceptable to mix and match tiers: for example, candidates whose writing skills are better than their reading ones, might find that a combination of Foundation Tier Unit 1 and Higher Tier Unit 2 would allow them to achieve their most successful outcome.
- Examiners for all units emphasise the importance of close and detailed reading of both the questions and any stimulus material that is printed on the question papers. In particular, it is important that candidates use the structuring and wording of the questions as the basis for their responses and, in doing so, ensure that their comments are related to key words in the questions. Examiners for Units 2 and 3 also stress the importance to candidates both of having a secure knowledge of the texts about which they are writing and of being sufficiently confident in this knowledge to convey it clearly to the Examiners.
- Examiners express concern that the influence of text messaging and emailing is having an adverse effect on candidates' syntactical constructions. Candidates are encouraged to switch their minds off from such grammatical abuses at the same time as they switch off their phones before entering the examination room!

2431/01 Non-Fiction, Media and Information

General Comments

Candidates responded well to the subject matter in both parts of Section A of the paper. Though they were both about railways, the two articles were a good contrast. Both were appropriate to the tier in terms of complexity. The first was straightforward in terms of information retrieval, while the second was adequately persuasive and allowed candidates to select and comment upon a variety of persuasive techniques. In Section B, Question 3 produced a variety of responses, from the usual first plane journey, the snowy walk to school or the journey down a dark alley, to the more unusual drive to hospital to see a dying relative. All candidates found something to write about, and so as a Foundation tier question it successfully encompassed all levels.

1. Comments on Individual Questions

Questions 1 (a), (b), (c)

- (a) *Who was mainly in charge of designing the Rocket?*
- (b) *From the paragraph beginning 'The opening ceremony of...', which two politicians do we know attended the opening ceremony of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway on 15th September 1830?*
- (c) *Where did the 'Rocket' begin its working life and where did it end its working life?*

These normally 'easy' questions proved to be more difficult than usual. Only those candidates who had read the text and questions very carefully managed to score full marks. This was because the answers occurred at points throughout the last four paragraphs and identifying them required both a close reading of the questions and a small degree of inference.

The reference in paragraph four, to the debate about who designed the *Rocket*, appeared to confuse many candidates even though line 17 said clearly, 'the major credit for the design must go to Robert'. In answer to 1(b), about half the candidates identified both the politicians who attended the opening ceremony, realizing that the Prime Minister is a politician and, therefore, an M.P. Many gained only one mark because they thought the answer was the P.M. and the Government (perhaps because they did not fully understand the word 'politician'). To gain both marks, it was also necessary to deduce that if Huskisson was killed, he needed to have been present at the ceremony. In response to 1(c), a large number of candidates did not read 'where' correctly, and answered as if the question was 'when', and so just gave dates. Even more failed to notice the phrase 'its working life', and did not understand that the engine was not working when it was being built or when it was standing in a museum.

Question 1 (d)

From your reading of this article, outline the important points about:

- *the history of the 'Rocket' from 1829 to the present day*
- *what made it famous.*

The majority of candidates felt at home here, with the identification of many appropriate points, usually expressed in their own words. The most common error in understanding was saying that the *Rocket* was the first steam engine, despite the opening sentence of the text saying, 'It is a

common mistake to say that the *Rocket* was the first steam engine.' Of course, to recount the history of the *Rocket* was easy, though even that entailed an amount of selection, and less successful responses contained irrelevant points about the relative importance of George and Robert Stephenson, and gave lists of the participants in the opening ceremony of the Liverpool and Manchester railway. However, the question of what made the *Rocket* famous did discriminate effectively. With mid-level responses, examiners often had to infer points about 'fame' which were not clearly stated by candidates, only implied. Not all candidates were able to organise their points effectively and there was a lot of narrative. Nevertheless, the better answers referred explicitly to 'fame' and, by paraphrasing short spans of the text to show that they understood them, made many clear points without repetition. This question was a successful test of reading and organisation.

Question 2

Explain how the article sets out to persuade you of the importance of the new St Pancras station.

In your answer, you should write about:

- ***the effects of the photograph and headings***
- ***the information selected to suggest the importance of the new station***
- ***the persuasive words and phrases used.***

Most Centres have now got to grips with the demands of this question and in recent sessions there has been a big improvement in how students are tackling it. Indeed, candidates who have clearly not been prepared in the techniques of answering this type of question are at a disadvantage: this was apparent when responses made only vague generalisations about language.

In general, candidates clearly appreciated the difference between the Q.1(d) retrieval approach and the Q.2 analytical approach. They responded well to the prompt regarding the presentation of the article. They seemed to like the St Pancras text, enhanced as it was by the striking photograph, and there were many sound commentaries on the impact of headline, picture (usually referred to as 'image') and subheadings. Analytical comments on language usually began at this point and were appropriately rewarded.

The significance of the reference to the Queen in headline and text was generally appreciated. Some students, however, thought she had paid for the refurbishment herself and had personally invited a thousand guests ('The Queen delivered an address to an invited audience' was taken to mean that she had written addresses on the invitations which had been delivered). A phrase that was sometimes explained well but more often misunderstood was: '...brings Britain closer to many other Continental destinations'. In the less successful responses, the meaning of this statement was self-evident: the continent was simply brought closer to Britain, and some also thought that the journey to Paris now takes only twenty minutes. Many adjectives eg 'glittering', 'gleaming' and 'wonderful' were treated as just indications of modernity, and 'glittering' was applied to the station and the trains rather than to a new era. In attempts at analysis, it is a shame that 'positive' and 'negative' are now so often taught as critical terms, when words like 'favourable' and 'unfavourable' are simpler, more direct and therefore clearer.

However, in the most successful answers, candidates quoted concisely and not only explained the meaning of words and phrases that they said were persuasive but also explained why they were so. References to imagery, metaphor and alliteration, when made, were usually apt.

Question 3

Write the words of a talk to your class, describing a journey you have made and explaining your feelings about it.

The journey could be by any kind of transport or on foot.

The question asked for 'the words of a talk' which described a journey and explained the writer's feelings about it. Therefore, responses which did not either describe or explain were self-penalising, and there was a good deal of such writing. The rubric instruction 'Write the words of a talk' told candidates the expected genre. The beginning and ending were sometimes appropriate eg 'Good morning', 'Hello. I'm standing here to...', 'Thank you for listening', 'Any questions?' and a few successful responses showed audience awareness and direct addresses (such as rhetorical questions) to the class during the talk.

The register could, of course, be colloquial – 'Me and my mates' occurred frequently as the subject of an opening sentence, and 'you guys' was a common form of address. However, the majority of candidates showed (as they knew they were expected to) an awareness of the structures of Standard English.

The journeys were overwhelmingly a flight, often the first one taken and usually for the annual holiday to Europe or Asia, or a walk through snow and ice (to school on the day of the examination), or a family day out in the car, or a coach trip to a sports event. The emotion of fear was usually prominent, and some candidates knew both 'petrified' and 'paranoia'. Many accounts, however, omitted to deal with feelings at all, apart from the more obvious physical reactions of vomiting or falling asleep.

In many scripts, unfortunately, the journey was only a brief introduction to 'what happened when we got there'. Many of the less successful responses said almost nothing about any journey and consisted of episodic accounts of events such as games of football or visits to relatives. Sometimes, though, there was an explicitly metaphorical slant. One example was a journey to a new school which was a gateway to a new experience. Another was a journey to visit an elderly relative, the feelings accompanying which showed an increasing appreciation of the relative's qualities or a maturing understanding of the journey through life.

