

GCSE 2004

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Report on the Examination

English *Specification A*

- English (3702)
- English Literature (3712)

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General Introduction

The first examination of a new specification is always an anxious time. In fact candidates knew what to expect and there were very few problems. The vast majority of candidates were familiar with the Assessment Objectives and knew how to respond to them.

The examination was once again subject to a security breach, which led to the late substitution of papers. The replacement papers had gone through all the normal stages of approval as directed by QCA.

A few comments emerge from the reports which follow which it would be useful to summarise here:

- detailed writing frames for coursework can hinder rather than help candidates, particularly when they reproduce the same chunks of material from the frame;
- the use of common unacknowledged secondary sources also means that candidates are not submitting their own work: there are penalties for this;
- the Prose Study has led to better, less artificial writing than the Wider Reading assignment it replaced;
- the key to success on Paper 1 Section A is answering all parts of the questions. Many candidates, particularly on or close to borderlines, did themselves a disservice by not attempting all parts of the questions:
 - adherence to the guidance about timing is important
 - planning is still far from the norm
 - it is no longer the case that every strand of every targeted Assessment Objective has to be tested in each examination, though they all have to be tested over time
 - candidates responded positively to the new structure of Paper 2
 - in Literature three Assessment Objectives are tested on the short stories and poetry and two on the prose. These Assessment Objectives are equally weighted. Some candidates tended to ignore AO2 or AO3 or both.

Many centres wrote to AQA to object to the use of the word ‘futile’ in Question 7 of the Literature Higher paper. Examiners were instructed to accept whatever candidates understood by the word. However, few were handicapped by their lack of knowledge of what ‘futile’ meant. They answered the question intended. However, a large number of candidates did not know what ‘recent’ meant and in Paper 2 Question 3 wrote about a forthcoming, rather than a recent event.

The most pleasing, and surprising, aspect of the examination was the very small number of rubric infringements, far fewer than in the first year of the three previous syllabi. Candidates were clearly very well aware of what they were expected to do and managed to negotiate their way through the choices they had to make on the selection of poems in both English and English Literature.

English (3702)

Paper 1 Foundation Tier

General Comments

This year the paper focused on the idea of work and conditions of employment. Candidates were asked to read and answer questions on two written texts. One was *Ripe Pickings*, a flier for a fruit growers' association and the other an extract from John Steinbeck's *Of Men and their Making*. They were also given a photographic illustration which they were asked to relate to the Steinbeck text. A surprising number of the candidates showed keen interest in the employment situations described, and considerable shrewdness in commenting on them. Both passages seemed to be accessible to most candidates, and although Steinbeck's style may have been more familiar to those candidates who had read *Of Mice and Men* than to those who had not, that familiarity did not necessarily give them any advantage in answering the questions.

In this new specification the questions in Section A are more tightly focused on specific Assessment Objectives and more equally weighted than in the previous syllabus. This seemed to give many candidates more confidence, and many of them gained much higher marks in this section than in Section B. A large number of the candidates showed that they understood how the paper worked, what the Assessment Objectives were, how to present their answers and organise their time. Many of them gained full marks in the first question. They had obviously been carefully taught how to approach the paper.

However, there is still a worrying gap between those candidates who have been carefully prepared for the exam and those who have not. In several centres it was noticeable that candidates were not getting marks which truly reflected their ability because they did not understand the framework of the examination. They answered the short questions in Section A at unnecessary length and then the more important ones too briefly. Sometimes they let one answer run into another, making it hard for examiners to disentangle them to find and reward understanding. Sometimes they launched into extended personal opinion or spent too much time explaining why they had chosen to pick out a particular statement and then found themselves unable to finish the reading section before it was time to move on to the writing section. A number of candidates answered Question 1 and then didn't attempt Question 2, thus foregoing more than half the marks. There is a clear instruction to answer all the questions in Section A in the question paper but centres may wish to remind candidates of this requirement as often as possible.

Section A: Reading

In this section the candidates were assessed on their ability to read with insight and engagement, follow an argument, select material to answer questions, collate material from different sources (making cross references and comparing) and evaluate how writers use linguistic, structural and presentational devices. Most of them showed they could read with considerable interest and insight and were able to select material efficiently to answer the questions. Many of them had a clear understanding of the differences between the two passages but a surprising number did not understand what 'presentational devices' were and so scored low marks on the question aimed at that Assessment Objective.

Question 1a required the candidates to choose one statement from the *Ripe Pickings* flier which would make them want to apply for a job with that association of fruit growers and one which would put them off, and to explain their choice. There were a number of points from which to choose and quite a large number of people got full marks. Some of the less able candidates misinterpreted the last paragraph about the necessity for new employees to spend a weekend at the corporate headquarters in Carlisle and assumed that all the fruit picking would take place in Carlisle.

Question 1b also produced good responses. Candidates were asked to show they could follow an argument by explaining in their own words three things which made life difficult for workers on the ranches in the Steinbeck text. Many of them showed real interest and involvement in the problems of poverty and poor housing experienced by the workers, picking out and commenting clearly on the central points.

Question 1c asked for a comparison between the two texts. There were some thoughtful comparisons but also many answers which just snatched at the most obvious point about the minimum wage and left it at that. This question proved to be a useful discriminator.

Question 2a, asking candidates to choose three presentational devices from the *Ripe Pickings* flier and explain how effective they were, brought a very mixed response. It was answered well by those who had been well prepared for this type of question, but many who did not understand the term ‘presentational devices’ wrote little or nothing of relevance. A number of them simply referred to one device three times, without realising that three different devices were required.

Question 2b asked the candidates to look at the last part of the Steinbeck’s passage and to say how he uses language to convey to the reader what he feels about the employer. This required close attention to language and an understanding of irony or sarcasm that was challenging for some of the less able candidates. Quite a lot of them showed that they had misunderstood Steinbeck’s implied criticism of the employer. However, there were some very good answers to this question, showing perhaps an instinctive reaction to sarcasm as much as an awareness of language as such, but making the point clearly nevertheless.

Question 2c required candidates to look at the photograph of the American migrant’s car and comment on the purpose of using it to illustrate the extract. Some candidates did not attempt this question, but most made the basic point about poverty.

Section B: Writing to Argue, Persuade or Advise

Candidates were asked to choose one of four questions. One tested the skill of arguing, one the art of persuasion and one the ability to give advice. The last question required them to argue and then persuade. A very high percentage of candidates chose to do the one requiring argument about Saturday jobs, perhaps because they were comfortable with the idea of a letter to a headteacher, whereas they had had less practice in writing a leaflet or a text for a speech. The responses to all the questions in Section B tended to be shorter and more succinct than those in response to Section B of the previous syllabus, presumably because of the reduction in the duration of the examination. Although only a few actually showed a plan for their writing before they began, there was generally much more sense of the need to provide a structure or sequence of ideas in the writing and it was good to see so many pieces which had been consciously shaped for effect. Spelling was still a problem, particularly in such common words as ‘writing’ or ‘there’, or even ‘you’ which was quite frequently spelt in the text message form of ‘u’. However, there were definite signs that candidates are beginning to use a more helpful range of punctuation.

Question 3 In some ways it was a pity that this question, which was about arguing for or against the idea that the headteacher should ban Saturday jobs, was so much more popular than all the others put together. Although there were some good answers, many of them either adopted an inappropriately aggressive tone or produced rather flat, ineffective writing, as if they had answered this question a hundred times before. However there were some interesting and illuminating responses too, and some impressive personal statements about the need to have a Saturday job in order to contribute to the family finances.

Question 4 The task was to write the text for a leaflet persuading 15 and 16 year olds to join a group pressing for better conditions for Saturday workers. Responses to this were very mixed. Although there was some lively writing, the less confident candidates tended to fall back on summarising the stimulus material and even the most able struggled to find convincing material. They used appropriate language for persuasion and understood the task, but found a limited number of points to make, so fell back on repetition. The best answers were those which used examples and anecdotes to support what they were saying.

Question 5 asked for an article for a careers magazine giving advice to students about what to look out for when applying for a job. This was the second most popular choice. Some candidates had obviously practised the skill of advice giving and wrote authoritatively and very much to the point. Others, however, found it difficult to vary the sentence structures or give the article much shape. They tended to list the points they wanted to make without developing them enough to retain the reader's interest.

Question 6 Candidates were asked to write the text for a speech arguing for better conditions in schools or colleges and then persuading people that more should be done to improve those conditions. This is a familiar sort of topic in examinations and might have been expected to attract more candidates, but very few chose to do it. On the whole the responses were disappointing to read. Rather obvious complaints were brought out and left to speak for themselves, without much attempt to produce a coherent argument or sequence the ideas. Very few of the candidates attempting this question made any conscious attempt first to argue and then to adopt a different tone in order to persuade.

Conclusion

Overall, the paper worked well and provided various opportunities for candidates to show what they could do. Most of them responded to what they read with interest and wrote with energy and enthusiasm. It has been good to see much more evidence this year of candidates shaping their writing for effect without losing their spontaneity. Skilful teaching shone through this improvement.

Paper 1 Higher Tier

As this was a new specification there were several issues raised by centres about the materials and the types of questions. It is the Principal Examiner's intention to address these general issues before reporting on how the paper worked with candidates. However, it might be worth starting with a direct quotation from a Team Leader's report which was typical of their findings: 'The exam was both candidate and marker friendly. All but the weakest candidates 'scored' well on Section A.'

Firstly, several centres voiced a general dissatisfaction with the nature of the materials in the replacement paper. The replacement paper had to be used following the theft of the original paper. It is important to stress that the replacement paper was a fully operational paper and had been through all the appropriate approval procedures as set down in the *QCA Code of Practice*. Both the original and replacement papers were consistent with the pattern of assessment exemplified in the Specimen Papers. Future question papers will continue to be set according to the information in the Specification and the Assessment Objectives. They will not be set as a mirror of past papers.

Page 21 of the Specification states that '**Section A** requires *Reading* responses to unseen non-fiction and media texts. There will be two or more passages in a variety of formats, including literary non-fiction and/or print and ICT-based information and reference texts.' Those centres that performed best this summer were those that had taught the underlying requirements of the National Curriculum.

