

English (Opening Minds)

General Certificate of Secondary Education **1900**

Examiners' Reports

June 2011

1900/R/11

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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

JUNE 2011 ENGLISH GCSE 1900 REPORT TO CENTRES

Although there will be one final chance for Centres to enter candidates in January 2012, this will have been the final full sitting of the Specification before giving way to J350 and J355 which will be first awarded in June 2012. The following introductory comments to this report relate not only to the performance of candidates for 1900 but, in most cases also have relevance to those taking the new Specifications in future.

- Although there are many candidates who show secure and perceptive ability to explain how effects are achieved, in response to tasks requiring analysis and comment of a writer's use of language, there are increasingly those who confuse analysis and explanation with identification of literary devices and assertion about their function. Centres are advised to discourage candidates from adopting the latter approach. Simply listing examples of 'the rule of three', 'rhetorical questions', 'fronted conjunctions' etc is of very little value in response to questions requiring analysis and is unlikely to be rewarded at any level above Band 5. Candidates should be advised that the ability to demonstrate an appreciation of the **effects** achieved by the use of linguistic devices is of far greater value than **simply naming** the devices without any appropriate comment in relation to the terms of the question.
- As mentioned in several of the following Unit reports, attention to accuracy of expression in writing tasks is something that should be encouraged. Observing the rules of punctuation, careful planning and structuring of essays through well-planned paragraphs and attention to suitable vocabulary choices remain key elements in producing creditable attempts at writing tasks.
- Centres are, in particular, reminded of the importance of ensuring that their administration procedures are carried out efficiently as mentioned in the reports for 2434 and 2435. With the increased emphasis on Controlled Assessment in the new Specifications, it is particularly important that administrative errors are kept to the minimum.

As the life of this Specification draws quietly to its close, Examiners and Moderators would like to record their thanks to all those, both teachers and candidates, who have, over the years, done so much to make the marking of the various units such a pleasurable and, at times, even enjoyable, experience.

2431/01 Non-Fiction, Media and Information

(Foundation Tier)

General Comments

The overall performance of candidates on this paper was very good. They found the content accessible and, in the case of the media text, quite engaging. They responded to the questions with obvious enthusiasm, presumably because many of them saw the relevance to their own lives and experiences.

The outcome was a full range of marks. The paper differentiated successfully between the candidates, though, as has been the case with previous versions of this paper, the reading responses were noticeably stronger than those to the writing task. This may have been because candidates are helped to give more detailed answers to the reading questions by the framework of the question, whereas with the less restrictive parameters of the writing task, candidates who were able to plan and organise their writing, and then to control sentences, punctuation and diction, stood out as exceptions. Candidates felt secure with the question, and rightly interpreted a 'leisure activity' as anything they did in their spare time. For the majority, writing about a time when they particularly enjoyed a leisure activity, however, meant that at some point they drifted off into narrative which was often rambling and uncontrolled, rather than delivering a planned and objective response. Being comfortable with the question, therefore, frequently resulted in limited planning, fewer paragraphs and more narrative, without sufficient attention to an objective explanation of why the activity was enjoyable.

Nearly all the candidates managed their time well and completed all the tasks and they appear to have been carefully prepared for the various demands of the different sections of the paper, particularly Questions 1 (c) and 2. The effectiveness of teacher preparation could be seen in the more analytical approach to presentation and to the exploration of the implications of the words and phrases used in the newspaper article, especially the headlines, sub-headings and captions, and the linking of these to the following text.

Comments on Individual Questions

Question 1(a) From **lines 10-14** (beginning 'Dr Naylor at Gothenburg University...'), write down **two things** which the rats used in Dr Naylor's experiments.

Most candidates scored both points, although a number did not spot that the question asked for two objects that the rats used. They rather thought that they were being asked about what the rats were used for.

Question 1(b) From **lines 23-26** (beginning 'People who know...'), give **three** reasons why people go jogging.

Most scored the full three points here, saying that people went jogging for fun, because their friends did it, and because they knew the value of such physical exercise.

Question 1(c) According to the article:

- How can exercise benefit people
- In what ways might it be a disadvantage?

Use your own words as far as possible.

The question asked for benefits and disadvantages of exercise and most candidates did work on both aspects, realising that some balance was required in order to give a range of points. It was possible to achieve good marks without reference to the experimentation with rats. One feature of middle range responses was that they ignored the phrase in the question, 'according to the article'. Because the topic of healthy exercise is often taught in schools, and also from their own general knowledge, candidates were well aware of the general biological benefits of exercise. However, this was not always to their advantage because they wandered away from the text and spent too long explaining how exercise can improve skin, muscle mass and relationships. They also wrote about the dangers of torn ligaments, lactic acid, muscle problems and broken ankles, none of which were mentioned in the text. In middle range answers, there was also little written about the rat experiments or Tony Barnes, although points from those two aspects of the passage would have helped to give a full and varied answer. Many candidates did not refer to Tony Barnes by name but generalised from his example, and that was fine. In the most successful answers, however, there were references to exercise in general, to jogging in particular, to the experience of Tony Barnes and to the rats and their brain cells.

Question 2 *How does the article show that Usain Bolt was such an outstanding athlete and personality at the Olympic Games of 2008 in Beijing?*

In your answer, you should write about:

- *the **presentation** of the article*
- *the **information** given*
- *some of the **words and phrases** chosen.*

The newspaper article about Usain Bolt proved to be popular. As with the first non-fiction passage, there was an engagement with candidates' general knowledge. The passage was straightforward, yet had scope for top range responses.

The presentation features were well explained because candidates had obviously been well taught about this aspect of media text study. They showed appreciation of the photograph (or 'image') and successfully linked it with the text to give a valid interpretation of its impact. They could explain the pun, the ambiguity and the humour in the way Bolt's name was used in the headline and the link with 'lightning' in the strapline below the picture. There was some analysis of the wording of the subheadings and the superlatives ('fastest', 'greatest') were noted. Indeed, one perceptive candidate, connecting the word 'immortals' with the Olympics, pointed out that Olympus was the home of the gods in ancient times. Of course, there is in the Mark Scheme ample credit allowed for such response to presentational features.

One surprising feature of the answer was that many of the apparently more competent candidates spent little time on the actual content of the article, even failing to mention the names of the events which Usain Bolt won. They sometimes talked about his celebration in general, without mentioning his dancing, his shoe waving or his flag wearing.

Words rather than phrases were often selected in response to the third bullet, and these were usually well explained. For example, 'pulverised' was a particularly well explained word. However, some candidates, who have been taught how to analyse language, used generic phrases such as 'positive connotations' and 'emotive language' without relating them to the text.

Question 3 *Write about a time when you particularly enjoyed taking part in a leisure activity.*

Describe that time and **explain** why you enjoyed it so much.

This was generally well answered, as candidates were enthusiastic about the subject matter. The task prompted pleasant memories for most, though many drifted into narrative and told the story of just one event. This approach was fine as long as they took care, as instructed, to

'describe' and 'explain' so that a clear sense of their enjoyment was conveyed. Indeed, the majority of responses did answer both sections of the question. Often there was trepidation in the tale and when it was overcome, there was the enjoyment. Sometimes, really arduous events were presented but the sense of enjoying a challenge was there. There were a few quite outstanding pieces of writing which managed to convey both the real feeling and atmosphere of a particular activity and the significance it held for the participant.

As always on this paper, the majority of candidates do find some real experience that they can present and very few seemed to be writing fiction. Of course, the 'leisure activity' did not have to involve sport at all. Perhaps because the scope for description was more limited than in physical pursuits, there were few 'Xbox' or 'Wii' or 'Playstation' experiences presented.

For those who were content to describe taking part in a football match or a school event, there was often little difference between written language and the currency of everyday conversation. The colloquial register produced plenty of 'mates' and a few 'aints'. 'We was' appeared frequently and so did 'Me and my mates went...'. Very little text spelling was seen and there seemed to be fewer instances of 'gonna' and 'wanna' than in previous series. However, it may be that texting is at least partly responsible for the habitual use of lower case 'i' as the first person pronoun in many scripts, and for the general lack of punctuation. These limitations have always been there, but now seem to be growing trends. The main problem for many candidates was the lack of control of sentences, and inconsistencies in use of tenses were legion.

However, as far as content was concerned, the accounts often ended with an idea of what the writers had gained apart from the pleasure – for example, self belief, a feeling of belonging (in a team) and pride in performance as well as recognition by peers and family.

Overall, this paper compared well with other years. The two articles were of a similar standard to previous ones and the questions prompted a full range of responses. 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 was therefore a very fair test.

2431/02 Non-Fiction, Media and Information

(Higher Tier)

General Comments

Overall, examiners thought that the paper was appropriate in terms of length, readability, vocabulary and tasks set and that certainly it interested the candidates. Very few found the material inaccessible although rather more than usual mismanaged time and failed to complete Task 3. The Orwell text for Task 1 proved to be a very good discriminator of reading ability, especially those parts which dealt with the changes to sport over time, and offered candidates with good summarising skills the opportunity to display them to maximum effect. At the same time, it gave some problems to those whose skills in this area were less well developed.

The text chosen for Task 2 provided an engaging experience for most, although a small number failed to fully appreciate the language register associated with Wimbledon which inhibited their ability to demonstrate critical awareness. The writing task for Task 3 provided an excellent vehicle for detailed description and explanation of personal feelings. There was a wide range of topics described, often with much wit and heart-felt loathing, although a number of candidates contented themselves with rather general and narrative accounts which often lacked specific focus and detail, or became trapped in personal exasperation (as with Jan Moir) more suited to the triplet requiring them to argue, persuade and advise. By far the most disliked topic, chosen equally by both male and female candidates, was professional football; more than one examiner commented that perhaps the FA should be made aware of the strength of feeling exhibited in responses to this task.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A

Reading: Non-Fiction

Question 1

Read the article 'The Sporting Spirit' by George Orwell.

