



General Certificate of Secondary Education

English 3702/3712

Specification A

Report on the Examination

2006 examination - June series

- English (3702)
- English Literature (3712)

Further copies of this Report on the Examination are available to download from the AQA Website:
www.aqa.org.uk

Copyright © 2006 AQA and its licensors. All rights reserved.

COPYRIGHT

AQA retains the copyright on all its publications. However, registered centres for AQA are permitted to copy material from this booklet for their own internal use, with the following important exception: AQA cannot give permission to centres to photocopy any material that is acknowledged to a third party even for internal use within the centre.

Set and published by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance.

The Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) is a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales 3644723 and a registered charity number 1073334. Registered address AQA, Devas Street, Manchester. M15 6EX.

Dr Michael Cresswell Director General.

Contents

General Introduction 5

English (3702)

Paper 1

Foundation Tier 7
Higher Tier 10

Paper 2

Foundation Tier 13
Higher Tier 15

English Literature (3712)

Foundation Tier 19
Higher Tier 24

Coursework 30
Mark Ranges and Award of Grades 37

This page has been left intentionally blank

General Introduction

English (3702)

This specification has now settled down with the result that, in its third year, there were very few candidates unsure of what they had to do.

The following Report looks closely at each element of the Coursework and Examinations. A few aspects of those detailed reports might usefully be pulled out at the beginning:

- language
- presentational and structural devices
- length of coursework written tasks
- variety of sentence structure.

There is a marked difference between candidates who can give examples of different kinds of language and those who can comment on its use. The way candidates can move up the ladder is for them not just to try to categorise the kind of language used but to comment on its effect, thinking, for example, about why the writer used a particular phrase rather than another and thinking about the precise effect this choice has on a reader. The identification of devices is a relatively low level skill; analysis of the effect created is at the top end of the spectrum.

Disappointment was expressed in responses to Question 2, the media question asking about language and presentation in Paper 1F. The way forward would be for the candidate to select a range of relevant features from the given material – highlighter pens are very useful for this – and then to comment on the specific effect of each of them. Despite the fact that this question comes towards the end of the hour, candidates need to have had sufficient practice doing this to be able to access a familiar approach and technique, so that they can answer the question with some range and details and can write specifically about the effects of a range of details.

It was encouraging to see much shorter pieces of work gaining very high marks in coursework. It is hard for candidates to learn that “less is more”, particularly when they have been rewarded in the past for diligence. But tightly set tasks and precisely focused answers can lead to the skills of analysis and conceptualisation without being spread over many pages. It is striking that candidates who write a great deal for their coursework assignments can show all the skills required for A* in an hour or forty five minutes in the examination. Sharpness of focus and succinctness are also the hallmarks of the most able candidates.

Variety of sentence structure received some prominence in last year’s report. It was encouraging that on Foundation tier there were distinct signs of improvement, with candidates using a wider range of specific structures for a conscious effect. It was clearly the result of a lot of careful classroom work looking at particular structures and their effects. Perhaps next year this step forward might also be seen in the work of Higher tier candidates.

The majority of candidates wrote in the examination with engagement and skill. They appear to enjoy writing. They are increasingly engaged with poetry. They can look at devices and think about their effects. What was also evident in a very large number of scripts was a sense of fun. That, too is a vital aspect of a young person’s education experience.

English Literature (3712)

At a time when it is fashionable to comment on declining standards of achievement, examiners and moderators in this subject were encouraged by the achievements evidenced by this year's candidates. Coursework standards remained high, and in the examinations the papers and the teaching had clearly enabled candidates to write at length, using their time to the full. Indeed, candidates seemed to demonstrate increased freedom of response here, which was sometimes absent in coursework, where moderators felt that more creative use of different texts from the usual fare might have pushed standards a little higher.

In the second year without annotation of examination texts, there was even clearer evidence than last year of the benefits of this change. Foundation tier examiners felt that there was a real change away from repetition of learned opinions towards honest engagement and response to texts, while at the top end of Higher tier there were many stunning responses to texts from sixteen year old candidates in schools, surely comparable to any achievement in any previous years. Candidates had clearly been taught skills, and had then used these to think about their chosen prose and poetry texts in the light of the questions. It was interesting to note the range of poems used in response to the questions, in both tiers. Clearly many candidates had been encouraged to look at a wide range of poems, rather than concentrating on a narrow range of key poems and learning every detail of them, unnecessarily.

English (3702)

Paper 1 Foundation Tier

This paper proved generally accessible to the majority of candidates. The passages about Antarctica provided for the reading section were short enough to be read by candidates of all abilities whilst containing enough information to answer questions in detail. Most of the candidates read them with understanding and interest, many of them showing real awareness of the writers' techniques and different purposes. The majority of them approached the exam conscientiously and attempted every question. There was evidence of effort and care in the planning and presentation of their responses with, for example, careful copying of given words such as 'environment', 'business' and 'expedition'.

Section A Reading

Question 1a

This question was intended to test the candidate's ability to read with insight and engagement and select material appropriate to the question. It was answered well by most candidates. They showed they could select two points from the advertisement and explain why those points would attract someone to the idea of a cruise in the Antarctic. Perhaps some of the explanations were a little thin, but a significant majority of candidates gained full marks on this question. Some failed to get the full four marks because they misunderstood what specifically the question wanted them to do – they gave bland generalised comments about Antarctica without relating them to the text. Some candidates wrote about how the picture attracted them rather than the text, ignoring the wording ('two points from the writing in the advertisement') of the question.

Question 1b

This question was designed to test the ability to read with insight and to follow the argument in the passage about Shackleton. Few candidates gained the highest marks for their responses. This was partly because they were not able to put the information in the text in their own words as the question asked them to do and partly because, although they selected some main points about the hardships, they were unable to comment on the ways Shackleton and his men coped, or to shape their answers to focus on the main theme of working as a team. Candidates need to be constantly reminded that the real work in this question is in the reading and they must force themselves to read every word, both in the texts they are given and in the questions, before they pick up their pens to write. Some of those who showed a range of insights, ideas and command of vocabulary in other questions were let down here by careless reading. Misreading Shackleton's 'burning goal' as 'burning coal', for instance, led to some inventive but unhelpful remarks about fossil fuels on ice.

Question 1c

This question required candidates to write about the difficulties and similarities in the ways the Antarctic is shown in the two given items. It was designed to assess the candidate's ability to follow an argument and make comparisons (AOs iii and iv). As with question 1b, few candidates achieved the highest marks. Those who read the question carefully and realised that the emphasis was on what was written about Antarctica did well. However, too many candidates failed to do themselves justice because they thought they were being asked to compare the presentation of the passages generally. Perhaps a clearer understanding of the way the paper is constructed and the observation that presentation comes into Question 2 would have helped them to avoid this mistake.

Question 2

The response to this question was very disappointing. Candidates were asked to look at the two passages they had been given as media items and to explain how the writer of each item tried to interest the reader. Four bullet points were given as guidance: presentation, language which describes, language which persuades and opinions. This is a familiar Question 2 format for students who have studied past examination papers for this specification and most of them have had sufficient practice in writing about presentation to do that with confidence. Too many candidates seemed to treat the bullet points as a simple checklist and think they just had to pinpoint examples on that list without making any significant comment. The writing about presentation was particularly disappointing compared with previous years. Many candidates produced examples of different print use, and most of them said that there was a big picture in the advertisement and a little picture on the website, but only a small minority found anything else to say. The best answers did say that the blue of the picture emphasised the icy coldness, but the great majority just commented rather oddly that the pictures were brightly coloured. Only a very few answers included anything about the shapes in the picture or the effect it would have on the reader. When it came to the language which describes or persuades the same weakness was apparent. Many answers included appropriate examples but no explanations of their effect. For example, candidates saw that ‘brutal cold’ is a descriptive phrase, they quoted it and then simply said that it describes the weather or is a ‘way of describing’. If they were asked during a classroom lesson why the word ‘brutal’ had been used, they would almost all have been able to give an answer, but in the exam they lacked confidence. Many candidates left the example unexplored and rushed on to the next point in the checklist. They did not realise that writing in detail about one example is far more likely to gain good marks than just picking several examples without exploring their purpose and effect. More practice in writing a lot about a little instead of a little about a lot might give them more confidence in developing their ideas. However, most candidates secured at least some marks on language whereas the part of the questions relating to opinions was answered poorly by almost all candidates. Of those who attempted the question many misinterpreted it as being their opinion which was being sought. If they had read the question more carefully, instead of rushing straight to the bullet points, they might not have fallen into this confusion.

Section B Writing

Question 3

Candidates were asked to write a letter arguing for or against expeditions to dangerous places and this proved to be one of the most popular choices. A lot of the answers followed the bullet points and it was clear that there has been a lot of good teaching about writing an argument. Even some of the weaker candidates used an appropriate tone, showed some awareness of alternative viewpoints and produced a well-structured letter even if they were unable to develop their points in great detail. Some did not seem to know what an expedition is, or ignored the word and wrote about dangerous places in general. Many answers made good use of the passages about the Antarctic, while others had ideas about going up Everest or something more local such as entering a haunted house.

Question 4

This required the text of a speech to local business people persuading them to sponsor a school adventure trip abroad. Many candidates seemed to follow the bullet points, disregarding the idea of a speech and writing a letter instead. They almost all seemed to understand the persuasive technique and balanced their explanation of why they deserved to be sponsored by skilfully flattering the business people and explaining the benefits to them. There was some confusion about the different sorts of sponsorship and often a certain vagueness about where the trip was going, but although this sometimes blurred the point of the speech it did not necessarily obscure the persuasive skills.

Question 5

The task here was to write an advice sheet for someone who has to survive several days alone. The unspecific situation meant that a wide range of responses was possible. Some candidates took it very seriously and wrote points to remember when faced with cold, hunger and wild animals in the jungle, while others wrote more humorously about how to survive when alone at home for several days and not sure how to turn on the dishwasher. There were some interesting answers from the better candidates but advice can often be a challenge for the less confident writer, in that it leads to repetitive sentence structures and a limited vocabulary.

Question 6

This required an article for teenagers, arguing that global warming will affect their lives and persuading them to join a group which aims to protect the environment. Most of the candidates who chose this question did both argue and persuade very effectively. It was the question which stood out as provoking the most interesting, detailed and engaged responses across the ability range. Candidates had a clear and impressive amount of knowledge about global warming and other environmental issues. They had specific vocabulary with which to discuss the topic and they used a variety of rhetorical devices and often wrote with passion.