It is important to reinforce the following:

- Question 2 will be assessing the candidates' ability to read one or more of the texts as media texts.
- More often than not, the media texts will be as colourful as those in the original paper.
- Literary non-fiction is likely to be used again in the future, just as it has been used in the past (e.g. Orwell, Pepys).
- It is the candidates' ability to 'understand and evaluate how writers use linguistic, structural and presentational devices to achieve their effects' (Assessment Objective 2(v)) which will be rewarded. Simply identifying these devices is a lower order reading skill, in the same way that simply identifying similes and onomatopoeia is a lower order skill in Paper 2 Section A and English Literature.
- Because media has a higher profile in this specification it will not always be possible, nor is it necessary, to cover all of the Assessment Objectives in every paper. There was no 'compare' question this year, but comparison must be tested at some point in future question papers.

Section A

Question 1(a)

This question is a good example of how the questions are based directly on the Assessment Objectives. It asked candidates to follow an argument and it introduced the four band model of skills that examiners used in all of the reading questions. These bands were based on the following basic criteria:

- notional G/F = little evidence
- notional E/D = attempts to engage
- notional C/B = clear attempt
- notional A/A* = detailed or fully absorbed and shaped for purpose.

Senior examiners reported that these basic skills criteria invariably made examiners' assessments more consistent and coherent.

In answering this first question, candidates could either cover all of the points in the content descriptors of the Mark Scheme, or show that they had followed Steinbeck's argument and shaped it to fit the requirements of the question. It is worth sharing the Assessment Objectives with candidates and asking them to try to identify the objective that each question aims to exemplify. Candidates who paraphrased the argument, or told the story, will do the same in Paper 2 and Literature.

The choice of Steinbeck as an author was neither a help nor a hindrance for candidates who had studied *Of Mice and Men* for English Literature. Candidates must keep firmly in their minds that they need to attempt the question set by reading the items which they are given on the day. Having read *Of Mice and Men* was of little or no help to candidates, in the same way that having read *Animal Farm* was of no use when an Orwell passage was set several years ago. It was, however, useful for candidates to notice that Steinbeck's style was Orwellian – and some did!

Question 1(b)

This question assessed the Assessment Objective 2(ii), where candidates are asked to distinguish between fact and opinion. Generally, it is useful for candidates if they can use the same structure for answering reading questions that they used at KS3: Point, Example, Explanation (easily remembered by candidates as PEE). Many candidates could identify the facts and opinions, but too many made vague comments without giving examples. What examiners wanted to see evidence of was a clear attempt by candidates to answer the question rather than simply reiterating the wording of the question. Examiners want to see whether the candidates can conceptualise a response to the question on the paper.

Question 2(a)

Several centres wrote in with reservations about the inclusion of the medium of photography in the paper. Candidates, on the other hand, handled the question confidently and competently. One senior examiner suggested that this was because candidates had not been 'trained up' to answer a question like this and as a result, candidates approached it in different and very interesting ways. The most able saw the car as a metaphor for the migrants and wrote effectively about what each detail might symbolise. Even the least able candidates were able to make the link between picture and text.

Question 2(b)

Candidates had all been well trained in how to analyse presentational features. The ones who fared best were those who varied their comments, rather than falling back on the standard ‘this draws attention to ...’ It was perfectly acceptable for candidates to say that the flier was amateurish and lacking in style, but they would still have had to explain how this form and presentation might persuade or dissuade a teenager. One centre was concerned that the format of Question 2 was misleading in that 2(b) and 2(c) were not related to the subheading, but there were no reports of any candidates having any problems with this format.

Question 2(c)

The answers to this question were disappointing. Just about every year there has been a question about a writer’s use of language (often as part of a comparison question) and still many scripts showed no evidence of candidates being able to distinguish between content and language. Whenever candidates identify a question which mentions language, they should think of word and sentence level issues and there is invariably something to write about:

- the person it is written in
- whether it is formal or informal
- what type of writing it is (i.e. argue, persuade, inform, etc.)
- the use of any rhetorical devices like repetition or question
- irony
- the tense(s)
- other ideas.

It is the ‘other ideas’ that examiners find interesting and are keen to reward. No mark scheme could ever cover the range of responses that 200,000+ Higher tier candidates will come up with.

Section B

This Section was very similar to former years in structure except that candidates had 45 minutes to write their response and that there was an extra choice of question which linked two of the triplets of writing types assessed in this paper. Team leaders invariably reported that candidates were not disadvantaged by the reduced time allocation. In fact, it appeared to focus their attention and resulted in a more determined attempt to include the relevant features of the text type. Many examiners also reported that the reduced time concentrated minds to such an extent that there were few who did not give enough evidence of satisfying purpose and audience and that the level of technical accuracy seemed to be higher. It appears that the Literacy Strategy is beginning to have an impact at sentence level with hardly any candidates omitting to use a rhetorical question, and most incorporated short simple or minor sentences for impact.

Question 3

This was the most popular question by far. On the whole, after a slightly ungrammatical start, candidates came up with a variety of reasons to support their arguments. Most candidates argued against a ban on Saturday jobs, but a surprising number were in favour of such an issue about which many had first hand experience. This question worked well because of the passion which candidates felt about the subject. Successful answers included evidence of word, sentence and text level control and effectiveness.

Question 4

This question allowed candidates to write in an exciting fashion with a clear sense of purpose and audience. It also allowed candidates to produce some interesting layout features (leaflet style) and an appropriately outraged tone. Responses showed that many students are clearly aware of their rights concerning part-time jobs. Many examiners reported that they saw a disproportionate number of higher level scripts based on questions 4 – 6. Many candidates seem to have had enough of reading by the end of Section A and chose the first writing task they stumbled across in this section.

Question 5

Not many candidates chose this option, but those who did, fared well. They were able to provide relevant detail and to use an appropriate tone which suggested that this topic had been covered in some detail in PSHE. It was like a breath of fresh air for examiners to mark something other than Question 3 and it is worth mentioning to students that a change to an examiner is a good as a rest!

Question 6

On the whole, this was a successful question because students had obviously analysed some famous speeches and were able to utilise several rhetorical features. They were also able to show more readily that they could use sentence forms for effect and use a fuller range of appropriate sentence structures.

In conclusion, it was felt that there were still too many candidates entered for the wrong tier, but the paper was able to differentiate between the candidates, affording some measure of success to all.

Paper 2 Foundation Tier

Candidates responded favourably to the reduction of the numbers of required poetry answers from two to one, and to the reduction of the time for the papers from two hours to one and a half hours. It was striking that weak candidates were able to write far more in an hour and a half than they had been able to write in two hours in the previous syllabus. It seems clear that far fewer gave up early and that they found having to write one poetry answer much less daunting than having to do two.

The work that most candidates had done in preparation for English Literature had a good effect on the Poetry answers in Section A. Almost all were able to make some cross-references and therefore to respond positively to the injunction to compare. Although there were examples of feature-spotting, giving rise to lists of devices used by the poets with varying degrees of accuracy, most candidates this year attempted to relate the use of such features to meaning and/or effect. Examiners felt that both of these indicated a significant improvement over previous years. There were far fewer answers which gave a sequential meaning.

The two questions on the poetry attracted roughly equal numbers of candidates. The vast majority chose to compare the named poem with a poem from the same cluster, but some were more adventurous, comparing it with a poem from the other cluster which was, of course, entirely acceptable and led, sometimes, to particularly thoughtful and fresh responses.

Question 1 allowed candidates to comment on a range of features of language and layout even when, perhaps, their understanding of meanings was a little shaky. *Two Scavengers* has an unusual layout which almost all could comment on at some level, and there were many different opinions about the poet's reasons for choosing this layout and about the effect it had on readers. Even though Ferlinghetti's ideas about democracy escaped many candidates, they were nevertheless able to comment effectively about the garbage men and the beautiful people. Effective answers selected details and showed their effect, details both of language and layout. Many personal responses showed pleasing involvement with the poems and with the poets' ideas and feelings which seemed to go well beyond the mere necessity to jump through examination hoops.

In response to **Question 2** *Half-Caste* was a poem which clearly appealed to many candidates. Sometimes, while acknowledging Agard's anger, they were not clear what he was angry about and felt that it was about discrimination suggesting that he felt he was half a person. On the other hand, there were far more candidates this year who could understand the way the poem makes its points about how ridiculous we would find it if everything composed of a mix of colons were to be called a 'half-caste' version of its genre. Popular choices for comparison were *Presents from my Aunts*, *Unrelated Incidents* and *Search For My Tongue*.

Most poetry answers were on poems which had been carried forward from the previous Anthology. There were some interesting answers on *What Were They Like?*, *Love After Love*, *This Room*, and *Not My Business*, but these were few and far between.

Candidates were given a wide range of tasks for writing on Section B, answers being spread well between the four choices, with the most popular being Question 4.

As mentioned in the Introduction, **Question 3** proved to be challenging for the majority of candidates choosing it on this tier. So many candidates wrote an advertisement for a forthcoming event that the conclusion was drawn that very large numbers had done this task shortly before the examination. Most attempting this question tried hard to write for a school or college website and most were able to work out the form for an appropriate article. Every candidate chose a suitable event. It was the word 'recent' that challenged them.

Given the choice between a time when they were happy and when they were unhappy, the overwhelming majority chose to write about when they were unhappy. The clearest and most effective responses chose either a happy or an unhappy time. Many, however, wrote a narrative in which they veered between being unhappy and happy. A significant number wrote about a happy time and a quite different unhappy time. More time spent considering the task's wording, noting the word 'or' would have improved the focus of the responses. The key discriminator here, however, was in 'explain'. Those choosing a narrative form only infrequently remembered to offer explanation. It was, perhaps, unfortunate that the paper was timed for immediately after the game between England and France in the World Cup. Some writing about the match offered a range of explanations; most, however, wrote a sports commentary with names of players creatively spelt. In contrast there were many sensitive and heartfelt pieces, particularly after bereavements, explaining a range of ways in which the event proved to be unhappy. Because candidates were writing about something they cared deeply about, examiners sometimes felt that answers to this question were the longest and the least crafted. The longer the answers were, the less likely they were to have a plan.

Responses to **Question 5**, describing a shopping centre when it was open and when it was closed, brought some of the best writing. The opportunities for some sort of open-closed parallel structure gave rise to more tightly planned and structured writing than on the other options. There was clear awareness of the need for descriptive vocabulary and more confident candidates chose interesting words and images. Most candidates attempting this question were able to show some ability to choose appropriate and telling vocabulary and syntax. The senses were often used effectively to create variation and atmosphere.