*Outline **concisely** George Orwell's views on the role of sport in society and how this has changed over time.*

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

Candidates showed a mainly secure understanding of the passage, although some apparently did not take into account the introduction explaining that the passage was written in 1945 and mistakenly attempted to relate the points to sport in the first decade of the 21st Century. As mentioned in the introductory remarks, most candidates successfully identified a range of points relating to Orwell's views about sport, although fewer were able to show a clear understanding of what he had to say about the ways sport has changed over time; in particular, the distinction between the seriousness with which it was taken in Roman and modern times and the different attitudes to sport in the intervening centuries was appreciated only in the most successful responses.

Higher level responses

Candidates producing responses in this range identified an impressive number of points, well balanced between the two required elements and entirely in fluent own words. There was often an exemplary degree of concision contrived through skilful synthesis of a number of points and an impressive ability to distil Orwell's sometimes wordy style into many fewer words. These responses had a clear understanding of the time frame, encompassing the manner in which sports had come to be taken more seriously and the ways in which this subsequently developed. In comparison with their responses to the other two tasks on the paper, a small number of candidates failed to do themselves justice here through serious over-condensation of the material, offering only five or six points. Although credit could be given for what was obviously very clear understanding, such responses could not reasonably be assessed as higher than low Band 3.

Middle level responses

Candidates producing responses in this range tended to find the part of the Task 1 text relating to Orwell's views easier to understand than that referring to changes over time and their answers often showed an imbalance of points between the two elements. Quite often responses contained almost all the points from the first part of the passage but only two or three from the second. Sometimes there was enough on the second element to achieve an overview, sometimes not. Most wrote in their own words but usually not concisely; this was particularly evident in some particularly long attempts at point 1 (that sport inspires hatred between nations, not goodwill). Often, historical attitudes to sport were not completely understood and candidates were serially attracted to long reproductions of the comments about Rome and Byzantium, writing lengthy and largely irrelevant comparisons between sport in these two ancient cities and that in modern times. Similarly, responses at this level frequently did not quite understand the section about "from Roman times until the eighteenth century" and asserted that sports were not taken seriously in Roman times.

Lower level responses

There were only a very small number of candidates who failed to achieve marks in at least the Band 5 range. However, less successful responses were marked by either a misunderstanding of the points relating to the changes over time, or by these points being omitted altogether. At the higher end of the range candidates identified enough relevant points to reach Band 4, but many others did not and produced a very limited range. Sometimes focus on the task was intermittent as candidates either took a Task 2 approach, or added much inappropriate comment unrelated to the passage.

Reading: Media Text

Question 2

Now read the article 'Why I hate Wimbledon?' by Jan Moir.

How does Jan Moir set out to make her view of Wimbledon so provocative and entertaining?

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

The choice of text was engaging to most candidates although in some lower band responses, there was some misunderstanding of Moir's sarcasm, especially relating to her adoption of a specific register in expressions such as, *Oh I say*, *Anyone for tennis* and *Golly gosh*, with the result that such ironical usage was interpreted literally. At this level, references to the passage were nearly always descriptive of content, sometimes with irrelevant personal responses appended. However, the most successful responses clearly understood that the author's purpose was to ridicule the snobbery at the heart of Wimbledon as exhibited in the speech, clothes, behaviour of players and spectators, traditions (with a full appreciation of all the strawberry references) and could discuss tone confidently with a full understanding of the ways in which the writer provoked a response as well as how she deliberately set out to entertain the reader. The very best were able to discern the bitter-sweet notes in the change of tone when discussing how Moir used to enjoy the tournament and were completely comfortable in explaining the formal and informal aspects of address used by the writer.

Higher level responses

Candidates producing responses in this range showed a clear understanding of Jan Moir's purpose, methods and, more importantly, of the manner in which she set out to **entertain and provoke** the reader. Explanations of the way in which such details as Maria Sharapova's decibel count were humorous, and of how Moir's descriptions of the spectators' motley appearance and poor behaviour were provocative, were extensive and detailed. They showed absolute understanding of the way in which Wimbledon's unwarranted snobbery was the key focus. One Examiner commented, 'Several answers were worth about 40 marks out of 30. These candidates actually do understand the effect of devices like asyndeton and synecdoche, never mind rhetorical questions!'

Middle level responses

Candidates producing responses in this range showed a tendency to answer a question not quite the same as the one set, on the lines of "How does Jan Moir persuade the reader to agree with her point of view?" This was fine as far as it went, but even when well done such responses had little, if anything, to say about the key elements of entertainment and provocation and, consequently, this lack of clear focus on the task prevented them from accessing the highest bands. Some responses at this level spent so much time on discussion of the first two paragraphs of the text that there was only a cursory reference to later material and did not convey a full overview of Moir's views. Responses at this level tended to be more descriptive than analytical and were of the "Quote and Comment" variety consisting of paragraph-by-paragraph exposition of the narrative with some understanding of purpose but markedly less so of tone. There were vague and misleading references to informal and formal tone especially with reference to the use of rhetorical questions, and ineffective attempts to attribute humour to persuade the reader. They were sometimes able to explain the correlation of the animal noises to the grunting of the female players as they served the ball but rarely explained why the appearance and behaviour of the fans annoyed the writer so much. There was some confusion of alliteration and assonance as in 'pock, pock, pock' and 'grunt, grunt, grunt' with candidates failing to explain the effects of either sound and how it conveyed the writer's views.

Lower level responses

In general, candidates producing responses in this range identified technical devices but made no attempt to explain their effect other than, at best, stating that rhetorical questions “make the reader think” (without explaining what it was they should think about) or that a particular detail “is humorous”, or “entertains the reader”. The least successful responses in particular did not even contain this low level of “explanation” but simply indicated devices, often incorrectly, and then said no more, for example “She uses rhetorical questions “Are you serious?”. Quite often the answer consisted of up to a page and a half of short statements of this nature. Occasionally there was just enough attempt to analyse to reach B4, but this was rare and, on the other hand, a significant number of answers consisted entirely of unsupported assertion.

Overall, although most candidates made some attempt to explain effects, many answers still show an over-reliance on description/paraphrase of content and on personal commentary with no reference at all to the text. Conversely, long quotations were also offered with very little explanation or discussion. Discussion of paragraph structure was generally restricted to block layout features as suitable for a newspaper article with little appreciation of how these paragraphs were linked, except for the obvious use of short sentences and paragraphs. Thus, analysis of structure tended to be undeveloped. Similarly, discussion and analysis of vocabulary was also somewhat superficial. Although nearly all candidates confidently referred to triplets (or the ‘magic three’) only a small number actually went on to explain the cumulative effect of those used in the passage. In the same way, most candidates were able to recognise the use of rhetorical questions but their purpose was rarely fully explained. Only a few responses made a generic comment about their use and function and then followed it up with specific examples with detailed analysis.

Section B

Writing to Inform, Explain, Describe

Question 3

A magazine is running a series of articles in which contributors describe an activity that they really can't stand and explain why they hold the views that they do.

Write your article for this series

Examiners felt that this was a successful topic and that candidates responded well to it. By far the most common activity written about was football, followed by other sports, followed by joyless PE lessons presided over by sadistic teachers. Predictably, homework and exams were also commonly slated. Among the less common – and often the most interesting – subjects were shopping, washing up/tidying up and playing with young children and dolls. Those who chose to write about more personal topics such as these were often able to deal with the topic in greater detail and with less ranting than those who opted to attack larger and more general targets.

Higher level responses

Examiners commented that responses at this level were a real pleasure to read. As one commented, 'The best efforts could have been lifted from the page unaltered and published as they stood. Heaven only knows how good the writer could have been if allowed the time to go through several drafts. I'm sure I couldn't write as well as that when I was sixteen.'

Responses at this level often showed a great deal of wit and a very good sense of audience and genre. The result was definitely an article slanted at a reader.

Middle level responses

Responses at this level were usually very competently done but without the spark and sophistication which would have given access to the top bands. There was sometimes some loss of focus with the writer drifting away from the requirement to *describe* and *explain* and producing a response more suited to the *argue, persuade, advise* triplet.

Lower level responses

Candidates producing responses at this level usually were not short of something to write about. This was, however, usually football and their offerings followed a predictable path, viz: "it's only men chasing a ball – they are vastly overpaid – they cheat on their wives – what about our troops in Afghanistan who are paid much less and they risk their lives, or doctors/paramedics who save lives? The fans are all drunken hooligans and the whole thing is a boring waste of time." However, this was sometimes done with a sense of audience and some notion of the need to write an article, and such responses were certainly not without merit.

With responses below the highest levels, Examiners commented on a worrying decline in the technical aspects of writing. One Examiner commented, 'Even at the lower end of the middle ability range some candidates appeared to be quite unable to distinguish between formations which are acceptable in speech but not in writing, and spelling errors in relatively common words were frequent. The writing of candidates in the lower ranges contained the most basic of errors and words which, while all recognisably English, were often not put together in anything resembling English syntax'.

