

GCE 2001
June Series



Report on the Examination

English Literature
Specification A

■ Advanced Subsidiary

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Publications Department, Aldon House, 39, Heald Grove, Rusholme, Manchester, M14 4NA
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Kathleen Tattersall, Director General

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English Literature

Specification A

General

Introduction

There were some real achievements by both candidates and teachers during the 2001 examinations. Certainly, cautions were sounded in the report on the January examinations (and this report needs to be read in conjunction with the January report for a full picture) about entering candidates too early for an examination which is intended to assess achievement at the end of one year of study; and, indeed, we marked a good deal of work in January that seemed to be the result of candidates having some knowledge of text but insufficient grounding in examination technique. Hence, the January report highlighted particular areas for improvement:

- the quality of the writing
- the structuring of argument
- answering the specific terms of the question.

These recommendations were based on a January entry of:

LTA1	-	5066
LA2C	-	390
LA2W	-	271
LTA3	-	56

The June examination series had an entry of:

LTA1	-	23236
LA2C	-	19978
LA2W	-	5308
LTA3	-	25500

The June examinations provided us with a pattern of very solid achievement, and there is much to praise.

Successful candidates:

The work at the very top was as good as the best work in the outgoing A level examination: it was engaged and original, setting out an enthusiastic and informed personal response to the text. There is clear evidence that teachers and candidates have worked hard to develop an increasing awareness of the writer at work and that candidates are learning to write about texts and characters as constructs.

Less successful candidates:

Those candidates who were not so successful clearly need more effective examination technique as well as better knowledge of their texts. Their work was often lacking in focus, overlong, repetitious, poorly expressed and based on skimpy knowledge of text.

Support for teachers

This is the first year of a new examination with a new standard and new Assessment Objectives. It is clear that teachers have gained insights and confidence from a number of support structures:

- the Specification, its specimen papers and its Teachers' Guide
- consortium meetings led by a moderator who can give advice on all aspects of the specification
- a series of national presentations by a team of senior examiners
- an issue of 5/6741 News, written by the senior examining team and inviting feedback.

There will be more support including a newsletter in the autumn with another set of presentations which will reflect on performance in the first set of examinations and point teachers forward to A2 issues.

Keys to success

In all modules and at both AS and A2, the keys to success in the examination are:

- developing a close knowledge of text
- studying the text with the relevant Assessment Objectives in mind
- practice questions tapered to the relevant Assessment Objectives
- tailoring knowledge to the specific demands of the question
- the selection and organisation of relevant textual reference and/or quotation
- clear, cogent, concise communication of an informed, personal viewpoint.

LTA1 The Modern Novel

General

The questions

This was a fair and enabling paper. Challenges for the candidate lie in the complexity of each novel and in the closed book situation. The questions therefore need to be accessible and straightforward, offering candidates the opportunity to deal with the central issues in the text. All the questions in this examination not only tested the relevant Assessment Objectives (1,2,3 and the first part of 4) but gave candidates the scope to explore, analyse and deliver informed personal responses to their texts. Each question differentiated well between those who analysed the writer's techniques and those who simply described and narrated.

In this examination, unlike January, candidates seemed to deal well with the definition of "episode" and were more confident with the questions which presented a short piece of text as a trigger or starting point. Questions which invited the consideration of a character as a construct were also well handled. Clearly, such questions cannot and will not always focus on "lead" characters, but examination of Nick, Jean, Logan and Jaime as constructs in their respective novels allowed candidates to explore their function in terms of structure, language and theme.

Candidate performance

The most successful candidates focused on the specific question, leaving behind any notion of a ‘prepared’ answer. They not only knew their texts well, they had also prepared wisely for the examination. The very best wrote the kind of answers that read as if they had been drafted and written over several days not within the confines and pressure of an examination. They wrote concisely and chose supporting material carefully. Above all, they were able to balance an examination of the writer’s techniques with an exploration of meaning and how it is shaped.

Areas of concern

Candidates were clearly less successful when they chose to tell the story or describe rather than explore and analyse. Lengthy repetitive essays with loose structure and unclear expression do not attract much reward. Weaker candidates also tended to focus excessively on the short extract at the expense of the specific question.

Set Texts and Questions

***The Bell* – Iris Murdoch**

This text was a minority choice, but it was handled very well by those candidates who studied it.

Question 1

“Consider the ways in which Iris Murdoch presents the religious community in the novel.”

The key words of this question (*consider, ways, Murdoch, presents, religious community*) indicate that an analysis and exploration of the religious community as a construct in the whole novel is appropriate – that is, in relation to its key themes and concerns as well as to its structure and language.

Successful candidates:

- looked at the community in general as well as at individuals in particular
- often included the nuns in their conversation
- noted Michael, Dora and Toby as the ‘eyes’, with Murdoch as the unseen narrator
- understood and analysed Murdoch’s use of symbolism
- were able to trace the development of the community’s ideology through to its abandonment
- wrote in an interesting way about sermons and different approaches to religion
- dealt with humour, irony and subtlety
- wrote with freshness and originality
- wrote clearly, cogently and concisely, structuring their answers effectively.

Less successful candidates:

- tended to ignore *ways* and *presents*
- told the story and/or described the characters in terms of their religious inclination
- wrote in a convoluted way with a poor grasp of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Question 2

“[Extract]

Using this short extract as your starting point, examine the ways in which Toby and Dora are presented as they discover and plan to raise the old bell.”

The key words of the question (*examine, ways, Toby, Dora, presented, discover, raise, bell*) indicate to the candidate that the key concern of this question is to explore the characters of Toby and Dora as constructs at a particular point in the novel.

Successful candidates:

- resisted the temptation to write character studies and focused on comparing the ways Toby and Dora are presented within the episode.
- showed understanding of Murdoch’s use of symbolism
- focused on Toby’s sexual awakening against the background of doubt triggered by Michael’s kiss
- tended to see Toby as trying to prove his manhood and Dora as the ‘witch’ subverting the rules and acting as the catalyst.
- wrote cogent, clear, concise essays which were effectively structured.

Less successful candidates:

- ignored the key words *ways, presented* and wrote character studies of Toby and Dora and/or told their story
- wrote in a convoluted way with a poor grasp of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

The Handmaid’s Tale – Margaret Atwood

This was the most popular text, and candidates generally wrote well in response to both questions. Many examiners noted concerns, however, about the number of answers that seemed to rely on a knowledge of the **film**, rather than of the **text**.

Candidates cannot hope to do well when, in response to question 3, they assert:

- that Offred asks Nick to escape with her
- that Nick jumps out of the van and says he will take her away once she tells him her name
- that she raises their child alone in the mountains
- that Nick takes her to a caravan somewhere away from Gilead
- that her friend Moyra finding out about her child sets her mind at rest
- that Nick does not report her when she steals a dandelion!

There is no substitute for a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the **written text**.

Question 3

“What is the importance of Nick in the novel? Consider the ways in which the writer presents this character.”

The key words of the question (*what, importance, Nick, novel, ways, presents, character*) indicate to the candidate that the examiner expects an analysis and exploration of this character as a construct in the whole novel – that is, in relation to its key themes and concerns as well as to its structure and language.