Conclusion

Candidates responded well to this paper in many ways. The reading in Section A was straightforward and manageable for most candidates and there were very few who were completely at a loss when answering the reading questions. Section B gave candidates a range of opportunities from which to choose. Many examiners have remarked on the fact that most candidates completed the paper and seemed comfortable with it. Answers in Section B tended to be shorter this year, but to have a clearer structure and to be better suited to purpose and audience. Many candidates were using discourse markers and rhetorical devices in a more sophisticated way and a variety of sentence structures appeared even in the shorter answers. There also seemed to be a wider range of candidates experimenting with rhetorical devices and varying their sentence structure. Many of them write with vigour and originality. The majority of them have been well prepared for this paper and taught in a way which has given them the confidence to write enthusiastically. This has made many of the scripts this year fun to read, interesting and illuminating.

Paper 1 Higher Tier

This year's paper was generally well received by everyone: candidates, teachers and examiners. This generalisation can be backed up by the facts that very few candidates failed to attempt all of the questions; there were no complaints telephoned into AQA by teachers in the aftermath and examiners found the paper relatively straightforward to mark according to the written reports received. The two extracts seemed to capture the imagination of the candidates, evoking detailed responses to Section A and acting as a springboard for their responses to Section B.

Section A Reading

This paper is necessarily predicated on the Assessment Objectives in the Specification and it became clear which centres had actually taught the AOs for reading and those which had simply taught to past papers. **1(a)** was a very straightforward question that almost all candidates accessed successfully if they answered the question that was in front of them. AQA English exams are never knowingly esoteric or gnomic, so candidates had to write down reasons for either visiting Antarctica; or for visiting Antarctica with Trailfinders; or both. As in the past, if they clearly attempted the question within a structured framework, then they were within the bands of marks notionally expected of this tier: the top 2. In order to gain a mark in the highest band, candidates had to write in some detail or show that they had understood the passage's under-lying conceptualisation in a shaped and absorbed manner. Some did a bit of both to get into this top band of marks.

This question did not ask 'how' and certainly did not ask about AO2 (v) which is always addressed in the 'media' section of this paper, (Question 2). Some candidates unfortunately answered a chimera of a question about language and presentation, which was, in fact, 2(b). It was frustrating for examiners when candidates did this, but these candidates were often the ones who did not answer the under-lying Assessment Objective for the next question either.

Question 1(b) was answered least successfully of all the questions. Let's remind ourselves what AO2(ii) actually says:

distinguish between fact and opinion and evaluate how information is presented

The most important part for this question has been emboldened. Those students who had learnt the difference between facts and opinions and how they might be used in many different ways, scored highly. Too many candidates thought that examiners knew that they knew which were which, but never clearly responded to the question by ***distinguishing*** then ***selecting material appropriate to their purpose***. With approximately 600 examiners marking this component, the paper has to be marked against consistent and coherent descriptors and the following are the descriptors for the third band of marks (5 – 6):

- *clear and effective attempt to engage with task*
- *structured response*
- *selects and comments on the use(s) of at least one fact and one opinion*
- *some reason as to how they help us to understand Scott's experience.*

This mark scheme points to quite a simple reading frame within which to operate and one which is relatively easy to teach and learn:

- select fact and comment on use
- select opinion and comment on use.

The best candidates engaged subtly and with a degree of conceptual sophistication with the ways that facts and opinions were used to engage the reader's understanding and involvement, making clear and

explicit reference to particular examples. The very best candidates explored the relationship between the passage as a diary and the psychological function of the text. What were these facts and opinions *for*, they wondered, in a piece supposedly written to be read by its own author? As a result of these postulations, there were some real insights into Scott's experiences, rather than the trite fact that -48 degrees C showed you how cold it was. Nevertheless, triteness often got candidates into the third, or 'clear' band of marks.

It is not too grandiose a statement that this particular reading Assessment Objective is a fundamental reading skill for taking part in a democratic society. We should all be able to have our own views about whether something is a fact or an opinion and why we think each is being used.

As already mentioned above, Question 2 deals with media, or AO2 (v): *how writers use linguistic, structural and presentational devices to achieve their effects*. It is also perfectly valid to ask a 'media' question about an item's purpose or audience. **2(a)** once more showed the difference between those students who had been given the space within a learning environment to discuss the possible audiences of several items and those who had not.

Few candidates had real problems with this question, but very few provided that degree of conceptualisation necessary to gain four marks. So, while few failed to provide valid audiences, weaker students did not give any reasons for their choice. Once more, a clear choice of audience for each and some sort of reason would probably have yielded three marks. Too many candidates, however, felt that the Scott passage was aimed at an 'adult' audience because the language was difficult and it 'had no colour pictures', or because it was written in 1903 and adults would remember it. More adventurous candidates concentrated on the demographic aimed at in the '*Trailfinders*' advertisement and the rather more interesting media implications of the audiences for a diary by a famous explorer in a totally male environment.

Question 2(b) was done reasonably well with nearly all candidates including language aspects used to persuade in addition to the more obvious presentational devices. Too many candidates relied upon the justification that pictures and colour were used 'to catch the eye', but there were many well-focused comments on the images, layout and graphology. Equally encouragingly, many candidates were confident in their handling of the functions and effects of this stylistically rich passage. A lot of examiners reported that it had been a pleasure to mark many scripts and to learn from the insights of students who had obviously been taught so confidently.

However, a word of warning: simply knowing the terms has never been a route to a higher grade. One particular centre had obviously taught a lot of linguistic terminology, but the range of supporting quotation did not necessarily exemplify the features the candidates identified.

Section B Writing

In the writing section, the most popular choice was Question 3, the letter, and the least popular Question 5, the advice sheet. Question 4 was a popular choice and was often persuasively tackled. Perhaps the best answers came from Question 6, the article on global warming for teenagers. This was both a familiar text type and audience, and a subject with which candidates felt secure and well informed.

Question 3 was either popular because it was the first title in the writing section, or candidates felt confident about arguing for or against the issue of eco-tourism within the format of a letter. It was certainly the case that more candidates were confident about integrating counter-arguments into the whole and using the skills of writing to argue in an assured and confident manner than in the past. The best answers were those that had a clear sense of audience as well as purpose and sustained that throughout. But this was the case with all of the questions.

Question 4 was no exception, where few knew how to structure a speech and use the skills of rhetoric to further their persuasion. In addition, there were fewer discourse markers used this year to signpost the

text for the reader. However, many did pull off their attempt at persuasion very confidently, really pulling at the heartstrings and coupling this with effective persuasive techniques such as flattery and downright bribery.

The biggest problem with this question was how to begin. Many adopted a letter style beginning, not because they misread the question, but because they did not know how else to start. There were, equally, some grandiloquent beginnings. However, writing to persuade seems to be an embedded part of candidates' repertoire and departments seem confident in their cunningly devised mnemonics which form an integral part of candidates' planning process.

Question 5 was tackled far less than the other options, but the need for careful planning and a cohesive structure was most obvious here. Most candidates reverted to bullet points throughout which did not give examiners the opportunity to reward candidates for their paragraphs being used to enhance meaning. The bullet point format also made it difficult for candidates to use a full range of sentence structures because they tended to list.

Question 6 was, in general, the best option for many students. Their knowledge was surprising and brought with it a lot of sophisticated vocabulary. One examiner reported that they were so well done that 'this examiner is now thoroughly depressed. They (the candidates) know all the relevant science; they can not only argue convincingly, but they can also frighten you into wanting to join all these agencies they are talking about!'

This essay choice exemplified the best of performance at KS4 and some of the inherent weaknesses of writing at this level. In all questions, the weakest area was sentence structure, with only the most able being able to vary either length or syntax for effect with any degree of consistency and control.

All in all, this paper gave candidates the opportunity to exhibit their skills in reading and writing against the requisite descriptors.

Paper 2 Foundation Tier

The alternative questions on the Poems from Different Cultures were formed in the same way this year with parallel bullet points. As always, and of necessity, they both tested all three Assessment Objectives. Because of this need, all candidates should know that they will have to respond to all three in equal measure and can therefore identify the triggers which denote them: ‘Compare (targeting AO2 ii) the ways ... are presented’ or ‘the ways the poets present’ (targeting AO2 iv) and a topic – in this case ‘people’ or ‘a conflict of feelings’ (targeting AO2 i). Fewer candidates than before completely ignored ‘Compare’ though a much larger number of candidates who interpreted ‘ways ... are presented’ as an invitation to iterate content. It remains the case that a disappointingly large number of candidates are unable to write about the poets’ methods. It is as if all their preparation time has been spent on the content of the poems whereas, in reality, those candidates who are well prepared for the examination have spent only a third of their time on content, the other two thirds having been spent on comparison and poets’ methods.

The candidates who were most successful in their poetry answers were those who realised that the main thrust of the question was on ‘presented’ (**Question 1**) and ‘present’ (**Question 2**). When they made methods of preparation the primary focus of their comparison they invariably did better than those who made ‘people’ or ‘a feeling of conflict’ the primary focus.

Almost all candidates had a working knowledge of either ‘Night of the Scorpion’ or ‘Presents from my Aunts in Pakistan’. There were no significant widespread misunderstandings of either poem, although some rather perversely took the scorpion to be a person and many were bamboozled by what ‘My father, sceptic, rationalist’ might mean. There was a wider diversity of interpretation of ‘Presents from my Aunts in Pakistan’ where almost every feeling under the sun could be attributed to the narrator’s response to the salwar kameez. Some found it difficult to formulate precisely what the conflict of feelings was in the poem, although almost everyone had a go at articulating it. There were some extremely interesting comments about details in the poem – the stained glass, the theft of the jewellery, the tin boat, the fractured land, the sweeper-girls – and there were some most interesting cultural and political readings of the narrator’s conflict of feelings from candidates whose response was often at a higher level than might be expected on this tier.

Interestingly and unusually examiners reported that the named poem was compared, across the cohort, with every poem in each cluster, and sometimes with a poem from the other cluster. ‘This Room’ and ‘Love After Love’ did not feature very frequently, and ‘Love After Love’ proved rather elusive to most of those writing about it, but candidates had clearly worked their way through a number of viable lines between a wide range of pairs of poems. The vast majority showed engagement with and interest in the poems they were writing about.