Although it is most probably unproductive for this report to list at any great length the range of errors noted in candidates' writing, it should be recorded that the apostrophe (both of omission

and possession) is a seriously endangered species and it would seem that the paragraph is closely following it into extinction. Centres are strongly advised to reinforce to candidates that even in the age of texting and emails, as far as GCSE examination essays are concerned **accuracy does matter.**

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 but many Examiners commented on the pleasure and privilege they felt in reading the scripts of all those candidates who had responded to the examination with genuine engagement. Most of those who sat this paper treated it seriously and responded to the tasks conscientiously. This is the last major sitting of the 1900 GCSE Specification and it is appropriate at this stage to congratulate all those who have both taken the exam or prepared candidates for doing so over the years that it has been in existence. Although the Principal Examiner's Report, by its very nature, tends to focus on those elements that have been less well done by candidates it should, nevertheless, be emphasised that Examiners have seen much impressive and outstanding work produced by those who have taken this unit. We wish future candidates well in their attempts at whatever specification they will be taking.

2432/01 Other Cultures, Analysis and Argument

All examiners reported that the paper was clear, accessible and appropriate for the candidates for whom it was intended. The questions in Section B, it was reported, gave candidates excellent opportunities to show what they could do at their best.

Overall Performance

The paper allowed very clear discrimination and differentiation for assessment. Many candidates showed obvious enjoyment of the paper and, in Section B, took great pride in recounting details of their treasured possessions and in attempting to persuade their peers to re-use and re-cycle. Some candidates were so generously supplied with knowledge that they found it difficult to be appropriately selective. A number of examiners commented on the sensitivity of the responses to both questions 7 and 8. There was little difference in the degrees of mechanical accuracy/error: but the choice of vocabulary (perhaps because of the familiarity of the subjects) was improved.

Section A was, in some cases, less well handled. There was less knowledge of the texts than we have seen previously and less confidence in some candidates in handling the tasks. The overwhelming choice was *Opening Worlds*, with many fewer than previously going for *The Old Man and the Sea* and with only the usual smattering of *Things Fall Apart*. Some centres had obviously taught a list of possible linguistic features and students had learnt these as a mnemonic: many, however, had difficulty in actually applying them to what they then went on to read in the examination.

There were fewer rubric errors than in the past although a very small minority of candidates persists with attempting all the questions in Section A. Some of these wrote more effectively on what was an unseen passage than on the text they had, notionally, prepared.

Comments on Individual Questions

- (1) *How do the writers in this passage... show the ways some characters try to influence others?*

The passage was taken from the opening of *Leela's Friend*, the "schoolroom" scene. This was slightly less popular than Question 2 although it has been quite clear for some time that this story is one of the most popular in this candidate range. Most responses tracked the passage and made comments on it and the two characters. They then went on to consider "influence" in one of all the other five stories. Most popular, but poorly answered was *The Pieces of Silver*. The best answers came on Anna and Savushkin in *The Winter Oak*.

- (2) *How do the writers in any of the two stories... show characters reacting to a new experience?*

An attractive and mainly well-answered question: the best answers were on either (or both of) *The Red Ball* dealing with Bolan's experiences in Woodford Square and afterwards; and *The Young Couple* which elicited some of the best writing we have seen on this story. Many had a strongly supportive and clearly empathic approach to Cathy and the situation she is landed in.

- (3) *How does the writer portray the killing of a fish here and at one or two other moments in the novel?*

Very few candidates gave more than cursory attention to the passage: many may not have recognized it. This did not prejudice the marks of those who went on to explore other relevant moments. A lot went for the killing of the marlin and then the sharks. Less specific responses talked in more general terms about Santiago as hunter and killer.

- (4) *How does Santiago find strength and support in his memories of the past in two moments on the novel?*

There were a roughly similar number of responses to this as to Question 3. Most went with the bullet points and explored the arm wrestling and baseball episodes in varying amounts of detail. There was less on "previous expeditions" and much on Manolin and the inspiration Santiago takes from their association.

- (5) and
(6) : on *Things Fall Apart*.

Very few candidates responded to either question other than in error. There is, consequently, too little evidence to make helpful comments on this text.

- (7) *"What are the possessions that you most want to keep?"*

See the comments above: the point is that the responses suggested a very much less materialistic cohort than we might have expected. Family mementoes of all sorts, treasured school paraphernalia and memories of parents and grandparents were to the fore. Mobile phones were a universal choice, not because of any perceived status they might denote, but rather to keep in touch with friends and family. Other popular artefacts were laptops, X-boxes and bicycles.

Most candidates were prompted to take very great pains and care with this work.

The reverse was, to an extent, the case with Question 8:

- (8) *Write the words of a talk to your class persuading them to re-use and re-cycle things instead of throwing them away.*

Candidates were almost all very well or too well supplied with relevant information and often felt the need to unburden themselves of it all in the course of the 35 minutes or so they had to complete the task. Most maintained an intermittently persuasive tone but some grammatical and syntactical structures become badly eroded as they did so. The question certainly differentiated across the full ability range.

Further Comments

A larger number of candidates than usual this year started with questions 7 & 8 and then moved back to Section A. Assuming an equal amount of time was left for this, it was unexceptionable. However, many candidates spent an even shorter time on the reading question than they might otherwise have done and limited the outcomes of their overall performance as a result.

As mentioned elsewhere, the level of mechanical felicity/insecurity was about the same as in previous years. However, some candidates in this tier who attempt to write about the language choices made by writers still find the exercise very challenging.

2432/02 Different Cultures, Analysis and Argument

Higher Tier

Examiners reported that the performance of candidates on this year's examination was good. Evidence indicated that candidates had been thoroughly prepared and coped very successfully with the demands of the paper; most candidates made excellent use of their time in dealing with all three tasks.

The vast majority of centres continue to use the *Opening Worlds* anthology to prepare candidates for this examination. Although this involves working on two texts, responses revealed a genuine grasp of how writers present the failings of adults and the ways in which they portray children.

In the ways writers portray children, it was clear that many candidates took the valid approach of considering how children are seen from the perspective of adults in the story and again Examiners marked positively the candidates' understanding of the texts and their ability to respond to the writer at work. Task 1 proved particularly popular, perhaps because the candidates were given the opportunity to explore the significant moment where Anna Vasilevna comes to such a painful awareness of her inadequacies, as well as a story of their own choice. Similarly, Task 2 was well tackled with candidates able to select texts that they had personally enjoyed, revealing a genuine engagement with writers who had portrayed children in a variety of ways. Indeed, all six tales were used in responses to this question with much perceptive analysis of language

A smaller, but still significant, number of candidates had studied *The Old Man and the Sea*: again Task 3 was very popular, giving candidates a rich passage on which to begin their analysis of Hemingway's presentation of the natural world, but many candidates also chose Task 4 which provided the opportunity to write on positive human qualities basing their responses largely on Santiago, but also mentioning the many qualities shown by Manolin and/or the relationship between these two characters.

Examiners were pleased to see that *Things Fall Apart* had been chosen by a significant number of centres for study this year and the candidates wrote very well on both tasks. Tasks 5 and 6 were both very popular, eliciting some very detailed and knowledgeable responses to the significance of food and drink in the Ibo culture as well as strong engagement with the terrifying build up to Okonkwo's suicide, showing empathy and sensitivity. The very precise nature of the tasks produced a wide variety of thoughtful responses.

Tasks 7 & 8 were strongly contrasted in terms of content and style. Many candidates seemed to be genuinely reflective in Task 7, perhaps even thinking about the importance of listening for the first time, whereas they were able to be far more opinionated and passionate in Task 8. The contrast in style and tone seemed more marked with these two tasks than in some previous sessions. The majority of candidates realised the importance of structuring their writing and there seemed to be fewer rambling, uncontrolled responses this year. As usual use of the prompts was very varied, with some candidates using them judiciously, incorporating the ideas in their own examples, whereas others simply repeated them without really understanding or exploring their implications. Some candidates used the prompt material unwisely and became distracted by war in Task 7, or young people being listened to in Task 8. A number chose to agree with the provocative statement in Task 8, presenting the view that the age limit for voting should be raised, and were able to provide a well developed line of argument. The responses sometimes focussed more on responding to the statement that young people know little of the

real world – often feeling highly aggrieved by it – and paid little attention to the issue of voting; the capacity to balance these two strands was often the hallmark of the stronger responses. However, it is clear that candidates really relish opportunities to express their ideas and views in the examination and many of their essays were very entertaining and thought-provoking.

In all questions, the hallmarks of good responses were careful planning, sustained focus, and detailed support or illustration. There was very little evidence that candidates had been entered for the wrong tier of the examination for this session. Nevertheless, centres are advised once more that they should not risk entering their candidates if their performance is likely to fall below what is required for an award at this tier.

Comments on Specific Tasks: Section A

Task 1

*How do the writers show the failings of adults, here and in **one other story** from the list above?*

A very popular question: *The Winter Oak* is clearly a story that appeals to the candidates and the vast majority demonstrated sound understanding of Anna Vasilevna's painful realisation of her failings during her walk through the forest. Interestingly, many candidates used the passage as a spring-board to look back at the beginning of the story where she misunderstands Savushkin and dismisses his offering of 'Winter Oak' as a noun and at the same time makes assumptions about his character. This led to some developed understanding of the story as a whole as well as detailed analysis of the passage. Of those who more immediately focussed on the passage, the preceding lines, "... you'll have to go by the road", were often used as part of their analysis to illustrate how Anna Vasilevna was continuing to fail. There were, amongst higher band responses, some extremely sensitive and detailed responses to the language of this passage.

Many of the other stories proved a suitable second choice: *Leela's Friend* and the failings of her parents in both their treatment of Sidda and of their daughter was a firm favourite, but many candidates also looked at Mr Chase and Clement's parents in *The Pieces of Silver* and Bolan's father in *The Red Ball*. A few interesting responses attempted to explore the failings of Mr. Megahey; his lack of clear eyesight was suggested as a metaphor for failing to see what was being required in his name.