Successful candidates:

- focused on Nick (and the novel) as a construct
- recognised Nick as an enigmatic and mysterious figure about whom the reader never finds out the truth
- understood and analysed the importance of ambiguity
- responded to the key word *presents*
- compared Nick to the Commander and to Luke to good effect
- demonstrated secure knowledge and understanding of the text, using quotation and/or close reference to the text effectively, in a neat and integrated way
- wrote clearly, concisely and cogently, structuring answers effectively.

Less successful candidates:

- often lost the focus on Nick and wrote about Offred or the Commander – or confused Luke with Nick
- struggled with *presents*
- failed to use the Historical Notes in their analysis of Nick's importance
- relied on narrative/descriptive approaches, and, at worst, simple storytelling or hazy recall
- asserted but could not explore ideas about heroes in fairy tales and romantic fiction
- neglected 'the ways' and focused on the progress of the love story – often à la Mills and Boon
- wrote in a convoluted way with poor grasp of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Question 4

(Extract)

“In this extract, Offred is sharing a memory of her mother with the reader. Using the extract as a starting point, examine the ways the writer uses memories in the novel.”

The key words of the question (*examine, ways, writer, uses, memories, novel*) indicate that the candidate is expected to analyse the part played by memories in the novel (in relation to structure, language, theme and subject matter) through the selection and analysis of appropriate detail.

Successful candidates:

- wrote well structured responses that used the trigger extract and selected key memories to show how Atwood produces Offred's different lives: her chronological lives pre and post Gilead, and her inner and exterior lives within the present
- made the connection from The Historical Notes that the whole novel is a collection of memories and flashbacks and that memories are central
- understood *the ways* and focused on the novel as a construct
- demonstrated secure knowledge and understanding of the text
- wrote cogently, clearly and concisely, structuring their answers effectively.

Less successful candidates:

- failed to use the extract as a starting point, or ignored it altogether
- alternatively, focused mainly or entirely on the given extract
- seemed unaware of the significance of the bonfires
- wrote about *Offred's* use of memories (or gave Atwood an occasional mention)
- described memories with little or no attention to how Atwood uses them
- concentrated on the *Night* chapters
- wrote in a convoluted way with poor grasp of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Knowledge of Angels – Jill Paton Walsh

This is a popular text and candidates performed creditably on both questions.

Question 5

“Discuss the importance of Jaime in the novel by referring to **two** or **three** relevant episodes.”

The key words of the question (*discuss, importance, Jaime, novel*) indicate to the candidate that the examiner expects an analysis and exploration of this character as a construct in the whole novel – that is, in relation to its key themes and concerns as well as to its structure and language.

Successful candidates:

- took note of the question and referred in some detail to two or three (or more) episodes, providing linking comment that often constituted an overview
- maintained a clear focus on Jaime throughout the novel
- noted the relevance of “J’aime” in French
- understood Jaime’s importance in terms of plot, structure and theme
- had secure knowledge and understanding of the text
- wrote clearly, concisely and cogently, structuring their essays effectively.

Less successful candidates:

- had difficulty focusing on Jaime in a sustained way
- often made Amara and/or Palinor the main focus of their answers
- were too heavily reliant on narration and description, or simply told the story
- were often repetitive
- wrote in a convoluted way, with poor grasp of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Question 6

(Extract)

“In this extract, Benedix and Palinor argue about the existence of God. Show how the key idea about the proof of God’s existence is presented in the dialogues between Benedix and Palinor.”

The key words of the question (*show, how, key idea, proof, God’s existence, presented, dialogues*) indicate that the candidate is expected to focus on the dialogues of Benedix and Palinor, analysing the ways in which they present their ideas.

Successful candidates:

- showed excellent knowledge and understanding of the dialogues
- analysed the discourse astutely
- were able to focus on key ideas
- selected and analysed appropriate examples from relevant areas of the text
- explored the presentation of Benedix and Palinor, both individually and in relation to each other, the influence of the various environments, as well as the proofs and rebuttals
- wrote clearly, concisely, cogently, structuring their essays effectively.

Less successful candidates:

- showed poor knowledge and understanding of the arguments
- made unsupported assertions as a result of the lack of understanding
- adopted narrative/descriptive approaches or simply told the story
- demonstrated confusion of quite a basic nature as to who was who and *what* was being said
- wrote with convoluted expression, with poor grasp of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Snow Falling on Cedars – David Guterson

This was a popular text and encouraged some excellent work. Examiners often referred to the high level of engagement with text and evidence of enjoyment.

Question 7

“How does Guterson present distrust of the Japanese in the novel? You may refer to **two** or **three** episodes if you wish, **or** range more widely through the novel.”

The key words of the question (*how, present, distrust, Japanese*) indicate to the candidate that the focus of the answer should be on the *ways* the writer chooses to present the distrust. Candidates who explored both distrust *of* and *by* Japanese were duly credited.

Successful candidates:

- adopted diverse approaches in their answers but went to the heart of the novel and engaged with the trial and the span of San Pedro’s history covered in the novel
- maintained a clear focus on the distrust and/or prejudice
- established overview and analysed prejudice in a sophisticated way
- referred to a wide range of incidents across the novel
- demonstrated secure knowledge and understanding using relevant quotation skilfully and appropriately
- expressed themselves clearly, cogently and concisely, structuring their essays effectively.

Less successful candidates:

- described the obvious racism
- struggled to discuss *presentation*
- generated a good deal of narrative
- showed a lack of close reading or a hazy historical recall
- wrote essays with a limited focus, often concentrating on one or two episodes or characters (especially Etta)
- described events where distrust was evident rather than commented or analysed
- wrote in a convoluted way with poor grasp of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Question 8

(Extract)

“Here are the last few sentences of the novel. In what ways is this an appropriate ending for the novel?”

The key words of the question (*what, ways, appropriate, ending, novel*) indicate to the candidate that the examiner expects an exploration of the appropriateness of the ending in terms of both subject matter and style.

Successful candidates:

- wrote focused answers, using the trigger extract to write about Kabuo, Hatsue and Ishmael either separately or in an inclusive manner
- clearly addressed the *ways* and *appropriate*
- grappled with *knowable /unknowable/accidents*, attempting to explore the philosophical aspects of accident, fate and free will
- demonstrated a freshness of approach and a conceptual response
- ranged widely across the text to inform discussion
- showed secure knowledge and understanding

- wrote cogent, clear and concise essays, structured in an effective way
- glossed the irony of “chambers”.

Less successful candidates:

- misunderstood the question, ignoring “appropriate”
- had difficulty engaging with knowable/unknowable/accident
- made several unsupported assertions
- tended to limit the discussion to Ishmael
- produced passages of unfocused, and, at worst, irrelevant comment
- were distracted by the narrative and could not clearly relate any discussion to the passage
- wrote in a convoluted way with poor grasp of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Enduring Love – Ian McEwan

This was a popular text. Examiners saw a good deal of excellent work in response to both questions.

Question 9

“At the start of the novel, the narrator is presented to the reader as a man who lives in a well-ordered world.

Examine the ways in which your responses to this character are shaped throughout the novel.”

