

GCE

Edexcel GCE

English Literature (8180/9180)

This Examiners' Report relates to Mark
Scheme Publication code: UA 017901

Summer 2006

Examiners' Report

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Publications Code UA 017901

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Unit 1: Drama and Poetry (6391)

General

Examiners were pleased with the high standard of scripts this summer. Responses from the most able candidates engaged with all or most aspects of the questions and explored the texts with mature perception and sophisticated critical judgment. The majority of candidates were well prepared and demonstrated a basis of sound knowledge. However, lack of prioritisation led to some unfocused essays which tended to explore the texts in excessive and rather undirected detail. There were some candidates who still have problems with timing, sometimes the result of an over-ambitious and lengthy first answer. Many examiners pointed out that the poetry essays have continue to improve, although it is also true that the candidates' choice of poem(s) remains a crucial discriminating factor in the assessment of Section B.

A01

Many responses demonstrated a high standard of accuracy, and, on the whole, well structured arguments. There were a number of comments this year about clumsy and inappropriate use of quotation. This largely stemmed from a failure to understand the way in which quotation needs to be part of an ongoing argument and critical debate, not just the 'evidence' that follows a statement. Secondly, although the vast majority of candidates managed to present a reasonably clear argument, there were occasions when this could have been improved with a sharper sense of priorities.

A02i

Once again, the drama essays generally reflected a pleasing grasp of generic issues, with much discussion of stagecraft and audience response. Many examiners commented on how candidates who write about genre are able to show real critical confidence and range. With the poetry, however, some difficulties remain, either as a result of over-ambitious attempt to 'place' the set texts within a very wide poetic context, or the inclusion of unnecessarily detailed paragraphs on - say - Romanticism.

A03

There was much excellent analysis of language with effective linking of poetic impact and meaning. However, as mentioned above, there is still a tendency for responses, particularly in the poetry section, to be rather unfocused in their commentaries.

A04

In general, critical references are being used much more effectively, and in many cases provided a clear and well focused grounding for independent critical argument. As always, those essays which established and then developed such critical responses in carefully judged essays which fully engaged with both the question and the text achieved the greatest success.

Behn: *The Rover*

Those few candidates who answered on this text appear to have found it rewarding. There is still a tendency for candidates to spend too much time on contextual material which is not examined on this paper.

Q1(a)

There was a tendency to refer almost exclusively to the 'violent and disturbing' elements in the play with little on the generic issues of farce and wit.

Q1(b)

This was the more popular question. There were some sharp and sophisticated arguments, for instance:

we see the emotional plight men put women in ... Angellica shows us the dark irony at the centre of the play as she would be at the mercy of the men she uses.

There were some interesting arguments which commented on authorial purpose and audience reaction and which clearly engaged with the central thrust of the play.

Friel: *Translations*

This text continues to be a popular choice. It was pleasing to report that the number of candidates who ignore the dramatic aspects of the play is gradually decreasing. However, a number of examiners commented on the continuing tendency to treat the play as an essay or political tract,

Q2(a)

This was easily the more popular question out of the two on this text, and indeed one of the most popular in the whole paper. Candidates found the scene very accessible, and partly as a result of this many responded with very long commentaries (often in a rather narrative style), consequently finding little time for anything else. Some candidates dismissed the assertion briefly and offered a prepared essay on language, communication and identity. The best arguments, however, took into account the prompts contained in 'at the heart of the play' and 'despite' and ranged well beyond the Yollande/Maire relationship, considering Manus and Sarah, Owen's realisation of his emotional ties to Baile Beag, Jimmy Jack's hopes for the future and, more broadly, love of Ireland, language in general and the classics in particular. In addition, many responses commented on the overall structure of the play through an analysis of Act Two, Scene Two, focusing on the ways in which the scene acts as a catalyst for the darker, threatening political issues which dominate the end of the play. There was much effective exploration of the relationship between politics and love:

The title Translations would indicate change and perhaps an element of meaning lost in the process. Love on the other hand is in a sense a language that is easily translated. It is the universal language of understanding.

Q2(b)

There were many excellent answers to this question, although rather too often the structure of the argument was little more than a list of characters. It was rare to find answer that referred to the phrase 'ultimately more painfully' although the range of hopes and fears discussed was wide, taking in those of the community and the nation as well as individuals. 'Hopes' that were explored included Maire's ambitions, Hugh's belief that he was destined to supervise the National School, Yolland's desire to settle in Ireland and Manus's hope for his new post and his future with Maire. The hopeful symbolism of Nellie Ruadh's baby was quite often discussed. The 'fears' were rooted in the changes brought about by the English and the threat of the potato blight, together with the implicit awareness of the presence of the Donnelly twins. Only a few candidates considered the dramatic impact of Maire's disorientation at the end or Jimmy Jack's painful pleas for companionship.