‘Two Scavengers ...’, ‘Nothing’s Changed’, ‘Island Man’ and ‘Blessing’ were the most popular choices to go with ‘Night of the Scorpion’. ‘Search For My Tongue’, ‘Not My Business’, ‘Hurricane Hits England’ and ‘Half-Caste’ were the most popular choices for Question 2.

Section B

Section B gave a range of accessible writing tasks. Even the weakest and least motivated students were able to find something they could write about. There were fewer candidates failing to attempt a writing task than in previous years.

One of the keys to success was the extent to which candidates grasped the kind of writing. **Question 3**, for example, was an ‘inform’ task. Answers providing a range of information, therefore, were more successfully focused than those which persuaded or exhorted.

The intention behind mention of the local newspaper in Question 3 was to encourage candidates to choose some specific examples of things to do which they would know about. Those accepting this invitation

invariably rooted their writing in specific details which gave rise to information. The more specific the idea about things to do, the easier it was to be precise and detailed. Many provided opening and closing times, precise locations, what exactly was involved in participating in paintballing. Some provided headline and sub-heading. The vast majority of responses consisted of a recognisable article. The weakest candidates experienced some difficulty with audience; the article was aimed at students, but some writers addressed parents or wrote a letter to the newspaper editor.

Question 4 was very popular, but attracted a vast amount of generalisation and cliché. It was universally accepted and almost universally stated that a best friend was “always there for you”, just like mother from a few years ago. The task mentioned ‘examples’ twice – in the stem and in the third bullet – but almost all candidates took this to mean examples of ‘qualities’, rather than examples of best trends on ‘best friendship’. These qualities, sensible though they were, were extremely broad. In addition to the primary one already mentioned, loyalty, trustworthiness and being a willing recipient of ‘deepest, darkest secrets’ were almost always mentioned. Examples tended to be generalised situations rather than specific situations which might have given the writing some colour and individuality. Nevertheless, those who took a few moments to plan, or to think about what they were given to write about before they started, could show simple paragraphing skills, devoting a paragraph to each quality in their list, and show some evidence of structure if the qualities were linked and then reflected upon at the end. Candidates were very clear about the quality needed in a best friend but reluctant to draw on what must have been a wealth of personal experience as the basis for the explanations.

Question 5 was a delight to mark. It was well done across the ability range with some lively, occasionally original and interesting fictional descriptions. There was often a pleasing and engaging honesty and sub-awareness in the responses, and a deal of self-deprecating humour or tongue-in-cheek arrogance. Other candidates were able to engage the reader by using the contrasting view-point of others about themselves, in addition to their own subjective views. It came as a welcome surprise to examiners that candidates throughout the ability range really did describe themselves and avoided endless circumstantial narrative about, for example, their last holiday.

Question 6 also elicited much highly successful writing. The subject matter was generally of sterner stuff and often extremely moving. Apart from the obvious matter of moving house, bereavement and marital break-up figured strongly. Some responses were extraordinarily vivid, and even those candidates whose natural written work was simple narrative statement were frequently able to select and order information to maximum effect.

As far as AO3 (iii) is concerned, there is little to add to last year’s report on this element. While the correct use of the apostrophe continues to grow, the use of the comma (except to differentiate items in lists) declines. A high percentage of scripts did not involve a single comma. The semi-colon is making an attempt at re-appearance, sometimes used correctly. The treble exclamation mark’s popularity is thankfully waning. There were some suggestions that the comment last year on the weakness of variety of sentence structure had been taken on board.

Paper 2 Higher Tier

Examiners considered this year's paper to be straightforward with accessible questions for Higher tier candidates. Many said the Section B tasks had facilitated lively and engaging responses and believed that candidates had, on the whole, done better on Writing than on Reading.

There were very few rubric infringements and very little evidence of candidates running out of time. Where rubric infringements occurred, they were mainly to do with inappropriate poetry choices from the literature section of the Anthology or, occasionally, where candidates did not attempt Section A. Generally, centres appear to have made sound judgements with regard to entries, most candidates being appropriately entered for this tier though there was, as always, a significant minority of candidates who would have been served better had they been entered for Foundation tier.

Last year there were concerns that pupils in some centres, and possibly whole classes, did not appear to be familiar with the named poems. This concern was again raised by examiners, but with increasing frustration on behalf of the candidates. As a minimum, candidates must study **all** the poems in one cluster. For the study of these eight poems they have access to 15% of their total mark for English. As stated in this report last year, any of the poems in a given cluster could appear as the named poem. It was disheartening, therefore, to discover that, as with 'Blessing' last year, a significant number of candidates appeared to have no or very little prior knowledge of either 'Vultures' or 'This Room'. Examiners repeatedly expressed their incomprehension of teaching colleagues who had not covered the minimum requirements with their students. These students, the able as well as the less able, were seriously disadvantaged by this failure.

Section A: Reading

Overall, there seemed to be an even distribution of choice between Question 1 and Question 2. There was evidence of some centres choosing the first or second cluster *en bloc*, whilst with others there was no apparent policy on choice. Some candidates selected poems from across the clusters, though this was not the norm.

There continues to be increased evidence of planning in Section A and examiners cite this as the factor most likely to help students select an appropriate second poem, produce structured and coherent responses that address the question and make relevant cross reference. Centres are reminded that the word "compare" is used to encourage candidates to make cross reference, which is one aspect of AO2(iv). The need to compare should not override the need to examine technique and to show understanding, and, at a higher level, exploration of ideas, feelings and attitudes. Candidates are not required to compare two poems step by step. A response in which the named poem is first explored, followed by an analysis of the second chosen poem with cross reference made to the first, is equally valid.

As in previous years, examiners reported some candidates making false assertions about either the poets or the poems, based on misinformation. Where the same assertions appeared several times in individual centres, it could only be assumed that candidates had been taught, or given access, to this incorrect information. There was also concern about some candidates' inability to write about technique in a constructive and purposeful way. In some centres there was almost rote identification of features, ellipsis and enjambment being the most popular this year, followed closely by lexical fields, but with almost no consideration given to authorial purpose or effect.

Centres should be aware that candidates do best when they have open minds about the poems and the confidence to interpret them in the way that is most appropriate to the question they are answering.

Question 1

There were some excellent responses to this question. Candidates of all ability levels, who had clearly been taught well, were able to engage with the central issues raised by the poem, commenting clearly on method and the comparison between humans and vultures. At a higher level, candidates demonstrated understanding of the duality presented in the Commandant and there were some exceptional responses which addressed the weighty philosophical issues of good and evil, man and beast, human choices versus natural instincts.

There were, however, many misunderstandings of ‘Vultures’. These largely focused on the vultures as people with, at times, no reference to the Commandant. Others felt the poet was showing the Commandant’s good side by comparing him favourably with the vultures. The misreading of ‘Vultures’ was sometimes carried to the extreme with comments on how unusual it was for vultures to buy chocolate for their tender offspring.

The most frequent second choice poems were ‘Two Scavengers in a Truck’ and ‘Night of the Scorpion’ with some interesting answers also offered on ‘Limbo’ and ‘Blessing’. Good candidates showed how the writers explored ideas through the people with some excellent focus on democracy and status in ‘Scavengers’. Some excellent answers involved crossing clusters and ‘Not My Business’ was a particularly effective choice, with more able candidates focusing on the theme of “man’s inhumanity to man”.

Examiners believed that the impact of good or poor teaching was very evident in the responses to this question, across all ability levels. Close language analysis and examination of techniques was frequently lacking. Many examiners felt that students gaining marks in the 16-18 range could be helped to achieve more highly with greater focus on examination of technique and it was suggested that “centres should spend less time on the dubious merits of enjambment and alliteration and concentrate on the more engaging effects of vocabulary choices and metaphor”.

Question 2

Examiners’ comments on responses to questions are largely determined by the centres they mark. This question provoked the widest range of comments, falling into two main blocks: comments on centres where ‘This Room’ had been well taught and comments on centres where candidates had limited understanding of ‘This Room’ or, in some cases, no prior knowledge of the poem.

In the former, candidates across the range demonstrated the ability to read beyond the literal and to grasp the metaphorical nature of the room itself. Amongst the best responses were those which focused on ideas of culture or gender for exploration and interpretation, and there were many insightful comments on the need for personal freedom and spiritual enlightenment. Examiners were often delighted by the responses they read and agreed the question presented scope for imaginative responses and detailed exploration.

Understanding of the term “imagery” also seemed to be centre, rather than candidate, based. Many centres had clearly addressed the use of imagery in a range of poems and, where this was the case, candidates across the ability range were able successfully to address the question. It was evident, however, that some students had no understanding of the term, some interpreting it as being concerned with the imagination. Others chose to interpret it as any linguistic and/or structural feature with erratic line length and enjambment featuring strongly in their responses. Such candidates also tended to refer to “positive” and “negative” words with no reference to context or effects. Wherever possible examiners awarded marks for understanding and awareness of technique but centres should note that Higher tier candidates are expected to be able to write about imagery.

For comparative purposes ‘Presents from my Aunts in Pakistan’ and ‘Search For My Tongue’ were relatively popular and successful choices, as was ‘Hurricane Hits England’. Several examiners reported stunning comparisons with ‘Love After Love’, in which candidates convincingly explored the metaphorical basis of both poems and demonstrated consistent and convincing insight.

Section B

As with last year, examiners reported increased evidence of planning and editing in Section B. It was evident that skills in planning and editing had been carefully taught in some centres, with the majority of candidates practising them, and to good effect. In many other centres, however, there was almost no evidence of either skill having been taught. Proficient planning and editing make a significant difference to candidates’ achievements and should be regularly taught and encouraged by centres.

There was also clear evidence of engagement with task. The range of questions appeared to appeal to candidates and there was more even distribution of responses across the questions than in previous years. There remain some centres in which the majority of students opt for Question 5, though these were fewer than in previous years. There is general agreement amongst examiners that candidates write best when they are strongly engaged by the task and that flexibility in choice of question should be encouraged.