The key words of the question (*narrator, presented, ways, responses, character, shaped*) indicate to the candidate that the key concern of this question is to examine the character, Joe, as a construct and to trace the effect on the reader of the changes in the character.

Successful candidates:

- maintained a clear focus on the shaping of reader response and on the novel as a construct
- provided a detailed analysis and exploration of the presentation of Joe in the whole novel
- showed clear understanding of and dealt with the “well-ordered world”
- knew the novel well and could trace the changes in Joe’s character in detail throughout the novel
- showed a sharp awareness of McEwan’s techniques for manipulating the reader
- showed selectivity in their choice of supporting material
- had the confidence to say that they did not like Joe much, finding his scientific ruminations somewhat irritating
- saw that Joe becomes just as obsessed as Jed
- tended to see the linear structure of the breakdown of both order and sympathy
- identified a certain circularity in the structure as well as an ambiguity in the final response to Joe
- expressed themselves clearly, cogently and concisely, structuring their essays effectively.

Less successful candidates:

- offered character studies of Joe
- often failed to appreciate *reader response* and the novel as a *construct*
- wrote about *Joe* being shaped by his experiences rather than the reader’s responses being shaped by the writer, or tended to describe the changes in Joe’s behaviour, but often not in the context of the question
- wrote essays where description and narrative dominated
- seemed to find the novel challenging, and had some difficulty in engaging with the notion of a “well-ordered world”
- wrote in a convoluted way with a poor grasp of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Question 10

(Extract)

“This is the description of Mrs Logan when Joe goes to Oxford to meet her. What do you think is the importance of this character in the novel?”

The key words of the question (*importance, character, novel*) indicate to the candidate that the examiner expects an analysis and exploration of this character as a construct in the whole novel – that is, in relation to its key themes and concerns as well as to its structure and language.

Successful candidates:

- understood *importance*, going beyond simple importance of character to analyse the importance of the character in the whole novel, linking Jean Logan into the themes and other relationships
- saw the link between Jean Logan the character, and the role the writer provides her with
- had a clear grasp of *how* Jean Logan (and her husband and children) had an effect on Joe
- drew parallels with other characters and situations
- made good use of the extract, developing its images relevantly in the light of the situation
- saw the link between Jean Logan and the title
- shared secure knowledge and understanding
- wrote clearly, cogently and concisely, shaping their answers effectively.

Less successful candidates:

- struggled to find something to say, demonstrating skimpy knowledge of text
- off loaded some prepared work (from the January examination?) on the title and on love
- tended to neglect Jean Logan’s reaction on discovering the truth about her husband
- described Jean Logan and told her story
- had difficulty in engaging with *importance*
- wrote essays which were limited in scope, often spending too much time on “the affair” and accidents/episodes associated with it
- were repetitive
- wrote in a convoluted way with a poor grasp of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Unit 2 Shakespeare Coursework

Overall, there was some very good work seen that reflected accurate reading of the Specification by centres and engaged, independent enquiry by candidates. Some pieces of work were awarded the full 20 marks as they addressed the Assessment Objectives at the highest level. Unfortunately, there was also evidence of rigorously taught coursework, dictated tasks and failure to address the Assessment Objectives head-on. Fortunately for the candidates, however, their work did not suffer too much from mis-applied Objectives. In order to help both teachers and candidates to achieve success with LA2C, this report will address the candidates’ work through the Assessment Objectives.

Assessment Objectives

The weighting of assessment units for this module is:

AO1 8%

AO2I 10%

AO3 7%

AO4 5% (The Unit only addresses the first part of AO4: *Articulate independent opinions and judgements*)

In practice, the above weightings mean that candidates are tested upon, in order of importance, their:

- knowledge and understanding
- ability to communicate
- understanding of form, structure and language to shape meaning
- independent judgements.

When using the marking grid, it is important to award marks according to columns 1, 2 and 3 and to “fine tune” the mark by referring to column 4 but only as it matches the first part of the AO.

Task Setting

When candidates had negotiated tasks with their teachers they focused on understanding and work was successful. If a task is *an exploration*, or *an investigation into the way Shakespeare presents*, a candidate is encouraged at once to show understanding. Centres are strongly advised to consult moderators when setting tasks. Consultation enables candidates to pursue appropriate tasks, giving them the best possible chance of achieving their potential. Following the consultation procedure is also the best way to ensure that candidates submit work which meets all the Assessment Objectives and is likely to be successful. Attending consortium meetings is also essential to the selection of appropriate coursework tasks.

It was disappointing to read so many essays on similar topics. Often the impression was of work that had been imposed upon candidates whereas it is in the spirit of coursework that candidates should be free to explore their own ideas of interest. Some folders reflected similar ideas presented in similar order and supported by similar quotations. Although where this happened candidates achieved different marks, the results were more a reflection of what they had assimilated, rather than of what they had successfully explored. It was disappointing to discover in some cases that whole centres had submitted work on the same topic. Candidates may well have performed better if there had been a range of assignments which allowed them to select one which suited both their interests and abilities. The benefits of choice should be seen as central to candidate success.

Tasks should not be agreed which encourage advocacy of opinion (see AO4 below) but which focus sharply on the first three objectives with AO2i having priority.

Assessment Objective 1: Communication

Successful candidates:

- submitted final draft quality work which was free from elementary errors of spelling and construction whether word-processed or in longhand
- demonstrated complete understanding of their chosen text by writing fluent, coherent essays with effective links between sentences and paragraphs
- knew how to introduce a line of enquiry and how to conclude it in either a terse summary or with a sound opinion in the light of the assembled evidence or with a tantalising prospect of future lines of enquiry.

Less successful candidates:

- submitted work that still contained teachers’ advice on how to improve
- did not observe the rules of spelling, punctuation and grammar
- adopted informal registers complete with verb contractions, colloquial language and showed paucity of vocabulary.

Folders should show that they have been read with AO1 in mind. Too often glaring errors of English language had not been indicated. Where candidates submit final, polished versions, their work must bear evidence that it has been close-marked. It is not expected that every error will be indicated or that every merit will be praised, but marking should be sufficient to indicate the overall quality of a candidate's linguistic achievement.

Assessment Objective 2i: Understanding

Successful candidates:

- wrote with close engagement with the text because they had chosen their own topics and were enthusiastic about exploring them
- were always analysing and exploring and giving evidence to support their work
- demonstrated their knowledge of the text as a whole by never being at a loss for an appropriate word or reference
- saw characters as products of the artist's imagination and not as real people
- could suspend their disbelief in order to engage with themes and ideas.

Less successful candidates:

- struggled to assimilate ideas they did not really understand
- told the story of a play, sometimes with a few embedded points
- failed to supply evidence to support their understanding
- assumed their reader had been part of the original class discussion and would therefore know what they were alluding to
- approached the play as if it were a soap opera where the reader is expected to believe in the reality of the characters
- were ever trying to find literal meanings, logical real-world plot lines and could not see the plot as a vehicle for the expression of ideas
- offered a reader a dictionary definition of the idea they were going to explore. Such an approach is unnecessary and inappropriate.