Churchill: *Top Girls*

This has become an increasingly popular text in recent years and it is clearly one that encourages some very pleasingly engaged responses. It is worth stressing again perhaps that it is advisable in this paper to use material on the historical/political background sparingly.

Q3(a)

This was easily the more popular question. Candidates found a great deal to say about the prescribed passage; indeed, if there was a weakness in some responses it was the imbalance between commentary on the scene and the placing of ideas within the wider context of the play as a whole. Comments included reference to the language of Nell and Win and the way their style of speaking reflected their personal relationships with men. Many commented on how 'masculine' the language was, not only in its vocabulary but also linguistic pattern. A popular phrase for analysis was 'tough birds like us' and the way it is adopted in the play as a positive rather than a patronising term.

Many responses did discriminate between 'succeed' and 'survive', although only a few developed their ideas into an argument. The best answers looked at Marlene and her relationship with her daughter, pointing out not only how much women had to sacrifice but also how callous and selfish the women in the play have become. As one candidate pointed out 'Angie will never succeed because of the climate created by women such as her own mother'. Dull Greet figured in a number of responses with her sense of female identity largely ignored by the other women. As one candidate wrote, 'the most important point which Churchill makes is against individualism and selfishness.'

Q3(b)

This was not a popular choice and in fact very few candidates attempted it. Of those that did, rather too many responses adopted a descriptive/narrative approach or provided rather simplistic character studies.

Williams: *A Streetcar Named Desire*

This text remains a popular choice which almost all candidates approached in an informed and responsive way with a particularly pleasing grasp of Williams's stagecraft and its impact on the audience. Examiners commented that there were fewer examples of overstated and unnecessarily lengthy comments on Williams's life story.

Q4(a)

This was the more popular question, and the responses were generally both thoughtful and engaged. Although all candidates could offer something on Blanche but not all were able to mould their knowledge to suit the particular demands of the question. There was a tendency to spend too long on the scene, providing much (sometimes rather unfocused) detail, although it is also true that the scene's accessibility allowed all candidates to explore the text with some confidence. As a result, a number failed to consider the wider issues of structure and dramatic impact contained in the prompt 'despite what the audience has come to expect'.

On the other hand, there were some excellent contrasts established between scenes 3 and 11. Some responses found Blanche to be a figure of tragic dignity ('Blanche falls from grace with the utmost elegance'), while others asserted that she had learnt nothing and that 'pitiable' was not the same as 'dignified'. Others argued that it was Stella who lost dignity in comparison to Blanche's 'triumphant' exit. Certainly there is a case to be made for either of these views, and many made it with real perception and detail. The richness of Williams's presentation was recognised by one candidate who wrote:

Our reaction to the other characters confers as much dignity on Blanche as the manner of her departure does. Mitch and Stella are sobbing from guilt, one at degrading her and one at betraying her, and Stanley's ripping off the paper lantern is seen as repugnant triumphalism.

Q4(b)

Some candidates were unable to distinguish between destructive and the much more sophisticated concept of self-destruction, and this resulted in rather descriptive accounts of Stanley's mental and physical assaults on Blanche and Stella. There were also comparatively few answers which tackled 'the development of the dramatic action'. The higher band responses realised that the concept of 'winning' was open to critical challenge and debate and that Williams presents the idea in an intentionally ambiguous way. There were some detailed and responsive examinations of Stella and Stanley's marriage, although there was some dubious (but often entertaining) suppositions about their future life together, sometimes suggesting that Eunice and Steve provide a bleak and depressing image of this. Self-destruction was interpreted in many ways, including the death of Allan Grey and its effect on the dramatic action, and the theme of self-denial. There was much reference to alcohol and to the ways in which both Blanche and Stanley attempt to dominate Stella, a process containing the seeds of future self-destruction.

Stoppard: *Professional Foul*

As ever, these questions were answered by a very small, but enthusiastic minority, almost all of whom answered Q5(a).

Q5(a)

The responses generally provided clear and coherent arguments and an understanding of the dramatic and thematic concerns of the play. Some excellent answers explored the significance of 'educated' with real sophistication. Most candidates wrote only about Anderson although the most able candidates could develop an argument of considerable sophistication.