Question 3

This was a surprisingly popular choice. It seemed to provide scope for candidates across the ability range to perform well. The majority of candidates obviously gave a great deal of thought to ways to prevent boredom and also how to construct and phrase an article aimed at students like themselves. There were many enthusiastic and well-structured responses to this question with a particularly strong sense of audience throughout. Many answers involved humorous and sometimes ironic references to popular perceptions of teenage activities. The most successful responses were developed and crafted for purpose showing subtle manipulation of reader and employing devices and vocabulary consistently matched to purpose.

Question 4

Examiners were, on the whole, least enthusiastic about responses to this question. Whilst writing was often organised and relevant to purpose, it was generally felt that responses were less innovative and engaging. The majority focused on similar qualities such as loyalty, honesty and trustworthiness offering detailed explanation of why these were important. Weaker candidates tended to adopt a “list” approach while the most successful were those who used a range of interesting examples to validate the qualities they felt a “best friend” should have.

Question 5

Concerns were expressed last year about formulaic approaches to descriptive writing which limited candidates’ performance. This was less in evidence this year, probably because the question forced the candidates to think “outside the box”. Examiners felt this question was a notable success, stimulating a wide range of responses from those which focused on purely physical details to highly crafted pieces written in the third person or even using a persona. Some were structured as an extended metaphor or a series of extended metaphors, to great effect. There was an impressive degree of self-analysis and some delightfully ironic approaches.

Question 6

The last question is rarely the most popular choice and yet, in many centres, this proved not to be the case. Candidates were clearly drawn by the personal nature of the task and many engaging pieces were written, often involving parental divorce, leaving a home or country, bereavement or personal triumph. There were many moving and highly effective examples of writing and examiners reported having been touched by the honesty and maturity of the candidates. Responses to this question were noted by many to be a “privilege to read”.

Comments on sentence structures, punctuation and spelling in responses to all questions were varied, with some examiners reporting improvement and others suggesting a decline in technical accuracy. There were, however, some common features. Examiners were agreed that there was good variation in sentence structure though many cited overuse of short sentences for effect and exclamations. Misuse of *there/they're*, *your/you're*, *been/being*, *of/have* were relatively widespread and there was a noted increase in the text version *u*. Competence in the use of the comma was also an area of weakness, both within extended complex sentences and as a tool for sentence demarcation. Development in skills in editing would help to eradicate some of these errors and, alongside planning, remains an area not widely in evidence but most likely to help candidates achieve highly.

English Literature(3712)

Foundation Tier

This year's examination paper, the third in the current specification, was successful in a number of ways. Centres generally approved of the paper, finding the questions accessible for the tier, and the demands on candidates fair in their equivalence with the previous year's paper and the specimen material. There were fewer rubric infringements, too. The majority of candidates wrote substantial responses, suggesting good preparation. This was also evidenced in other perceived improvements in responses, which will be detailed below. As one senior examiner remarked, 'Even apparently less able candidates were recording some skills high up in the mark bands. The general impression was of good teaching and a more widespread understanding that skills, not recall, were being assessed.'

There was some evidence of more thoughtful planning representing the thinking process which then enabled the candidate to write. This did not apply to candidates who manufactured huge grids or mini essays as plans, leaving less time for the writing itself, which generally added little to the plan. Clearly, this is not an efficient use of limited time.

There were fewer candidates who seemed to mistime the paper this year, by spending too much time on Section A and therefore compromising achievement on Section B, which carries more marks. More candidates this year began with Section B, and most were clearly advantaged by doing so. Candidates who do mistime the paper tackle Section A first, almost exclusively.

Assessment Objective 3.3, 'explore relationships and comparisons between texts, selecting and evaluating relevant material' is tested in responses to AQA Anthology Short Stories, and to Poetry in Section B. Nearly all candidates were aware of the necessity to compare by linking the texts in some way or ways, but the adequate provision of material to support comparison, or comparative comments on details from different texts, were far more patchy.

Finally, a plea to invigilators. It is very helpful to examiners if candidates fill in the question numbers on the front of the examination paper, and vital that they complete the boxes for centre and candidate numbers.

Section A: Post-1914 Prose

AQA Anthology: Prose

Three Assessment Objectives are tested in each of Questions 1-3, and although candidates generally responded more successfully to AO2 than in responding to novels, achievement in AO3 remained a weakness, even when the same candidates compared poems successfully in their Section B response. In the responses of candidates from some centres comparison was often simple or absent.

Question 1

This was the most popular of the three questions. *Your Shoes* continues to engage Foundation candidates, despite the complexity of the text, and there were a number of interpretations of what 'loss' might be here, and how it was conveyed. *The End of Something* was rather more problematic for many candidates, however. The number of candidates who thought that 'loss' referred to the mill, and therefore perhaps the lumbering industry, suggested that some had only read the beginning of the story in the exam itself. Candidates should have read all the stories in the selection before the examination, not just those that they think might 'come up'.

Question 2

This question was the least popular of the three, and those who did attempt it often struggled to focus effectively on the openings of the stories, and how they work. As with Question 21, however, candidates should know that the questions and the mark schemes are based firmly on the Assessment Objectives, and that questions might well centre on things other than ‘themes’: on response, perhaps, or on AO3.2, as here.

Question 3

This was probably the best answered question of the three. The choice of *Your Shoes* as the second story often allowed candidates to tackle the second prompt about ‘how the writers show these feelings’ very well, as did the choice of the grandfather in *Flight*.

Examiners commented that responses to the novels were generally encouraging this year, with many candidates showing real engagement with text and task.

Lord of the Flies: William Golding

Question 4

The majority of responses seen to this text were to Question 5, but those who did attempt this question often did well, as long as they moved beyond the plot to the writer’s wider concerns.

Question 5

As stated above, this was the more popular of the two questions. It was generally well done: many candidates responded well to ‘how Golding makes you respond to Jack’, often moving beyond a list of nasty deeds to details of language and juxtaposition of characters.

Of Mice and Men: John Steinbeck

Question 6

This was slightly less popular than Question 7. The intention of placing ‘how Steinbeck presents these places’ as the first of the three bullets in the question was to encourage candidates not to adopt a narrative approach, and for many this worked, producing responses much more focused on presentation than is often the case with this novel. Crooks’ room was often a productive choice, candidates interpreting details in the light of the character and the concerns of the novel. Of course, some candidates could not move beyond accounts of what happened in their chosen places. The choice of the barn frequently began with a simple comment introducing a lengthy recount of the death of Curley’s wife.

Question 7

Candidates seemed comfortable with this task, and responded in an engaged way throughout the range. One senior examiner commented that the question ‘seemed to give candidates a real chance to do well’, particularly in response to ‘why their dreams cannot come true’ in terms of explained responses, and to ‘how Steinbeck uses their dream’. Here an examiner commented that many ‘recognised beyond the literal dreams of George and Lennie to the concept of thwarted hopes’. There was widespread awareness of the socio-economic context, often usefully; but AO3.4 is not tested in the examination, and some candidates had obviously spent a disproportionate amount of time studying ‘the American Dream’. Of course, this is fine as a contextual element which can aid understanding of the novel, but when responses

dealt with this without clearly relating it to details of the novel (which is what the question was about), underachievement was inevitable.

I'm the King of the Castle: Susan Hill

Question 8

This question produced some very thorough responses, showing structured and sustained approaches. Candidates offered engaged and even intense responses to the character and his presentation.

Question 9

Very few responses to this question were seen by senior examiners.

A Kestrel for a Knave: Barry Hines

Question 10

There were many well-supported answers to this question, candidates revelling in the details of the behaviour of teachers.

Question 11

This question, like Questions 8 and 13, was centred on AO3.1 and often worked very well, the free choice offered eliciting honest, detailed and forthright responses. The minority choice of Mr Farthing was often interestingly argued. Of course, some candidates just produced lists of unappealing behaviour, without clearly explaining reasons for dislike or mentioning the writer's purposes or techniques.

To Kill a Mockingbird: Harper Lee

Question 12

Some candidates failed to move beyond the passage in responding to this question, but a proportion of these represented those candidates who every year seize desperately on a passage question to respond to, not having read any texts before the exam. For many candidates the task was really enabling, as they focused on language details for bullet 1 and writer's purposes and structure in relating the two halves of the novel for bullet 2.

Question 13

As with Question 11, this produced some good responses on a variety of characters.

The Catcher in the Rye: J.D. Salinger

Question 14

Senior examiners did not see any responses to this question.

Question 15

Responses here showed evidence of pleasing empathy for Holden and his situation.

Green Days by the River: Michael Anthony

Senior examiners did not see any responses to this text.

Heroes: Robert Cormier

Question 18

Senior examiners did not see any responses to this question.

Question 19

This question produced enthusiastic, well-informed responses. Candidates had clearly engaged with the text and the characters. Weaker responses indulged in much generalisation, but others were able to use and interpret details really effectively in responding to all three bullets in the question.

Section B: Pre-1914 and Post-1914 Poetry

Most examiners felt that poetry responses had improved this year on the whole. This was the second year of unannotated texts in the examination and the trend towards more honest, original responses to texts and tasks, unencumbered by lists of devices continued, and far fewer candidates seemed unaware of the necessity to compare poems. There were, nevertheless, large numbers of candidates who still wasted time noting rhyme schemes, or line lengths, or number of verses, or remarking on such devices as enjambement with no detail or understanding. All these only merit marks in the 9-12 mark band. There were a lot of rather formulaic responses from candidates who seemed to have a rigid view of what they should include at the expense of understanding and, perhaps more importantly, enjoyment. Similarly, there was a marked increase in the use of comparative connectives, often without any comparative sense at all. Discourse markers alone do not gain marks here.

Seamus Heaney and Gillian Clarke

Question 20

This question was generally well answered, though the necessity of writing about ‘On the Train’ produced some surprising gaps in understanding. If the only suffering the candidate could find in the poem was the inability to speak to somebody on a mobile phone, they could not usually find much to say about the poem.

Question 21

Like Question 2, this was clearly focusing AO3.2, and therefore proved difficult for candidates who had perhaps not thought clearly about uses of language in poems, or who thought it was an invitation to list devices. A few responded delightfully to the range that the task offered, and produced responses beyond the targeted grades for the tier.

Question 22

This was generally well answered. The structure of the question did not seem to be a problem, and many responses were strong in differentiating between types of family relationships.