Question 6, combining description and explanation worked well for those who remembered these words while they were writing. The question asked candidates to recommend a holiday place to a friend. The most successful and focused responses came when a particular friend had been chosen and when this person was directly addressed. Weaker candidates forgot about the friend, giving a narrative of a holiday they had taken. Those who combined description with explanation throughout and who had a specific friend in mind did very well.

This was the first year of the operation of the new writing mark scheme, just as it had been for coursework. It threw up some interesting features and anomalies. It was by no means the case that the mark for AO3 (iii) was in line with the mark for AO3 (i) and (ii). There are very few skills descriptors and it would be well worth candidates being familiar with them during the course. They would note, for example, that paragraphing and vocabulary for effect are descriptors in the 7-8 band. To ignore paragraphs, therefore, is very unwise in the examination. It would be useful for them to consider, at the checking stage, whether the words they have chosen convey the effect they intend. Similarly, in AO3 (iii) it would be worth candidates being aware of the need to 'use a range of punctuation' for 4-5 and to 'use sentence forms for effect' in 6-7.

Previous reports have mentioned the beneficial effects of planning. They have extolled the benefits of careful checking. Fewer than 10% of candidates on this tier show evidence of either in the examination. It is a great shame, and it can frequently make the difference between one grade and the next.

Paper 2 Higher Tier

The changes made to this paper have been widely welcomed by examiners. The absence of a second compulsory poetry question, meaning that candidates are no longer tested on the same objectives twice, has resulted in more focused and considered responses in both reading and writing.

Overall, there were very few rubric infringements. Where these did occur, they were mainly to do with inappropriate poetry choices from the literature section of the Anthology. Most candidates completed the paper in the given time and there was little evidence of undue haste in either Section. Furthermore, there was less evidence of “exam fatigue”, with candidates achieving at comparable standards in both sections. Occasionally, candidates chose to respond to Section B first, though there was no apparent advantage or disadvantage to this. Centres appear, generally, to have made sound judgements with regard to entries, most candidates being appropriately entered for this tier. Where entry was inappropriate, however, candidates were inevitably disadvantaged by the absence of the bulleted prompts available to them on Foundation tier.

Examiners reported increased evidence of planning in both Section A and Section B, and cite this as the factor most likely to help candidates focus on the questions and produce structured and coherent responses. There was also more evidence of editing of writing 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 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.

This is the last year in which candidates will be allowed to use annotated Anthologies in the examination. Almost certainly, this will cause anxiety in some quarters. However, teachers should be aware that this year, as in previous years, there was clear evidence of candidates being disadvantaged by excessive or unhelpful annotation, which served only to cloud the issues and to inhibit direct responses to questions. Provided candidates are helped to understand, analyse and compare the poems in advance of the examination, examiners are confident that they can only benefit from the absence of annotation.

Section A: Reading

The majority of examiners felt that the inclusion of one named poem in the question gave candidates an immediate and relevant point of focus and made the choice of the second poem easier.

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. Overall, there seemed to be an even distribution of choice between Question 1 and Question 2.

The choice of the second poem was always an important factor in the success of the response. At times, examiners felt candidates were writing about their favourite poems rather than the ones best suited to the question, and this was to the detriment of their responses. It was disappointing that candidates rarely chose to write about poems that have not previously appeared in an Anthology. Some of these, such as *What Were They Like?* for Question 1 and *Love After Love* for Question 2, would have made particularly good choices. It is hoped that, as this specification becomes more familiar, candidates will range more widely across the selection of poems.

The responses of some candidates did appear to be hampered by a formulaic approach to comparison, which addressed aspects of the poems such as ideas, language and form in routine order but failed to address the question. Centres should be reminded that in English the comparison element of the questions relates to the cross reference aspect in the following Assessment Objective:

AO2 (iv) select material appropriate to their purpose, collate material from different sources, and make cross references.

It forms only one part of one objective and, although important, teachers should beware of giving it too much emphasis. Furthermore, centres should be aware that there is no preferred model of comparison. Some candidates are more comfortable with dealing with points of comparison and contrast from both poems simultaneously, whilst others prefer to write about one poem first and then to make points of comparison and contrast whilst writing about the second poem. It is possible to achieve full marks using either model.

There is a huge amount of information available on these poems, both in text books and on the internet, much of which offers helpful approaches and insights. Some of this material is, however, at best, misleading and, at worst, incorrect. Examiners reported an increase in 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.

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. Happily, many examiners reported evidence of excellent teaching which had sought to genuinely explore meaning, examine technique and develop personal response and interpretation. Where this was the case the responses of the candidates, across the range of ability, were a delight to read.

A simple, time-saving point that centres might like to clarify with candidates is that, where the title of a poem is lengthy, as in *Two Scavengers in a Truck, Two Beautiful People in a Mercedes* and *Presents from my Aunts in Pakistan*, it is wholly acceptable to abbreviate the title, for example to *Scavengers* and *Presents*.

Question 1

On the whole, this question was well answered with weaker candidates identifying the ways of contrast within the poem, and using supporting quotations, and more able candidates exploring the injustices in society and giving convincing and insightful interpretations of both the *gulf* and the *high seas*. The significance of irony was also often explored with good effect. There were, however, misconceptions, with some candidates asserting that the scavengers are actively stalking the vulnerable affluent of San Francisco and others seemingly unaware of the occupation of the scavengers.

Nothing's Changed, *Vultures* and *Island Man* were favourite, and perhaps obvious, choices for the second poem, though some candidates struggled to make use of *Limbo* and *Night of the Scorpion*. Overall, it was the ability to focus on what *use* was made of contrast that differentiated between the more and less able candidates.

Question 2

The best responses to this question focused effectively on the key concept of identity and the methodology of the poets. Less successful candidates tended to give detailed accounts of the poems, though again with occasional misconceptions. Almost the entire entry of one centre claimed that Agard was a man who was unsure of himself and his identity whilst other candidates asserted, rather bizarrely, that *Half-Caste* was a poem about being handicapped.

The favourite choices were *Unrelated Incidents*, *Presents from my Aunts in Pakistan*, and *Search For My Tongue*. The majority of candidates appeared to be completely comfortable with these poems and to have a strong understanding of notions of culture and identity. Many examiners noted the progress centres have made in dealing with these poems and commented on the extensive evidence of teaching that was both sensitive and thought provoking.

Section B Writing

Candidates did not appear to be disadvantaged by the reduction of time for writing. Many examiners commented that responses were more tightly focused, particularly where there was evidence of planning, and that conscious imposition of structure was more strongly in evidence. For the first time, two marks were awarded for writing, the first for *communication and organisation* and the second for *sentence structures, punctuation and spelling*. Whilst a new system of marking always presents initial teething problems, at the end of the marking period examiners reported widespread satisfaction with the new system, believing it to reflect candidates' achievements fairly.

Candidates were given a choice of four questions. The most popular choices were Questions 5 and 6 with a substantial minority choosing 4, whilst the least popular was Question 3. Some centres had clearly instructed candidates to opt for Question 5, with almost the entire entry writing to describe. It is not clear why centres would choose to do this and, whilst the candidates had obviously been taught to write descriptively, examiners felt that at least some of the candidates would have achieved more highly had they chosen a different question. It is probably best to assume that candidates write best when they are strongly engaged by the task and that flexibility in choice is to be encouraged.

Question 3

Whilst the least popular choice, this was often done very well. It demonstrated the ever-increasing popularity of school proms, with many students writing about a forthcoming rather than a recent event. As this was not a crucial element of the question, and as for many the end of school festivity was a significant event, no penalty was imposed. Interestingly, some candidates interpreted the word *event* in a manner different from how it was intended, and wrote of less formal occasions such as a fight in the playground or, more curiously, a robbery. The request to write an article for a website did not pose problems for the majority of candidates, who were clearly familiar with this type of writing. There were very few attempts to design a web page and even fewer attempts to write in 'text' language used by mobile phone users. Clearly, centres have heeded warnings about the need for Standard English and passed these on to candidates.

Question 4

This question gave candidates the opportunity to write in a more personal way. Inevitably, there were the tales of woe over England's footballing defeat, but more moving by far were the explanations of family upheavals and bereavements or, on a lighter note, the arrivals of siblings and the successes of operations. Examiners were reminded of the complexities and demands of candidates' lives and were impressed by their maturity and ability to deal with difficult situations.

Whilst most candidates chose to write about unhappy times, they often moved on to explain how situations changed and were resolved. This combination of unhappy and happy times was, almost always, deemed to be a natural consequence of the question and no penalty was imposed.

Question 5

This was considered to be the most popular choice and examiners were impressed by the originality and delightful and sustained crafting in the best responses. Some ingenious personae were adopted and candidates had clearly been taught a range of descriptive devices with many using these to good effect. Appropriate use of irony and humour was a noticeable feature of high level responses.

There was, however, at the lower end of this tier, evidence of formulaic writing with abundance of groups of three, similes and adjectival lists. Some candidates, as was evident in their initial 'plan', were clearly going through a checklist of features to include, the consequence of which was mundane and contrived writing.

Only a few candidates failed to describe the shopping centre when it was both open and closed. Where this did occur, they almost inevitably penalised themselves by limiting the opportunities to describe contrasts in atmosphere. No external penalty, however, was imposed.

Question 6

Examiners were generally delighted with the responses to this question. They felt that the opportunity to describe and explain was liberating for the candidates and that the responses were, on the whole, both interesting and engaging. Candidates clearly have wide experience of travel though it was often the local, seemingly ordinary area that drew the best responses. Occasionally, candidates resorted to chronological, narrative accounts of recent holidays but, overall, the writing was structured and, in the best responses, carefully crafted.

As stated in the introduction to this report, there was welcome evidence of an increase in planning and editing of writing. Examiners repeatedly report these as being major contributors to candidates successfully structuring their writing and demonstrating conscious choices in vocabulary and syntax. Centres that spend time on these areas should feel assured that their efforts are reflected in candidates' responses and they are rewarded with higher marks.