Occasionally candidates seemed intent on unfairly blaming the adults for their poverty and making some unreasonable assertions, but generally they were frighteningly aware of how easily adults betray their weaknesses and let children down in the process. A few candidates looked at *The Young Couple*, generally focussing on Naraian and his parents in the latter's oppression of Cathy and the former's failure to protect her from it. However, many candidates looked beyond the more obvious points at Naraian's failure to live up to his ideals and his gradual submission to the temptations of materialism and comfort. One Examiner commented that "It was pleasing to encounter some strong responses to *the Young Couple* where use of language, not just descriptive, but also the use of symbolism, was presented as a key means of emphasising the way the adults failed to understand Cathy, or help her to settle in India." Candidates who chose to look at *Games at Twilight* for this question generally focused on the mother's exhaustion and lack of control over the children at the beginning, and her subsequent lack of understanding and sympathy for Ravi at the end, referring to the way the "motherly Mira" at times fulfils the role of parent in the way that Evelina does for Clement in *The Pieces of Silver*.

The vast majority of candidates balanced their responses well, though some left too little time for the second story and were unable to include the level of detail required for the higher bands. Use of quotation was generally good and it was noticeable that many candidates appreciate the desirability of analysing the writers' use of language as appropriate.

Task 2

*How do writers portray children in any **two** of the stories from the list above?*

Candidates adopted vastly different approaches to this task: some defined characteristics of children and how specific characters embodied them, whereas others looked more widely at how children are presented in the stories in terms of poverty, abuse, and more thematic concerns. Many used contrast, particularly with reference to a spoilt child such as Leela compared to a child who has to overcome adversity such as Clement or Bolan. A few responses were rather simple and undeveloped, and some candidates became distracted by the adults in the stories and started discussing their failings, trying to incorporate elements of Task 1 into a response to Task 2.

Most candidates adopted an analytical approach by focusing on 'portrayal' as the key word in the question. The discriminator tended to be in their choice of material: there is clearly more scope for demonstrating insight when exploring the significance of victory and being forgotten to Ravi, than in discussing whether Leela is more spoilt than neglected. Similarly, many responses referred to the funereal game at the end of *Games at Twilight*, but few explored how that related to the portrayal of Ravi. Overall, the most popular stories were *The Red Ball*, *Leela's Friend* and *The Pieces of Silver*, with more successful responses often opting to consider *Games at Twilight* or *The Winter Oak*. With *Games at Twilight* the focus of responses was generally on the adversarial nature of the children or the way in which Ravi could be seen as a victim of Raghu's bullying, sometimes including sensitive responses to language. Relatively few ventured into detail regarding the loss of innocence at the end. Very few candidates looked at *The Young Couple* as clearly Cathy and Naraian did not comfortably fit into the candidates' definition of 'children' for the purposes of this question.

Task 3

How does Hemingway portray the natural world, here and elsewhere in the novel?

This was a popular task – the passage worked very well, offering the candidates great scope to comment on the language and to link their comments to other parts of the novella. The majority of higher band responses cited the dual presentation of the natural world as a thing of great beauty but also of danger, linking their comments to the Portuguese man-of-war in the passage and the injuries sustained by Santiago as a result of its filaments. Many candidates also commented on the vastness of the sea in relation to the description of the shoreline, relating their comments to Santiago's security at sea and his innate understanding of his place in the natural world. Less successful answers tended to comment on the more obvious features in the passage, or approach it descriptively with few or any links to the wider novel. Occasionally candidates were over-reliant on taught literary techniques and such answers tended to lack personal engagement with the task, although they made relevant points.

Task 4

How does Hemingway help us to celebrate positive human qualities in the novel?

The majority of responses to this question focused on Santiago, citing his determination, knowledge, perseverance, courage, pride and strength and sometimes comparing him with the other fishermen to highlight his true respect for the sea. Wider ranging answers also looked at Manolin's qualities of loyalty and service to the old man and considered the benefits they gained from each other. There were a number of candidates who presented the argument that Santiago is a Christ figure and Manolin his disciple with varying degrees of success, depending on their understanding of the wider text and their ability to support such assertions with convincing references to the novel.

Task 5

How does Achebe reveal the importance of food and drink to the Ibo people, here and elsewhere in the novel?

There were some excellent responses to this task with many candidates revealing an in-depth knowledge of the whole novel through their comments on the importance of food and drink in the Ibo culture. The passage proved an excellent starting point with candidates skilfully referring to the wider novel from many of the issues raised, such as ritual, courtesy, tradition, hierarchy, ambition and celebration. Many discussed the yam as a currency and sign of wealth, power and prosperity. Responses tended to be good or excellent – very few falling below Band 4.

Task 6

How does Achebe make the death of Okonkwo seem so terrible?

In the words of one examiner: "Brilliant, brilliant, brilliant! The level of detail brought to this question was astounding and I learnt from them this year. There was complete, conceptualised understanding of the whole 'Things Fall Apart' idea as explored through Okonkwo's life and death." Middle band responses still offered sensitive personal response to why that death was so terrible for that man. This was also a popular question and one that elicited a number of really powerful responses.

Many candidates dealt with the terrifying nature of Okonkwo's death by charting the events that lead up to it, as the destruction of a powerful and proud man who refuses to give in to the destruction of his culture and way of life. There was great empathy with Okonkwo's isolation, and his growing helplessness and many candidates were impressive in their ability to retain such empathy for Okonkwo, while citing his own role in his downfall and the events leading up to his suicide. Many wrote very sensitively in their responses to this task, appreciating the link between his death (and personal tragedy) and the way things fall apart in the Ibo culture. These responses confidently referred to his concept of failure, the irony of his sharing a similar fate to his father in death, the contrast between his greatness and fall, the insulting treatment in jail that drove him to desperation, and the insulting dismissal of his life to 'one paragraph'. The responses that confidently used precise detail from many different relevant sections of the novel did not waste time on lengthy introductions, generalisations and concluding summaries.

Section B

Task 7

When is it important to listen to other people?

Candidates' responses were often wide ranging, thoughtful and reflective, as they genuinely considered their own experiences of listening. The best responses were able to consider the task personally through their own experiences at home or in school, and then widen their comment to a wider perspective considering the global implications of governments failing to listen. These were frequently presented in virtually flawless English with a mature range of vocabulary and expression.

Less successful responses tended to rely more heavily on personal experiences of listening, often approaching the task as 'why' it is important to listen, rather than 'when'. Many relevant comments were still made in these responses but they tended to be more mechanical in their consideration of the issues. The prompt material was used with varying degrees of success – less successful responses often incorporated the prompts without actually developing them or commenting on them in any way – particularly the Hemingway quote. Some candidates were side-tracked by the prompt about young people in the army (that was clearly more useful for

Task 8) and allowed their writing to drift from the subject of listening to a rant about the rights of young people. The style chosen to respond to this task varied – most candidates did adopt a reflective style of writing, but some responses became a piece of personal writing describing an incident in the candidate's life when they failed to listen, or weren't listened to. Others adopted an argumentative style more suited to Task 8.

Task 8

A politician has proposed raising the voting age from 18 to 21 for local and general elections because "Young adults know nothing about the real world".

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

The majority of candidates enjoyed responding to this task and many had plenty of interesting points to make. Most were aware of the need to address the audience and use rhetorical devices, although some seemed to address their speech to the politician, leading to some rather lively rants! Some of the strongest responses forgot to address the audience, often writing a formal argumentative essay instead. Whilst they were tightly structured and included plenty of relevant points, they often missed opportunities to use rhetorical devices to make their writing lively and focussed.

The least successful responses generally turned into a rant about young people's rights rather than focussing on the issues raised in the task. Some candidates focussed only on the suggestion that 'young people know nothing about the real world', ignoring the suggestion that the voting age be increased. A surprising number agreed with the politician and seemed to embrace the idea of being free of political pressures until the age of 21, expressing a preference for partying at university instead of focusing on adult concerns for a few more years. These candidates often cited examples of older brothers and sisters who didn't exercise their right to vote anyway, and felt that they had a limited view of the world since they were mainly still at school. The majority, however, were outraged that a politician should make such a sweeping generalisation about young people, often defending themselves with real vigour and passion. Many cited hardships in the lives of themselves and their friends that made their experiences of the real world far greater than that of "politicians in their ivory towers".

Examiners felt that candidates displayed considerable originality of thought and sophisticated powers of persuasion: politicians should feel their ears burning at the number of scathing references to both past expenses scandals and current university fees policies! A sense of genuine grievance was detected in response to the proposition. At times, as a consequence, the development of argument was sacrificed to the expression of outrage.

In Section B responses the quality of writing varied considerably. The most successful responses were skilfully crafted, using a wide range of sophisticated vocabulary. Middle band candidates wrote in a more straightforward style, but with a reasonable level of accuracy using vocabulary suitable for purpose. Lower band answers tended to lack structure and ramble with poor punctuation and simple vocabulary. 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, and that organisation of ideas into well structured sentences and paragraphs is required for the higher bands.

2433/01 Literary Heritage and Imaginative Writing

There was a considerable range of ability evidenced this year. Several of the best candidates could well have gained a B Grade had they been entered for the Higher Tier, as they were well-trained and disciplined, producing competent but not overlong essays, and focused, aptly supported Literature responses that showed a clear understanding of their texts. The least successful candidates put considerable effort into their essays, but either omitted one or both of the Literature questions, or demonstrated very little understanding of their texts in thin and/or very confused responses. This clearly limited their chances of scoring well on the paper as a whole, since the Literature is worth 50% of the marks. In most cases, pressure of time did not appear to be to blame.