Carol Ann Duffy and Simon Armitage

Question 23

This was an extremely popular question, and was generally well done, with some predictable weaknesses in responding to bullet 2, which targeted AO3.2. As with ‘On the Train’ in Question 20, ‘The Eagle’ proved mystifying to quite a number of candidates. While any interpretation of texts can be accepted if properly argued and detailed, some candidates struggled to support their views.

Question 24

This question was generally successful, with the pairing of ‘November’ and ‘On my first Sonne’ proving helpful to many candidates. ‘Havisham’ also produced some lively responses.

Question 25

This was not a particularly popular question. Candidates who chose to use ‘The Laboratory’ in part (b) seemed far more able to engage both with the meanings and methods of the poem than last year’s candidates.

Higher Tier

Most significant to report is that candidates are being increasingly well prepared to address the Assessment Objectives of this component; most understand what is expected of them and can respond accordingly. Only a minority now do not compare at all and, in most cases, addressing AO2 is moving beyond a mere list of devices. The message of ‘write a lot about a little’ is certainly making an impact.

Clear preparation for the examination is also evidenced by the fact that there were very few rubric infringements and few candidates who ran out of time or who did not manage their time reasonably well, if not very well. It never ceases to amaze examiners just how much some candidates achieve in one hour and three quarters whilst sustaining a remarkable quality of response. Indeed, it is rewarding to read some outstanding, articulate and insightful work. Examiners report that they often enjoy reading much of the work they mark.

The absence of annotation continues to have a positive impact on candidates’ work. A positive element too is that senior examiners report that quotations were usually judiciously chosen, brief and embedded into the response.

A note about choices of poems: whilst most candidates choose to write about the key poems and can obviously achieve at the highest level in doing so, an increasing number choose other poems. This is a welcome trend. Either these candidates have been taught a wider range of poems or the candidates are applying their skills to poems which have not been taught. In some cases, the latter is probably the case given the imaginative and fresh responses sometimes offered. These candidates are to be applauded.

Section A: Post 1914 Prose

Anthology Prose

It was felt by examiners that the Anthology short stories were continuing to become less popular and were sometimes used with weaker candidates although there was also evidence of some analytical and exploratory responses as comments on individual questions show. Examiners felt that, as with poetry, there was clear evidence of the candidates being released to write with some independence when unhindered by annotation. Candidates tended to be less successful when they discussed one story at the expense of the other, a feature which clearly has an impact on comparison. It was also interesting to note that candidates were sometimes less competent at comparison in Section A than they were in Section B.

Question 1

This was a popular question which revealed that candidates can write well about *Chemistry* although it is not often a popular choice when they are free to make their own decisions. Some candidates were able to trace the significance of chemistry in the story and relate it closely to the task. Candidates did, however, write more competently about *Flight*. Comparisons, both similarities and differences, are clear between these texts and weaker candidates were therefore more confident in this area. More able candidates compared, for instance, communication, highlighting the words and silences in *Flight* and the actions in *Chemistry*. Less successful candidates wrote about characters rather than focusing on grandparent/grandchildren relationships.

Question 2

This was certainly the least popular of the three tasks. Candidates wrote well and confidently about the conflict in *Growing Up* although occasionally there were unexpected choices made for the other text which then proved difficult to write about and to compare with the named text. *Flight* was the most popular choice for comparison.

Question 3

This was as popular as Question 1. It offered the most able candidates scope for exploration and the less able a ‘hook’ on which to hang ideas. The sharp focus of the task helped the candidates and enabled them to address AO2 which can be problematic for some. It is more challenging, certainly, to compare symbols and some candidates did struggle to develop the symbols beyond the obvious. However, the best responses analysed details of the symbols, such as the effect of sunlight on the bird and on the granddaughter’s hair to establish a connection and a comparison of the daughter’s trainers and the mother’s shoes and how these connected to the narrator; other candidates explored how the grandmother’s shoes hurt the narrator and why the narrator ironed and sucked the laces of the trainers. The most popular and probably the most obvious choice for the other text was *Flight* but it was pleasing to see *Superman and Paula Brown’s New Snowsuit*, *Snowdrops* and *Chemistry* being chosen. *The End of Something* would have been an excellent choice but it is rare indeed for it to be chosen.

Lord of the Flies: William Golding**Question 4**

The words ‘enthusiastic’, ‘independent’, ‘conceptualised’ and ‘analytical’ featured remarkably frequently in examiners’ reports when discussing responses to this text; this was particularly, though by no means exclusively, the case with this task on leaders. There was evidence of some excellent teaching, of independence of thought being actively encouraged and of an engaged reception of the text by candidates. Jack and Ralph were obviously the most popular choices and whilst most candidates discussed the dictator versus the democrat idea, many took their argument much further, exploring the contextual and philosophical significance of these two leaders. Better candidates were able to explore the fallibility of Ralph as a leader. Candidates were able to comment insightfully on Golding’s purposes. Other leaders discussed were Simon, Piggy and Roger, identified as the ‘dictator elect’; the Beast was also explored very convincingly as a leader. Many candidates were able to evaluate how these other characters helped to determine events and thinking on the island with insightful exploration of, for example, Piggy as an intellectual leader and Simon as a spiritual leader. The task seemed to enable candidates across the range to perform successfully.

Question 5

Some candidates tended to focus more on Jack’s character in this task rather than his importance; however it must be said that their understanding of him was, for the most part, impressive. There was also a tendency to provide a chronological catalogue of Jack’s decline. On the other hand there were many outstanding responses to the task, demonstrating similar skills to those shown in Question 4. Noteworthy here was a great deal of close textual analysis when discussing Golding’s presentation of Jack, particularly his changing appearance; this analysis was then related to his importance. Much skilful, imaginative and powerful writing was in evidence.

Of Mice and Men: John Steinbeck**Question 6**

Once again this was an overwhelmingly popular choice of text which is used across the ability range of this tier. It clearly has something to offer everyone and is very accessible; responses to both the questions corroborate this view. The tasks were equally popular and, by and large, equally well done. There were some truly outstanding and imaginative responses to this task. The places chosen varied from the most obvious ones of the clearing and the bunkhouse: Weed, Crooks’ room and the farm of Lennie’s dream all featured in responses. Some responses tapped briefly, but successfully, into contextual issues when discussing the importance of the chosen places. Others chose to compare the clearing at the beginning and the end, enabling analysis of the structure of the novella. The bunkhouse as a prison was imaginatively considered by some as was how this setting was used to reveal information about

characters. The question enabled the best candidates to engage in close analysis of Steinbeck's craft and to 'write a lot about a little'; this was particularly evident when Crooks' room was chosen although some of the analysis of detail used in the setting of the beginning and the end of the novella was equally impressive. Weaker candidates tended to describe the places, however, rather than explore their importance.

Question 7

Here the best responses explored more abstract types of 'weakness' whereas weaker ones simply interpreted 'weakness' as 'loneliness' and embarked upon an essay on this theme. Most candidates chose Lennie and/or Curley's wife; some produced analytical and conceptualised responses whilst others produced character studies involving the predictable comments about these two characters rather than addressing the notion of 'weakness'. Curley as a weak character was often convincingly handled with exploration of his sense of inferiority and his inability to form relationships. Considerations of George and/or Slim went beyond the obvious and convincingly interpreted them as weak since they could not or would not escape their lot. Candy's dog was certainly an interesting choice!

I'm the King of the Castle: Susan Hill

Questions 8 and 9

This remains a minority choice but when it is studied, the responses are usually sensitive, engaged and analytical. Whilst Question 8 may have been dominated by a response to Kingshaw's experiences, it offered the most able an open task to which they could respond in a variety of ways. In Question 9 weaker candidates tended to list or describe all that happened to Kingshaw which makes us pity him. The best responses analysed Hill's craft closely, exploring how she does not allow the reader to escape Kingshaw's pain, past, present and imagined; the novel sees events from his perspective so Hooper's feelings are rarely witnessed. Of course, it is fine in such a task to take issue and to explore the idea of Kingshaw's problems being of his own making.

A Kestrel for a Knave: Barry Hines

Question 10

This was not an overly popular text and it is, perhaps, too often reserved for the weaker candidates whereas it can, of course, stimulate the most able to respond imaginatively and to analyse Hines' writing in great detail. The best responses gave a wide, sometimes imaginative, interpretation of education and who was being educated. Other candidates focused solely on teachers.

Question 11

This task enabled candidates to respond in a straightforward way to Jud which many did well. Others were able to explore his presentation in a more sympathetic way and so view him more favourably against the social and economic background of the novel. A few candidates did not move out from the extract to the rest of the novel.

To Kill a Mockingbird: Harper Lee

Question 12

This task led to many candidates achieving at least a considered/qualified response as almost inevitably there was a comparison made between Atticus and Ewell. Better responses included evaluation of what each father did in relation to his children; also these responses often explored the idea of Atticus as flawed in some way rather than a simplistic idea of Atticus good, Ewell bad. Sadly, neither Radley nor Cunningham as fathers were much in evidence.

Question 13

As with the previous question, examiners noted that candidates almost unfailingly respond to this text with enthusiasm and commitment, relating closely to the ever-relevant problems of prejudice and racism; this was certainly in evidence in responses to this task. Examples of courage such as Atticus' defence of Tom and Mrs Dubose conquering her morphine addiction were explored in a detailed, well-referenced and perceptive way. Links were established between acts of courage and differences were cited. Most candidates appreciated different forms of courage. Some responses were offered which explored the courage of Scout and/or Boo. Less successful candidates simply wrote accounts of events which exemplified courage and showed no awareness of Lee as a writer.

The Catcher in the Rye: J.D. Salinger**Question 14**

This remains a minority choice but is usually handled with panache. Candidates analysed the range of Salinger's techniques used to present Holden. Changes in Holden's language and how they reflected his state of mind were examined as was the concept of Holden as an unreliable narrator. Candidates found it easy to sympathise with Holden and his inability to grow up. They had no problems separating out elements in his character which were amusing and contradictory. Some outstanding responses were offered.

Question 15

Candidates were able, by and large, to be imaginative here and make their own individual choice of places. Most were able to make links between Holden's state of mind and the settings. Pencey featured as did Central Park, the bar and the visit to Holden's parents late at night. Another choice was the Museum of Natural History, reflecting Holden's desire for things to remain the same. Some lovely details were offered as conceptual insights such as the frozen lake and the lost ducks expressing Holden's 'frozen' state of mind, trying to maintain eternal youth but losing sight of his aims and bearings.