English Literature (3712)

English Literature Foundation Tier

General Comments

Examiners found that the fears which naturally accompany the introduction of a new specification were largely unfounded when it came to the execution of the final outcome, the examination itself. One examiner commented that it was ‘a fair and interesting examination in which most candidates took up the challenge seriously whatever their ability – a tribute to much of the teaching’. Indeed, many examiners were impressed with the general standard of responses, which were felt to be confident and interesting, on the whole – again a tribute to their preparation, as was the very low number of rubric infringements seen, despite the complexity of Section B, eliciting this comment: ‘candidates wrote about the right poems in the right number, which shows that the rubric was well understood by schools and pupils’. Of course examiners were keen not to penalise candidates for any misunderstanding which might not have been their fault. The vast majority of candidates appeared to have been entered for the correct tier.

Some candidates spent too long on the prose section, which is worth fewer marks than the poetry. Additionally, some centres had clearly advised candidates to attempt the Section B question first, and this was helpful to most candidates who did so. It was not helpful, though, for candidates to simply stop writing about the prose after 45 minutes whether they had finished or not. Clearly some candidates will be best served planning to write 45 minutes on the prose, whether they do it before the poetry section or not.

Most examiners commented that candidates’ ability to compare had clearly improved from the NEAB syllabus, particularly in Section B, but unfortunately some candidates seemed to forget that commenting on writers’ methods is also important. Making the correct choice of a second story in Section A Questions 1-3, or of additional poems in any Section B question which asked for choice, is an important issue for maximising marks. Some candidates might have gained more if they had thought for a little longer about their choices.

Section A: Post-1914 Prose

Most examiners felt that candidates had not suffered from the reduced time allocation; indeed, they seemed to produce more focused, direct responses with less repetition of ideas and details. Perhaps inevitably, there was a lack of variety in texts chosen. *Of Mice and Men* was by far the most popular text, while few responses were seen on *The Catcher in the Rye*, *I’m the King of the Castle* or *Green Days by the River*. The last text in particular might well be appropriate for Foundation candidates. Accordingly, the comments on individual questions below only refer to those texts on which comments from examiners have been received.

Anthology Prose

Comparison often seemed to be neglected here. It is one of the Assessment Objectives tested in Questions 1-3, and should be addressed. It seemed strange to read responses of candidates who had compared extremely well in writing about poems, but did not exhibit the skill when writing about short stories.

Question 1

A number of candidates seemed to misread ‘adults’ as ‘parents’, which was a significant handicap in writing about *Snowdrops*, as it prevented them from exploring the relationship between Miss Webster and the children.

Question 2

There were some excellent responses to this question from candidates who had got to grips with Hemingway’s prose. The question enabled them to do some close work on effects created. Some candidates struggled to find something to say about such effects, however.

Question 3

This question generally produced the best responses on the Anthology short stories. *Flight* was generally understood and dealt with well, many responses indicating clear engagement with the writer’s techniques. There were some ill-advised choices of second story here, however.

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

Candidates produced largely narrative responses to this question. Many told the story of Ralph and Jack, which amounted to a summary of the plot of the novel; others, however, found it a helpful vehicle for displaying appropriate knowledge.

Question 5

Perhaps surprisingly, this was the more popular and better answered question of the two. Almost all of the candidates seemed to have some awareness of the symbolism of the features they chose to write about, though ‘hunting’ was sometimes dealt with rather hazily.

Of Mice and Men: John Steinbeck

Once again, many candidates produced really engaged responses to the characters and the story. At the same time, a similarly familiar problem was present: candidates sometimes forget to write about writer’s methods, perhaps because they enjoy the text so much. Both questions afforded candidates the chance to retell the death of Curley’s wife, which they remembered very well, but in simply retelling they did not really gain many marks.

Question 6

Some candidates misread the question and wrote about a range of characters, then chose one to sympathise with. They were not penalised for this, of course, but inevitably answers were less focused, with less use of detail. Candidates who chose George or Crooks or Curley’s wife rather than Lennie often produced interesting responses which accessed the second prompt successfully.

Question 7

In answering this question some candidates forgot about the task until they reached the final bullet. In these responses prompts 1-3 tended to produce unfocused writing, often about loneliness, before the question was tackled through the fourth prompt. This in itself was often a retelling of Curley’s wife’s death, rather than a demonstration of the methods which Steinbeck uses to show Lennie’s death as unavoidable. In this sense the prompt was a discriminator between those candidates who could deal with the writer’s methods and those who could not.

A Kestrel for a Knave: Barry Hines

These questions were held by examiners to be very successful in eliciting engaged, knowledgeable responses.

Question 10

Many candidates seemed to enjoy the focus of this question, though there were some rather fanciful attributions of feelings and attitudes to the kestrel.

Question 11

This was generally well answered, with many candidates focusing well on ‘different ways’.

To Kill a Mockingbird: Harper Lee***Question 12***

Many candidates seemed to struggle to find appropriate material, and some produced character studies of Atticus, leaving the reader to decide which bits were relevant, rather than dealing with him as a parent.

Question 13

There were some really engaged responses here, with candidates ranging through the novel for material.

Heroes: Robert Cormier

Many candidates wrote very well about this text, though a good number seemed to neglect the writer, as with *Of Mice and Men*, and possibly for the same reason. Certainly, there was evident enthusiasm and engagement from candidates across a wide range of ability. Candidates answering Question 19 seemed to produce marginally better responses than those answering Question 18.

Section B: Pre-1914 and Post-1914 Poetry

As mentioned above, the poetry caused far fewer problems for candidates than might have been expected. There were few rubric infringements, and the inevitably lengthy wording of the questions did not seem to cause the candidates any problems, on the whole. The two part nature of some of the questions seemed to be helpful to most candidates, particularly in accessing comparison. Unless cross-reference between the two parts is required in the wording, two separate essays are perfectly appropriate. Comparison was generally improved from the previous syllabus, with comparatively few candidates either attempting some comparison at the end of the answer or ignoring it altogether. There was clear evidence of candidates employing a range of discourse markers appropriate for comparison. This is only a tool for comparison rather than attracting marks for its own sake, though it is a useful tool, at least when some comparing/contrasting is actually being done. It is important for candidates to select material for comparison, not simply to generalise.

There were many really engaged responses to the poems, and some interesting interpretations offered. Some of the interpretations were very difficult to justify from the poems, though, and many candidates writing about such poems as *Kid*, *Salome* and *Havisham* might have benefited from some familiarity with the contexts of the poems. There was a marked reduction in responses to poetry consisting of the listing of devices without support or relationship to meaning, though there were still some, particularly in response to Question 25. Perhaps the removal of annotation in next year’s examination will have an effect on this problem, which undoubtedly suppresses achievement.

Seamus Heaney and Gillian Clarke***Question 20***

This was the most popular question on this pair of poets. *Baby-sitting* worked very well where it was understood, though responses to Yeats were less successful. There were some sensitive responses to Jonson and Heaney in part (b).

Question 21

Some candidates seemed to struggle with the term ‘attitudes’, which seemed a little surprising given the assessment criteria.

Question 22

This question was the least popular of the three, and the least successfully answered, generally; perhaps the word ‘nature’ was a problem, though given the selection of poems it was difficult to see why.

Carol Ann Duffy and Simon Armitage***Question 23***

This was by far the most popular question on this pair of poets, and the most successful in eliciting engaged responses. Candidates across the ability range were able to write about feelings and effects, and *Salome* and *Education for Leisure* seemed to be actively relished by many candidates.

Question 24

Candidates often found telling comparisons between *Kid* and *Havisham* in part (a), in terms of style as well as situation and attitude, though as mentioned above some candidates would have benefited from some knowledge about the fictional characters – not for its own sake, but as a clarifier of understanding.

Question 25

This was a good choice for more able candidates, but many others fell into the problem outlined in the introduction to this section, producing lists of devices unsupported and unrelated to meaning or response. Assessment Objective 2 refers to writers’ choices of form, structure and language and how they contribute to meaning. Candidates therefore need to show how these elements are related. Some future questions will still focus on this skill, as it is an Assessment Objective.

English Literature Higher Tier

Preparation for the first examination of a new specification is always an anxious time for everyone involved and so it is very pleasing to report that candidates were very well prepared for this examination. A great deal was new. While the choice of a single prose text or short stories was continued from the previous specification, the requirements for the poetry section were very different. Of perhaps even more significance was the introduction of the weighting of the Assessment Objectives for the first time in that the two Objectives tested on the single prose texts (AO1 and AO2) were equally weighted as were the three tested on the short stories and the poetry (AO1, AO2 and AO3). Many had suspected that because comparison was thought to be a high level skill candidates may have struggled with the fact that comparison skills carried a third of the marks on the short stories and the poetry. However, the vast majority of candidates had developed their skills well in preparation for the examination. It was by no means the case that only the most able candidates were able to compare, indeed it was a striking feature of the examination that candidates throughout the range were able to show comparison skills. Many examiners reported, however, that candidates were much more confident about revealing their skills of comparison when writing about the poetry texts than they were when writing about the short stories. Some, in fact, were more capable in their response to AO3 than they were to AOs 1 and 2. It seemed to be the case that those candidates most likely to fulfil their potential made sure that they had spent more or less equal amounts of time preparing for each of the Assessment Objectives to be tested. Candidates who fared less well appeared to be much more confident and willing to write about character or theme than they were writing about style and writers' methods.

Given that the structure of the questions had to be much more complex in this specification than in the previous syllabus, there had been a great deal of anxiety that there would be large numbers of rubric infringements. This was not the case. In fact the percentage of candidates infringing the rubric was far smaller than it had been at the time of the introduction of the previous syllabus. Candidates knew what they would have to do and set about doing it.

This was the last year when candidates could bring into the examination room texts with marginal annotations. The prevalence of reiterated annotations was much lower this year and so candidates could, on the whole, convey their own responses to the texts rather than rely for a good part of their answer on pre-prepared material. This bodes well for next year when texts must be clear of annotation.

The reduction of time allowed for the answer on the prose text also proved to be beneficial. Far fewer candidates than in previous years spend their time reiterating the content of the texts and narrating the plot regardless of the question. In fact there were few candidates on the Higher tier who were unable to achieve some focus on the task.

Many centres wrote to say that their candidates did not know what 'futile' meant and that in their view they were therefore disadvantaged by the wording of Question 7. Although it was the case that some candidates did not know what the word meant, there was less of a problem than teachers had perceived. Examiners were instructed to accept whatever the candidates thought futile meant, which would be evident from their answer.

In Section A the passage-based questions were much less popular than the more standard kind of essay questions. Such passage based questions provided an excellent opportunity for candidates skilled in responding to AO2 to show their skills and there were many examples of outstanding close stylistic analysis in response to such questions.