As far as accuracy of expression was concerned, the examination produced the usual wide range of achievement. A small number of candidates wrote fluently and accurately. Spelling was good, punctuation was acceptable and included only minor slips or errors, and full stops were used when needed. There were suitable variations in sentence length and a well-controlled variety of structures. Paragraphs were used appropriately. The range and precision of vocabulary were impressive. At the other extreme, there were many 'talks' which became breathless narratives lacking any kind of control. Sentence separation was random and of little or no help in focusing the reader's understanding and much sentence construction was formless. Indeed, many attempts at sentences consisted of strings of present participles with no finite verb or subject (both this and the confusion of upper and lower case letters would appear to be from the influence of text messaging). The commonest errors were simple grammatical ones: 'We was...', 'Me and my family was...' and 'are' for 'our' as in 'We got in are car'.

Overall, the paper was as successful as could be expected. There was a full range of achievement. Both reading passages were generally understood and apparently enjoyed. There were few timing issues and most candidates divided their time sensibly. Everyone thought of something reasonably relevant to write about for Section B, and only a small number of candidates failed to complete all three questions.

2431/02 Non-Fiction, Media and Information

General Comments

About 4,500 candidates sat this paper in this session which is, once again, an increase on previous years. Although, as is usual for this session, many of these were aiming for a grade C, from the comments of Examiners it would appear that more Centres are making use of the modular options offered by this specification and are entering their complete cohorts of candidates (in either Year 10 or Year 11) for this unit at this time of year with the result that the full range of achievement was more apparent than usual in this year's scripts. However, it would also appear that, as in previous January sessions, many candidates were re-sitting the examination having been unsuccessful in June, and Examiners were of the opinion that many of this particular cohort might well have found the Foundation Tier paper more suited to their ability.

Overall, the content of the reading passages engaged the candidates and the paper as a whole proved to be appropriate to the tier; most candidates were able to respond to all three tasks. Very few, if any, gave evidence of being pressured by time although there were some who apparently decided either not to attempt one or two of the tasks or to write only very brief responses to all three; neither of these approaches was conducive to achieving a good grade. This again reinforces the impression that some would have been better suited to the Foundation Tier.

In general, candidates tended to perform more successfully on the writing task in Section B than on the reading tasks in Section A. Although most candidates produced at least adequate responses to Task 1, a significant number had serious problems in answering Task 2 ; these will be detailed later in this report.

As stated above, in general, most candidates responded well to the writing task although there were some who somewhat miscued their approach and rather than describing a problem and then explaining ways in which it could be overcome, chose to unleash an angry rant at the editor of the newspaper, apparently unaware of the fact that this personage was in no way responsible for the problem and certainly was not the person who should be putting it right! Not surprisingly, many candidates chose to write about problems resulting from recent adverse weather conditions; Examiners were pleased to report that, despite the media-inspired fears to the contrary, only a handful of candidates were unable to sit the paper because of the problems caused by snow and ice.

There was quite a lot of commendable evidence of time spent in planning answers. This usually paid off, though occasionally there was strangely little evidence in the final response of the care and method that had gone into the plan. Conversely, many candidates wrote in an unplanned, disorganised way, their scripts frequently showing evidence (in crossings out, asterisked footnotes and added bits and pieces, sometimes at the end of the script) of afterthoughts and amendments - which in some cases made the answer difficult to read. Centres are advised to inform their candidates that the time allowance for the paper is fairly generous and includes time for preliminary thought and planning and that time spent in planning might well lead to improved performance (and might well help candidates avoid writing Question 1 responses that are unnecessarily long).

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A

Reading: Non-Fiction

Question 1

Outline concisely:

- **what irresponsible drinking is and why people are concerned about it**
- **the proposals that have been made to deal with irresponsible drinking**

Use your own words as far as possible.

Most candidates appeared to understand the passage well, although fewer gave indication of having a clear understanding of the requirements of the task, in particular of the requirement to explain the points concisely. Most successfully identified what was meant by irresponsible or 'binge' drinking and some of the issues related to it which were a cause for concern, although many omitted mention of the health risks and how drinking led to violence and spoilt city centres. The proposals for dealing with the problems were also generally understood, although many candidates tended to copy the points direct from the passage rather than attempting to show complete understanding by expressing them in their own words. Most candidates achieved marks in the Band 4/3 range; the most common features of scripts in this range were wordiness, unselective following of the sequence of the original text (and hence some disorganization), and copying of chunks of text, especially that concerning the proposals for remedying the problem. However, others produced responses that contained a clear and focused overview of the material, with the key points skilfully manipulated and reorganised to show a complete understanding of both the concerns and the proposals for dealing with them.

The least successful responses came from those who did not appear to be totally clear about the demands of the task, and often wrote at length expressing their own opinions and ideas, and comments on the facts and proposals given. Many candidates were unable to distinguish sufficiently between facts which were required and unnecessary material (eg why increasing tax on alcohol would be unpopular).

There were two quite common kinds of digressiveness: those who imported their own view and background knowledge, eg on how unfortunate it was that Britain was gaining this reputation for alcoholism, or on the ramifications of health hazards not actually mentioned in the text; and secondly those who included in their summaries material from the text that was irrelevant to the task, eg reservations about whether some of the proposed remedies would be fair or practicable. A considerable number of candidates included inaccurate representations of whether the 'proposals' were merely suggestions up for discussion or were actually in force. Inevitably, as this topic was very much part of the national news at the time when the paper was taken, candidates tended to refer to some of the points that were being made in media reports and bulletins; these were, in general, relevant to the task and the paper setters were able to congratulate themselves on their prescience!

Reading: Media Text

Question 2

In this article Barbara Ellen sets out to challenge in an entertaining way some of the criticisms levelled at young people.

Explain how she tries to do this.

You should explore:

- ***the way she presents her ideas***
- ***the way she uses language to create a tone of voice***

This turned out to be difficult for many candidates and only comparatively few showed clear understanding of the writer's point of view and a confident appreciation of the ways in which she expressed it. It was hoped that the statement in the question that she 'sets out to challenge in an entertaining way' would help candidates to focus their responses on a key point of the writer's approach, but many chose to ignore this prompt and opted instead for a general survey of the passage with mainly unhelpful attempts to spot the uses of rhetorical questions, alliteration, emotive language and 'the magic rule of three' without making any attempt to explain how these devices (which were not always to be found in the passage) were effective. In addition, such references frequently were either unsupported by appropriate quotation or supported by a quotation which did not, in fact, illustrate the stated literary device.

A further problem experienced by many candidates was an apparent inability to understand where Barbara Ellen stood in relation to modern-day teenagers. Their tendency was to assume that as she was an adult, writing for a 'middle class newspaper' she must, de facto, be antipathetic to modern youth – a misreading which clearly limited the range of their responses. Others showed in their paraphrases/ descriptive comments a sound general understanding, but lacked either the insight or vocabulary to develop this understanding into any worthwhile analysis of either content or language and tone.