Green Days by the River: Michael Anthony

No responses were seen by senior examiners to Questions 16 and 17

Heroes: Robert Cormier**Question 18**

Senior examiners reported that this text was more in evidence this year and had been studied by a wide range of candidates. This was the more popular question on it. Less successful candidates simply wrote about Nicole's character rather than her importance and several did not write about her importance throughout the novel. More successful candidates considered the role she plays in determining events and how she is presented by Cormier although much of this was not analytical. Some candidates did explore her as a catalyst or plot device in the novel.

Question 19

This question was more problematic although the bullet points aided candidates' access to the task and the sharp focus also helped. They were forced to consider Cormier's methods, thus addressing AO2. Some candidates only addressed the first two bullet points but those who did address the third bullet were often able to reflect and consider. Some examiners noted plenty of original thought; others observed some candidates who simply recounted what happened in different sections of the novel.

Section B: Pre-1914 and Post-1914 Poetry

Seamus Heaney and Gillian Clarke

Question 20

No one task was significantly more popular than another in this section. This task enabled candidates to focus clearly on AO2 but sometimes they considered language to the detriment of interpreting ideas. Even more able candidates tried to cover too many language features without analysing any in detail. However, there were some vigorous and enjoyable answers; ‘aspects of nature’ gave opportunity for a range of responses. The ‘safe’ route was, perhaps, nature as difficult, dangerous, changeable or beautiful. Some very insightful scripts offered investigations into the awe and majesty of nature, using ‘Inversnaid’ and/or ‘The Eagle’. ‘Mali’ was also compared with ‘Inversnaid’; nature was seen as flawless, secure and just as it should be. Comparison, generally, was well evidenced and sometimes innovative. In particular, candidates were secure when comparing ‘Storm on the Island’ and Clare’s Sonnet. Choices in part [b] were wide ranging and often made outside the key poems.

Question 21

Where candidates were less successful on this task, it was sometimes because they had not focused on precise feelings or had simply written about the poems and covered ‘strong feelings’ only implicitly by dint of what happens in the poems. However, there were some original responses to ‘Catrin’ as the named poem and many candidates explored a wide range of ‘strong feelings’ in their chosen poems. There were some interesting choices too: one was ‘The Village School Master’ which was offered as an exploration of passion for a dedicated teacher. Comparison at its best was imaginative and evaluative, sometimes candidates juggling successfully a comparison of all four poems.

Question 22

The focus of ‘family relationships’ proved accessible to a range of candidates and many candidates engaged successfully with the problems inherent in the relationships in the chosen poems. It was interesting to note the range of responses to these problems: ‘The Song of the Old Mother’ and ‘Baby-sitting’ elicited very mixed reactions. ‘Mid-Term Break’ elicited some very moving responses to both its content and the simplicity of its style.

Duffy and Armitage

Question 23

This was a popular question with which a majority of candidates engaged. Indeed, examiners report that the candidates seemed to have had fun with the task and many responses were exciting, exploratory and showed real independence of thought. Candidates were generally aware of the wide range of women in these poems – mothers, daughters, murderers, seducers, lovers – so comparisons were varied and often very striking. ‘Salome’ elicited strong personal responses, often depending on the gender of the candidate! The way in which the poets presented these women was analysed wonderfully by many candidates. The question appeared to allow for conceptualisation at the higher end of the tier.

Question 24

Once again, this was a popular question for which, one suspects, candidates had been prepared although this did not prevent there being some fresh and original responses in many cases. Many candidates chose poems outside the key poems and wrote exceptionally well about them; ‘November’ was often sensitively analysed in terms of both its style and content. Candidates seem to approve of the anti-war theme in the Hardy poem and linked this effectively with ‘Hitcher’ and ‘Education for Leisure’. Some candidates displayed what one senior examiner referred to as ‘obvious relish and/or disgust’ as they explored death

or the threat of death in the poems. Comparison was not an issue with many candidates and those who chose the two Browning and the two Duffy poems seemed to compare exceedingly well.

Question 25

This was the least popular question, perhaps because of ‘Homecoming’ being a named poem. Some candidates struggled with what memories were being presented in this poem and, surprisingly, in ‘Before you were mine’. There were certainly some bizarre and fascinating interpretations of Armitage’s poem – all equally valid when they were well argued and well supported. Some candidates engaged with Armitage’s use of cliché and there were some inventive ideas as to what the ‘canary yellow jacket’ represented. Some candidates found the ‘shift’ to part [b] challenging; also there were some predictable responses. However, there were some interesting considerations of the effects of frustrated love in ‘The Affliction of Margaret’, ‘The Laboratory’ and, unusually, ‘My Last Duchess’.

Senior examiners noted a number of matters which may be considered when preparing candidates for the next examination:

- Increasingly, centres are advising candidates to answer on poetry first; this was often beneficial to candidates.
- Planning often helped candidates.
- Encourage candidates to know their strengths and weaknesses. They should be made aware of the different types of tasks which may be set in the poetry section. For some, the single task is most suitable; for others, the two part task may be better as, for example, the comparison may be more straightforward to tackle. Also, the ‘list’ tasks, which have always been a possible option, may include other than key poems. Candidates are free to choose as they wish but may need to be advised by teachers.
- There was a sense of many candidates being prepared to pursue their own voices rather than relying on received ideas. This should certainly be encouraged in candidates.
- Several senior examiners felt that there are increasing numbers of candidates being entered for Higher tier when Foundation tier, for a variety of reasons, may be more appropriate. Centres may wish to consider this observation.

Finally, there is obviously some wonderful teaching and learning out there; a parting thought comes from a senior examiner of many years’ experience:

‘It was genuinely interesting to find out what the candidates had to say’.

Coursework

En1

Summer 2006 sees the end of the first three-year cycle of advisory visits to centres for Speaking and Listening. Most centres have now been visited, and a new three year cycle will start in September 2006. Advisory visits usually take place between November and February.

As part of the ongoing training and standardising of teachers for coursework in English, AQA this year gave a prominent focus to aspects of En1, in particular the Drama-focused context. This input was much appreciated by those teachers who attended regional meetings. There was, however, some inconsistency in the extent to which information was then further disseminated to colleagues. In a number of centres visited in 2006 teachers in charge of Speaking and Listening had no knowledge that such training had taken place, despite someone from their centre having attended the regional meeting.

Advisers generally reported that centres are showing considerable commitment towards the teaching and assessment of the En1 component. Most centres have a definite strategy for standardisation and most centres use a format that records attainment across the three contexts as well as the skills triplets. However, the standard of commentary in such records can sometimes vary, both within and across centres. Best practice is where it is possible to see how marks have been awarded through reference to the criteria tailored to the performance of the individual.

Most of the visits completed this year were very positive in atmosphere and showed practice in centres which ranged from the acceptable to the excellent. A number of advisers reported how English teachers were pleased to be given the opportunity, via an ‘official visit’, to give some time and thought to how En1 works within their centre. Advisers were aware that in a number of centres staffing turnover makes the management of En1 quite difficult – but again centres were generally able to maintain acceptable procedures. In nearly all cases the real stars were the candidates themselves. The fact that these candidates are usually selected for their positive qualities does not hide the fact that advisers have a really pleasant experience when meeting these representatives of the centre.

Drama-Focused

Although there was an improvement in work seen in this area, especially where the training material had been disseminated, there is still some insecurity about the teaching and assessment of the Drama-focused activity in a certain centres. One problem tended to arise when otherwise able candidates had not been given substantial enough activities or opportunities consistent with their abilities. This led to the centre marking on expectation of student performance, rather than on the evidence of the performance itself. There were also some cases of inappropriate ‘casting’. How well you can perform in Drama-focused activity does depend, at least to some extent, on the role you are given or choose.

The most successful activities usually achieved a balance between prepared script and improvisation and often worked particularly well when the work was solo or paired. Several centres seemed to have picked up on the lessons of the video work on Charlotte Dymond (2003) and opted to select stimulus material which allowed students to work with particular speech genres.

It should go without saying, by now, that performance of a play script is not permissible within this context. Nor is the discussion of a play, or a planning session of how a play might be turned into a film – although both of these might be suitable group activities.

Individual Extended Contribution

In the great majority of cases, this context was delivered through a formal talk to the class or group. This does not have to be the case, but many teachers clearly feel that addressing a group formally is a useful life skill.

Some interesting points arose from how students use accompanying material when addressing a group. PowerPoint slides, for example, can get in the way of interacting with an audience if they are simply read aloud – a form of script, however clever the IT skills are. In a different way, artefacts brought along to show to the audience can distract if handed round at the wrong time. Cues and prompts are a necessary part of talking formally, but how they are used needs to be considered. These are issues which could usefully be addressed when teachers work with students on how to perform within this context.

Group Interaction

Quite a number of advisers indicated that this context led to some disappointing work. There is an obvious reason for this: while the other contexts are performative in nature this context is much more about interaction and reflection. The fact that groups nonetheless are observed by teachers and advisers can lead to an artificial situation, because to some extent they *are* having to perform their skills. (This situation is even more evident when it comes to interboard materials on tape/DVD. It is very hard to be a spontaneous group member with a camera pointing at you).

There was a trend this year towards over preparation of ‘group interaction’ with the result that a hoped for ‘discuss, argue, persuade’ transmuted into a series of solo presentations better matched to ‘explain, describe, narrate’. However, it was apparent that the problem is almost certainly about how centres prepare for a visit, rather than about how this context is working in the classroom.

Some teachers, understanding the ambivalent nature of assessing group work, set up situations in which the groups are in role as discussion groups on television, or at public meetings. These can work well, provided the skills of reflection and interaction can be seen.

The size of a group also requires careful thought. All sorts of reasons go into how a group is formed, but sometimes a group can be too big, or small, for its intended purpose.

Administration

A number of advisers have noted that although visits are nearly always conducted in a very pleasant atmosphere, actually arranging the visits can take a lot of time and effort. It would be much appreciated if centres could ensure that they respond quickly to the initial contact by their adviser and that they make sure the En1 co-ordinator can be easily contacted thereafter.