As suggested above, it is here that task-setting is important. Tasks which focus on "the ways" and "Shakespeare presents" and "an exploration of ..", lead candidates to explore and to understand, whereas tasks which concentrate on "character" can cause candidates to lose sight of the playwright himself as a presenter. It would be good to see greater varieties of tasks negotiated. Whereas a candidate may be unhappy with the presentation of Prospero, for example, the same candidate may be perfectly able to explore the love story. Weaker candidates can achieve Band 3 with carefully negotiated lower tariff tasks than those negotiated with the upper Band 3 and Band 4 aspirants. Left with the higher tariff task, the candidate often ends in Band 2.

Candidates may undertake comparative work within a text but **they should not offer comparative work between texts**. Comparison of Shakespeare's presentation of a theme in two plays, or comparisons of characters from two plays is AO2ii work and is inadmissible for LA2C.

Assessment Objective 3: Language, form and structure

Successful candidates:

- paid close attention to why Shakespeare may have preferred one word to another
- were able to unpack and explore metaphor in order to make meaning
- were alert to connotation
- were sensitive to the need to quote poetry as poetry and to explore it as such
- could appreciate the effects achieved by literary devices and by the arrangement of scenes
- were able to discuss how an actor's interpretation can shape meaning and were alert to ambiguities in sound and rhythm as well as in words.

Less successful candidates:

- spotted tropes but did not comment on their effect
- were happy to offer quotation but did not explore it or integrate it successfully into their work
- could not unpack metaphor or took it literally
- asserted ideas by offering no evidence to suggest a basis for them
- quoted poetry as prose
- failed to appreciate the difference between prose and poetry.

This Assessment Objective works as a strong discriminator. It is unlikely that a candidate who does not address Shakespeare's language will gain reward in Band 3 or above. Passing references, for example to the "merry war" between Beatrice and Benedick where the candidate offered no close-study, will not persuade a reader that the quality of their wit has been appreciated. Candidates have their texts before them and they must use them.

Assessment Objective 4: Independent opinions and judgements

Successful candidates:

- carefully assembled evidence from the text and offered supported opinion
- in making judgements were always alert to the possibility of ambiguity
- wrote tentative, probing, exploratory answers before venturing to pass opinion
- were able to conceptualise and show insight.

Less successful candidates:

- wrote assertive, opinionated answers
- offered little evidence for their opinions
- regurgitated received opinion, and so showed that the task was not addressing the objective properly in the first place
- were writing on a play that had been taught so thoroughly that they became confused and were unable to extract their own lines of enquiry
- wrote "many people think" as an unhelpful way of presenting assertion.

Centres must be very careful at the task-setting stage that AO4 is not allowed to dominate. In several instances, candidates had been given critical essays on a text and been asked to assess the play in terms of the published critics. The task directly addresses both parts of AO4 and was, therefore, inappropriate for Unit 2. It is worth noting that at A2 Level, the dominant objective for coursework is AO2ii and not AO4. **Tasks that ask candidates to respond to other critical opinion must not be set.** Candidates should be careful of how they use commercial study guides. Wholesale lifting from such sources is easily spotted and is not rewarded unless the ideas have been fully assimilated and discussed.

Too many tasks were a quotation from a play followed by the requirement, "discuss". This, too, is inadmissible, as "discuss" addresses the first part of AO4, while weaker candidates feel obliged to advocate opinion in support of the point for discussion. If a quotation from a play is to be used as part of the task, the remainder of the wording must address either AO2i or AO2i and AO3 together.

No Place for AO5

AO5 is not examined at AS until Unit 3. This particular Specification has been designed to become progressively more demanding which is why the second part of AO4 and AO5 do not feature until Unit 3. Of course, the best candidates will find it hard not to consider these objectives but they do not gain extra marks for doing so. Topics which directly encourage critical reading and background reading should not be negotiated. Tasks which encourage candidates to research historical background, for example, can cause candidates to stray from AO2i and AO3 which do earn marks.

Length

In the vast majority of cases, coursework was of an appropriate length. The autumn AQA Newsletter sent to centres contained the guidance that coursework does not have to be at least 2000 words, but 1500-2000. This is a guide only as there were examples of folders of 1200 words showing close, coherent, engaged work and there were some longer than 2000 that displayed the same qualities. In a very few cases, however, coursework was penalised for being too short. Centres should draw their moderators' attention to short folders and ask for guidance. Folders below 1000 words were penalised where it was obvious that the centre had exacted no penalty. Folders over 2000 words that offer long, rambling, unfocused essays do not suffer a penalty as the lack of focus found in them will have already been penalised.

Presentation

Candidates do not need to show off their IT skills in an English Literature examination. Some fonts and point sizes used were extremely difficult to read. Only black ink should be used. The practice of centre-justifying quotations in order to indent them makes for difficult reading. Tabulation should be used. Black ink in point 12 (10 if they must) is easy to read and does not impede communication.

Unit 2 Shakespeare Written Paper

Assessment Objectives

Rubric

This unit is the written paper alternative to the coursework, Unit 2 LA2C. It tests the same Assessment Objectives:

AO1 8%

AO2i 10%

AO3 7%

AO4 5% (the unit only addresses the first part of AO4: Articulate independent opinions and judgements.)

Comments

Examiners noted that this paper gave all candidates the opportunity to:

- show what they knew and understood and what they appreciated in dramatic language, form and structure
- express individual opinions; and therefore meet the Assessment Objectives for the paper.

It was pleasing to see a huge improvement since January in the quality of expression and structure (AO1), understanding and knowledge of the chosen play (AO2i), discussion of language and drama (AO3) and confidence in attempts at individual response (AO4) across all texts and questions on the paper. Consequently, a huge overall improvement in marks, and therefore grades, awarded was achieved and candidates and centres are to be congratulated on their individual and collective successes. It is clear that this examination has produced more reassuring results in this Unit than were generally realised in the Spring, whilst retaining the ability to discriminate across the 1-20 mark range.

Factors affecting success and marks were the same as in January-candidates achieved success if their answers met the above Assessment Objectives in response to the specific question set, and focused on the play as text and drama. Success was more widespread and weaknesses were less frequently seen but the reasons for each of these were the same.

Success in AO1 required coherent expression of ideas. It was also achieved in answers which were alert to verse and versification-use of the original capital letters at the beginning of lines, use of the forward slash at the end, sensitivity to poetic form, integration of shorter quotation and correctly set out longer ones.

Success in AO2 demanded close textual reference and scrutiny, utilising, under examination conditions, the facility of the text.

Successful answers, particularly in AO3, demonstrated an understanding of genre and appreciated the language, forms and structures of the chosen play as dramatic constructs.

Success in AO3 was enhanced by alertness to differences between verse and prose, aural effects of poetry and intuitive responses to metaphor and idiom.

Success in the first part of AO4 was gained through an assimilation of classroom experiences and reading and a willingness to prioritise independent judgements and a personal response to the text and the question set.

Candidates were less successful in AO1 if they communicated using inappropriate register-colloquialism, slang, inelegant verb contractions, vague pronouns causing ambiguity and lapses into discussions (perhaps previously had) which assumed that the reader could decode or know what reference was intended.

Less successful answers in AO2 struggled to demonstrate textual knowledge and understanding and seemed not to have referred to the text in the examination, capitulating instead into some wild and often inaccurate assertions, even misreadings.