Although few rubric errors were evident in this session, there were still some candidates who answered two Shakespeare questions; others wrote on 3 poems instead of 2, immediately leaving themselves little time to show any depth of understanding or language appreciation. In every question it is important to take careful note of the key words, and to ensure the answer is focussed, at however simple a level, throughout.

Question 1. Writing to EXPLORE, IMAGINE, ENTERTAIN.

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

I took one last nervous look in the mirror...

Potential C grade candidates need to demonstrate that they can develop a story, control the structure as evidenced in the use of paragraphs and a logical ordering of material, and seek to influence the reader by a conscious choice of vocabulary or other narrative devices, including a variety of sentence structures. Inevitably, in this tier, ambition results in some loss of control of technical accuracy, but it is more important to show potential and a wide vocabulary than to produce an accurate but very simple piece of writing. In addition, candidates should be aiming for quality, not quantity. It is not necessary, even desirable, to complete the whole story. All that is required is sufficient development to fulfil the band criteria – for most candidates this entails at most two sides of average handwriting and spacing. Significantly, the least successful answers were frequently the longest.

The question specifically directed candidates to explore the thoughts and feelings of the narrator. Although clearly these and all relevant narrative skills could only be demonstrated within a framework involving situation, atmosphere, and to some extent plot, those responses that leapt rapidly from the opening sentence to an action-packed storyline (usually involving gangland warfare, complex robberies, vampires and/or football matches) rarely stayed focussed on the task.

Examiners enjoyed the variety of fresh responses seen this year, starting and sometimes ending with a reflection in the mirror and ranging across weddings (and including some lively feelings about an arranged marriage), pre-party or first date preparations, many stage and sports performances, and some ghost stories that worked better than the usual haunted house scenario. Those whose association of ideas led from 'nervous look' to the examination room in some cases fulfilled the task by being able to focus on feelings and create a situation that added to the tension; others, sadly, had no clear line of development, hence ending in a rather repetitive self-limiting account. In contrast, nervous anticipation of a job interview tended to work well because it allowed more scope for a clear line of development involving changes of scene, a range of feelings and descriptive detail, and still a choice of suitable endpoint. Some second

language candidates may have lost marks for limitations of idiom and tense control, but others scored well on AO3iii for accurate spelling over a range of vocabulary, and sound punctuation.

The main reasons why some responses slipped into Band 6 and below were threefold: first, and very common, was a failure to establish what was happening and/or where the story was going, resulting in rambling sentences, little or no paragraphing, and confusion. This was particularly the case where candidates adopted a different persona and produced a range of sometimes dramatic emotions, but with no clue as to their origins, cause or effect. The second main failure was launching into action, ignoring the narrator's feelings and the need to ensure that development stems from the opening lines; the third was over-reliance on dialogue, which allowed little scope to show thoughts, or a wider vocabulary, and often caused further confusion by a failure to paragraph and punctuate each change of speaker helpfully.

The most serious technical weakness was the failure to recognise sentence endings, let alone punctuate them correctly. Where candidates were uncomfortable 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 could adopt this style most effectively, for others this also led to choosing basic, rather repetitive vocabulary ("stuff" was common this year, for want of a more precise term) and sentence structures, and a neglect of narrative detail that would have created some helpful atmosphere for the reader. The most frustrating weakness, from the examiner's point of view, was lack of development (many responses of well under 100 words) after a promising opening. Candidates must demonstrate the ability to sustain an appropriate mood, and sense of direction.

TEXTS FROM THE ENGLISH LITERARY HERITAGE

SHAKESPEARE

Potential C grade candidates need to ensure that they respond directly to the question, take full advantage of the bullet points, and demonstrate as clear and detailed an understanding of the relevant sections of the play as possible. This means choosing the question, or the character or moment within the question, which best enables them to do this, avoiding the temptation to lapse into narrative, or making sure after a narrative section that they add a comment that clarifies relevance and restores focus. All points raised need supporting evidence from the text, the best in the form of short snippets of quotation interwoven into the fabric of the answer rather than several lines in a 'chunk' which leaves the examiner to identify the significant elements.

Responses that slipped into Band 6 or below were usually showing very little understanding of the play, at best an implied relevance to the question, almost a complete absence of textual support for points made, or a serious lack of development.

2 **Much Ado About Nothing**

2a What do you find interesting about **one male character** in the play *Much Ado About Nothing*?

Write about what you find interesting in:

- what he says and does
- how his behaviour affects other characters

The second bullet point was key to the question as it steered the response into showing understanding of a wider section of the play. Examiners were delighted by the range of characters candidates chose in this tier, including Don Pedro and Dogberry. The least successful was often Benedick because, although his witticisms and his change of heart re: marriage are interesting, how his behaviour affects others – even Beatrice – requires greater insight into the play,. It also proved too easy to lapse into lengthy narrative of his exchanges with Beatrice, and even to switch focus onto her rather than him. The most successful answers tended to be on Claudio and his traumatic effect on Hero and Leonato, Don John and his effect on Claudio and Hero's 'marriage', and Dogberry with his comic effect and his eventual unearthing of Don John's plot.

2b Choose **one** moment from the play *Much Ado About Nothing* and explain why you find it amusing.

Write about:

- the way the characters behave
- the words they use.

Examiners will always credit what the candidate finds amusing, provided the reasons for this are explained. Hence, when the cruel accusations at the 'wedding' were chosen as the 'moment', initial surprise was overcome when the candidate went on to show a strong understanding of the situation by explaining how such a fuss was produced based on a false accusation, and it was amusing to see how many people were taken in and responded dramatically. Most responses chose an exchange between Beatrice and Benedick: here the discriminator was how well they could explain the humour, which some did remarkably well, others betraying a very limited understanding of the text.

Those who chose to explain partly via contrast with their later exchanges, or at least a reference to what their real feelings proved to be, were able to produce a clear reason for amusement and demonstrate a wider understanding of the play. Other successful moments included the fooling of Benedick into believing Beatrice loves him, or the exchanges between Dogberry and the Watch.

3 **Romeo and Juliet**

3a What do you find interesting about **one female character** in the play *Romeo and Juliet*?

Write about:

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

This question gave a realistic choice of three characters (although one candidate tried to use Lady Montague), and needed a perceptive understanding of the play to be able to respond to the second bullet. The most successful choices were probably Lady Capulet, for her lack of sympathy and support in pushing Juliet to desperate measures, and The Nurse, for her enabling the lovers to marry, and to comfort each other prior to Romeo's banishment.

Many chose the scene with Lady Capulet for its entertainment value and the close bond revealed with Juliet, but then found very little to say about her effect on other characters, and allowed themselves no scope to demonstrate whole play understanding, compared to those who identified the Nurse's part in the chain of events leading to the tragic ending. Similarly, Juliet appeared to be an obvious choice, but 'interest' tended to be justified in terms of her being the main character, and a character sketch or a narrative account of the love affair followed, but the second bullet was ignored, or at best her effect on Romeo implied in narrative accounts of the lovers' deaths. Clearly time spent planning how to develop both bullets before making a final choice of character was crucial to success in this question.

3b Choose **one** or **two** moments which show how important the feud is in the play *Romeo and Juliet*.

Write about:

- *what the characters say and do*
- *the results of their actions.*

The key word here is 'important' and whereas the first bullet enabled candidates to show some understanding of characters' words and actions, the second bullet was a steer into how to show this importance. Again, choice of moment could determine success. The servants' brawl worked well provided that the Prince's reaction was included and the link traced, however briefly, with the lovers' need for secrecy and/or Romeo's banishment and the tragic chain of events. More successful was the fighting resulting in the deaths of Mercutio and Tybalt, the subsequent banishment of Romeo and the eventual death of the lovers. The best candidates used helpful supportive quotation, such as Mercutio's curse 'A plague on both your houses!' with its sense of doom, rather than more factual support of events as in Benvolio's news 'brave Mercutio is dead'. A few used some of the Prologue in conjunction with one of Tybalt's aggressive moments to show how the feud affected the lovers. The least successful responses produced long stretches of narrative, even several lines of quoted dialogue, or showed considerable confusion with film versions of the play, featuring petrol stations, guns and police chiefs.

POETRY

With some very honourable exceptions, this was usually the least successful section of the paper. There seem to be three main reasons to account for this: first, lack of time management resulting in a response that was very rushed, thin, or unbalanced, if present at all; second, inadequate preparation resulting in basic misinterpretations of the poems, or a transparently generalised approach to the main themes in the section – for example, in Question 7, talking about the contrast between expectations and the realities of war, with no attempt to look closely at the text; third, the approach that turned the question into a formulaic exercise designed to spot similes and identify rhyme schemes without being able to understand their effects, or how they related to the question.

All too often comments were so vague they could apply to almost any poem or question, for example, 'it makes it more emphatic' (of what?), 'it draws the reader's attention' (to what?), 'it makes it more interesting', 'it makes it flow', or, even more revealing, 'it makes it easier to understand'.

In this tier, full credit is given to any attempt to explain the effects of language, without any necessity to use the correct technical terms. Awareness of the use of language is credited where the candidate consistently chooses short, apt quotations in support of points made. Essentially we are looking for straightforward understanding and relevance to the question. Hence candidates are advised to choose, out of the three, the two poems that they feel most confident in using in response to the question (which may not necessarily mean the two they know most about). Where a short poem has been selected, for example, *The Target*, understanding of most of the text will be relevant and expected. Conversely, a longer poem, such as Tennyson's *The Charge of the Light Brigade* allows candidates to select and comment on only those relevant details with which they are most confident. The least successful answers still tend to explain or translate the text, using lengthy quotation as padding and showing very little real understanding.