Conclusion

The following comments are taken verbatim from reports sent in by advisers. They support the idea that Speaking and Listening is a valued part of the English curriculum, with much to offer to students of all backgrounds and abilities:

‘More and more, centres are realising how valuable En1 is, both as an examination component and as a way of preparing students for life beyond the classroom.’

‘All centres welcomed the visit and most see it as necessary maintenance as well as an opportunity to boost the En1 profile. As in previous years, demography proved a fickle indicator of attainment: some of the most inspiring visits were to centres whose candidates have to deal with a range of disadvantages and

challenges. These instances seem to highlight the potential of this component to offer all students, and their English teachers, something that is uniquely precious and valuable.’

En2/3 (Reading/Writing) and Literature

Moderators were able to confirm centres’ marks in a considerable majority of centres this year, and many commented positively on the highly professional way centres are setting, marking and moderating tasks: advice from previous Principal Moderator reports and from Autumn Standardising meetings seems to have been acted upon in many centres, leaving moderators in the position of being able to confirm marks with even fewer difficulties than in previous years. The group standardising meeting has been a cornerstone of the AQA approach for many years and it is worth reiterating its value. Its value, of course, will only be significant if lessons learned from the meeting are disseminated to others working in the department, and there is some anecdotal evidence that this dissemination may not be taking place in some centres. Two teachers may attend the meeting: it is recognised that this is increasingly difficult in most centres, but there are real advantages to be gained by, for example, an NQT attending the meeting alongside a more experienced colleague. There is also a library of previous standardising materials and video tapes for EN1 (Speaking and Listening) to which NQTs should have access.

One concern raised by several moderators was that there seemed to have been many more administrative problems than in previous years and, in a later section of this report, there are some points which centres should consider carefully. There can be quite severe consequences for candidates if things like transcription errors are allowed to slip through the net. English departments spend a lot of time on careful moderation which can be jeopardised by clerical errors, sometimes quite a lot of errors. Moderators have to accept that the mark on the Centre Mark Sheet is the correct one so it is certainly worthwhile taking great care to ensure that marks are correctly placed, accurately added together and properly checked on both the Candidate Record Form and Centre Mark Sheet.

Most centres are very confident and assured in their appreciation of the Specification. One general area that departments may wish to discuss is the way coursework is integrated with the other elements of the GCSEs. To define coursework as work undertaken during the course to improve the speaking, listening, reading and writing of candidates, rather than as four, five or six discrete assignments labelled ‘coursework’ may help to integrate the different elements of the course more helpfully and productively for candidates. There is some evidence that more integration may be, in some centres, necessary: Moderators report of, for example, Media responses which either focus on En2 without much attention devoted to En3 criteria, or written responses to Shakespeare which lack clarity because there seems to be have been little focus on the structuring of the written response.

It is reassuring to be able to say that there has been no significant increase in instances of reported plagiarism this year. Teachers seem to be more aware of the problems of plagiarism and there has been a reassuring number of communications with AQA staff from teachers who have been dealing with authentication issues in their centres. The best way for these concerns to be addressed is in centres because there can be very severe consequences including loss of marks and disqualification if plagiarism is identified by moderators when work has been submitted and students have signed their Authentication. Centres are to be praised for their cooperation in trying to stamp out plagiarism but it remains a very important issue on which we all need to keep a vigilant eye. We would advise centres to read QCA advice and to look carefully at the JCQ (Joint Council for Qualifications) guidance for teachers and assessors about plagiarism: it provides a lot of practical support. We would also advise teachers in centres to avail themselves of all the support possible within their own centres to help them deal with instances of plagiarism.

At the risk of stating the obvious, it is worthwhile reiterating that good task-setting is at the heart of a successful approach to English/Literature coursework. One tendency noted by moderators is for several centres to adopt the same piece of coursework, often taken from available on-line resources. There is much to be admired and praised in the way such resources have empowered classroom teachers and allowed them to share ideas freely, but it may be worth departments’ time to discuss some of these

received ideas for assignments and consider whether they should adopt them in their entirety or adapt them. Some better writing has been seen when candidates wilfully or with the encouragement of their teachers refuse to follow the formula of the original assignment and write narratives about experiences much nearer to their own. When moderators comment on successful original writing in centres, they rarely refer to cloned assignments; they are more likely to be engaged and excited by young writers finding their own voice and exploring rather than copying structures.

The other significant issue for moderators remains the blight of over-scaffolding. There have been few reported instances this year of scaffolding to the extent that there are doubts as to whether work is the candidates' own writing, but many moderators have expressed some disappointment that the work they receive from some centres contains assignments which seem to be cloned. They notice it most when the scaffold leads several candidates to make the same unhelpful comments, usually about the contextualisation of the text. There is undoubtedly a place for writing scaffolds especially for candidates operating at the lower end of the mark range, but it is difficult in some instances to see how the very similar work of several candidates placed in high mark ranges can possibly meet an assessment criterion which uses the word 'originality'.

There is some considerable variety of practice in the ways centres prepare candidates to explore the contexts of literary texts. At its best the contextualisation is concise and relevant to the task. In some centres however there are still examples of contextualisation which seem to have no bearing on the assignment focus. Prose Studies based on Dickens often begin with potted biographies of the writer for no apparent reason, and it was common for moderators to feel that many responses to literary texts would have been better off starting at paragraph three or four. Centres are strongly advised to persuade candidates of the pointless nature of potted histories of the writer's life and times: it is, for example, of no consequence that Dickens was 'born in Portsmouth' as moderators were endlessly informed. Biographical information is only relevant if it in some way illuminates the text. Another issue concerns the accuracy of some of the contextualisation: at the more extreme end of the spectrum, some observations suggested by quite able candidates were considered to be 'specious generalisation trotted out with misplaced confidence'. Centres need to be careful that they are not advising candidates to make generalisations about, for example, the place of women in Elizabethan times simply to fit an argument they wish to promote.

There are some excellent examples of purposeful annotation but it remains a feature of assessment that needs to be discussed and developed in some centres.

At its best, annotation provides the moderator with a concise running commentary drawing attention to the features of the writing which explain the mark awarded. There doesn't have to be very much; in fact too much annotation becomes a distraction. The most contentious feature of annotation is often that it is misplaced. Where, for example, a candidate uses a quotation, it is common to find 'lang' jotted in the margin whether or not there is any subsequent analysis of or comment about the language. Where a candidate writes about the social or historical context, it is commonplace to find 'context' written in the margin. If the contextualisation is irrelevant and does not address any significant assessment criteria then the annotation is misplaced.

Marginal annotations which explains to the candidate and the moderator how criteria have been met are most helpful, but some of the best summative annotation appears at the end of an assignment. The moderator is a significant audience for annotation; if the audience on a final draft is also the candidate then the comments need to be fixed in assessment criteria.

Shakespeare

Romeo and Juliet has become the standard text and, probably because there is a helpful resource to be used, the standard response has become one which focuses on one or two scenes in the play. Although *Romeo and Juliet* has become the most popular text, moderators saw successful work based on a variety of texts. *The Merchant of Venice* and *Othello* are also popular texts and, on the fringes, *Titus Andronicus*

made an appearance this year. *Hamlet*, *Much Ado about Nothing* and *The Taming of the Shrew* produced some lively and engaged writing. In the past there has been a problem with some centres eliciting responses from candidates which were focused on one of the film texts of plays - usually the Luhrman *Romeo and Juliet* - rather than Shakespeare's text, so it is reassuring to be able to say that moderators felt such practices were on the wane.

The best work treats the text as something created by a writer to shape an audience's response, and is based on parts of the text whilst providing an informed and filtered knowledge of the whole play. Close, critical reading provides the best opportunities for candidates to meet assessment criteria; the best responses focus on what is actually in the text rather than what the 'notes' say. There are still some instances of candidates producing hugely over-long assignments often about character in which sweeping statements rather than observations based on close reading are made. Moderators certainly saw examples of candidates meeting notional A* criteria in assignments of less than 1000 words and others who were failing to meet those criteria in responses of many thousands of words. Candidates who write overlong responses are often using hundreds of words on narrative: we need to encourage more focused and concise responses which encourage candidates to develop ideas rather than provide knowledge of plot. En2 responses in coursework should be an opportunity for candidates to rehearse their En3 skills and it is worthwhile looking at the En3 criteria when preparing En2 assignments: it helps integrate skills. Words like 'concise', 'sophisticated' and 'focus' appear in high grade assessment criteria in En3.

Despite comments made in previous Principal Moderator reports, moderators are still finding essay titles along the lines of, "Who is responsible for the deaths of Romeo and Juliet?". Such approaches do not help candidates meet assessment criteria and should really be discontinued. A focus on character has been seen to disadvantage high-ability candidates when they produce worthy, long and detailed assignments in which they treat the character as a real person rather than something constructed by an author.

Prose Study

The most popular author appears to be Dickens and the single most popular text is *Great Expectations*, but moderators have seen some excellent work produced in response to a variety of quite challenging texts including *Wuthering Heights*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Jane Eyre*, *Gulliver's Travels* and various other examples from the National Curriculum List of Prescribed Authors (Pre-1914). Some good approaches have been found in response to short stories. Some candidates are clearly more likely to cope with a collection of short stories rather than a novel and centres are reminded that although the requirement is to refer to a minimum of three stories, there is no requirement to respond equally to each of the texts: a very good response may focus on one text with some reference to the other two.

Moderators reported improving expertise in thoughtful task setting. The key word, "How" usually features in good tasks, allowing candidates to engage with authorial craft. As was mentioned in last year's report, the best responses came from candidates who were able to study sections of text closely and relate them convincingly to the whole. Some good work was seen, for example, when candidates explored two or three chapters from different parts of *Great Expectations* and focused on Pip's development and the ways in which Dickens crafted this. Such an approach was less likely to lead to the kind of stifling line by line response which can be a feature of the study of a single section of the text.

Dickens seems to be the writer who attracts the worst kind of approach to the social and historical contexts: the two main concerns are the irrelevance of much of the biographical detail and the fairly naïve generalisations about Victorian society with which some assignments begin. Candidates who approach the context by engaging with the writer's craft and reaching conclusions produce much better writing than those who begin with a faux historical preamble and then make the text support their generalisations.