The short stories (Questions 1, 2 and 3) were very popular, attracting candidates throughout the ability range, although they were more popular among those rather lower in the mark ranges. Although candidates generally wrote well on the individual texts it was in the requirement to compare and contrast that they tended to be less effective. Better candidates moved seamlessly between the texts, building their response around issues of language, character and meaning, where weaker ones tended to write about one text before moving on to the next with, at least, a cursory linking phrase between the paragraphs. There was, however, some very good discussion of the comparative use of symbolism in a number of stories, particularly where *Your Shoes*, *Flight* or *Chemistry* were used.

The most popular stories in the Anthology were *Flight*, *Your Shoes*, *Chemistry* and *Superman and Paula Brown's New Snowsuit*.

Some weaker candidates referred to the short stories as 'poems' and to their sections as 'stanzas' just as in poetry answers they referred to the poems as 'stories' and to their divisions as 'paragraphs'.

Section A: Post-1914 Prose

Anthology Prose

Question 1

Question 1 was the most popular of the three, candidates being well informed about the relationships in the stories but struggling with 'how does the writer present'. Responses to *Chemistry* usually concentrated entirely on the narrator-daughter relationships, rather than exploring the narrator's own relationship with her parents, which was a missed opportunity to develop a three-generational approach. In *Your Shoes* the actual shoes provided a focus for discussion, and several candidates explored the ending with the mother sitting and chewing the laces. This was seen as a reference to the ever-popular liquorice laces which youngsters love to eat and was seen in two ways: either that the mother had reverted to her own youth, echoing thoughts about her own mother, or that it was an imitation of the daughter recalling happier days, or perhaps suggesting that it was both. The metaphor of the chemical changes which grandad brought about in his studio in *Chemistry* was picked up by many and naturally led to discussion about changes within the family unit. The image of the boat sailing across a prescribed line and then later sinking was also central to many discussions. A range of comparisons was found by more able candidates in their discussion of the changing family structures in the stories and in their uses of imagery.

Question 2

Those who did know what was meant by the term 'settings' often struggled to link the settings in their two stories, concentrating on describing the settings rather than dealing with the how and the why. Candidates fared well linking setting to moods and attitudes, the sunny countryside of *Flight* yielding to a darker interior setting and the initially bright colours of *Paula Brown's New Snowsuit* yielding to the darker muted colours of maturity. Many candidates referred in various ways to the ideas in the stories about refuge and security. The grandad's orderly and secure dovecote was seen to represent his old fashioned, orderly room and the bedroom with its dreams and colours represented the security of childhood in the second story. Some candidates went on to address and compare the ideas of 'refuges': how the secure dovecote of *Flight* with its wire meshing might suggest grandad's resistance to change, such as his precious granddaughter's courtship. In *Paula Brown's New Snowsuit* the bedroom was often seen to represent the idealised and safe interior world of the narrator whereas in *Your Shoes* the bedroom was a refuge for the mother. However, in all three there was no security: the meshing of the dovecote was open; the bedroom carried images of the airport and subsequent ideas of carrying on; the bedroom in *Your Shoes* has a door, windows and a permanent reminder of the outside where the shoes themselves should have been or, metaphorically, were. The security, therefore, was seen to be illusory.

Question 3

There were some thoughtful responses in answers to Question 3 to the subtlety of Hemingway's story. Few decided to answer on *Snowdrops*, despite the fact that its deftly shaped ending would have provided an interesting contrast. The decaying town of *The End of Something* was widely used as a foreshadowing of a relationship in decay; the failure of the fish to bite was seen as a suggestion of Nick's resistance to Marjorie. Interestingly, many candidates pointed out that the suddenly-shelving beach with the deep dark water foreshadowed the depths which the characters would face in assessing their relationship, but also noted that it could be an image of the actual development of the story. Many explored the abrupt entrance of Bill in different ways. Some suggested a possibility of a gay relationship; others commented on his offhand manner and his calm eating of a sandwich as suggesting that he 'ate' and destroyed Nick's other relationship. Those who chose to compare with *Snowdrops* explored how the image of the snowdrops indicated that there was a divergence between the reader's and the child's perception of life, with the child being disappointed finally by the flowers and the reader realising that he had not yet learned about life and its disappointments in the way that characters from *Your Shoes* had.

Lord of the Flies: William Golding

Question 4

One significant discriminator in responses to Question 4 on *Lord of the Flies* was 'how typical'. Weaker candidates addressed the passage but not the rest of the text or addressed the rest of the text but not the passage. A second discriminator was the address of both bullets. The character of Simon was eagerly accepted, and many candidates used this as a starting point for exploring aspects of the novel as a whole. Another popular opening was discussion of the imagery relating to Simon. Interesting links were made between the 'fiery eyes' and the fire on the island or the fiery nature of the once-children now-savages. Others explored the surreal nature of the imagery and how it might suggest the uncertainty of the children on the island, and how they could not rationalise the findings of their senses: hence the distorted responses to the parachutist, the Lord of the Flies, and even in the mistaking of the children-as-beasts. The significance of the sea as barrier and sanctuary to the dead was often discussed, as were links with the death of Piggy and links to early descriptions of the island. There was some wonderfully perceptive work on the character and symbolic nature of Simon with his address to the Lord of the Flies seen as a vision of the island as an anti-Eden, a Hell on earth.

Question 5

The openness of Question 5 gave candidates the opportunity to draw on a very wide range of possible material. The key to success, though, lay in the extent to which they could link what they had to say to 'terrifying' and 'haunting'. Some took these words as synonyms; the more interesting answers distinguished between them. Candidates could immediately put themselves in the position of being children on the island terrifyingly facing the unknown, lost without adults, threatened, bullied and afraid of awful noises heard in the dark and at risk of being murdered themselves. The 'haunting' aspect was often very thoughtfully dealt with, looking frequently at what Jack and the aggressive characters damaged or lost. The intellectual clarity of Piggy, Ralph's brave honesty and Simon's mysticism were all assessed as being haunting in their beauty, only to be destroyed.

Of Mice and Men: John Steinbeck

Question 6

As in responses to Question 4 one discriminator in the task set for Question 6 on *Of Mice and Men* was the extent to which candidates could address 'typical' and the required movement from passage to whole text. Some dealt with aspects of plot development and the foreshadowing of Lennie's death and that of the dream. Others moved into the area of characterisation. Most looked closely at least at some detail and were aware of the pathos of the change in appearance of Curley's wife from the

‘tarty’ and maligned to the innocent, peaceful victim. There were excellent analyses of Steinbeck’s use of detail elsewhere. Some candidates commented on the bitch crossing the barn in alarm after picking up the ‘dead scent’ of Curley’s wife to care for her pups just as, several responses went on to say, George cared for Lennie in a motherly way to the point of his humane killing of him. Another noted the account of Crook’s room, with the detailed titles not meant for Lennie but for the reader to pay attention to. These titles opened up Crook’s character, Steinbeck’s concern for the failure of the American Dream and for great social inequalities.

Question 7

As noted earlier in this report, examiners accepted whatever candidates thought ‘futile’ meant in responses to Question 7. Some thought it meant ‘optimistic’, for example. All knew what they wanted to say about dreams, the Dream or even just Lennie and George’s dream. Range of comment was a factor in this answer; those who wrote only about George and Lennie did not do as well as those who thought more roundedly about dreams in the novel and discussed several: Curley’s, Curley’s wife’s and Crook’s, for example. It is always useful for candidates to make a list of the range of material which they could use as part (or all) of their plan before they begin to write. Candidates wrote about how the characters perceived their dreams, whether it was a spur or a comfort or led to cynicism as with Crook. Candidates often noted that Slim needed no dream. Robbie Burns was often quoted, used and sometimes explored with reference to the text’s content. Steinbeck’s presentation was less often in evidence, although many made reference to foreshadowing, the shooting of the dog, Lennie’s various accidents, Carlson and the ever-ready Luger. Many made the distinction between Curley’s wife’s dream which had already been shattered and that of George and Lennie which was not shattered until the end of the novel. The best candidates were able to take a step back from the characters, their dreams and situations and to think about the writer and his methods and purposes.

I’m the King of the Castle: Susan Hill

Question 9 encouraged and received considered responses from candidates prepared to acknowledge that the adults were worthy of some sympathy, though most decided that they should be condemned for their actions. Whilst candidates could forgive Hooper because he was a child, they deemed the adults to be much less worthy of forgiveness. Answers were especially successful when candidates distinguished between Mr Hooper and Mrs Kingshaw instead of lumping them together as inadequate parents. There were several convincing arguments in support of Mr Hooper.

I’m the King of the Castle was a minority text, chosen mainly by able candidates. Good answers to **Question 8** looked at the structure of the final three sections of the chapter and explored how details given about the four main characters matched earlier impressions of them. They looked, for example, at Mrs Kingshaw’s clothes, the description of how Hooper slept, contrasting his lack of remorse with Mr Hooper’s dreams and Kingshaw’s nightmares. They looked at the irony of Mrs Kingshaw’s comments on things beginning, linking Kingshaw’s choice of the stream in which to escape the places where he felt comfortable earlier in the novel. In response to AO2 candidates considered the writer’s technique (‘It started to rain’) and the reader’s response to Mrs Kingshaw’s actions when she comforted Hooper. The very able looked at the perspective of the narration and the effect of being allowed into Hooper’s mind to see his triumph, consolidating the reader’s impression of him. Hill’s use of the pathetic fallacy and use of settings figured strongly as did Hill’s use of flashbacks. The symbolic significance of Kingshaw folding his clothes neatly and the ambiguity of the reasons for Hooper clasped to Mrs Kingshaw’s bosom, indicating either victory or fear, was linked to his having called for his mummy in Hang Wood.

Question 9 saw Mrs Kingshaw, as a woman, blamed almost unreservedly. Candidates saw Hill’s purpose as to present her in such a way that the reader disliked her. Candidates were not all convinced that she was ignorant of Kingshaw’s situation. The only, often very grudging, sympathy

was for her as a single parent. Mr Hooper commanded far more sympathy, but he was often seen as lacking in confidence, unable to relate to people, including his own father, and for this reason Hooper was seen as knowing no better. Many candidates saw the novel's adults as typical cases of the upper/middle classes not wanting to know. The most able candidates explored the writer's purposes, mannerisms, presentation of actions and dialogue, noting, for example, the progressive strained formal language in the communication between Mrs Kingshaw and her son.