More specifically, many candidates seemed to experience some difficulty in understanding what is meant by **presentation**, thinking of it as **layout** and expending much unnecessary effort on descriptions of font and style. Similarly, comments on how the article was structured were generally restricted to saying how the block layout features were suitable for a newspaper article with virtually no appreciation of how the linking of paragraphs was a means by which the writer involved the reader in her argument. In general, candidates found the vocabulary and sentence structures of the article to be accessible and some identified the use of short sentences to introduce some paragraphs. However, there was rarely any discussion of the effects of this process. Some candidates did identify the use of slang words such as **yoof, youth thing, crime thing, rosy-specs and happy-slapping** but, in general, there were only limited attempts to discuss vocabulary and its effects

Examiners felt that the task itself was not inherently more difficult than any of those set in previous sessions but all commented that the performance of candidates was overall less successful than in the past. It is important to stress that when approaching similar tasks in the future, candidates should read both the passage and the wording of the task carefully before writing their answers and ensuring that they refer to the content of the passage in order to illustrate the point they are making. For example, it is not enough simply to say that Barbara Ellen is being humorous and that her choice of words such as 'yoof' illustrates this; the next stage, and one that is essential to reach Band 3 and above, is to explain *why* this word conveys her humorous tone and how the use of this tone succeeds in conveying her point of view to the readers. Starting from what is actually in the passage is a crucial tactic in answering this task – attempting to drag in everything that has been learnt beforehand in preparation for this task (lists of figures of speech etc.) most certainly is not! This is the most demanding task in this unit and one which successfully discriminates: centres are advised to consider how well they think individual candidates are capable of meeting its requirements before deciding whether these candidates should be entered for the Higher Tier or not.

Section B

Writing to Inform, Explain, Describe

Question 3

Write a letter to your local newspaper in which you describe a particular problem in your community and explain how you think it should be dealt with. Begin your letter 'Dear Editor...'

Nearly all candidates appeared to understand the requirements of this task and to respond to it with enthusiasm although, perhaps surprisingly, only a very small number chose to write about problems within a *school* community. Some opted to utilise the material in Section A and wrote about problems resulting from irresponsible teenage drinking; many others saw litter as a major problem in their community while others were more concerned about bullying or anti-social neighbours or the lack of leisure facilities. As stated above, there were also many heartfelt concerns arising from problems caused by the recent heavy snowfalls.

Many candidates found an appropriate tone for a letter to a newspaper editor, although quite a few either seemed a little uncertain about what an editor does, or forgot about it as they proceeded, and such responses frequently ended up haranguing the Editor as if he/she was in some way responsible for the problem described, and the person who should be doing something about it - which resulted in the response losing focus on the task.

The most successful responses – and there were a pleasing number of scripts which achieved marks in the top band - adopted a fully consistent and appropriate tone, clearly identifying the problem and how it affected the community and then giving a reasoned and developed explanation of how it could be rectified. Many responses at this level were written by candidates who had the confidence to write in the persona of someone clearly not themselves (a retired colonel or middle-aged parent, for example), with tongues firmly in their cheeks in order to produce letters which were both fully relevant to the task in tone and content but which also engaged and entertained the reader. It should be emphasised that candidates who take such an approach to this task and carry it off successfully will be rewarded by the Examiners.

The least successful responses were characterised by thinness of development of the initial situation or the proposed solution, and also by poor control of the basic mechanics of language: sentence separation, use of commas, spelling, and syntax & grammar. Overlong and rambling sentences were another noticeable feature of scripts in this category, as were lexical repetition, and the use of 'it' and 'this' unrelated to an antecedent. Overall, linguistic expression was not fully secure in many scripts with a disappointingly large number of responses showing very limited sentence structures and correct separation of sentences. The use of the 'me and my mates...' construction is also becoming depressingly common, even in scripts which in other aspects achieve marks in Band 3 and above. Examiners also commented on the number of candidates who misspelt 'sincerely' and who failed to observe the use of paragraphs to order their ideas.

Conclusion

In conclusion, responses to this paper reflected the whole range of ability expected from this Tier. As always, the best work was of a very high standard indeed although, as is the case with January session examinations, there were fewer high quality scripts than in the June series. However, most of those 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 instructions carefully and, in particular, to ensure that when answering Task 2 the wording of the question is kept clearly in the front of their minds and that all comments refer to what is actually to be found in the content and language of the passage, rather than what candidates hope might be made to fit from the list of literary devices that they committed to their memories earlier!

2432/01 Different Cultures, Analysis and Argument

General Comments

The paper was well received by centres and candidates and elicited work that covered the full range of possible achievement in this tier. Very few candidates failed or refused to take the opportunities it offered to show what they were capable of and most wrote enthusiastically and, in many cases at length, on both the topics in Section B.

The majority of candidates had studied the “Opening Worlds” anthology. Some found difficulties in linking with consistent relevance the stories they chose to the task they picked. Some tended to write what, perhaps, they had prepared for tasks other than the ones on the question paper. There was some well informed work on “The Old Man and the Sea” which most candidates had read with enjoyment and understanding.

More candidates chose the passage based question (3) on this latter text rather than (4), whereas more went for question (2) than (1) in response to the “Opening Worlds” stories. This was perhaps because of the lack of familiarity with the passage from the antepenultimate moments of “Games at Twilight.”

The stimulus material for Section B was evidently well received, with more than the usual proportion of candidates making use of it in one or both writing tasks. All had much to say about the joys of teenage life, which generally outweighed the miseries. Almost all candidates wanted the *status quo ante* to prevail as far as the school leaving age was concerned. Although not coming to School had its attractions, the thought of having no qualifications and no job were unthinkable for the majority.

Many candidates failed to punctuate or structure sentences rigorously and accurately. Once again, much comma splicing was in evidence.

Comments on Individual Questions

Question 1

How do the writers here and in one other story show how a character’s imagined world is better than the real one?

Candidates found this a challenging task. The best answers dealt confidently with both sides of what was asked: in the case of “Games at Twilight” this is the contrast between Ravi’s intense preoccupation with “such victory, such laurels” and the harsh, heartbreaking reality of what follows, immediately: “they had quite forgotten him”. They concentrated on the passage in its local context (the shed, the spiders etc.) and the broader context of his place in the family hierarchy. Many of the more successful responses went on to examine both sides of “The Young Couple” and made appropriate references to Cathy’s hopes and aspirations at the start of the story (“Cathy was thrilled.....”) and the claustrophobic, deceitful reality that transpires. Many other candidates wrote successfully about “The Winter Oak”, making the point that (for example) the elk lives in Savushkin’s imagination: he has seen nothing but its “pellets”.

Less successful responses found difficulty in taking more than a literal view of the passage and of Ravi’s thoughts and feelings. Many of these then went on to consider “Leela’s Friend”. Although this is a shorter and accessible text, and therefore very popular, it is not necessarily

one which is most relevant to all tasks. The most successful work on it looked at the richness of Sidda's imagination when compared with the squalid prejudice of the world around him.

Question 2

How do the writers of two of the stories show the effects on a character of not having what they need?

This was much the more popular of the two questions on "Opening Worlds", perhaps because it allowed candidates to choose the two most often selected stories: "The Pieces of Silver" and "The Red Ball". There was much good work that looked at the plight of Clement, who needed money but not love, and of Bolan, who needed both. It was pleasing to see numbers of responses on the latter story which looked at his experiences in the "Market School" and related this to the sense of homogeneity he missed compared to life in Tuna Puna. Some responses dealt with Bolan's father, which was perfectly appropriate. It is incorrect, however to say, as many candidates did, that the man is an alcoholic. In fact he has a "nip" of rum, which is all he can afford. The point here is the differences in the reasons he drinks at all, before and after the family's arrival in Port of Spain. Less successful responses tended to give little more than a recounting of the narrative line of each story, sometimes with a significant lack of selectivity. Other texts chosen included "The Winter Oak" (Savushkin wants for empathic understanding in school; Anna lacks sensitivity) and "Leela's Friend (Leela lacks Sidda and *vice versa*).