4 SECTION C: WAR

*How do the poets use words and images to show people's attitudes to war in **two** of the following poems?*

(Page 34) *Asquith* *The Volunteer*

(Page 35) *Newbolt* *Vitae Lampada*

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

Few candidates chose this question and the response was often disappointing, as many candidates revealed considerable misunderstanding of the first two poems, particularly of *Vitae Lampada*. Few grasped the idea that the attitude to war encouraged by schools and continued by the army as motivation was to view it as a game, with the same elements of honour, courage and reward for effort. Some responses confused the cricket analogies with football; others tried to make the poem fit with the commonly assumed anti war theme, but at best could only identify a high casualty rate in 'The sand of the desert is sodden red' as support.

Similarly, while a few recognised in *The Volunteer* a sense of fulfilment through the opportunity for adventure, challenge and an honourable death, most could only focus on the fact that he died and again assumed the poet was anti war in attitude. Tennyson proved the most accessible, responses understanding the attitude of obedience to orders, courage in the face of danger and praise from subsequent generations for their noble conduct. However, few used quotation to support the dangers and excitement of the action. Too many, instead, attempted to discuss rhythm and rhyme scheme without making sense of their effect or their bearing on the question.

5 SECTION D: Town and Country

*How do the poets use words and images to show people's reactions to the natural world in **two** of the following poems?*

(Page 48) Hardy *Beeny Cliff*

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

(Page 50) Hopkins *Binsey Poplars*

Answers needed to identify the reactions to the natural world conveyed in each poem. Responses to Hardy tended either to talk about the loss of his wife without relating it to how this coloured his reactions to the scenery on different occasions, or to pick out descriptions such as 'sapphire' or 'irised rain' as examples of appreciation of beauty, or to focus on possible reasons for the Roman numerals marking each stanza. Kipling was not a good choice as few could do more than, again, pick out examples of beautiful sights – 'trout-ringed pools' and rolling badgers. Hopkins proved the most accessible in that his love of natural scenery and his horror at man's destruction of it was generally understood. The best responses were able to use the final repetition of 'sweet especial rural scene' as evidence of his love and regret, even if 'aspens dear', and the analogies to a woman and the vulnerability of an eyeball were not understood, and could identify how the repetition of 'felled' and the use of 'hack and rack' suggest how savagely he believes the scenery has been treated. Few used the title, *Binsey Poplars*, as a clue to the precise nature of the scenery being destroyed.

6 SECTION G: How It Looks From Here

*How do the poets use words and images to show people's thoughts, in **two** of the following poems?*

(Page 92) Duffy *In Your Mind*

(Page 95) Plath *Mirror*

(Page 96) Hill *The Hare*

So few candidates attempted this question, examiners wondered if they had chosen it as an unseen because the poems were short. Duffy was the most successful, but only where candidates had grasped the idea that she was day dreaming.

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

*How do the poets use words and images to show the attitudes of people to war in **two** of the following poems?*

(Page 103) Gurney *The Target*

(Page 106) Gurney *The Bohemians*

(Page 106) Sassoon *Lamentations*

The majority of candidates answered this question, some with real engagement, especially with *The Target*, where they empathised with the soldier's confused feelings of guilt, regret, and attempted self-justification for shooting a man, and also with his concerns for the sufferings of his mother, and by association, all the mothers worrying about the fate of their sons. The least successful responses merely translated or slightly reworded the text, a few thought he had shot one of his own men, and there was little attempt to identify precisely what he must be feeling if he wants to ask forgiveness, or if he thinks God 'takes no sort of heed'. The very best focused more closely on words and images used, such as 'job', 'tangle' and 'bloody mess'.

Lamentations proved less accessible and more confusing. Some thought the crying man was being punished as a deserter, or was mourning a brother who had been shot as a deserter; others thought he had been mortally wounded and nobody was doing anything to

help him; 'gone west' was thought to mean gone to France to fight. However, the best focused on the evidence that he was overcome by grief and that, understandably, now hated the war. Similarly, those who used *The Bohemians* could identify the rebellious attitude of certain soldiers, but became confused about who gained promotion, who died, ('ghost' prompted another train of thought) and, indeed, how the poet viewed their behaviour.

2433/02 Literary Heritage and Imaginative Writing

General Comments

Although there was a much smaller entry this year, examiners once again were heartened by the quality and depth of the best answers produced under such rigorous time constraints, and the freshness of response evidenced at all levels. While it was rewarding to see real engagement with some questions, there was a marked imbalance observed in the narrative skills required for the imaginative writing question and the recall and analytical skills required for the Literature. This was particularly pronounced at the C borderline, where many papers gained their C through very competent writing despite limited reading skills, and at the A borderline where, conversely, good reading skills added significantly to sustained but not entirely convincing writing skills.

Although candidates from some centres had evidently been well-trained in examination technique, there was still some concern over 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, though – obviously – 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.

Sadly, some candidates entered for this tier would have been better in the Foundation Tier. Where performance is erratic, or where the normal expectation is at best Band 5 per question, it is safer to opt for the Foundation Tier rather than risk losing out on a final grade by achieving below Band 6 on the paper as a whole.

Section A: Writing to Explore, Imagine, Entertain

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

I took one nervous look in the mirror...

The generic mark scheme for imaginative writing clearly places great emphasis on structure, coherence and paragraphing – hence the wisdom of careful planning before writing. Rambling at will, however fluent in expression, rarely holds the interest of the reader for long. Similarly, going off at 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 other appropriate narrative devices in developing the situation and exploring the thoughts and feelings of the narrator. Although the opening sentence is given as stimulus material, rather than a hurdle, the development should be constructed as a convincing extension, and not give the impression of a previously written story very loosely connected.

This year many candidates exceeded all our expectations, producing imaginative scenarios ranging from pre or post cosmetic surgery nerves to quite sophisticated explorations of how the face reflected back might reveal the ravages of time, some form of abuse, or the growing evil within. Many focused on pre-wedding nerves, with several poignant explorations of an arranged marriage scenario, others on nerves before a stage, musical or sports event, an important job interview, or starting a new school. Memorable

was a detailed description of clothing and make-up preparation in a seemingly trivial manner before finally revealing the narrator's status as a drag artiste. Even the much-loved haunted house, vampire or crime continuations seemed to work better this year for starting with the reflection of the ghost or the intruder seen in the mirror.

The least successful, with a few honourable exceptions, were those who focused on pre-examination nerves, as these responses tended to be repetitive and to have little sense of direction or development; in addition, those who launched into an action-packed account of a football match or a war event often lost sight of the need to explore thoughts and feelings. Conversely, some choosing a stream of consciousness approach found difficulty in controlling sentence structures, and considerable confusion between indirect and direct forms of speech or thought.

Happily, 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, weaker responses tend to perform in inverse proportion to the quantity they write, especially candidates for whom English is still a second language: vocabulary tends to become ever more bland and repetitive, sentence structures more rambling and confused or, conversely, increasingly simple the more pages produced. Although Examiners bear in mind that this is first draft writing, a number of marks were needlessly lost for failure to control tense sequences and 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. Where I.C.T. may have undermined the habit of indicating paragraph openings by indentation, candidates would be well-advised to leave a space between paragraphs. Hedging of bets by giving a full stop a tail, or following a comma by a capital letter, only confirms the Examiner's impression of an insecure grasp of basic punctuation. However, 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. Some very neatly returned to the mirror as their endpoint.

SECTION B: READING TEXTS FROM THE LITERARY HERITAGE

SHAKESPEARE

In this section, questions 2 and 3, we 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 – 4 points to be fully made per answer or a wider range at a slightly more superficial level, but all directly focused on the question.

We have accordingly tried to set questions that will enable candidates to concentrate on one character, in the context of the whole play, on 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. They avoid choosing quotations that merely confirm narrative events, (eg Tybalt kills Mercutio, 'brave Mercutio is dead') but select a few very short

snippets that show motivation, characterisation, or hold thematic significance; it is good practice to always provide a short comment that explains how the language conveys this.

Despite the standard reminder following each question, "Support your answer by referring to and quoting from the play", some candidates still lose marks for a failure to produce textual evidence or illustration. 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.

2 *Much Ado About Nothing*

2 (a) *Explore the role of **one male character** in the play *Much Ado About Nothing*.*

The key word here was 'role', which invited responses to explore not only how the character contributed to the plot, but also his dramatic or thematic significance. Whilst Examiners were delighted by the range of characters chosen, it was in the candidates' best interests to select the one whose role could be explored with the most confidence.

Hence, while many chose Benedick, perhaps on the grounds that for them his role was to be the most interesting, witty male character in the play, they rarely scored much higher than a low band 3 unless they could indicate more complex aspects of his role – such as how his attitude towards love contrasts with and highlights the weaknesses of Claudio's, or how his being duped is interwoven in the themes of deception and misunderstandings. Those choosing Claudio or Don John, or even Dogberry, found it easier to identify how their actions affected the plot, or linked in with the title, and/or exposed some of the weaknesses in the patriarchal society of Messina.

(b) *Explore some of the ways in which Shakespeare creates humour in the play *Much Ado About Nothing*? You may choose to focus your answer on **one** or **two** moments in the play.*

The question was asking candidates to explain how the humour works either throughout the play, or in one or two choice moments. Responses that merely narrated some of the witty interchanges between Beatrice and Benedick, or how Benedick was tricked into believing Beatrice loved him, could only, at best, be awarded a band 4. However, those which, for example, explained the set up with Benedick believing he is overhearing something not intended for his ears, identified how Leonato over-exaggerates beyond all credulity Beatrice's reactions, or showed how Benedick's subsequent protestations of love are as banal as anything he had previously criticised in others, clearly demonstrated perceptive understanding and consistent focus on the question. An impressive analysis was also offered of Dogberry and the Watch, complete with his malapropisms, his confusion, and yet the irony that he is finally instrumental in uncovering the plot against Hero.