Less successful answers in AO3 wrote out verse as prose, listed, with varying degrees of accuracy, examples of similes and metaphors, assonance and alliteration, enjambment and repetition, quoted iambic pentameters, again with varying degrees of accuracy and no endorsement by attempts at scansion, wrote about the 'book' and the 'reader'; in short, had barely a grasp of Shakespeare's dramatic and poetic craft and its making of meaning.

Less successful responses to AO4 relied heavily on footnotes and introductory essays as a substitute for attempts to articulate an independent viewpoint.

Whilst AO5 is not tested here, if anything, more, rather than less, of a general grasp of the significance of historical and social context would have assisted many candidates in their attempts to answer on *The Taming Of The Shrew*, although historical narrative offered on the other two plays was sometimes inappropriate and assertive.

Reward could not be given to the attainment of untested Assessment Objectives. For example, AO2ii through comparisons with other plays by Shakespeare, or the rest of AO4 through discussion of critical views beyond the candidates' own responses. However attempted, these efforts did not gain credit beyond their attempts to meet the specified Assessment Objectives or above the attempts of candidates whose responses did not attempt unspecified Assessment Objectives.

Answers which focused on the demands of the question attempted were more successful than answers which did not base an argument on exploration of the key words offered. This is as crucial to note as achievement of the specified Assessment Objectives of the examination.

Distribution of marks

12-20 answers

- were seen pleasingly often, including some answers with full marks which were quite breathtaking in their brilliance
- were free of received opinion and used their own ideas incorporating what they had learned to inform enquiring responses (AO2&4)
- were sometimes tentative and built up arguments with substantial support from the texts-prepared and thought through before the writing of the essay (AO1 and good exam technique)
- were alert to the drama and poetry of the play, seeing it as something to be acted on a stage (AO3).

9-11 answers

- were less successful in freeing themselves from the need to reproduce all that they had learned on a particular topic or about a critical process (AO4)
- were more or less secure, often making similar points in similar order (AO2I)
- suggested that Shakespeare wrote only in iambs (AO3)
- made obvious and accurate comments about character and juxtapositioning of scenes but did not enquire into why characters were presented as they were or why the scenes were juxtaposed (AO3)
- integrated quotations poorly into an argument, often showing that marginal notes could not be matched to the appropriate quotations (AO1).

7-8 answers

- showed that the text was understood but relied heavily on the narrative content (critical points were so embedded in narrative that they did not stand out) (AO2I)
- contained ideas sufficiently understood or reproduced, if after a struggle, but were not developed or sustained (AO2I)
- paid too little attention to style of writing-the fourth bullet point under “Information” on the front cover of the question paper (AO1)
- struggled to engage the language and dramatic action of their chosen play (AO3).

1-6 answers

- included everything that was known about the play in question (AO2I)
- were rambling and unfocused (AO1)
- called upon bogus history and asserted an insecure understanding of Elizabethan life (AO5I not assessed)
- offered the whole story of the play (AO2I)
- were often so poorly expressed that it was difficult to deduce what was being said (AO1).

Too many answers across the bands spent the whole hour covering every page of the answer booklet instead of concentrating and focusing on appropriate and cogent arguments on the set question.

Responses to individual questions

The three plays achieved equal popularity. The questions on *Twelfth Night* and *The Taming Of The Shrew* provided alternative choices of more or less equal attractiveness. Octavia proved to be less of a draw than the beginning of the play in the choices on *Antony and Cleopatra*.

Twelfth Night

Question 1

Successful answers:

- ranged confidently across the play focusing on specific songs for close textual study
- focused on how the songs may be used and selected specific examples to illustrate points
- saw the songs as a product of Shakespeare's imagination (rather than Feste's) and were alert to them as a dramatic device
- attempted to link the songs to the moods and tried to engage their symbolic values in the play.

Less successful answers:

- could not engage the key words "you find interesting"
- wrote about Feste almost entirely
- latched on to describing the content of the songs
- got distracted by the story.

Question 2

Successful answers:

- began with the extract set, and explored it in detail, commenting on how it related to the rest of the play
- attempted to explore the language and metaphors of the extract
- engaged the key words "dramatic significance"
- attempted to explore the irony and potential comedy of the scene
- were alert to dramatic tension and mood in the extract.

Less successful answers:

- described the characters of Orsino and Cesario/Viola
- described the extract
- told the story
- made assertive comments about the Duke
- saw character before construct.

Antony and Cleopatra

Question 3

Successful answers:

- focused on the extract itself and its dramatic positioning and function within the play
- showed the confidence, or at least willingness, to explore the effects of the poetry
- explored language and metaphor to comment on the differences between the two cultures
- understood the Roman role of Philo in the extract
- grasped the sexual and romantic connotations of the language.

Less successful answers:

- described the plot or the characters in the extract
- told the story
- got side-tracked into a debate about Rome-Egypt
- struggled to understand the Roman responses
- launched into assertions about Cleopatra and why ‘no-one likes her’
- asserted that Antony was not doing his duty and took a high moral tone which collapsed into ranting disapproval far removed from the text.

Question 4

Successful answers:

- demonstrated selection of appropriate scenes
- developed an independent response to the character of Octavia
- attempted keywords “dramatic presentation and importance”
- were able to see the structure of Octavia’s appearances in relation to key aspects of plot, character development and ideas
- explored the use of contrasts between Cleopatra and Octavia.

Less successful answers:

- got side-tracked into a description of how different Cleopatra was from Octavia
- ignored the “dramatic importance” and/or “presentation”
- described Octavia, asserting how she was to be felt sorry for, or she was dismissed as ugly and wimpy...

The Taming Of The Shrew

Again, a less successful aspect of answers to each of the questions on this text was an apparently unassimilated critical response to the play which produced a rather narrow potential for exploration in some cases. An awareness of context and the Shakespearian world of the play and possibly the playwright seemed absent from some responses, making it difficult for candidates to accept or challenge the ideas demonstrated by the language and action of the text without resorting to assertions.

Question 5

Successful answers:

- showed impressive coverage of a wide range of relationships presented in the play
- ranged across the play and homed in on some well chosen examples of a few presentations of relationships
- addressed what they thought Shakespeare wanted to present and explore, and how he did it through constructed relationships between the characters in the play
- engaged with the key words “you respond”.

Less successful answers:

- asserted that Shakespeare was “sexist”
- wrote entirely about Petruchio and how he tamed Kate
- described the major relationships between the male and female characters in the play.

Question 6

Successful answers:

- immediately engaged the key words “appropriate” and “title”
- focused variously on the bullet points to help construct an argument
- chose their own focus to explore what was “appropriate”, selecting well detailed examples as illustration
- explored the key words “you find”.

Less successful answers:

- wanted to write about who was the real shrew, insisting assertively that it was Bianca and not Kate
- wanted to explain that Shakespeare was/was not sexist, far removed from close textual study
- got bogged down in bogus assertive comments about how it was all right in those days to treat women like that
- referred assertively to Katherina’s speech to show that the title was not appropriate.

Conclusions

Dramatic language, function and presentation are key concepts on this Unit.

A sense of the drama in performance enhanced responses to dramatic aspects of the text.