Question 3

How does this ending help us to understand the rest of the novel? You should write about:

- ***what has happened to the marlin.***
- ***the relationship between Manolin and Santiago.***

The passage stresses the hugeness of the marlin and of Santiago's indefatigable spirit and "the boy's" devotion to his mentor. The bullet pointed structure was instrumental in enabling candidates to link these points to "the rest of the novel". Generally candidates answered very strongly on the Manolin/Santiago relationship; in some cases, they did less well on the fate of the great fish. All, even the less successful answers, had good things to say in response to the task, for example in relation to the destruction of the marlin by the sharks. The novel had been read with understanding and, most often, enthusiasm.

Question 4

How does Santiago use his past experiences to help him battle with the marlin in one or two passages in the novel?

Most candidates took "past experiences" to be Santiago's memories of more than recent events and chose, aptly, to concentrate on the scene of the arm wrestling, the adulation of "the great DiMaggio" and, more generally, on the background of his relationship with Manolin. Fewer mentioned the previous fishing experiences, for example his previous encounter with the male and female marlin. There were few unsuccessful responses to this task and some very strong ones: again there was evidence that candidates had read and understood the novel with some thoroughness and pleasure.

Question 5

How does the writer show the importance of families here and at one other moments in the novel?

Question 6

How does the writer present the differences between any two or three different men in the novel?

Other than candidates who attempted all six questions in Section A, there was only one centre responding to this text. These were apparently re-takers who were well prepared and wrote convincingly, on whichever of the two questions they chose.

There was a more than usually wide use of the stimulus material for both questions in **Section B**: it was obviously well received and helped to stimulate interested, relevant and well developed responses to both questions 7 & 8.

Question 7

Is being a teenager enjoyable?

Definitely, certainly and assuredly! A lot of answers expressed surprise that the matter had been raised: the assumption was that teenagers did, indeed, have all the fun and none of the responsibility until they started work for a forty year sentence of dullness. More depressing was the constant repetition of the pleasures drinking, smoking and driving were alleged to entail: for many these were the “best” bits of teenage experience. More encouragingly, many responses emphasized a sense of gratitude to and admiration for the longsuffering, hardworking parents who made having a good time possible. Some answers were rather repetitive and over reliant on the stimulus material, but there were very few short ones. The most successful responses had a clearly developed structure and aptly drawn summative conclusion: the weakest simply made a few random comments.

Question 8

“The School Leaving Age should be lowered not raised.” Write the words of a speech to your class arguing your point of view.

This was answered less fully than question 7, although some answers could have been more concise and a little less repetitive: nonetheless we had clearly struck a chord with the candidates, who responded in a way that was instinctively relevant to both task and genre. The consensus was that although it would be nice not to have to come to school, the outcomes of not doing so would be far, far worse. “College” was the next step for almost all candidates - a preparation for the welcome world of money and independence. Many wrote about the horrors of having either no job or a very boring unskilled job later in life. Once again the Guidance Services are doing a palpably effective job in Schools. The leaving age it was thought, therefore, should stay as it is. A few dissenters argued that it should be raised, so that students could go at a slower pace and acquire a greater degree of knowledge/skill than otherwise.

Very few candidates ignored totally the injunction to write a speech: but many of them could have sustained it far more consistently. Consistency of tone/genre was an important differentiator here.

Report on the Units taken in January 2010

As in previous sessions, essays frequently featured rambling and uncontrolled sentences spliced together with a series of commas at random moments. Few failed to use paragraphs at all, but many of the paragraphs consisted of a single sentence. Fewer candidates found accurate spelling a real challenge.

2432/02 Different Cultures, Analysis and Argument

General Comments

Examiners reported that the performance of candidates in this examination was generally good. The four and a half thousand candidates represented an increased entry from the previous year and consisted principally of centres familiar to OCR who are using the flexibility of entry, in terms of tier and time, to their advantage. The entry clearly continues to reflect the intentions of most centres to use 2432 for the terminal examinations in this, the seventh year of the specification being offered by OCR. Certainly, evidence from Examiners indicated that candidates had been thoroughly prepared and coped successfully with the demands of the paper.

The time available to candidates in the examination did not appear to affect their ability to offer responses of sufficient length to be rewarded positively. Examiners reported that virtually all candidates made good use of their time in dealing with their three chosen tasks. However, in this session there were more rubric errors with some candidates attempting to respond to tasks for which there had clearly been no preparation.

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 writers' skill in their presentation of adult behaviour and the suggestion that childhood is not a happy and innocent time. Once again, centres should note that Task 1 no longer requires the candidate to explore both the passage and the rest of the story it is taken from. They must, however, continue to examine a second story from the list specified at the top of the page. Many candidates will feel that further exploration of the text from which the passage is taken is most useful in responding to the task, but the constraints of time make the study of all three elements, passage, rest of text and second story, very demanding. Consequently, there is no penalty for the candidate who selects references exclusively from the passage, or indeed the rest of the story, before going on to deal with a second tale. Task 2 proved equally popular, perhaps because the stories do generally reveal some rather unpleasant aspect of childhood, and candidates were given the opportunity to select texts that they had personally enjoyed, revealing a genuine understanding of the characters' early lives. Similarly, good answers came from candidates who attempted Task 1 where they were able to draw upon many characters and situations that reveal adults at their best and worst - the passage from *The Pieces of Silver* providing a powerful starting point - as well as selecting a second story where adult behaviour was particularly clearly presented. The most popular second text was, perhaps inevitably, *The Red Ball*; however all six tales were successfully used in responses to this question.

Tasks 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, Task 3 proved the more popular, although the nature of both tasks encouraged the vast majority of candidates to respond with insight and understanding.

Examiners were pleased to note that *Things Fall Apart* had been chosen by a significant number of centres for study. Task 5 was the more popular as it enabled candidates to focus on Okonkwo and the impact of his exile. However, those who attempted Task 6 were rewarded with the opportunity to analyse closely a wide range of examples of things falling apart, often citing both Okonkwo and the Ibo culture in their responses. The very open nature of the tasks produced a wide variety of thoughtful responses.

The performance of candidates on Tasks 7 and 8 was generally very good. The opportunity to write a letter in which they argued a point of view regarding the national newspaper's claim that, 'The older you grow, the more useless you become,' produced animated responses, frequently with candidates taking the view that older meant late teens or early adulthood rather than the 'old age' we might have predicted. Interestingly, the majority of candidates was very much against this claim, intent upon defending their parents and grandparents in terms of their contribution to the lives of others. Equally, the opportunity to consider how far life is unfair, in which many spent useful time examining the nature and definition of unfairness, produced many engaging responses in which candidates drew upon their immediate circumstances, as well as addressing their views on the lives of others across the world. Certainly, the issue was one that was particularly familiar to them, giving candidates considerable material for discussion regarding their perceptions of how 'fair' appears to them.

However, not for the first time, there was considerable evidence that candidates had been entered for the wrong tier of the examination for this session. Centres are advised once more that they should not risk entering their candidates where performance is likely to fall below what is required for an award at this tier.