3 *Romeo and Juliet*

3 (a) *Explore the role of **one female character** in the play *Romeo and Juliet*.*

There were a surprising number of candidates who chose Question 2a, **one male character**, and then applied it to this play, a clear rubric error. Again, 'role' was the key word, and those who chose Juliet, as the character they knew most about, often struggled to identify a role beyond that of being the main character, or an example of a passionate first love. The best responses, however, were able to establish links with The Prologue and the ending to show how she was the victim of Fate, her love

doomed, but the means by which peace was ultimately brought to Verona. Similarly, those who chose the Nurse, for her motherly role towards Juliet, often failed to extend that to the play as a whole, rarely venturing further than the balcony scene, or where she teases Juliet by delaying news of her wedding. Where there is a wealth of material/moments to choose from, the candidate who selects words or actions that are significant thematically and to the plot will score a much higher mark than the candidate who omits even to mention her role as go-between, let alone her comic role, or her part in the tragic chain of events leading to Juliet's death. Those who did mention her change of advice to Juliet often failed to explore this in terms of alienating and isolating Juliet, or in terms of showing a very different view of love and marriage. Similarly, those who chose Lady Capulet tended to delight in emphasising her failings as a mother, but only the best identified her part in the tragic chain of events, and how she exemplified the most frightening revenge aspect of the feud.

- 3 (b) *Explore some of the ways in which Shakespeare presents the impact of the feud in the play Romeo and Juliet.*

*You may choose to focus your answer on **one** or **two** moments in the play.*

'Impact' was the key word in this question, and almost any example of violence, anger against the opposing family, or even the dismay expressed by Juliet when she first discovers Romeo's identity, could work provided the response went on to identify the sense of inevitability the feud creates, seen through links with The Prologue and/or the Prince's final pronouncement, the need for secrecy or the escalating tragic sequence of complications. The least successful answers merely narrated key moments; even where they used a significant quotation, such as Mercutio's 'A plague on both your houses', they failed to comment on its thematic implications. Several responses showed confusion with video productions, suggesting that Tybalt, or even Lady Capulet, knew of Romeo and Juliet's affair, and referred to gunfights, petrol stations and angry police chiefs.

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 best responses have to be sharply focused and concisely worded; there is no time to give a biography of the poet or a synopsis of the society of his time.

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 responses can only aim to make 4 – 6 fully developed points across the two poems chosen. Candidates 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.

There remains a tendency among candidates to adopt a formulaic approach, homing in immediately on structure with at best an all-embracing suggestion as to the effect ('it makes it flow' ;'it makes it easier to understand', 'for emphasis'), naming techniques employed (or even not employed) without providing examples or explaining their effect,

and sometimes without ever identifying the main purpose of the poem. In contrast, several candidates give just a very generalised response without ever selecting examples from the text. This was particularly apparent in Qu.7 where many talked about the contrast between the expectations and realities of war, ignoring the actual text.

Although many candidates may find it easier to sustain an analytical approach by structuring their answer as a comparison, 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 inspires them the most, but they must give the second 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: we include three solely to provide some element of choice.

4 SECTION C: War

Explore some of the ways in which the poets present attitudes to war in **two** of the following poems:

(Page 34) Asquith *The Volunteer*
(Page 35) Newbolt *Vitae Lampada*
(Page 36) Tennyson *The Charge of the Light Brigade*

The response to this question varied. *The Volunteer* was probably the best understood, with many candidates exploring the contrast in tone between the two stanzas and appreciating that 'living' was associated with adventure, challenge, joining the select and honourable band of heroes, not remaining safe in a dull, routine 'grey' job. Likewise, Tennyson's poem was understood for the praise given for courage in facing impossible odds, and responses made full use of the opportunity to explore the linguistic devices used to heighten the dramatic effect of the brigade's memorable advance. Less well-understood was *Vitae Lampada*, with the cricket analogy not fully grasped, although many still gained credit for analysing the use of language that showed the extent of the casualties involved, and the repetition that emphasised the traditional attitude towards facing up to the challenge of warfare. In fact, where centres offered responses to both question 7 and question 4, the ability to comment helpfully on the effects of linguistic devices was more pronounced in question 4.

5 SECTION D: Town and Country

Explore some of the ways in which the poets present people's reactions to the natural world, in **two** of the following poems:

(Page 48) Hardy *Beeny Cliff*
(Page 49) Kipling *The Way Through the Woods*
(Page 50) Hopkins *Binsey Poplars*

With a few honourable exceptions, Kipling was the least well understood, few picking up the mysterious, almost ghostly references to 'the swish of a skirt' or 'the beat of a horse's feet' through 'the misty solitudes' on a non-existent road. Some picked up the power of nature seen in the way the 'weather and rain' have reclaimed the road, but many could comment only on the beauty of the undisturbed wildlife as a reaction to the natural world. In some centres, both the Hardy and Hopkins poems appeared to have been thoroughly taught, and many complex references were relevantly explored in detail. However, occasionally a less confident response would attempt to explain, for example, the Biblical reference implied in 'sandalled' but reveal that it had not really been understood. Less successful responses nevertheless were able to gain credit for the areas of this very

complex poem that they did find accessible, such as the affection shown for the 'aspens dear' and the repeated 'sweet especial scene' and the anger against the savagery of the destruction expressed in the repetition of 'felled, all felled' and the harsh sounding 'Hack and rack', and 'Strokes of havoc'.

Many responses were unconvincing in their attempt to establish some significance in the Roman numerals denoting the different stanzas in *Beeny Cliff*. While most understood the link between the stages of Hardy's relationship and the descriptions of the scenery, with much made of the symbolism in the use of 'opal' and 'sapphire', few commented on 'chasmal', though many quoted it as evidence that nature survives.

6 SECTION G: How It Looks From Here

Explore some of the ways in which the poets convey people's thoughts in **two** of the following poems:

(Page 92)	Duffy	<i>In Your Mind</i>
(Page 95)	Plath	<i>Mirror</i>
(Page 96)	Hill	<i>The Hare</i>

Some candidates are to be congratulated on how well they tackled these difficult poems, but very few had studied this section and responses were often disappointing. Most understood that Hill's poem was disturbing, and how frightened the woman was, but few could comment on any detail, or the use of similes and contrasts to enhance the fairytale quality of the nightmare, and some showed considerable confusion as to what was actually happening to the woman. Most understood the mixture of day dreaming and drawing on simple images from ideal past experiences in *In Your Mind*, contrasted with the mundane reality of a desk job and 'English rain'. Despite making excellent use of a mirror in their opening essay, few were comfortable analysing the thoughts of Plath's *Mirror* and the idea of cold, unbiased truth in what it portrays.

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

Explore some of the ways in which the poets present attitudes to war in **two** of the following poems:

(Page 103)	Gurney	<i>The Target</i>
(Page 106)	Gurney	<i>The Bohemians</i>
(Page 106)	Sassoon	<i>Lamentations</i>

This section once again proved the most popular choice and produced some strongly engaged responses. The key words were 'attitudes to war', although, disappointingly, many responses launched into an analysis of two poems without any reference to the question. Hence, although the simplest areas of each poem were at least by implication relevant, the bohemians ignoring rules and regulations, the soldier in *The Target* feeling guilty about killing another 'boy', many missed the steer towards examining the three different attitudes explored in Sassoon, or considered what the poet's attitude to war might be in *The Bohemians* when, whether soldiers tried to be dutiful or not, they mostly ended up dead in 'Artois or Picardy'. The force of 'free of useless fashions' was rarely appreciated, nor the criticism of how the war 'wrenched what little soul they had still further from shape'. In less successful responses, considerable confusion arose, from the very long sentence, as to who gained promotion or 'died off one by one'.

Similar confusion arose in consideration of the Sassoon poem over whether it was the poet's or the Army's belief that 'Such men have lost all patriotic feeling'. Nevertheless, there were some impressive responses that confidently analysed 'blind darkness' and 'puzzled, patient face' to show how some had become brainwashed by the army to be embarrassed by shows of grief, and to regard death as the normal price to pay, hence the

use of the euphemism, 'gone west' and the derogatory, 'all because'. These responses fully appreciated the use of irony in the concluding line. Sadly, a few very mature responses showed clear understanding without once quoting from the text or once attempting to analyse the use of language. Others showed some confusion with *The Hero* and *The Deserter*, believing that the soldier was being punished for desertion or cowardice. Others failed to understand 'gone west'. Although *The Target* proved the most accessible, responses tended to discuss the ideas of guilt and kill or be killed without attempting to analyse language.

Only the most successful responses looked at how the simple language in first person and short, abrupt sentences portrayed an ordinary man struggling to come to terms with an alien situation. The references to God had significance beyond whether the soldier still had a religious faith, as, in conjunction with 'tangle' and 'bloody mess', they reflect his feeling that everything to do with war is wrong, and out of control. Even where candidates used these references as aptly chosen supportive quotation, only a few went on to explore their effect. Similarly, those who identified 'gone west' as a euphemism failed to consider why it had been employed.

2434 Literary Heritage and Imaginative Writing

General Comments

This year there was a much smaller entry as centres are now concentrating on the new specification and a great many centres had submitted coursework in January.

Again it was generally pleasing to see the 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 coursework showed the hard work of the majority of teachers in delivering the coursework component.

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.