Edexcel Poetry Anthology (Section One: Post-1770)

The anthology continues to be the most popular poetry text. There were many excellent answers, but equally rather too many answers were obviously relying upon a very limited knowledge of the poems. Pleasingly, several examiners commented upon the improvement in the way candidates analysed the language and form of the poems. They noticed fewer lists of features, although there was still a tendency among the less confident to produce a linear response, narrating the poem and reproducing each part in their own words ('he goes on to say that ...', 'this means that ...'). It is important that candidates realise that paraphrase is not a helpful part of the critical process. There were also many examples of candidates spending far too long attempting to explore the nature of poetry in general. The assertions are designed to be the starting point for examinations of particular poems not generalised discussions of the genre. As ever, centres need to remember that a comparison between the poems is not required, and can be problematic for the less confident candidate.

Q6(a)

The discriminating factor in this question was whether candidates could identify and explore emotions and ideas or whether they simply generalised or gave examples of emotive language. In general, the less confident answers wrote about the poems with little if any reference to the question. Emotions were, in fact, handled more confidently than ideas, although both named poems were often analysed confidently, with perceptive and thorough examination of language, form and ideas. It was pleasing when the candidate made an explicit connection between emotions and ideas ('already we can see his emotions are fuelling his ideas'). 'Dover Beach' and 'London' proved popular additional choices, with most candidates able to understand their moral, emotional and intellectual concerns. Those who chose 'Wuthering Heights' (Plath), 'My Last Duchess' and 'Remember' often found it difficult to discern ideas behind the intense emotional impact of the poems.

Q6(b)

Some candidates found it difficult to explore the terminology of the question effectively, in particular the words 'aggressive' and 'demanding'. Perceptive candidates showed convincingly how imagery and tone could be aggressive and demanding while still retaining subtlety and ambiguity. The most common 'difficult issue' was death and mortality. Responses which explored 'Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night' and 'The Second Coming' did so thoughtfully and with

considerable perception on the whole, but other poems were not always chosen so appropriately. Indeed, the choice of material was - as always - a discriminating factor. There were many close examinations of 'Prayer Before Birth', and an equal number of rather strained attempts to make 'My Last Duchess', 'I Am' and 'Remember' (a particularly problematic choice) fit an appropriate argument. More successful were commentaries on 'London' and 'Dover Beach'.

Betjeman: *The Best of Betjeman*

Many examiners commented on the increasing popularity of Betjeman on the paper and the confidence and engagement shown by so many of the responses: 'strong answers with clear enthusiasm and understanding' as one examiner put it. However, a number of answers still provide too much unnecessary biographical material, often ineffectively integrated with the flow of the argument. Some candidates also chose inappropriate poems and struggled to develop an effective argument. Both questions proved popular.

Q7(a)

Most candidates knew the named poems well, although a few were rather confused by 'Myfanwy'. 'False Security' was a particularly productive choice for many candidates who explored confidently the child/adult points of view and the way a sense of threat is woven into the texture of the description, with perceptive analysis of the imagery ('there is imagery of decay in the 'fallen leaves' and the ominous atmosphere creates a sense of lingering threat'). Responses centred sympathetically and with real understanding on the social anxieties explored at the end of the poem. Some candidates however mistakenly thought that the assertion was about *all* of Betjeman's poetry, and as a result developed an unnecessarily aggressive response, understandably arguing that this was not the case. There was a wide range of additional poems chosen, most of which were explored in a clear and focused way, although there was a tendency in some cases to create an argument about the theme when there was actually little to say. As always, the choice of poem is central. Popular choices were: 'Senex', 'Middlesex', 'Slough', 'Norfolk', 'Youth and Age on Beaulieu River, Hants', 'Sun and Fun' and 'Original Sin on the Sussex Coast'.

Q7(b)

There were many engaged and thoughtful responses to this question, although some candidates showed a lack of confidence when dealing with humour. Indeed, many ignored the 'comic tone' part of the assertion altogether, or simply gave one example of a comic poem and one of a serious one. However, the more able candidates perceptively explored the serious thrust of Betjeman's social criticism in contrast to his apparently light poetic style. Many commented on the satirical aspects of Betjeman's poetry, through analysis of such poems as 'Westminster Abbey' and 'Executive'. There was much evidence of perceptive understanding of form and tone and Betjeman's use of persona. Of the more serious issues discussed, the most common were Betjeman's antipathy to modern urban culture, childhood misery, mortality and religion (in for example 'Hymn', which, as one response put it, 'illustrates Betjeman's feeling that the church has been wiped clean of its spiritual significance.'). Other popular poems were 'Sun and Fun' and 'Christmas'.