Media

There remain some issues concerning the relevant Assessment Objectives for the Media response. The work of some candidates still seems to be more focused on En2 rather than En3. Often this can be seen in ‘analysis’ of media texts which seems to be an extended list in which the candidate ‘spots’ features and assiduously works through them with little sense of a reader. Much better writing is seen when, as one moderator reported, candidates ‘engage with issues and polemics’; there is greater sense of purpose. It is worthwhile looking again at the A* response produced in response to a *Cosmopolitan* front cover by Candidate 1 in the Standardising Materials for 2005. Media texts often engage candidates and can be used to integrate the course and develop candidates’ skills. En1 can allow candidates to develop a personal voice about media texts and they have to respond to them in Paper 1.

Perhaps the most significant issue for centres to discuss is whether to go down the ‘analysis’ route or the ‘review, comment’ route. Either approach can work well but in some centres there is a need to focus more on candidates crafting and structuring their responses. Sometimes there is a vagueness about the purpose of the writing: candidates write about the opening twenty minutes of a film with little sense that they know why they are doing it. Candidates need a focus: for example they may find it more helpful to engage with an assignment that invites them to explore the differences between texts or parts of the same text rather than just writing essays about a particular scene.

Candidates struggle to produce high grade writing for certain audiences – some seemingly pithy, colloquial and witty reviews for a ‘teen’ audience are impossible to match to higher grade descriptors. Moderators have seen some wonderful writing about film that might feature in a magazine like *Empire*, and one moderator reported on some excellent work produced by candidates who were writing two reviews of the same film for different newspapers. Such assignments may, however, be outside the scope of most candidates. Such approaches preclude candidates from adopting the endless frame by frame study that can be a feature of, for example, writing about the shower sequence in *Psycho*.

At the risk of stating the obvious, the best writing comes when candidates are engaging with genuine enthusiasm with texts and tasks they like. Some more stilted writing emerges when candidates are using ‘over-scaffolded’ approaches: some writing about *Shrek* which seemed very similar across several centres was noticed by moderators.

There remains a tendency to sometimes write about more than one text for no good reason that moderators can see; it simply produces more rather than better writing. Where two media texts are to be properly compared and candidates are given a point to debate, writing is undoubtedly better. For example, a task inviting a candidate to compare the way war is presented in two brief sections of film may give a much better focus than simply writing about the opening scenes of *Saving Private Ryan*.

Original writing

There were clear signs that advice about the length of candidates’ original writing had been accepted and it was rare to find long rambling narratives. There is also evidence that Original Writing is more crafted than the Media response. For some reason *The Assassin* again appeared in several centres, often to the dismay of moderators. In the hands of many candidates this assignment becomes little more than formulaic writing by numbers with little sense of a reader at the other end. It seems odd that so many thousands of young people are writing about motiveless or mercenary killing without any sense of moral debate. *The Assassin*, with its rigid structure and questionable content seems to take us further away than ever from the notion that English may be, to an extent, about personal growth. If it is the tight structure of *The Assassin* model which is attractive, then it ought to be possible to adapt the assignment and re-focus it on different subject matter more relevant to the lives of the young writers. Moderators read some interesting reworking of autobiographical writing in, for example, an assignment inviting candidates to write a letter to themselves to be opened in thirty years: it guided candidates into shaping their material and considering audience in more interesting ways than simple chronological writing.

Questions still need to be raised about how much original Writing is being undertaken by candidates. Original Writing in coursework provides opportunities to practise and extend the writing repertoire and could play a significant role in developing candidates' skills were it to be treated as more than a one-off piece of coursework. Thirty percent of the marks for the GCSE are for En3 in the two exams, and the 5% in coursework for Original Writing can provide opportunities to develop writing skills for the exams and leave candidates in a position of being able to select the best piece of Original writing rather than include the only one. There should be opportunities to experiment with structure and style. Candidates who are also studying for English Literature can use the texts they are exploring as stimulus material for their own writing: moderators read some very interesting responses to *Your Shoes* from the Anthology.

Post-1914 Drama

A small number of texts predominates: *An Inspector Calls*, *The Crucible*, *A View From the Bridge* and *Our Day Out*. Moderators feel that task setting in response to modern plays seems not to be as good as in the case of Shakespeare and Prose Study. It is more common, for example, to find tasks based on the whole play rather than on a close examination of a feature or section of the text. There are still tasks of the 'Who is responsible for?' kind; *An Inspector Calls* is especially prone to this approach. *Our Day Out* often elicits quite poor responses because many tasks do not allow candidates to engage with the writer's craft: it is very difficult to achieve marks when writing about 'Your favourite teacher' in the play. Lower ability candidates are really not well served by such assignments submitted for assessment.

In the best centres there is a proper focus on the text as drama; on a writer's methods in shaping audience response. There is now less of the kind of response which purports to treat the text as a play - describing costume, selecting actors - but which leads to very superficial responses. Moderators occasionally encounter assignments which can work well with very careful teaching but which disadvantage candidates severely if candidates fail to grasp the main focus of the assignment: writing extra scenes for a play, for example, can provide evidence of appreciation of the writer's craft, but it can also lead candidates into writing which achieves very poor marks.

Administration

Two problems which were mentioned in last year's report need to be repeated because they seemed to be even more of a problem this year than last.

- When centres fail to meet the requirement to asterisk 'Incomplete Folders', moderators are unable to select a proper sample, something which causes delay and makes the moderation process more difficult.
- Moderators are often presented with the impossibility of reading the pink and yellow copies of the Centre Mark Sheets because mistakes have been made on the top copy and crossed out in ways that make the bottom copies illegible.

On the whole, centres are to be congratulated for the smooth operation of coursework. With evidence of confident familiarity with the Specification it could be a time to consider some innovation. As one moderator reported: 'Given the increasing prescription of other parts of the English experience, it would be good to see students' minds skilfully steered into the more adventurous activity in the open possibilities of Literature.'

Mark Range and Award of Grades

English (3702)

Foundation tier

Component	Maximum Mark (Raw)	Maximum Mark (Scaled)	Mean Mark (Scaled)	Standard Deviation (Scaled)
Paper 1	54	162	68.5	19.8
Paper 2	54	162	66.8	18.2
En1 Speaking and Listening	54	108	58.0	14.3
En2/3 Reading and Writing	108	108	52.1	14.6
Foundation tier overall 3702	--	540	245.5	54.4

		Max. mark	C	D	E	F	G
Paper 1 3702/1F boundary mark	raw	54	30	24	18	13	8
	scaled	162	90	72	54	39	24
Paper 2 3702/2F boundary mark	raw	54	28	23	18	14	10
	scaled	162	84	69	54	42	30
Foundation tier scaled boundary mark		540	284	233	182	132	82

Higher tier

Component	Maximum Mark (Raw)	Maximum Mark (Scaled)	Mean Mark (Scaled)	Standard Deviation (Scaled)
Paper 1	54	162	105.5	20.5
Paper 2	54	162	106.5	19.9
En1 Speaking and Listening	54	108	80.0	11.8
En2/3 Reading and Writing	108	108	77.4	12.9
Higher tier overall 3702	--	540	369.4	53.5

		Max. mark	A*	A	B	C	D	allowed E
Paper 1H 3702/1H boundary mark	raw	54	46	41	36	31	23	-
	scaled	162	138	123	108	93	69	-
Paper 2H 3702/2H boundary mark	raw	54	46	40	34	29	22	-
	scaled	162	138	120	102	87	66	-
Higher tier scaled boundary mark		540	451	403	353	303	234	199

Provisional statistics for the award

Foundation tier (193,458 candidates)

	C	D	E	F	G
Cumulative %	24.8	60.0	82.7	93.4	97.8

Higher tier (235,942 candidates)

	A*	A	B	C	D	allowed E
Cumulative %	7.2	27.3	61.9	90.5	99.0	99.5

Overall (429,400 candidates)

	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Cumulative %	4.0	15.0	34.0	60.9	81.5	92.0	96.8	98.8

English Literature (3712)*Foundation tier*

Component	Maximum Mark (Raw)	Maximum Mark (Scaled)	Mean Mark (Scaled)	Standard Deviation (Scaled)
Examination	66	140	58.9	16.3
Coursework	57	60	29.4	8.2
Foundation tier overall 3712	--	200	88.2	21.4

		Max. mark	C	D	E	F	G
3712/F boundary mark	raw	66	34	28	23	18	13
	scaled	140	72	59	49	38	28

Higher tier

Component	Maximum Mark (Raw)	Maximum Mark (Scaled)	Mean Mark (Scaled)	Standard Deviation (Scaled)
Examination	66	140	96.5	16.2
Coursework	57	60	43.0	7.4
Higher tier overall	--	200	139.5	21.0

		Max. mark	A*	A	B	C	D	allowed E
3712/H boundary mark	raw	66	55	49	43	37	32	-
	scaled	140	117	104	91	78	68	-

Provisional statistics for the award

Foundation tier (134,773 candidates)

	C	D	E	F	G
Cumulative %	24.8	56.0	79.5	91.2	96.3

Higher tier (226,388 candidates)

	A*	A	B	C	D	allowed E
Cumulative %	6.9	30.6	67.1	91.9	98.0	98.8

Overall (361,161 candidates)

	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Cumulative %	4.3	19.2	42.1	66.8	82.4	91.6	96.0	97.9

Definitions

Boundary Mark: the minimum (scaled) mark required by a candidate to qualify for a given grade.

Mean Mark: is the sum of all candidates' marks divided by the number of candidates. In order to compare mean marks for different components, the mean mark (scaled) should be expressed as a percentage of the maximum mark (scaled).

Standard Deviation: a measure of the spread of candidates' marks. In most components, approximately two-thirds of all candidates lie in a range of plus or minus one standard deviation from the mean, and approximately 95% of all candidate lie in range of plus or minus two standard deviations from the mean. In order to compare the standard deviations for different components, the standard deviation (scaled) should be expressed as a percentage of the maximum mark (scaled).

Uniform Mark: a score on a standard scale which indicates a candidate's performance. The lowest uniform mark for grade A* is always 90% of the maximum uniform mark for the unit, similarly grade A is 80%, grade B is 70%, grade C is 60%, grade D is 50%, grade E is 40%, grade F is 30% and grade G is 20%. A candidate's total scaled mark for each unit is converted to a uniform mark and the uniform marks for the units will be added in order to determine the candidate's overall grade.