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

- **MS1s.** There were more clerical errors this year,. Marks on the MS1 were often not the same as those recorded on the folders, and Moderators had to contact schools unnecessarily to establish which mark was appropriate.
- **Centre authentication sheets.** Centres are reminded that signed authentication sheets are necessary for 2434 and 2443/2447, Numbers of Moderators commented that they had to ring centres to ask for these to be provided.
- **Application of assessment criteria.** Most teachers are now very skilled at applying the assessment criteria accurately, but where centres' marks are "out" there is often little evidence of an effort to annotate students' work and little or no evidence of marking in Bands, with just an overall grade given at the end of the work. When this occurs Moderators have reported that teachers seem to lose sight of the bands more easily, and constant referral back to the wording of the assessment criteria throughout the course might help eliminate this problem.

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 found consistently in only the most successful responses.

Response to Shakespeare

The majority of centres again chose *Romeo and Juliet* or *Macbeth*.

Candidates seemed generally confident in understanding plot, themes and character, and the more successful responses made appropriate comment on language and its effect.

Centres demonstrated a varied approach to the interpretation of “Shakespeare’s stagecraft”. Centres are reminded that term “theatricality” means an awareness of the whole play, and candidates who submit detailed responses to specific scenes 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.

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

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

Most centres are now comparing only two poems. The most popular pairs of poems were again *The Charge of the Light Brigade* and *Dulce et Decorum est*, Blake’s *London* and Wordsworth’s *Upon Westminster Bridge*, and love poetry.

The danger of comparing a post 1914 with a pre 1914 poem is that there must be a greater emphasis upon the analysis of the pre 1914 poem to meet the assessment criteria for 2443.

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 who showed appreciation of the function of form and language in a way that was both 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.

Moderators reported a generally higher standard overall, with an interesting range of narrative allowing candidates to write creatively and engagingly. This time there was a wide range of responses and a number of centres have clearly urged candidates to go for the unexpected and make an impact upon the reader from the outset. This led to more candidates attempting tasks which could address the whole range of assessment criteria.

Overall centres are to be congratulated for their generally consistent application of the assessment criteria in relation to a range of interesting and demanding tasks.

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.

The fact that there were only a small number of centres where marks had to be scaled bodes well for the new specification and the consistent application of the assessment criteria for the Controlled Assessment units.

2435 Speaking and Listening

General Comments

This unit continues to be successful, with Team Leaders/Moderators reporting no real difficulties or problems for this series. This is only to be expected, being the last major entry for this specification. What problems there were, were centred largely on administration issues. Centres maintained good practice: producing clear reports and judgements firmly rooted in the assessment criteria, setting appropriate tasks, ensuring secure internal standardisation procedures were in place and on-going records kept. 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 acting upon the advice given.

Task setting

Centres have continued to set tasks suitable for their candidates, with those candidates in the higher bands being set challenging activities and moved out of the familiar towards more stimulating and original materials, situations and audiences. The converse was also true, with more limited candidates being set appropriate tasks. Candidates with little empathy for Literature were achieving greater success with non-literary based activities.

This was often the case with the drama-focussed context. There is no requirement, and never has been, for the stimulus material to be drama based or even literary based. Those centres which provided candidates with the opportunity to create independent roles separated from set drama texts often allowed their candidates to achieve more. Some centres, despite advice and feedback, still have real problems with task setting for the drama-focussed context. Moderators reported candidates reading scripts or simply discussing a play. Neither activity is valid. Good tasks are always rooted firmly in the assessment criteria and enable candidates to meet these.

Record keeping

The majority of centres presented careful, thorough and clear records; many were word processed. Similarly the majority of centres used the OCR designed candidate record form, which was designed to cover all the necessary elements. Of those centres, which used forms designed in-house, as always the majority provided all the relevant information for moderators.

Many centres now maintain an on-going centrally held set of marks and comments. These procedures helped to prevent problems arising from staff absences, changes of staff and the like. There were very few problems caused by these, for this series.

Application of the Criteria

Centres continued to display confidence and competence in assessing their candidates. Here good practice in awarding the final mark, balanced strengths and weaknesses; not just recording strengths. The Moderator needs to know why candidates have failed to achieve the next band and what distinguished a candidate's performance. This aspect of the application of the criteria is particularly important, where there is bunching of the marks or a narrow mark range in a centre.

Internal Standardisation Procedures

Procedures continued to be secure and in many instances rigorous and thorough. Good practice was to use cross moderation of groups, joint marking exercises, reorganisation of groups for assessment and department Inset time to watch and discuss filmed evidence, either the centre's own or that provided by OCR. Many centres reported on procedures to train and integrate new members of staff.

However, a worrying omission from many records – which often applied particularly in small centres – was that there were departments where no mention was made of having watched/assessed the filmed evidence provided by OCR in the form of the Inter-Board DVD/videos. These set the agreed OCR standard against which a centre must judge its own internally set standards. They provide vital support for all, but are of particular relevance for small centres and teachers working in isolation to prepare their candidates.

Administration

Team Leaders/Moderators reported a decline in the number of centres which had everything in place with the Moderator by the published deadline. Thankfully, the majority of centres were still relatively problem free, but some centres with a reputation for efficiency in the past, had let matters slide. The procedures for this unit have been unchanged for the life of the specification and centres now have easy access to instructions on the OCR website, apart from paper versions of all, sent to centres.

As centres increasingly move to systems where non-subject-specialist examination officers are the point of reference and dispatcher of materials to Moderators, it is vital for the smooth running of the process that all involved understand what is required by whom and when. In some case much persistence was needed on the part of Moderators to obtain all the paperwork necessary to complete moderation and meet their deadlines; all of which is time consuming and should be unnecessary. So, grateful thanks and acknowledgement to those centres where cooperation in assembling and checking documentation enabled Moderators to complete moderation smoothly.

Advisory and moderation visits to Centres

Moderators witnessed much good work at all levels. The visits, as always, provided an opportunity for much fruitful discussion with teachers, regarding task setting, the application of the criteria and the management of this unit. It was pleasing, again as always, to see how candidates rose to the occasion; in some instances pleasingly surprising teachers with their confidence and maturity.

All the visits made for this series were advisory; no moderation visits were necessary.

Conclusion

This unit is often a real strength for candidates, with year on year improvement in standards. All this is testimony to the hard work and dedication of the teachers involved in preparing and assessing candidates for this unit. Many thanks go to them for their continuing commitment.

2443/2447: English Literature (Coursework)

General Comments

Centres are to be praised for the care and commitment made to candidates submitting coursework this year, when so much else has been going on to distract them. Everyone benefits when staff complete paperwork punctually and accurately and particularly when they take the trouble to annotate work and provide detailed comment indicating how marking was informed by the assessment objectives. Similarly evidence of internal standardisation is always re-assuring and the very exercise of moderation is useful staff development. There is always sympathy for centres working in isolation, where often some sort of benchmarking is needed so that teachers can have a sense of comparative standards.

As has been the case for many years now, teachers have set tasks that have been tried and tested and have marked them within tolerance. As this specification comes to an end it might be helpful to summarise some of the good practice that has characterised it.

Very often, when assessing a centre, a Moderator can see the degree to which a teacher has provided a support structure for assignments. When all the content has been dictated, including the requisite quotations, good students have often been constrained, but where the support has allowed for individual expression and insight even candidates of medium ability have been able to demonstrate some of the more demanding criteria such as sensitivity and originality.

Well set tasks have always supported candidates, providing them with prompts and manoeuvring them to meeting the full range of assessment objectives, whereas less well thought-out ones often lead to narrative or responses that over-balance into just one assessment objective. For example analyses of Hardy's short stories that focus only on AO4 can result in a piece of socio-historical documentary. At the other extreme vague questions like, "Write a critical commentary on..." often don't give the sense of direction that candidates need.

Many centres tackle Shakespeare via an examination of one scene only. This approach can lead to fine analysis of language, stagecraft and style but students needs to be encouraged to refer to the play as a whole.

Even the most challenged of students have been able to make some comment on the language of poetry and there has been a definite improvement in this area over the years. Good teaching has encouraged students to go further and link identification of stylistic devices to effect and meaning. There are still cases where students have solemnly learned the names of rhetorical devices which they are delighted to spot, but which do very little for expressing their understanding or appreciation. Such responses are often technically clever but give a rather clinical reaction to the text. Those candidates who react with sophistication and confidence have been unafraid to ask themselves questions like, "How does this verse make me feel?" and then "What in the form or language has made me feel his way?" These are the young people who are more likely to go on to enjoy literature.

One of the challenges of teaching 2443 and 2447 has always been the art of comparison. Very few candidates now write on two entirely separate texts but the skill of continuous cross-reference and judgement eludes all but the most talented reader. Two limitations always emerge: the unbalanced answer focusing mainly on the easier poem; the final paragraph comparing the two. Blake and Wordsworth on London, and *The Light Brigade* and *Dulce et Decorum* have always been firm and workable favourites. Seeing other poems being studied is always welcome. These responses frequently demonstrate a lingering problem with AO4 – undigested biographical detail which is not informing the study of the text. More of this has been reported, presumably a result of students doing their own internet research. Teaching how to

use secondary sources, now so much is easily available, remains one of the challenges of the future.

As has always been the case, fewer centres have opted for 2447, perhaps because of the issue of having to teach an extra play, so it is refreshing to come occasionally across writers like Becket or Pinter.

When 2443 and 2447 first came into being the technology available to candidates was only beginning to be exploited. Managing that technology has become a major requirement of teaching and examining. There are often marked differences in grammar and spelling between word-processed and hand-written material but the temptation to assume the technology will always take care of things was evidenced by the student writing on *Romeo and Juliet* who quoted: "How cam'st thou Hitler..."

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