Keats: Selected Poems

It is often the case that answers on Keats have a particularly engaged and scholarly approach, and so it proved again this year. Many examiners commented on the focused knowledge, perception and confidence that permeated most of the responses. However, it is worth pointing out that some problems from the past remain: too much unhelpful biographical material, some inability to prioritise from a wide range of knowledge and a tendency to focus rather too much on the philosophical rather than Keats's language.

Q8(a)

Comparatively few candidates answered this question, although on the whole responses reflected considerable knowledge. While candidates understood the idea of 'longing', many found it difficult to develop an argument. Additional poems explored were 'Ode on Melancholy', 'Lamia', 'The Eve of St Agnes', 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' and 'Ode to a Nightingale'.

Q8(b)

This was the more popular question and there were some really excellent answers. Although there was a tendency to spend too long on general comment on Keats and the senses, most responses defined and then explored the central dichotomy, sometimes broadening the range to include dreams and reality (although sometimes the relationship to the central ideas was insufficiently developed). It was felt that many responses demonstrated a confident and perceptive grasp of the ambiguities of Keats' language and imagery. Poems chosen included 'To Autumn', 'Lamia', 'Ode to a Nightingale', 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' and 'Bright Star'.

The Penguin Book of American Verse

Only a few centres prepare candidates for this text and in general they responded in an effectively engaged way to the demands of the questions and to the wide range of material available in the anthology. Many explored the specifically American aspects of the poetry with real perception and knowledge.

Q9(a)

This was the less popular question. Responses were generally thoughtful and the choice of material was appropriate. Some answers successfully linked poems from very different periods of American history, showing a confident use of the wide-ranging poems in the anthology.

Q9(b)

Responses made generally excellent use of a wide range of poems, such as Sylvia Plath's 'Lady Lazarus', a number of E.E. Cummings' poems and the ever-popular Emily Dickinson. Responses related form to poetic impact effectively and analysed the language in considerable detail and with a clear focus.

Clarke: Letter from a Far Country (from Collected Poems)

As in previous years, comparatively few candidates attempted these questions, although the responses were generally detailed and carefully developed.

Q10(a)

Most answers were pleasingly free of the linear narrative approach and developed an engaged argument, responding to the key idea confidently, and commenting on the given poem with real perception. Many drew thoughtful links between the poems, exploring and analysing language and poetic impact.

Q10(b)

Most candidates understood the central concept here although many had some difficulty in relating their understanding to their chosen poems. They were able to demonstrate really detailed knowledge of the poetry but arguments were lacking in sharpness and focus.

Unit 2: Pre-1900 Prose (6392)

General

The quality of answers was at times very high, with candidates making good use of their limited time, selecting relevantly and purposefully from their texts. There were some outstanding responses which demonstrated an assured understanding of the text, clear contextual awareness and application, and confident critical judgement. Candidates in the higher bands showed awareness of alternative interpretations, and engaged with different ways of reading the text, while lower band candidates tended to base their arguments on personal opinions, nonetheless demonstrating their engagement and interest.

In closed book examinations, it is perhaps most useful if candidates do not attempt to memorise lengthy quotations: very brief but aptly chosen quotation or close textual reference is preferable. Lower band answers are distinguished by the way that they tend to write at some distance from the text, making generalised comments, and failing to engage with the writer's presentation of the settings, characters and events. Higher band answers will respond to prompts such as 'shows' (1a), 'presentation' (1b 2a, 2b, 3a, 3b, 4a, 4b, 5a,), 'invites' (1b), 'pleasure' (2a), 'creates' (2b), 'indirectly...entertainingly' (3b), 'powerful condemnation' (4a), 'clearly shows' (5a), 'unsettles' (5b).

Lower band responses on the whole focused on parts of the question rather than the whole, paying scant regard to those aspects of the question which might be more problematic. They do, however, very frequently provide much extraneous information, usually contextual material, not linked to their chosen question. Higher band answers on the other hand are able to select from their contextual knowledge that which is relevant and illuminating. They are also unlikely to draw rather contentious conclusions from the events of a writer's life.

The focus on context in this unit means that there will be particular areas to be explored which go beyond character or 'theme'. The writer's inferred attitudes and values are important here, and it was noticeable that many candidates do not pick up the way that a writer deliberately creates a setting, environment or 'society' which is separate from his or her own life and times. Lower band candidates tend to blur the lines and to conflate the events of the writer's life with the events of those in the text. They very often, for example, fail to register or explore the ramifications of the fact that an author is writing of a time earlier than his or her own.