Answers which fostered an **informed** independent judgement enhanced the response; answers which fostered an **uninformed** independent judgement collapsed into the Band 1 criterion, assertion.

The use of the text is not to be underestimated and the physical presence of the text can be effectively employed to assist demonstration of detailed knowledge.

Length is no advantage if it comprises repetition or unwieldy exposition of ideas.

Successful responses are products of an attainment of the Assessment Objectives tested which assume assimilation and maturation of skills standardised by the board as AS level irrespective of at what point the examination is taken.

Unit 3 Texts in Context

Comments

Only a very small number of candidates were entered for the LTA3 paper in January 2001, so this June’s paper (with almost 27,000 candidates) was, in many ways, the first proper run of the Texts In Context module. It is pleasing to be able to report that this paper has been a considerable success: feedback from centres has been positive (the questions were welcomed as “fair” and “stimulating”) and examiners have reported that the mark scheme, with its customised grids for each question, worked extremely effectively.

The examiners were very impressed with the quality of work produced by the candidates in this examination. Among the comments in their reports were:

- “The majority of the candidates were well prepared for the examination – all of the texts were handled with great proficiency and the contextual aspects were addressed very capably.”
- “I felt humbled by the high quality of some of the scripts I marked. I think all of the candidates should be applauded for rising to the challenge of this examination.”
- “It was a pleasure and a privilege to read these inspirational responses. The candidates approached this examination in a focused and engaged way.”

Rubric Infringements

Unfortunately, a number of centres did not ensure that their candidates studied one pre-1900 text and one post-1900 text. In teaching either two pre-1900 texts or two post-1900 texts, some centres committed a serious rubric infringement: these are not permitted combinations. AQA will expect all centres to teach one pre-1900 text and one post-1900 text in future: candidates must be prepared in accordance with the genre and period requirements of the Subject Criteria which govern all AS Specifications.

The Quality of the Responses

This is a new examination which is testing new (or, at least, newly explicit) Assessment Objectives. Nevertheless, the majority of candidates had been well prepared for the paper: they showed a secure knowledge and understanding of the texts they had studied; they were able to address contextual issues as an integral part of their responses to pre-1900 literature and they constructed balanced debates around different readings of their twentieth century texts. They engaged with the texts in a personal, well-informed manner; examiners read many original and highly individual responses from candidates who were able to think for themselves and who displayed impressive maturity in their written expression.

Inevitably there were some abuses of the open text. In a few cases some candidates presented a version of a pre-written general answer: this is easy to spot, because they dismiss or ignore the question’s keywords. Candidates should also be warned against copying out, or borrowing heavily from the introduction to a text. Fortunately, these unhelpful practices are restricted to a very small number of candidates. It is to be hoped that, in the future, they can be eliminated entirely.

Finally, AO4 responses were sometimes very one-sided: candidates voiced their total agreement with the opinion stated in the question but failed to offer any alternative readings or counter-arguments, which would have taken their answer into a higher mark band. AO5 answers occasionally consisted of background information with little direct reference to the text: it should not be forgotten that the text remains the primary focus of every answer; knowledge of context is assessed **via** knowledge of the text itself.

Responses to individual questions

Doctor Faustus

It is important to remember that the questions for this Specification are based on the version of the A Text published by New Mermaids (edited by Roma Gill).

Question 1

This question provided candidates with a suggested context of all Marlowe's plays (one of the definitions of context offered on page 11 of the Specification) but, in order to answer the question, candidates did not need to be familiar with all of Marlowe's *oeuvre* – they were simply invited to explore the presentation of Faustus in the light of the given context.

Successful candidates:

- engaged with both of the question's keywords: *tragic* and *weak*
- focused primarily on the text and skilfully integrated their contextual knowledge of tragedy and the tragic hero
- explored relevant aspects of the presentation of Faustus with confidence, paying particular attention to his many missed opportunities for repentance.

Less successful candidates:

- attempted only one of the keywords or ignored them both
- produced simple character sketches of Faustus
- copied out misunderstood notes on tragic theory (e.g. "Aristotle said he thought Shakespeare's tragic heroes were...") but paid very little attention to the text.

Question 2

This was the more popular question, and was usually well answered.

Successful candidates:

- established the scene's importance by making connections to the rest of the play
- made effective use of the bullet points
- analysed the ways that the language used by Faustus and Mephistophilis indicates their shifting relationship
- carefully integrated their contextual knowledge of morality plays and the significance of Helen of Troy.

Less successful candidates:

- gave only a simple account of the scene
- ignored the idea of the scene's importance within the whole play
- made general or assertive comments about the language used.

The Country Wife

This was the least popular of the pre-1900 drama texts but it was a successful choice for the centres which taught it: the responses from candidates of all abilities displayed a strong personal engagement with the play.

Question 3

This was the more popular question on this text. It was generally very well handled.

Successful candidates:

- engaged with seventeenth century views of women and innocence
- displayed a secure understanding of the ways Wycherley presents Margery across the whole text
- focused primarily on the text and integrated contextual information as part of a shaped, coherent response.

Less successful candidates:

- produced simple character sketches of Margery
- used the question's keywords in a basic way
- were sometimes restricted by the weakness of their expression, although they did manage to show some understanding.

Question 4

Successful candidates:

- established the scene's importance by relating its events to other parts of the play and to Wycherley's key themes
- had a secure grasp of genre and showed their understanding of the effect this scene would have on an audience
- kept the text at the forefront of their answer and integrated contextual information when it was appropriate.

Less successful candidates:

- produced simple accounts of the events of the scene
- addressed the scene's importance only implicitly or indirectly
- could not always appreciate the dramatic irony of Sparkish's behaviour.

The Rivals

This play is a fairly popular choice but examiners reported a number of concerns. For instance, many believed that Sheridan is a Restoration dramatist and began their answers with long accounts of the end of The Commonwealth and the re-opening of the theatres. Similarly, *The Rivals* attracted much more than its fair share of socio-economic answers which said plenty about the state of a nation on the verge of the industrial revolution, but very little about what happens in the play: centres need to remember that the text is the primary focus of the answer, even when AO5 is being assessed. The best candidates clearly showed that they could think for themselves and see alternative interpretations of the play beyond, for example, "a laughing comedy".

Question 5

This was the more popular question; it differentiated the candidates very clearly.

Successful candidates:

- displayed a secure understanding of Sir Lucius' important role in the play
- explored Sheridan's purposes and the satirical uses to which he puts Sir Lucius
- knew that Sheridan was Irish himself and reflected on the ambiguities and the question of stereotypes that this fact raises.

Less successful candidates:

- tried to dismiss Sir Lucius as a minor character, so that they could write about the characters on whom they wanted a question
- produced simple character sketches but were unable to engage with Sheridan’s satire
- quickly ran out of things to say about Sir Lucius.

Question 6

Successful candidates:

- engaged with the keywords *fashionable glitter*, using the desperate affectations of Acres and the servants as examples of fashion’s powerful influence
- found plenty of examples of cruelty in the text, notably in the unsympathetic treatment of Mrs Malaprop and in the frequent boasts and threats of physical violence
- suggested alternative readings of the text, which they were able to support with carefully chosen details.