Comments on Specific Tasks: Section A

Task 1

How does the writer present the behaviour of adults, here and in one other story from the list above?

and

Task 2

How far do the writers suggest that childhood is not a happy and innocent time in any two of the stories in the list above?

In the most successful responses, candidates were able to relate their knowledge of the text to the main thrust of the questions and provide coherent, structured and sometimes incisive analysis, characterised by comments referring back to the range of ways in which writers presented the behaviour of adults and its impact on those immediately around them, supported by brief, appropriate references. Indeed, examiners felt that a tight focus on the language of the passage in Task 1 produced many excellent responses without candidates having to go beyond the confines of the passage before moving on to their second choice. They certainly grasped the writer's fine portrayal of Dave Dovecot, whose dismissive attitude to Clement's needs tells us so much about the impact of poverty on the family. Certainly, they perceived the significance of the casual proffering of the empty plate and the expectation that Clement would take the plate to the kitchen for him. Task 2 provided candidates with the opportunity to examine how far the writers suggested that childhood was not a happy and innocent time. They certainly revealed an interesting range of examples from virtually all the stories to foot the bill, with Clement and Bolan by far the most popular. Undoubtedly the very open nature of the task encouraged an examination of some of these favourite individuals.

In the middle range, candidates, even when their knowledge of the texts was very sound, sometimes found it difficult to shape what they knew to the needs of the question. Often, what were appropriate and quite sharp insights lost their immediacy because their relevance to the question was left implicit rather than being explicitly stated. In this range, candidates frequently began with the experience of children in their pursuit of something relevant to say about the behaviour of adults in response to Task 1. Long passages of mere narrative were much in evidence here. Centres need to be advised to impress on their candidates that any comments

must be directly related to the questions 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 the second story. Centres would be well advised to encourage candidates to spend their time evenly over the two stories.

At the lower end of the range was a minority of candidates who had clearly struggled to see beyond the mere narrative; indeed they reproduced much of it in their attempts to formulate a relevant response to either task.

Once again examiners were concerned that a few candidates were struggling under the misconception that they would have time to re-read the full texts during the examination and produce a satisfactory answer. Invariably such responses were very short. Centres need to remind candidates that in an examination situation the text is no more than an aide-memoire to assist with the selection of appropriate references, and that there is insufficient time for any substantial reading.

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

Examiners were pleased to note that candidates did not select stories for analysis outside the six identified at the top of the Task 1/Task 2 page. Centres are advised that such responses would inevitably be self penalising.

Task 3

How does the writer reveal positive qualities in Manolin, here and elsewhere in the novel?

and

Task 4

How appropriate is Hemingway's title 'The Old Man and the Sea'?

The best responses offered a genuine engagement with the text and a keen eye for short, pertinent references to back up comments which were entirely focused on the question. Answers to Task 4 were detailed and perceptive, particularly in dealing with the tremendous relationship between Santiago and the sea and how it has shaped, in every way, the man he has become. Task 3 proved more popular, with candidates successfully focusing in on the tremendous bond between Manolin and Santiago in the passage which reveals so many of the boy's positive qualities, including his gentle care for Santiago's physical and mental needs, that are so well drawn at either end of the novel.

Middle range responses showed a clear understanding of the general themes in *The Old Man and the Sea*, and were able to provide sufficient textual support for their answers. Some candidates were determined to include their thoughts on the novel generally and there was some bending of ideas to fit the task. Equally, a large number of candidates failed to go very far beyond the passage for Task 3, which was evidently self penalising in a task that clearly invited them to examine how Manolin's positive qualities sustained Santiago on so many other occasions and in so many different ways. Conversely, a small number of candidates focused almost exclusively on the rest of the novel to the exclusion of so much relevant detail in the passage.

The least successful responses frequently consisted of narratives which were seldom supported by explicit textual reference. Certainly, some candidates struggled with their choice of Task 4, unable to go much beyond the fact that the novella was about an old chap who spent quite a lot of time at sea. Responses at this level were brief or extremely repetitive, failing to convince the Examiner that there was any genuine understanding of the appropriateness of the title, or indeed Manolin's positive qualities beyond the fact that he looks after Santiago.

Task 5

What is the impact of his exile upon Okonkwo, here and elsewhere in the novel?

and

Task 6

What makes the title 'Things Fall Apart' so appropriate for Achebe's novel?

There were many excellent responses to these tasks. The best examined in considerable detail how Okonkwo's exile had impacted so negatively on the Ibo's perceptions of him and upon his position within the tribe, combined with the loss of face that so influences all his thoughts and actions in the early part of his exile. They also perceived how out of touch Okonkwo became with the impact of the white man on the tribe and his failure to readjust upon his return, which resulted in inevitable conflict and his tragic death. Here there was a genuine engagement with the text through short, pertinent references which were invariably focused on the question. The less popular Task 6 produced some good responses with candidates skilfully examining how an ordered society can literally and quite suddenly 'fall apart' as well as relating the title to Okonkwo's personal demise. Explicit references abounded with short pertinent use of quotations.

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

Weaker 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 either task. Unsupported narrative was very much in evidence in responses that were frequently very short.

Section B

Task 7

'Life is unfair!' is it?

The best responses were wide ranging, analytical and thought provoking. Many good responses examined the definition of fairness in achieving an objective examination of the candidates' thoughts about the prompt. The lives of others far less fortunate by nature of their place of birth and personal circumstances featured large in many of their considerations. In responses at this level, thoughts were presented in virtually flawless English with a mature range of vocabulary and expression. Such candidates invariably introduced a variety of perceptive, personal viewpoints which they interwove with the stimulus material in a logical structure with a clearly identifiable effective opening and a strong personal summation, one stating quite perceptively, "Life is luck and very few of us truly get dealt a good hand."

There were many commendable responses to this task in this session with candidates effectively analysing the features of their own lives that could justifiably be viewed as fair or otherwise. This was clearly a topic which candidates found relevant and important.

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

Task 8

“The older you grow, the more useless you become,” claimed an article in a national newspaper.

Write a letter to the editor arguing your point of view.

High level responses revealed an effective, persuasive tone, frequently marked by a confident use of rhetorical questions and a well judged application of punctuation marks to enliven their content. Such responses were very convincing in their address to an audience who were skilfully drawn into the debate. Such work was invariably influenced by cogent argument either for or against the belief that the older you grow, the more useless you become. The very best were passionate in their defence of their elders, particularly family members and, thankfully, their teachers, or equally convincing in their belief that age did indeed bring with it all the vestiges of increasing uselessness, one wag suggesting, “You should ask a famous personal trainer to write a column every week explaining what exercises might benefit those over 55 and how to do them. Remember to include pictures and diagrams to make it easier to understand!”

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

Responses in the middle and lower levels were at ease with the subject matter of the task but frequently failed to convince examiners that their arguments had any persuasive merit. The instructions clearly asked for an address to a particular audience which should have opened up many opportunities for persuasion. However, responses at the lowest level merely saw the task as an opportunity to offer unsupported evidence with no clear articulation of any point of view or little attempt to persuade the intended audience.

Examiners felt that this year’s task enabled candidates to argue for and/or against the point of view stated in the question. Nevertheless, as always, we advise candidates to strive to follow a line of logical, persuasive argument that does not confuse the intended audience as to the writers’ strength of feelings regarding the issue raised, or indeed dilute the power of their argument.

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 issue of age and usefulness, together with considerable maturity of thought and expression. Indeed, one candidate felt compelled to add the following note to the examiner. “I wish to let you know that I am not a cold hearted person, I just thoroughly enjoyed ranting about something!”