Where candidates cite critics, they should engage with their views, rather than assuming they are absolute authorities. The phrase 'in the light of this statement' provides the opportunity for candidates to formulate their own interpretations, and to test their judgements against a particular critical view. If they do introduce other critical opinions, they do need to demonstrate convincingly that they have understood the cited reading: in other words it is not introduced simply to meet, as they see it, the demands of AO4.

Hardy: *The Return of the Native*

Q1(a)

Key to this question is a consideration of the concept of tragedy as revealed and explored by Hardy in the novel. Too often the concept of tragedy was seen as the deaths of the characters, and answers focused on a description of incidents which illustrated fate, coincidence, error and decisions. Many candidates examined tragedy in a literary sense, and made effective use, for example, of Hardy's use of classical allusions in his presentation of Eustacia, as well as comments on the structure of the novel. Some candidates convincingly referred to imagery which foreshadowed tragic events such as the pool described as "an eye with no pupil", anticipating Clym's blindness and Eustacia's ignorance of Clym's dream. There was also comparison of Clym and Eustacia with fated, tragic heroes/heroines of classical and biblical mythology creating a sense of foreboding. More reductive answers with a more simplistic view of tragedy described characters' 'fatal flaws'.

Some of the least effective responses were those which worked through tangled formulations of "fate + chance + error" or "coincidence + wrong decision + perhaps fate". There was little reference to Hardy in such answers, with a very limited sense of an author at work. Some responses did work their way through the process of separating one from the other, or showing them as part of an inevitable process *and* avoided retelling large sections of the story. These responses made some reference to the author's techniques, and were also in some cases critical of what they argued to be overuse of fate/coincidence.

More able candidates considered Hardy's belief in a tragic existence at the mercy of fate/force (but not God), which is the main contextual area in the question. Often, however, candidates did not consider why events unfolded as they did and what Hardy might have wanted to achieve by the structure of the novel. Very few mentioned Hardy's possible exploration of how human beings exist.

Q1(b)

The higher band answers looked at the women as a whole, rather than as three separate characters. They were thus able to examine contextual issues of gender, and the opportunities and limitations of women's lives, emotionally and physically in the world of the novel. Most candidates were adept at covering the three linked emotions both structurally and analytically, though 'admiration' was the most difficult. Many candidates referred to Hardy's relationship with his mother and his first wife, not always very productively or sensibly, but some candidates were able to make productive links between Hardy's own experiences and his presentation of women.

The more able candidates explored carefully Hardy's attitude towards his characters by engaging in detail with the text and with Hardy's craft. Candidates were very divided on what they thought 'treated well' meant, with lower bands tending to think that it required only good things happening to the character, but more capable candidates arguing that it was about the level of sympathy that Hardy shows. There were unbalanced essays which edited the question down to "We can view the female characters with..." where the authorial dimension went missing. The majority tried to deal with key words in the statement, with less attempt to respond to "their situation in the society of the novel". Thomasin, the typical, angelic, Victorian woman was contrasted with the wild, dark, romantic, dissatisfied Eustacia. Many candidates agreed it was easy to feel compassion for

Thomasin, but Hardy ensures compassion for Eustacia by her death, and images of her afterwards indicate his attitude. Some argued that Hardy did not present Eustacia as a character to be admired but as one that needs to be understood. Some noted that Thomasin's and Eustacia's situation in society was not so different as neither had parents or siblings, but inhabitants of Egdon reacted differently to them - liking Thomasin but suspicious of the attractive, dangerous Eustacia.

External contextual features such as women in Victorian society, class and the urban/rural divide were used thoughtfully in a number of responses.

Shelley: *Frankenstein*

It was noticeable in responses to both questions that there was a great deal of extraneous biographical, historical, philosophical information included which candidates did not direct usefully to the particular question. Candidates need to be much more selective, and to direct their knowledge accordingly.

Q2(a)

Responses often showed good textual and contextual knowledge. Few candidates, however, commented on the invitation to address the structure of the novel or Shelley's presentation of character and description. There was a tendency for candidates to examine the reasons for some of the issues addressed in the novel without reference to how these ideas were actually treated within the novel: this often became a generalisation of Shelley's reasons for creating aspects of character without commenting on the literary evidence. Such answers did not attempt to engage in any significant way with the phrase 'pleasure in reading', although some did address this, and disagree, their argument being that too many painful things happened in the novel for there to be any 'pleasure', thus demonstrating a rather naïve response.