A Kestrel for a Knave: Barry Hines

Examiners, as in previous years, were delighted at the high level of engagement and response to *A Kestrel for a Knave*. **Question 10** was the most popular choice. Candidates always empathised with Billy, discussing his disadvantages at home, unloved and uncared for, his life at school, generally mocked and bullied, a representative of the have-nots in life as opposed to the more comfortable Fir Tree Estate dwellers. Kes was seen by all as playmate, soul mate, source of love and intellectual enlightenment, a spur to self knowledge and self-worth. Stronger candidates engaged with the task through the frame of authorial purposes and devices, looking at the centrality of the kestrel as a structural force in the novel, with its patterning of episodes, tones and emotional range.

There were many interesting and thoughtful comments in response to **Question 11** on authorial methods and purposes, especially when Hines' 'snapshot' technique was seen as a parallel to the original cinematic experience of the environment. There was some fine work on light/dark colouring and varieties of textual toning. The responses to the ending and feelings generated were often sincere and moving, often related to candidates' own experience.

To Kill a Mockingbird: Harper Lee

Question 12

Question 12 was the most popular of the two tasks on *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Candidates could easily empathise with Atticus, a good man with high morals and a decent caring parent. At a straightforward level candidates offered a list of his actions related to the children which established his credentials as a parent. Working within the frame of authorial purposes, good candidates explored viewpoints: there were considerations of Scout as narrator; Lee's use of other people's perspectives to establish Atticus's good parenting, characters such as Calpurnia, Aunt Alexandra, Mrs Dubose, Miss Maudie, Bob Ewell and several others. The symbolism of the novel was often considered in relation to Atticus's central moral teachings. Many candidates convincingly demonstrated that the proof of Atticus's good parenting lay in what Scout and Jem actually did, such as desist from fighting because they remembered what their father had said, and for example, defuse the explosive situation outside the jailhouse by talking to Mr Cunningham about something which would interest him. Many drew attention to the fact that before the killing of Tim Johnson the children perceived Atticus as useless but quickly learned otherwise and so were prompted to see aspects of people they might otherwise not have noticed. Some candidates found the portrayal of Atticus as a parent to be unrealistic and sentimentalised. A few commented on Atticus's shortcomings when Harper Lee presents him as failing to protect the children as much as he could have done.

Question 13

About thirty per cent of candidates answering on *To Kill a Mockingbird* chose to write on Question 13. The opportunity was eagerly grasped by those candidates who were confident about analysing Harper Lee's style and there were some outstanding close analyses of her techniques of creating drama. The weakest candidates could not get beyond asserting that the two chosen passages were dramatic, then proceeding to give an account of the content of the scenes. Most, though, could point to some techniques, many commenting on sentence length, syntax, language, verbal patterning, uses of the senses. A very large number chose to write about the attack by Bob Ewell and could easily see that because the novel is told through Scout's eyes and because she could not see out of her costume,

tension and drama were created by means of the sounds she heard. This scene, followed by the killing of Tim Johnson and the courtroom, were the most popular choices of episode.

The Catcher in the Rye: J D Salinger

Question 14

The Catcher in the Rye was a welcome newcomer text to this specification. Although Question 14 was the minority choice there were some very skilful, thoughtful and well informed answers which not only made a range of links between the ending and the rest of the novel in terms of character, plot and events, but looked closely at Salinger's writing techniques. The nature of Salinger's presentation of Holden was, for more able candidates, the key to whether they thought the last section of the novel formed an appropriate ending to the novel. Some did; some didn't. Some argued that Holden had been deluding himself throughout the novel and was still doing so in this extract; others argued that his responses to the psychiatrist indicated a major change. When supported by movement between the ending and the rest of the novel, both these approaches were thoughtful and, often, convincing. Some argued that Holden had actually changed because of his interactions with Phoebe and discussed the extent to which Holden could be seen to want to change society rather than run away from it. Holden's dreams were seen by many to melt after his realisation that he could not drift with Sally Hays or find comfort with the prostitute; many perceived a note of melancholy in this passage as Holden realised the solidness of a reality he needed to come to terms with. There was some excellent close analysis of the passage matched, by the most able candidates, by a range of appropriate links with elsewhere in the novel.

Question 15

Question 15 was the more popular choice. Most grasped that they could write about a range of young people. Although a few treated young and older people rather indiscriminately, a few wrote only about young people much younger than Holden himself, and a few omitted to mention Phoebe at all. Most considered that Holden's relationships foundered because he found adults 'phoney'. They often went on to discuss the unsatisfactory nature of his relationships with Stradlater, Ackley, Jane, Cally and the prostitute, several times contrasting these with his thoughts about Allie and Phoebe. Able candidates often explored Holden's (perhaps ironic) ideas of iconic innocence, a memory set from childhood when Allie was alive and in which Phoebe was central and Jane significant. Holden's state of mind and the ways it is presented by Salinger, his self delusion, or hypocrisy, or innocence or disturbance, was central to successful discussions of the topic.

Green Days by the River: Michael Anthony

Green Days by the River was such a minority choice that no senior examiner reported having seen work on it.

Heroes: Robert Cormier

Question 18

Heroes was the most popular of the 'new' texts to this specification. Candidates readily engaged with the realism of the plot, the suspense as truth unfolds and the interesting development of character. At higher levels candidates engaged in their responses to Question 18 with the speculative nature of the ideas in the novel: what is heroism? What are the stereotypical views of it? Do these ideas hold water? Would the reader be capable of true heroism if the time came? Candidates added that Francis was made insignificant, often not like a hero. On the other hand Larry was all that heroic stereotypes are until the turning point in the novel. Some candidates considered that Francis, Larry and Nicole all turned out to be heroic, although in different ways. They showed that Francis carried on, despite having lost the two loves of his life; that Larry confessed to what he had done, thus preventing Francis

from committing murder, showing mercy and compassion; that Nicole showed heroic characteristics in her survival. Many concluded that being scared did not prevent one from being heroic.

Question 19

Question 19 elicited similarly engaged and thoughtful responses. Candidates considered the love interest in the novel and what happened to Nicole and the crashing of Francis's ideals as he witnessed (or at least heard) what Larry was doing. The tension of the war scenes and the grenade, and the shocking ending as Francis headed for an exit were all considered effectively. The best answers came from those who could look closely at style and analyse the methods used to make the chosen events dramatic. Irony and symbolism were often well explored.

Section B: Pre-1914 and Post-1914 Poetry

Seamus Heaney and Gillian Clarke

Many candidates appeared to have ranged widely over the poetry in the Anthology. Several examiners reported that during the course of their marking the large packet of scripts they had seen responses to all, or almost all the pre-1914 poems and to all the poems of Duffy and Armitage or Clarke and Heaney. It appeared, therefore, to be the case that the questions had achieved their aim of allowing candidates to write about whatever poems they felt comfortable with and to be relevant to the particular question they chose. There were some surprising choices of poems for particular questions, but candidates had on the whole thought carefully about how their poems fitted the task and achieved an appropriate angle.

Question 20

Question 20 was very popular, and there was a wider range of response to 'danger' ranging from the literal to the conceptually much more abstract. There was danger in nature, in war, in relationships, as a healthy and proper fact of the beauty of God's creation, in childbirth and in many other aspects of life. Some candidates preferred to compare in terms of similarity in subject matter and ideas, others in terms of difference, most by both. *Storm on the Island* and *Patrolling Barnegat* led to a lot of detailed comparative comment and analysis on the nature of similarities and differences in the two poems, particularly with regard to AO2. *The Field-Mouse* was a popular choice and rich in possibilities for the analysis of metaphor and symbolism.

Question 21

Attitudes in response to Question 21 were carefully unpicked, candidates often taking the naming of *Digging* to look at other child-parent attitudes. *My Last Duchess* was also a popular choice here.

The theme of relationships between parents and children was also a popular choice. **Question 22** enabled most candidates to find some initial similarities between *The Affliction of Margaret* and *On my first Sonne* before going on to examine differences particularly in terms of the poets' attitudes and techniques of presentation. Many candidates found the feelings to be exaggerated and obsessive in *The Affliction of Margaret*, yet under-statedly heartfelt in *On my first Sonne*. There were some very interesting and thoughtful responses to Blake in (b) and much close examination of the ways Clarke presented the relationship between parents and children in a complex way in *Cold Knap Lake*.

Carol Ann Duffy and Simon Armitage

Question 23

Examiners were struck by the sophistication of the analysis of metaphor in *Mother, any distance greater than a single span* in response to Question 23. There was a wide diversity of interpretations ranging from some very detailed analyses of the metaphor of the measuring tape as a visual

presentation of the relationship. The contrast between Armitage's presentation of very closely linked images and metaphors and Duffy's wide-ranging series of vignettes was observed by many to be a significant difference in the ways the relationships were presented in the two poems in (a). The rather obsessive love in *My Last Duchess* and *The Laboratory* formed in interesting pairs for many answers to (b), but *The Affliction of Margaret* and *On my first Sonne* were also popular choices. Some struggled to find very precise points of similarity and differences with their other chosen poems when they wrote about the *Clare Sonnet*, but there were some sophisticated comparative analyses of the *Clare Sonnet* and *Inversnaid* as presentations of the love of nature.

Question 24

The phrase 'the ways the poets use the first person to create a voice' proved a difficulty to less confident candidates who just wanted to write about the character and attitudes of the speakers in response to Question 24. It was, therefore, the idea of the poets 'creating' a voice that proved to be a significant discriminator in responses to this question. On the other hand, very large numbers of candidates had responded very strongly to *Education for Leisure* and to *Hitcher* in particular and were able to convey a range of similarities and differences in these poems with regard to character, attitudes and situations. The weaker candidates, clearly caught in the anti-social behaviour of the speakers, found it difficult to see that the speakers had been created by the use of particular techniques. Responses to the two Browning poems were strong here, as were quite different kinds of answers to the second part of the question which focused on *On my first Sonne* and Tichborne's *Elegy*.

Question 25

Question 25 enabled candidates to choose from a very wide selection of poems in the Anthology, and they did. They enjoyed writing about hatred, murder, obsession and intimidation, but some, taking the cue perhaps from the mentioning of *On my first Sonne* dealt with more tender emotions. There were some striking and powerful analyses of *Inversnaid* and *Homecoming*. The key perhaps lay in the extent to which they could encapsulate the nature of the strong emotion in particular poems and could point to the techniques the writers were using to convey them.