2433/01,02 Literary Heritage and Imaginative Writing

General Comments

Evidence suggests that candidates were largely entered for the correct tier with most Foundation Tier answers reflecting Band 5 qualities and below, or a mixed performance with Band 4 on either the Literature or the Writing task, but rarely for both. Higher Tier scripts tended to reflect Band 5 and above, although there was a disturbing number of Band 6, even 7 answers in the Higher Tier, especially in Section B. Examiners felt that such marks were due mainly to an inadequate grasp of examination techniques rather than to a lack of understanding of the literary texts, although some candidates clearly struggled with the poetry. Centres are advised that it is better not to enter for the Higher Tier candidates whose performance can veer below Band 6, as they are then in danger of falling below an E grade, and thus scoring zero on this paper. Success in these papers depends on a disciplined approach, a wise allocation of time, and a strictly explicit focus on the question. Very generalised or verbose responses to the Literature tasks, including lengthy introductions, repetitive conclusions, and irrelevant empathic or philosophical reflections are counterproductive.

Question 1: Writing to EXPLORE, IMAGINE, ENTERTAIN

Copy out the sentences below, and then continue the story, exploring the thoughts and feelings of the narrator. (Higher Tier)

Copy out the sentences below, and then continue the story. Show the thoughts and feelings of the narrator. (Foundation Tier)

There was no turning back. Would I ever be forgiven for what I was about to do?

In assessing narrative skills at both Higher and Foundation Tiers, examiners are essentially looking for the ability to organise and structure ideas into a coherent piece of writing that communicates clearly and is convincing and controlled in its development of a chosen genre. Hence, Band 3 and above responses are expected to use helpful paragraphing and punctuation, to choose vocabulary and a range of sentence structures carefully for their effect on the reader, and give an overall impression of confidence and security. Less successful responses are likely to contain too many syntactical errors for a Band 4 but may still achieve a strong Band 5 for clear development and communication and some ambitious use of vocabulary or other narrative devices to influence the reader. Although the build up of suspense can be one such means, its effectiveness is marred if the result is confusing. Some plots proved too complex, their use of flashbacks too bewildering, and switches in and out of stream of consciousness writing too abrupt; necessary narrative clues at convenient stages were omitted so that the reader lost track of what was actually happening or was expected to happen. In developing a suitable narrative situation, there is an opportunity for candidates to use their imagination; however, continuations that ventured yet again into haunted houses, blood-thirsty monsters, and superman feats were rarely convincing. The most successful tended to be those which developed the situation in terms of one of the following: childhood sibling warfare, challenges undertaken in order to be in with the gang/'cool kids', cheating in exams, stealing from parents, running away from home, having an abortion, or helping someone die. There were some quite sophisticated attempts to create the persona of someone suicidal or insane, or a war commander facing an impossible dilemma. Full credit was given to the development of a strong narrative voice, but candidates should be aware that if they rely entirely on the narrator's view as expressed in colloquial English throughout, they are not allowing themselves the opportunity to demonstrate the full extent of their language skills.

The hallmark of Band 6 responses and below was a failure to establish at any point what the narrator intended doing, possibly focusing on feelings, but in a rather generalised and/or repetitive way, or conversely launching into action, ignoring the narrator's feelings and the need to ensure that development stems from the opening lines. These responses tended to be too chatty, rambling, or over-reliant on dialogue. Technically, this resulted in erratic or non-existent paragraphing, even where there were constant changes of speakers, and a failure to recognise, let alone punctuate, sentence endings correctly. Where candidates were uncomfortable in using the tense construction given in the opening sentences, they incurred little penalty provided they quickly settled into a tense sequence they could use with consistency. However, in trying to explore thoughts, some candidates kept switching from present to past and from indirect to direct speech in an effort to produce stream of consciousness writing. While some candidates were able to adopt this style most effectively, for others it led to choosing basic, rather repetitive vocabulary and sentence structures, and a neglect of narrative detail that would have created some helpful atmosphere for the reader. Other limitations included too little development (well under 200 words) to demonstrate the ability to sustain an appropriate mood; no sense of direction so that the ending appeared too abrupt or contradictory to what had gone before or, conversely, going on to such a length that the quality of the writing markedly deteriorated as the narrative progressed. Those candidates produced 4 - 5 sides, ignoring the recommendation to work on only a section or mini chapter of a story (2-3 sides maximum), and not only succeeded in weakening the good impression created by their best sections of writing but also left themselves seriously short of time to devote to the Literature questions. Many such scripts contained responses to only two questions and several others produced short, superficial responses, or tackled only one poem.

READING: SHAKESPEARE.

At both tiers, most answers engaged with the question, and demonstrated some understanding of their chosen play. Many candidates, however, wasted valuable time explaining laboriously what they were intending to do, then repeated this in similar form as a conclusion, without developing the middle section in any real detail. Others, similarly, under-achieved through adopting a wide-sweeping, generalised approach, with little attempt to support their ideas with any detailed reference to the text. While background information on Shakespeare's ideas and beliefs, his time, and audience expectations can be invaluable in enabling the candidate to reach a more perceptive understanding of the play, candidates cannot afford to devote whole paragraphs to this instead of focusing immediately on the demands of the question. Similarly, while genuine engagement or interaction with the play is rewarding, there is neither time nor place in such a tightly timed examination for personal reflection: eg 'This makes me glad that I won't have an arranged marriage'.

Much Ado About Nothing:

There were no answers on this text from the Foundation Tier and very few in the Higher Tier.

(Higher Tier) 2a. Explore one or two moments in Much Ado About Nothing when you are surprised by a character's actions.

This gave candidates scope to discuss the insults thrown at Benedick by Beatrice, surprising in a society largely dominated by men, her extraordinary challenge to him to kill Claudio, and her agreement to marry him despite their apparent enmity. Similarly, Benedick surprises us by rapidly admitting to love for Beatrice despite former pronouncements that he would remain a bachelor. Alternatively, Claudio surprises us by choosing to woo Hero via Don Pedro, by shaming Hero so publicly, and then by agreeing so rapidly to marry Leonato's niece; Hero is

surprisingly unable to defend herself against Claudio's accusations and still willing to marry him despite his treatment of her; Leonato's acceptance of the accusations and instant rejection of his daughter shock us. All these 'moments' allow scope for responses to explore dramatic or thematic significances, questioning the mores and expectations of Messina society.

(Higher Tier) 2b. How far does Shakespeare's portrayal of Beatrice and Benedick convince you that their marriage will be a happy one?

'How far' and 'portrayal' were inviting candidates to produce a balanced judgement by looking closely at some of the verbal exchanges between the two characters, both before and after they have declared their love for each other, to show understanding of the shared values, the vitality of their interaction, and the sincerity of their love. 'Portrayal' could include using Don Pedro's comment on Beatrice', an excellent wife for Benedick', their friends' willingness to plot to bring them together, and the juxtaposition of their relationship with that of Hero and Claudio, which suggests a stronger foundation and greater chance of happiness.

Romeo and Juliet

(Higher Tier) 3a How far do your feelings towards Friar Lawrence change during the course of the play Romeo and Juliet?

(Foundation Tier) 3a How do your feelings about Friar Lawrence change at one or two moments in the play Romeo and Juliet?