Less successful candidates:

- engaged **only** with *cruelty or fashionable glitter*
- produced social history essays on spa towns or the poverty which Sheridan didn’t show
- ignored the question entirely and wrote the “laughing comedy” essay they had prepared in advance.

The Glass Menagerie

This was by far the most popular of the modern plays and it produced some excellent responses: candidates of all abilities engaged sensitively and thoughtfully with Williams’ drama.

Question 7

This was the most popular question on the paper and the candidates generally handled it well. It should be remembered that this question is heavily weighted towards AO4 and is assessing the candidate’s ability to construct a balanced argument in response to the view of another reader. The director’s view of all four main characters gave candidates plenty of scope for debate and for the consideration of a range of alternatives and combinations. Many candidates supported their arguments with well-chosen details from the text, but they were not expected to write on every character at great length – indeed, in the time allowed, it would not be possible. Centres can be assured that examiners are well aware of the time constraints under which candidates are working and will bear this in mind when making their judgements.

Successful candidates:

- wrote balanced discussions of the director’s view, considering alternatives and voicing their own well-supported personal responses
- were aware that our attitude to some of the characters, including Jim, is informed by their complexities and contradictions
- explored the ways that Williams’ dramatic techniques shape the audience’s responses to the characters.

Less successful candidates:

- produced accurate character sketches and simply accepted the director’s view unquestioningly
- were distracted by the possible autobiographical elements in the play and drifted into irrelevance
- saw the characters as real people or the play as merely a soap opera (in which, one candidate wrote, “Laura attends computer classes”).

Question 8

This was not a popular question, but those who attempted it usually did well.

Successful candidates:

- explored the play’s moral dimension with some confidence
- engaged with Williams’ attitude to the kinds of people and the sort of society he is presenting
- gave a balanced response to the question of “How far?”

Less successful candidates:

- struggled to engage with the concept of morality
- attempted to turn the question towards the general context of The Great Depression
- made assertive claims about Williams’ own moral stance.

Light Shining In Buckinghamshire

This play is by far the least popular text on the paper: very much a minority choice.

Question 9

Successful candidates:

- understood the ways in which the play might be seen as representing socialist or feminist views
- were able to support these interpretations with appropriate textual detail
- developed the debate by integrating their own views of the play.

Less successful candidates:

- struggled with the terms “socialist” and “feminist”
- padded out their answers with long historical accounts which paid little attention to the text
- had difficulty engaging with the question of “To what extent?”

Question 10

This was the more popular question on this text.

Successful candidates:

- engaged with the idea of “despair” and were able to suggest other interpretations of the play’s ending
- used their knowledge of the whole text to inform their response to the final scene
- explored the form and language of the ending.

Unsuccessful candidates:

- wrote simple, often narrative, accounts of the final scene
- struggled to apply the ideas of “happy endings” or “despair”
- ran out of things to say because of the scene’s brevity.

Arcadia

This is a text which differentiates candidates very clearly: many thrive on its wealth of concepts and ideas; some are just confused.

Question 11

Successful candidates:

- were able to consider both the dramatic and philosophical elements of the play
- explored the play's theoretical and abstract dimensions with insight and enthusiasm
- produced a shaped and coherent debate which was enriched by their own views and ideas.

Less successful candidates:

- could establish drama only via narrative or description
- tended to explain the philosophy and drifted away from the text in the process
- struggled to engage with the question and fell back on a rehearsed response to a different question they were hoping might come up.

Question 12

This was the more popular question on this text.

Successful candidates:

- made constructive use of Bernard's speeches on the importance of Byron
- debated Byron's importance and weighed it against the importance of other characters
- were able to link Byron to key themes, such as chance and Romanticism.

Less successful candidates:

- ignored Bernard's starting-point speeches
- saw Byron as a plot device whose only importance is his connection to Chater
- simply listed any mention of Byron in the text, but made no attempt to evaluate his importance.

The Wife of Bath's Prologue

Chaucer is the most popular pre-1900 poet by a long way: many candidates responded to the Wife of Bath with fervent engagement and obvious enjoyment.

Question 13

As with Question 1, this question took its contextual lead from elsewhere in the author's output. Candidates did not have to know the *General Prologue* description to answer the question satisfactorily; nevertheless, many were familiar with the description and put their wider reading to good use in addressing the subject of the Wife's wandering.

Successful candidates:

- made constructive use of the recommended starting point in establishing the Wife's love of wandering
- were able to consider alternative meanings of the keyword *wandering*
- saw that the *Prologue's* structure is yet another form of wandering.

Less successful candidates:

- did not know the difference between “wandering” and “wondering”, resulting in largely irrelevant responses
- wrote simple accounts of the Wife’s travels
- merely paraphrased the passage suggested as a starting point.

Question 14

The more popular Chaucer question: this produced many conceptual and exploratory responses.

Successful candidates:

- had a secure knowledge of the fourteenth century attitudes presented in the extract
- considered the ambiguity of voice which is implicit in Chaucer’s use of the Wife’s persona
- read the text closely and, in employing neat supporting details, showed their mastery of Middle English.

Less successful candidates:

- produced paraphrases or translations of the passage
- wrote long, general accounts of fourteenth century attitudes, but made no reference to the passage
- showed no awareness of Chaucer’s techniques or intentions.

Three Victorian Poets

This was a fairly popular text and the responses it produced were often thoughtful and well-informed.

Question 15

Successful candidates:

- adopted an analytical approach to Tennyson’s poetic technique
- integrated biographical information while keeping the text at the forefront of their answers
- used the question of “What do you find interesting?” as an opportunity for an informed personal response to the poem.

Less successful candidates:

- wrote narrative accounts of the poem
- abused the open text and just copied out Jane Ogbourn’s notes from page 47
- produced biographical accounts which paid minimal attention to the poem itself.

Question 16

This was a very popular question and examiners were impressed by the wide range of relevant poems which candidates selected as reflections of Victorian attitudes to gender. Among the most effective choices were ‘The Princess’, ‘The Lady of Shalott’, ‘Aurora Leigh’, ‘Porphyria’s Lover’ and ‘My Last Duchess’.

Successful candidates:

- selected appropriate poems which allowed them to explore contrasting attitudes
- had a secure understanding of the effects of language and form in their chosen poems
- used the bullet points sensibly and produced engaged personal responses; as one candidate perceptively remarked: “Not all women were the pushover they were brought up to be!”.

Less successful candidates:

- made inappropriate selections which resulted in unconvincing or assertive responses
- wrote simple accounts of their chosen poems
- paid little attention to language and style.

A Choice of Christina Rossetti's Verse

This was very much the minority choice among the pre-1900 poetry texts but it produced consistently impressive responses: candidates of all abilities responded to Rossetti with sensitivity and enthusiasm.

Question 17

This was the more popular question on this text.

Successful candidates:

- explored the poem with confidence and insight
- made effective use of the bullet points and suggested interesting alternative readings of the poem
- enjoyed themselves finding details which modern readers might not expect in a children's poem (the clear favourite was the much-quoted "Hug me, kiss me, suck my juices").