Coursework

The moderation of coursework in this first year of a new specification has been very successful. Moderators have reported that the vast majority of centres have absorbed the changes from the previous syllabus with considerable and admirable professionalism. Although there has been a great deal of continuity from the requirements of the previous syllabus, centres have had to cope with changes to the study of prose, response to media and the assessment of writing – the latter having been introduced after the start of the specification two years ago. Moderators have reported that standards have been at least maintained, with some evidence that in some areas the standard of work is being raised through improved task-setting.

In the vast majority of cases, moderators were able to confirm the judgements of centres: the important processes at the heart of Specification A – the use of Standardisation materials and an Autumn Meeting – continue to produce confidence in the business of assessing candidates' work. It is recognised that it is becoming ever more difficult for centres to release staff to attend these meetings, but their importance cannot be over-emphasised. The importance of English and English Literature results to many schools is obvious, and the autumn meetings serve the purposes of establishing and re-visiting assessment standards, providing training in aspects of En1 and good task-setting, as well as providing an opportunity for sharing good practice.

Where moderators find problems there are invariably staffing difficulties: many English departments are working in very difficult circumstances. One feature of the new specification – the allocation of 'Coursework Advisers' – has not been used as much in some circumstances as should be the case: problems discovered by Moderators would have been dealt with at a very early stage had some centres approached their Coursework Adviser for advice about the nature of some assignments.

There were some problems this year in cases where centres had over-relied on extensive scaffolding: this can militate against candidates being able to demonstrate fully what they know, understand and can do. The plethora of Internet sites which candidates can use has also caused some difficulties. It must be the responsibility of the centre to investigate cases of plagiarism and where students have 'lifted' work inappropriately from the Internet it is usually quite easy to find the proof. Moderators have come across instances of work being submitted with teacher annotation stating that the centre does not believe the work to be the candidates' own: if that is the belief of the centre then the work should not be submitted. Such cases are dealt with by the moderation process and the consequences for candidates submitting such coursework are serious.

In the best centres, good task-setting is at the heart of a successful approach to the Specification and there is growing evidence that task-setting is becoming better in response to issues raised in training materials, these Reports and the Autumn Standardisation meetings.

There has been quite a lot of focus in recent years on setting good tasks in response to drama texts. The main issue has been how to approach drama texts in ways that recognise the special nature of drama. At one extreme, there were tasks which encouraged candidates to focus on drama texts as though they were like novels – candidates would write about characters as though they were real people – and at the other extreme there were assignments which invited candidates to write about performance with barely any reference to a written text. Sometimes candidates are invited to write about some kind of pseudo-performance: the oddest assignment found this year was one in which the candidates were invited to write directions for the actress playing Eva Smith. However, moderators are finding fewer and fewer of these kinds of assignments. There are still some problems with the use of film – something that was reported last year. In some centres candidates are only writing about Shakespeare's text tangentially; the main focus of their writing is a media text. Commonly this occurs when candidates are invited to compare the Lührman and Zeffirelli versions of *Romeo and Juliet*. It is

worth re-iterating that the text – the written text – must be at the heart of the candidate’s response. References to a performance such as one of the film texts should serve the purpose of illustrating an interpretation of the written text.

Sometimes candidates are invited, unhelpfully, to assume an expertise they cannot possibly have. This most commonly occurs when centres are devising tasks to help candidates meet assessment criteria about the historical context or the literary tradition. Candidates often make sweeping and inaccurate comments about, for example, the place of women in Victorian society or the role of the detective in crime fiction. If candidates’ knowledge of the stories of Arthur Conan Doyle is restricted to the five or six stories they have read, it serves no purpose for them to pretend wider, sweeping knowledge of all the stories or detective fiction in general. Far better for candidates to respond to, for example, the view of women presented in the stories they have read than to make sweeping assertions based on something they have heard in the classroom. As has been stated before in these reports, the best responses refer sparingly to appropriate contexts. Many centres devised assignments in response, for example, to Dickens in which candidates explored aspects of social conditions in Victorian England by close examination of sections of *Hard Times* or *Great Expectations*. In the best centres, candidates responding to *Romeo and Juliet* used their understanding of tragedy to explore the dramatic significance of a scene from the play; this proved to be a better approach than one in which candidates wrote an introductory side or more about the origins of Tragedy before going on to write about *Romeo and Juliet* without relating anything to this introduction.

Some moderators have found too many instances of assignments which invite candidates to assess the responsibility of various characters for various things. At its worst this can lead to three En2/Lit assignments along the following lines: ‘Who or what is responsible for the deaths of Romeo and Juliet?’; ‘Who or what is to blame for Lennie’s death in *Of Mice and Men*?’; ‘Who is most responsible for Eva Smith’s death in *An Inspector Calls*?’ Such assignments do little to facilitate engagement with assessment criteria about a writer’s use of language or structure.

The quality of annotation varies greatly from centre to centre. There are two extremes: at one end of the spectrum there is virtually no annotation, rather there is a brief comment such as ‘Good’ at the end of a piece of coursework; at the other extreme there are marginal comments on line after line, many of which seem to be fairly indiscriminate. Some annotation is not very helpful: where a candidate makes some reference to a historical fact – such as, for example, where Charles Dickens was born – it serves little purpose to write ‘historical context’ in the margin. Sometimes candidates write unhelpfully about the historical context. However, where a candidate *integrates* a comment about the historical context – it might be to support a point about the weird sisters in *Macbeth*, or a point about the serialisation of texts in Dickens’s time, then the annotation ‘historical context’ is appropriate and helpful. In many, probably most centres, there is a great deal of formative assessment as teachers talk to candidates about their drafts; there may be little left to say to the candidate when it comes to the final draft. Annotation of a final draft, it could be argued, has the Moderator as the more significant audience. When checking the work in the sample before sending it to the Moderator, centres would be advised to consider the annotation of the work. It should help make clear why the candidate’s work has been assessed at the mark awarded.

In most centres, the administration of the moderation process is exemplary, leaving the Moderator free to concentrate immediately on the standards of candidates’ work. There were some concerns that the mathematical demands placed on English teachers by the new Candidate Record Forms and the many boxes for marks might prove to be a source of problems. Of course there were some problems – with well in excess of 400,000 candidates that is no surprise – but most centres managed the process extremely well.

En1

As part of the new specifications, Speaking and Listening saw two significant changes from previous practice. The first of these was the requirement that candidates produce work within three specified contexts: individual extended, group interaction and drama-focused. The second significant change involved aspects of the monitoring of centres' assessment for En1: a three year rolling programme of centre advisory visits was introduced, with a more rigorous agenda for such visits. In both cases these changes have been quickly integrated into English Coursework, and although there are still some areas for further development, it is pleasing to note how well this component has operated in 2004.

The Three Contexts

The requirement for candidates to perform within three contexts is designed to introduce variety into the curriculum and to stress the fact that effective speaking and listening has a number of different features. Where the best practice was observed, En1 was integrated into full schemes of work, and was taught in much the same way as reading and writing skills were taught. Where practice was less effective, advisers reported that candidates were expected to perform complex spoken tasks without any apparent preparation.

Advisers saw some very impressive work within the *Individual Extended* component. Although there is considerable flexibility around what constitutes an extended performance, and what the content/context for such a performance can be, many centres (echoing the exemplar material shown on recent tapes) chose to show Advisers candidates who were giving fully-fledged talks to the whole group. Some of these were outstanding, with just the right balance between preparation and spontaneity; even weaker candidates managed to sustain a reasonable level of performance over a couple of minutes. Many candidates were helped by being asked questions which encouraged them to develop their ideas and to extend the range of their vocabulary.

Group Interaction is the context with which teachers are most familiar, and group work is at the centre of much English teaching. It is worth stressing that this context requires *interaction*, a combination of both speaking and listening, where candidates genuinely engage in explorative talk. There are times, though, when work within this context is in danger of becoming more performance based than explorative. This is understandable; candidates who are being assessed by an outsider, whether via a tape or via a visit, are in one sense performing for outsiders. In everyday classroom situations, though, it is worth teaching students how collaborative talk really works, and how the different functions of group members are best delivered.

Drama-focused activities were, for some centres, a new concept, and so the cause for some concern. As it turned out, most centres coped well and candidates clearly enjoyed the opportunities to perform in role. Being in role and then being assessed against English criteria, is not easy, though, and certainly needs preparation. Many centres chose to use literature as a stimulus for these activities, with candidates being asked to assume the role of a character from a novel, play etc. This can work well, although a performance in role of a minor character might not be the best way to allow an able candidate to show all the requisite skills. It is also worth stressing that students need help with performing in role – just because they have studied the text does not necessarily mean they can 'become' the character. Some of the best performances in role involved candidates creating their own personas, based upon their observations of social situations that they are familiar with. It is hoped that future teachers' meetings will discuss successful activities and share good practices.

Advisory Visits/moderation

Advisory visits are usually made as part of a three yearly cycle but they can also be triggered by concerns over the implementation of En1 in a centre. Advisory visits serve two main functions – to advise centres on all aspects of En1 and to report to AQA on assessment and standardisation. In addition to advisory visits, which normally take place between October to March, moderation visits are made to some centres in April/May. Moderation visits can lead to adjustments to marks in the same way that written coursework marks can be adjusted.

Most of the visits completed this year were positive in atmosphere and showed practice in centres which ranged from the acceptable to the excellent. In the latter category were centres who have placed speaking and listening at the heart of their schemes of work, so that candidates are confident in being assessed and subtle in their skills. Advisers were aware that in a number of centres staffing turnover made the management of En1 quite difficult – but again centres were generally able to maintain acceptable procedures.

Many good examples of record keeping were seen across a range of centres. The best ongoing records showed precise assessment of each task (including the award of a mark) and some brief description of the performance that would eventually be used to help formulate the final summative commentary. Fortunately, very few centres are still commenting on social behaviour rather than En1 skills. In many centres the candidates themselves were given access to the ongoing assessment, which makes sense if they are going to develop the quality of their work.

Summative comments for each candidate form part of the final coursework submission for En1, En2, En3. These summative comments should show how a final mark is arrived at by relating the general criteria to the specific tasks that form the final submission – merely copying out the criteria is not very helpful.