The majority of centres had studied this play and most candidates who chose this question demonstrated a sound understanding of why Friar Lawrence married the lovers and how he continued to help them. However, responses that failed to indicate, even by implication, any change in their feelings towards him were not confined to the Foundation Tier. Examiners were prepared to accept any feelings offered, from sympathy to outrage, provided points were developed and rooted in the text. Indeed, the candidates who claimed to respect him throughout, hence little change in their feelings towards him, because his intentions were good, and it was events/ Fate rather than faulty reasoning that caused the tragedy, received positive reward, especially if (in the Higher Tier) the argument still brought into consideration such weaknesses as the seeming cowardice in his 'I dare no longer stay', with reasons why they might be understood, if not excused. Few candidates in the Higher Tier seized the opportunity to demonstrate a perceptive overview (Band 2+) by including a consideration of his tragic role as one of the instruments of Fate through which the sacrifice of the 'star-crossed lovers' would be brought about. Too many produced a largely narrative account of his actions, without examining in any detail his motivation, or the constraints of the situation, for example, a suicidal Romeo and then a suicidal Juliet when faced with the prospect of a bigamous marriage. Essentially examiners were looking for engagement with the Friar, and a judgement based on a clear understanding of his predicaments. Too many, in referring to the message not being delivered to Romeo, failed to show any understanding of why this had happened.

Foundation Tier candidates who achieved a Band 4 mark chose one or two moments wisely to enable them to identify a clear reason for a change in feelings, such as giving Juliet a potentially dangerous potion, and subjecting her parents to such a cruel 'bereavement', or marrying the lovers when he was not convinced that Romeo really was in love and thus betraying the parents' trust. Examiners were looking for an explicit focus on the question and straightforward understanding of the reasons for his behaviour and the consequences in the chosen moment(s). Some responses confused the issue by looking for changes in Friar Lawrence's feelings. Others, more commonly, ignored 'change' and gave a narrative account of some of his actions.

(Higher Tier) 3b Explore Shakespeare's presentation of different attitudes towards love and marriage in the play Romeo and Juliet.

(Foundation Tier) 3b Choose two characters who have different attitudes towards love and marriage in the play Romeo and Juliet.

Write about:

- **how their attitudes are different**
- **how this difference affects what happens in the play.**

In the Higher Tier few responses used the opportunity to look at presentation, and to explain thematic significance, whether at the simplest level - how conflict over marriage, largely arising out of the feud, contributes to the tragic demise of the 'star-crossed lovers' - or the more complex issues - light versus dark, pure versus materialistic or carnal - that arise out of a study of some of the language used on the subject of love and marriage. Secure responses compared in some detail Capulet and Juliet, Juliet and the Nurse, or Romeo and Mercutio. However, those who chose Romeo and Juliet rarely found convincing differences. 'Explore' entails establishing some awareness of the significance of these differences in terms of dramatic impact or outcome. The least successful responses were too generalised and repetitive, too narrative in approach, or too fragmented by referring to too many characters, including even the servants in the street brawl, to consider the function of these differences in the play.

Successful Foundation Tier candidates made good use of the bullets and were able to show how the differences between Juliet and Capulet led to desperate measures and the ultimate demise of the lovers; similarly they could show how the differences between Mercutio and Romeo led to Mercutio's misreading of Romeo's refusal to fight with Tybalt, Mercutio's death, Tybalt's death and Romeo's banishment. The differences between Romeo and Friar Lawrence resulted in a secret marriage and its tragic consequences. However, those who tried to establish differences between Romeo and Juliet had difficulty in responding to the second bullet.

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

Regardless of the tier entered, to achieve a Band 4 mark, candidates had to be able to show a straightforward understanding of the two poems selected, a generally consistent focus on the question, and the beginnings of a response to the poet's use of language/ techniques. Although credit is given for any attempt to analyse language that is relevant to the question, answers that fail to show understanding of the ideas/feelings/tone of the poem as a whole are self-limiting. Examiners will accept a wide range of interpretations of feelings/tone, provided some support from the text is provided. Although there were some impressive responses, examiners were often disappointed by the considerable misunderstandings shown, sometimes giving the impression that these poems had not been recently revised, if studied at all during the course, or that candidates had mistakenly turned to Section C (Question 4) war poems when they had been prepared for Section H. Some responses made a valiant attempt to look at structure and other devices, but often lacked the overall understanding, or the confidence, required to explain their effect on the reader. Another limitation was in supplying several lines of quotation followed by a simplistic 'translation', which showed at best a very basic understanding of the poet's views. Answers offering only one poem had to be penalised. The few who offered all three were usually self-limiting, in that there was insufficient time to demonstrate the ability to analyse detail. Although answers were received from sections C, D and H in the Higher Tier, by far the most popular was Section H: Poetry of the 1914-1918 War (ii). For written coursework combining Literature and Language requirements, candidates are required to compare poems. However, in this examination, comparison is not required, and, although some candidates may find that comparing helps them to sustain an analytical approach, the pitfalls were all too obvious for some who were reduced to identifying trivial similarities and differences - for example, that mothers are referred to in both Hinkson and Gurney's poems - rather than focusing on the question and analysing a few details in depth.

SECTION C: WAR

(Higher Tier) Discuss some of the ways in which the poets explore the attraction of war, in TWO of the following poems:

(Foundation Tier) How do the poets use words and images to suggest the attraction of war, in TWO of the following poems?

(page 34)	Lovelace	To Lucasta, Going to the Wars
(page 34)	Asquith	The Volunteer
(page 36)	Tennyson	The Charge of the Light Brigade

In both tiers, the best responses were normally to *The Volunteer*, where the contrast between his routine office life and the romanticised view of 'that high hour' when he died gloriously in battle was clearly understood. Although the appeal of 'honour' was recognised in *To Lucasta*, there was considerable confusion over nunnery and mistresses and how his pursuit of honour should increase her love for him. Tennyson's poem was understood, but some responses struggled to establish how the language used to emphasise the odds stacked against the 'Noble six hundred' was to demonstrate the appeal of the heroic, the chance of a superhuman achievement or a glorious death. This exam allows only limited time for the best responses to do full justice to such a rich poem: candidates are, therefore, well-advised to select a few very different points to develop with examples and explicit comment on the effects, such as the use of dramatic descriptions, the repetition with slight changes of the final line of each stanza, and the use of the rhetorical questions. Above all, candidates should discuss the relevant aspects that they fully understand and enjoy rather than struggle to reproduce technical detail they haven't found convincing. They should also resist the temptation of assuming that every poem is anti-war, especially when the question has steered them to focus on the exact opposite.

SECTION D: Town and Country

(Higher Tier): Explore some of the ways in which the poets convey feelings about love, in TWO of the following poems:

(Foundation Tier): How do the poets use words and images to convey feelings about love, in TWO of the following poems?

(page 46)	Marlowe	The Passionate Shepherd to His Love
(page 46)	Raleigh	The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd
(page 48)	Hardy	Beeny Cliff

Very few candidates chose this section. The shepherd's attempt to persuade the Nymph that her life would be idyllic if she accepted his love was largely understood but the reply caused some confusion, especially over the tenses used in the last stanza. The best responses selected clear examples of how seasons change and all living things follow the same downward cycle, to throw doubt on how long his love would last, let alone their perfect happiness. The responses to *Beeny Cliff* were disappointing as few saw that the poet was using the setting to mark the transient nature of his love and the contrast between the happy associations and the heaviness he feels when she is 'elsewhere'.