Less successful candidates:

- allowed the poem's sexual undertones to dominate their answer and distract them from the rest of the question
- wrote simple, narrative accounts of the poem
- struggled to engage with the idea of a changing critical response.

Question 18

Successful candidates:

- chose relevant poems and were able to place them in the broader context of Rossetti's work
- analysed Rossetti's use of language and style
- integrated ideas about Romanticism and nature poetry, while maintaining a focus on their chosen poems.

Less successful candidates:

- wrote general contextual answers which did little with the actual poetry
- produced simple accounts of their chosen poems
- paid no attention to Rossetti's use of language and style.

The Whitsun Weddings

Larkin and Duffy are joint favourite choices among the twentieth century poets. Interestingly, however, many candidates treat Larkin as a writer in need of AO5 / historical context treatment, so distant does he seem from their own experiences...he travels *by train*, the people he portrays *don't wear designer labels* (as one candidate pointed out) and he's obviously *frightened* of the opposite sex! Nevertheless, examiners reported that candidates consistently responded to his poetry with understanding and enjoyment.

Question 19

Successful candidates:

- produced relevant and coherent answers which addressed all the question’s keywords
- had the mastery of detail to select the most convincing and relevant examples: “moustached” women “in flowered frocks”; boys “with inch-thick specs”; men who keep “plugging at the four aways” or who carry “unlucky charms”
- could appreciate Larkin’s humour and could provide examples of it (such as the “houses”/“trousers” rhyme in ‘Self’s The Man’).

Less successful candidates:

- seemed determined to write about the poems they had prepared, regardless of the question
- chose appropriate examples but did not directly address the question of “How far do you agree?”
- couldn’t see the humour and resorted to the vague assertion that Larkin is always “negative”.

Question 20

Successful candidates:

- had a secure knowledge of ‘Dockery and Son’
- explored the connections between this poem and the rest of the collection
- produced a balanced argument in response to the question “To what extent do you agree?”.

Less successful candidates:

- merely paraphrased ‘Dockery and Son’
- did not really understand what the poem is about
- ignored ‘Dockery and Son’ and wrote about other poems they believed to be “typical of” Larkin.

Safe As Houses

Fanthorpe is the minority choice among twentieth century poets: only a few centres studied this text.

Question 21

Successful candidates:

- chose appropriate poems for this question
- addressed the question of “To what extent do you agree?”
- analysed Fanthorpe’s language and style in the poems they had chosen.

Less successful candidates:

- struggled to engage with the idea of “sense of place”
- chose inappropriate poems for this question
- paid little attention to language or the question of “To what extent?”.

Question 22

This was the more popular Fanthorpe question.

Successful candidates:

- selected relevant poems for the question
- produced a balanced debate which considered alternatives
- explored Fanthorpe’s language and style.

Less successful candidates:

- wrote simple accounts of their chosen poems
- could cope with “the real world” but failed to engage with Fanthorpe’s language
- ignored the key question of “How far do you agree?”.

Mean Time

Duffy was a very popular choice. The candidates had obviously enjoyed studying her poetry and they responded with freshness and enthusiasm.

Question 23

This was the more popular Duffy question and many candidates answered it in a perceptive, engaged manner. Relevant responses did not require a detailed knowledge of the history of English love poetry: most candidates produced workable definitions of the keywords “romantic and traditional” and then set about applying these terms to *Mean Time* in a thoughtful, and often original, manner.

Successful candidates:

- were able to explore Duffy’s use of traditionally romantic imagery through well-chosen details: wedding cakes, flowers and stars
- understood that Duffy often subverts or even rejects conventional images of romance: “Not a red rose or a satin heart.”
- answered the question of “How far do you feel?” by developing a balanced debate which applied the keywords to a variety of relevant poems.

Less successful candidates:

- wrote simple accounts of two love poems but ignored the question of “How far?”
- simply agreed with the given reading and did not offer any alternatives or counter-arguments
- produced long lists of technical terms used by Duffy but seemed to have little idea of what the poems are actually *about*.

Question 24

This question caused concern for some centres because of its use of allegedly “obscure” poems which centres had not taught. Centres should be aware that, unless otherwise stated in the Specification, it is expected that candidates will be familiar with all the poems in a collection – just as it is expected that they will have read all the chapters in a novel or all the scenes in a play. In this case, obscurity was in the eye of the beholder: many candidates had sufficient insight and overview to argue that these poems are a vital and integral part of the collection.

Successful candidates:

- had a secure understanding of both poems, and often knew who the poems are about
- were able to connect the poems to others in *Mean Time*, in terms of theme (one candidate likened The Biographer’s self-pity and unrequited love for his subject to “Havisham”), language (the use of cliché in “Fraud” is often reflected elsewhere in the collection) and form (two more dramatic monologues)
- focused on the keywords *very different* as part of a balanced debate.

Less successful candidates:

- were confused by Duffy’s use of personae in these poems
- fell back on narrative or paraphrase
- struggled to make any sort of connection between these poems and the rest of the collection.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Unit 1 LTA1 The Modern Novel

Grade	Max. mark	A	B	C	D	E
UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36
Boundary Mark (Scaled)	20	14	12	10	8	6

Unit/Component	Maximum Mark (Raw)	Maximum Mark (Scaled)	Mean Mark (Scaled)	Standard Deviation (Scaled)
LTA1	20	20	11.1	4.0

Unit 2 LA2C Shakespeare (Coursework)

Grade	Max. mark	A	B	C	D	E
UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36
Boundary Mark (Scaled)	20	16	14	12	10	8

Unit/Component	Maximum Mark (Raw)	Maximum Mark (Scaled)	Mean Mark (Scaled)	Standard Deviation (Scaled)
LA2C	20	20	13.2	3.6

Unit 2 LA2W Shakespeare (Written)

Grade	Max. mark	A	B	C	D	E
UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36
Boundary Mark (Scaled)	20	14	12	10	8	6

Unit/Component	Maximum Mark (Raw)	Maximum Mark (Scaled)	Mean Mark (Scaled)	Standard Deviation (Scaled)
LA2W	20	20	10.8	4.1

Unit 2 LTA3 Texts in Context

Grade	Max. mark	A	B	C	D	E
UMS	120	96	84	72	60	48
Boundary Mark (Scaled)	40	27	23	19	15	11

Unit/Component	Maximum Mark (Raw)	Maximum Mark (Scaled)	Mean Mark (Scaled)	Standard Deviation (Scaled)
LTA3	40	40	21.8	7.4

Advanced Subsidiary award

Provisional statistics for the specification as a whole (18205 candidates)

	A	B	C	D	E
Cumulative %	18.5	38.7	63.0	84.4	95.6

Definitions

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

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

Standard Deviation: a measure of the spread of candidates' marks. In most components, approximately two-thirds of all candidates lie in a range of plus or minus one standard deviation from the mean, and approximately 95% of all 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).

Uniform Mark: a score on a standard scale which indicates a candidate's performance. The lowest uniform mark for grade A is always 80% of the maximum uniform mark for the unit, similarly grade B is 70%, grade C is 60%, grade D is 50% and grade E is 40%. A candidate's scaled mark for each unit is converted to a uniform mark and the uniform marks for the units which count towards the AS or A-level qualification are added in order to determine the candidate's overall grade.