Standardisation

The standardisation of En1 across teaching groups in centres clearly requires different procedures from those which operate with the written coursework elements. Ideally, there will be some opportunities for teachers to visit each other in classrooms – and where this facility is limited, priority can often be given to teachers who are new to the centre.

There are though other methods of internal standardisation. These include:

- team meetings which consider aspects of En1 by using training tapes
- the regular swapping of written records
- teachers working in pairs with some common activities
- special attention given to NQTs
- use of out of class speaking opportunities, such as assemblies, for standardisation
- regular slots for En1 at department meetings
- production by centres of their own videotapes
- informal links with other centres.

One final piece of standardisation is, somewhat surprisingly, overlooked in some centres. This involves ensuring that all folders sent to the Moderator as a coursework sample have En1 records which are completed with the same degree of accuracy and detail. One teacher taking overall responsibility for checking these records is an obvious way to ensure that there is reasonable uniformity across the centre.

Conclusion

The general impression from the large number of visits made to centres was that En1 is taken seriously in most centres and that its marking and moderation is seen as an important part of the GCSE process. Many candidates seemed to enjoy the opportunities offered by speaking and listening, and there were examples of interesting work spread across all ability levels. This general level of success does not come easily in terms of time, though, so the Principal Moderator and the rest of the team are very grateful to teachers for all their hard work in this area.

En2/3 (Reading/Writing) and Literature

Shakespeare

There was evidence of a widening range of texts and Moderators have reported some very successful work in response to *Othello*, *The Tempest*, *Hamlet*, *King Lear* and *The Taming of the Shrew* as well as the more familiar *Romeo and Juliet*, *Macbeth* and *The Merchant of Venice*. Whilst there may be no particular merit in studying one play rather than another, Moderators feel that in some centres the challenge of a new text leads to a refreshed departmental look at assignment-setting. In response to training materials many centres have now adopted approaches which invite candidates to write a lot about a little rather than try to write huge assignments about the entire play. Such approaches work because they encourage candidates to engage with detailed features of language and structure.

One assignment which was impressive asked candidates to explore the letter as a dramatic device in three plays. Candidates needed to approach three texts with a fairly light touch but were then able to focus on one small but significant feature. It proved to be a very successful assignment.

There is still evidence of the approach to Shakespeare which invites candidates to produce director's notes in a fairly superficial way. Some candidates expend much energy on explaining why Tom Cruise would make an excellent Banquo or why Lady Mabeth should wear a black dress or why 'sad' music should be played at the end of *Romeo and Juliet*. Such responses do not help candidates address assessment criteria and disadvantage the weaker candidates at whom such assignments are often aimed.

Prose Study

The move away from Wide Reading has, unsurprisingly, led to an improvement in responses to prose texts. Moderators have reported remarkably assured writing in response to substantial and demanding texts. Dickens is the most widely used author, with *Great Expectations* and *A Christmas Carol* probably the most popular texts, but there was also extensive use of *Jane Eyre* and *Pride and Prejudice*. Some excellent work was seen in response to *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. Where short stories were used the best responses tended to be genre based or focused on stories of the same writer, but, as a generalisation, candidates seem to write better in response to one text than they do when they are trying to pull three or more short stories together. Responses to Dickens' novels tended to engage candidates better than, for example, *The Signalman*.

As was the case with Shakespeare, some centres took the opportunity to create tasks which enabled candidates to follow a strand through more than one substantial text.

Media

The change in the assessment of this component from En2/3 combined to En3 on its own has, generally speaking, produced better results with much less ‘analysis by listing’ approaches to things like newspaper front pages or print advertisements. Moderators reported that many centres were producing excellent writing in response to moving image with the caveat that some approaches were still more focused on En2 than En3. Frame by frame dissection of, for example, the shower scene in *Psycho* tended to produce overlong writing with little sense of crafting. Problems arise when candidates are given tasks which lead to over-long responses. The study of the 1980s Levi jeans campaign is still in evidence and may still be an entirely legitimate case study, but a response which covers every aspect of all the advertisements is unlikely to lead to a clear focus on the En3 assessment criteria. Similarly, there is little merit in inviting candidates to write about two trailers rather than one unless there is a genuine context for comparison. Writing about two simply lengthens the response and often leads to repetition.

Whilst the most enthusiastic responses tended to be in response to moving image, some particularly interesting work was seen from one centre in which candidates were invited to explore the view of women in society which could be inferred from the cover of a glossy magazine for women. It produced engaged, punchy and concise writing. Some excellent work was also seen in response to: ‘Does the American cartoon series ‘The Simpsons’ contravene BBC guidelines for children’s television?’

Original Writing

Moderators felt there was an improvement in this element of coursework with more narrative writing and better crafted writing. Some Moderators felt that the new Writing Mark Schemes helped centres to focus on the crafting of writing. Autobiographical writing was considered to be especially good when the task was set up in such a way as to preclude a simple chronological approach. There is no doubt that crafting is important in Original Writing and tasks need to be focused and concise to allow candidates to concentrate on text and sentence structure. Some centres made life difficult for Moderators by including portfolios of Original Writing – an autobiography, a story and some poetry. Such approaches are unhelpful and should be avoided.

Post 1914 Drama

There is still a fairly small range of texts used. Moderators came across examples of centres successfully using texts by Brecht and Pinter, but most centres select from Priestley, Willy Russell and Arthur Miller. As was reported last year, there is often a hierarchy of texts with lower-ability candidates being given *Our Day Out* or *Blood Brothers* whilst higher-ability candidates use texts like *The Crucible*. Sometimes – it depends on the nature of the tasks – this works to the disadvantage of the lower-ability students. Moderators found some very poor tasks in response to *Our Day Out*. Generally speaking it is fairly uncommon to find well thought out responses to a text that was originally written for television. It is reassuring, however, to note that tasks set in response to the widely used *An Inspector Calls* are becoming more focused on significant assessment criteria although, as has been noted elsewhere in this report, tasks inviting candidates to explore who is most responsible for the death of Eva Smith need re-thinking.

Administration

There is a huge candidature for these Specifications: more than 400,000 candidates in the case of English on its own. Errors in administration are proportionately small but, nevertheless, make the moderation process sometimes more difficult than necessary.

Perhaps the most frustrating aspect of the process for Moderators was the failure of some centres to asterisk candidates whose folders were incomplete. This meant that Moderators called for inappropriate samples and needed to contact the centre again.

Some centres used out-of-date Candidate Record Forms so that the Moderator was unable to determine how the En3 Assessment Objectives had been met.

In some centres the marks on Candidate Record Forms were different from the marks written on the centre mark sheet, leaving the Moderator unclear as to which was the centre's mark.

Some centres provide their Moderator with a rank order – something which is of considerable help to the Moderator when s/he is selecting a sample. If a rank order exists in a centre it would be greatly appreciated if a copy could be sent with other paperwork to the Moderator.

Mark Ranges 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	68.4	21.5
Paper 2	54	162	70.8	19.4
En1 Speaking and Listening	54	108	56.6	14.6
En2/3 Reading and Writing	108	108	50.0	15.2
Foundation tier overall 3702	--	540	245.7	57.8

		Max. mark	C	D	E	F	G
Paper 1 3702/1F boundary mark	raw	54	30	24	18	12	6
	scaled	162	90	72	54	36	18
Paper 2 3702/2F boundary mark	raw	54	30	25	20	15	10
	scaled	162	90	75	60	45	30
Foundation tier scaled boundary mark		540	289	236	184	132	80

Higher tier

Component	Maximum Mark (Raw)	Maximum Mark (Scaled)	Mean Mark (Scaled)	Standard Deviation (Scaled)
Paper 1	54	162	102.1	20.4
Paper 2	54	162	113.1	19.4
En1 Speaking and Listening	54	108	79.4	11.7
En2/3 Reading and Writing	108	108	76.7	12.8
Higher tier overall 3702	--	540	371.4	52.0

		Max. mark	A*	A	B	C	D	allowed E
Paper 1H 3702/1H boundary mark	raw	54	45	40	35	30	22	-
	scaled	162	135	120	105	90	66	-
Paper 2H 3702/2H boundary mark	raw	54	46	41	36	31	24	-
	scaled	162	138	123	108	93	72	-
Higher tier scaled boundary mark		540	450	402	354	306	237	202

Provisional statistics for the award

Foundation tier (202722 candidates)

	C	D	E	F	G
Cumulative %	23.9	57.3	80.0	92.0	97.2

Higher tier (224591 candidates)

	A*	A	B	C	D	allowed E
Cumulative %	7.5	28.3	62.7	90.6	99.0	99.5

Overall (427600 candidates)

	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Cumulative %	3.9	14.9	32.9	58.9	79.2	90.2	95.9	98.4

English Literature (3712)

Foundation tier

Component	Maximum Mark (Raw)	Maximum Mark (Scaled)	Mean Mark (Scaled)	Standard Deviation (Scaled)
Examination	66	140	57.3	16.8
Coursework	57	60	28.2	8.6
Foundation tier overall 3712	--	200	85.4	22.4

		Max. mark	C	D	E	F	G
3712/F boundary mark	raw	66	33	27	22	17	12
	scaled	140	70	57	47	36	25

Higher tier

Component	Maximum Mark (Raw)	Maximum Mark (Scaled)	Mean Mark (Scaled)	Standard Deviation (Scaled)
Examination	66	140	89.6	17.3
Coursework	57	60	42.6	7.5
Higher tier overall code	--	200	132.1	22.2

		Max. mark	A*	A	B	C	D	allowed E
3712/H boundary mark	raw	66	54	47	40	33	26	-
	scaled	140	115	100	85	70	55	-

Provisional statistics for the award

Foundation tier (154823 candidates)

	C	D	E	F	G
Cumulative %	24.6	54.1	76.8	89.6	95.6

Higher tier (217201 candidates)

	A*	A	B	C	D	allowed E
Cumulative %	6.4	28.1	64.7	91.4	98.1	99.0

Overall (371925 candidates)

	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Cumulative %	3.7	16.4	37.8	63.6	79.8	89.8	95.1	97.6

Definitions

Boundary Mark: the minimum (scaled) mark required by a candidate to qualify for a given grade. Although component grade boundaries are provided, these are advisory. Candidates' final grades depend only on their total marks for the subject.

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 candidates lie in a 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).