SECTION G: How It Looks From Here

(Higher Tier): Explore some of the ways in which the poets convey thoughts about happiness, in TWO of the following poems:

(Foundation Tier): How do the poets use words and images to convey their thoughts about happiness, in TWO of the following poems?

(page 92)	Duffy	<i>In Your Mind</i>
(page 93)	Larkin	<i>Wedding-Wind</i>
(page 100)	Pugh	<i>Sometimes</i>

There were no responses to this section in either tier apart from one candidate who tried to do every poetry question, regardless of which sections had been studied.

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

(Higher Tier): Discuss some of the ways in which the poets explore different reactions to war in TWO of the following poems :

(Foundation Tier): How do the poets use words and images to show different reactions to war, in TWO of the following poems?

(page 103)	Hinkson	<i>Joining the Colours</i>
(page 103)	Gurney	<i>The Target</i>
(page 105)	Owen	<i>Spring Offensive</i>

This was by far the most popular section across both tiers. *Joining the Colours* was tackled well. Although only the best responses could produce a convincing analysis of the effects of the rich examples of imagery such as 'food for shells and guns', 'Into the dark', 'into the mist', or 'The drab street stares...', most candidates in both tiers confidently discussed the happiness and youth of the soldiers, as evidenced in 'gay', 'smooth-cheeked and golden', 'wedding day' and 'singing like the lark' and the poet's or observer's contrasting fears that they would not return. Misunderstandings tended to be minor, such as who was actually singing, although some thought the poem was happy throughout, totally missing the more sinister implications. Although several quoted 'Too careless-gay for courage', few understood that it was questioning the concept of bravery when the boys were totally ignorant of the horrors they would be facing. *The Target* proved accessible across both tiers in terms of content and engagement, but, in the Higher Tier, the ability to comment on the effects of the simple language and structure was the true discriminator. Less successful responses tended to summarise the text, still relying on key phrases eg 'bloody mess', and 'set her fears at rest' with no attempt to explore the implications. Some thought the speaker was contemplating suicide for his mother's sake. Wisely, candidates tended to use a selective approach to the very dense *Spring Offensive*, choosing to use references to 'carelessly slept' and 'stood still to face' to show the war weariness or the sense of doom of the soldiers, and Owen's use of Nature to suggest a temptation to appreciate and choose life rather than certain death through the unnatural pursuit of war, or to show the poet's strong anti-war feelings through descriptions of the sky's 'fury' and 'superhuman inhumanities'. Others chose to explore the effect of the rhetorical question at the end. Sadly many candidates wasted valuable time identifying rhyme schemes and structure without appreciating their effect; some commented on the use or absence of devices, such as alliteration, personification, similes, and metaphors without explaining how they conveyed feelings or reactions, or showing any appreciation of the poem as a whole.

2434 Literary Heritage and Imaginative Writing

General Comments

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

Centres had clearly had considerable difficulty in meeting the initial deadline owing to the bad weather in January. Many centres were a week late in returning to school and they are to be complimented for the efficient way in which they tried to despatch course work as promptly as possible.

In the majority of cases the course work 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. Teachers are to be complimented for the considerable time and effort that they make in completing and assessing final course work folders.

It is pleasing to report that the vast majority of centres had marked course work within the tolerance applied by 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.

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 course work assignments which show little sign of helpful annotation for the moderator or of how the final mark has been arrived at.

AO 3.2 READING.

A0 3.2 (iv) and (v) again proved to be the biggest differentiators. 3.2 (iv) (selecting material and making cross references), was a skill apparent only in folders awarded marks in the highest bands.

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* and to *Twelfth Night*, and some excellent responses to *Othello*, *As You Like It* and *Much Ado about Nothing*.

Candidates seemed generally confident in understanding plot, themes and character, and the more successful 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" entails an awareness of the whole play, and that candidates who submit detailed responses to specific scenes are often disadvantaged, when assessed against the criteria for higher Bands, if they cannot make some reference to the scene in the context of the whole play.

Report on the Units taken in January 2010

Generally, however, an increased number of candidates demonstrated understanding of language and form and the range of more challenging tasks which had been set helped to encourage candidates to move away from the more narrative responses.

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 course work unit on Shakespeare as interesting and demanding as they have.

Response to poetry.

Again, as in June, 3.2 (v) was the greatest differentiator. On this occasion it is welcome to note that fewer candidates were showing their expertise in simply identifying structural and presentational devices and that more were able to show the effects of these devices 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 best 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 best 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.

A03.3. 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 the quality of a response is not always commensurate with the length of it.

A large number of candidates in this entry took the opportunity to show their creativity in a range of genres, such as fantasy and adventure; gothic horror; biographical comedy and even poetry!

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 course work 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 course work component an interesting and challenging element of the GCSE course.

2435 Speaking and Listening

General Comments

The trend continues in the January series, for a number of Centres to enter an entire cohort of candidates rather than just seeing this series as a "re-sit" session. However, for many Centres, the January series is still treated as an opportunity for candidates to improve on their June result, often working in remodelled groups and on different activities.

Task setting

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

For these 'repeat' candidates, the drama-focussed context was often more successful this time round. Candidates, having been through the process, seemed to be clearer about what was required, and more skilled in adopting and sustaining a role realistically and convincingly.

As we are well into the life of this specification, it is easy to become complacent and so not to 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, where only one task for each section is produced. 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 to 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 by the Moderator 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 includes balancing strengths and weaknesses, not 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 as it allows Moderators to distinguish performance where there is a bunching of marks.

Internal Standardisation Procedures

These continue to be secure and in many instances, rigorous and thorough, with Centres using cross moderation of groups, joint marking, reorganising of groups for assessment and departmental Inset using filmed evidence. Attention, therefore, is strongly drawn to the Inter-Board Training and Guidance DVDs and videos, 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. Centres now have a bank of support and guidance material to draw on, and it should be used by all Centres as part of their standardisation procedures.

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. It is vital for the smooth running of the process that descriptions of procedures are read, understood and carried out by all relevant parties. In this series the moderation process was protracted unduly by Centres waiting for Moderators to select the sample (it is Centre selected) and by not having records and forms ready for prompt dispatch. This year, the temporary closure of many Centres around the deadline date added to the delays. Centres, perhaps, need to consider having contingency plans in place so any delays are kept to a minimum. Moderators are always grateful for early submissions.

However, grateful acknowledgement is made to those Centres where co-operation in assembling and checking documentation and prompt responses to requests enabled Moderators to meet their deadlines.

Conclusion

This unit continues to be successful and is often a real strength for candidates. All this is a testimony to the hard work and dedication of the teachers involved in preparing their students. As always teachers are to be complimented and thanked for their continuing commitment.

Grade Thresholds

General Certificate of Secondary Education
English (Specification Code 1900)
January 2010 Examination Series

Unit Threshold Marks

Unit		Maximum Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
2431/1	Raw	63				51	44	38	32	26	0
	UMS	62				54	45	36	27	18	0
2431/2	Raw	90	73	68	62	56	50	47			0
	UMS	90	81	72	63	54	45	41			0
2432/1	Raw	63				56	49	42	36	30	0
	UMS	62				54	45	36	27	18	0
2432/2	Raw	90	77	71	64	57	50	46			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	50	45	39	33	27	24			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
	3.4	11.3	27.7	60.2	87.5	95.6	98.7	99.9	100.0	6227

6227 candidates were entered for aggregation this series

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