"Voyage of discovery" was taken in different ways to mean scientific discovery, the sea trip or psychological development. Higher band answers explicitly defined this, referring to actual and metaphorical journeys. "Personal" development was basically confined to how the characters changed, and "moral" development was skimmed over by quite a number of candidates. Most answers focused on Frankenstein and the Creature, exploring moral development in terms of who was right and wrong in their actions throughout the novel with varying degrees of close scrutiny.

Very few candidates took the "voyage of discovery" literally and dealt with Walton and Frankenstein without looking at the notion of moral development. However the vast majority explored the moral progress of Victor and his Creature. Lower band responses remained at the level of character studies or narrative accounts of their development, but higher band answers went on to analyse Shelley's moral intent and the effect of context on her presentation of characters, and drew in philosophical and scientific context to useful effect.

Q2(b)

In response to this question the more able candidates attempted some definition of "society". However, many candidates wrote about families and individuals without really giving a sense of something bigger of which they are the building blocks, or their answers included an implicit consideration of society, but this was never overtly defined or discussed. Too often answers were confined to the De Lacy family

as an example of being benevolent, but also exemplifying society's tendency to judge on appearances. Many conflated society with family, which restricted the scope. Some candidates seized upon shallow and cruel in relation only to Frankenstein and the Creature especially in the lower band answers resulting in narrow, one-sided arguments. Benevolent and supportive were often dealt with by referring to the female characters and Clerval. Only higher band candidates attempted to address the question in terms of values and Shelley's attitudes: for example, prejudice, justice, science, ambition, duty, family, as revealed by her narrative methods. Higher band answers dealt with the complexity and effectiveness of the structure and differing narratives and the effect on the reader, although many candidates limited their responses to the obvious incidents within the novel often failing to comment on Shelley's use of language and structure.

Whilst lower band answers might give a list of features of the Gothic genre, the higher band responses explored Shelley's exploitation of the genre, pointing out that, as a Gothic novel, *Frankenstein* would have been expected to depict a society that is "shallow and cruel". However, there are still large numbers of candidates who, particularly with this novel, present too much non-integrated contextual material that often has little relevance to the question. Darwin and the French revolution are discussed at length with limited reference to the text itself.

Lower band answers tended to rely on a series of examples: 'Another cruel act is... and a benevolent act is...'. They tended to conclude that the 'message' of the novel is not to judge by appearances.

Austen: *Emma*

The more able candidates moved from the consideration of individual characters and relationships to conceptual categories: thinking about Mr Woodhouse, for example, led them to consider the function of dependency in the novel. There were conceptualised answers which linked gender and power to wealth, class, status, personal power, moral codes. Some responses gave very detailed and sophisticated analyses of the position of women in Austen's time (using the events of novel as an example in cultural history) but did not have any sense at all of how *Emma* functioned as a novel to convey any of this. Long quotations were given from a range of sources ranging from Edmund Burke and Mary Wollstonecraft to Sir Walter Scott, but only some of these responses also considered how Austen responded to this context in terms of plot, structure, narrative method or her characteristic uses of language.

Many candidates agreed with the statement with little or no attempt to define its terms, or consider its implications. Not many candidates picked up on the notion of 'appear'. With the majority arguing that women did have the greater control and few pointed out that this so-called supremacy was limited to the home and trivia. The hierarchical nature of Highbury was rather hazy with few really understanding the different levels.

Weaker responses tended to discuss two or three women and what they did in the novel; many narrative and descriptive responses were seen. The role of men, part of the question, was sometimes only cursorily looked at. The ability to comment analytically on Austen's methods, with a grasp of her ironic tone was generally the hallmark of higher band answers.

Q3(b)

Some candidates saw this question as an opportunity to write their “education of Emma” essay instead of engaging with the concept of education contextually. Others included a wider range of references to take in Harriet’s and Jane’s position, but few dealt directly and productively with “indirectly” or “entertainingly”.

Emma obviously played a leading role and was frequently juxtaposed against the talented Jane. Women’s occupations were always limited to marriage, prostitution or being a governess but few condemned Emma for her rash and irresponsible “education” of Harriet. Mr Knightley usually emerged as the moral touchstone and none thought that he too might have some limitations.

Higher band essays often included useful contextual information on the subject and were also able to show how there is education in the schooling sense in the novel – and how that fits into the scheme of things in the book – or not. They considered Harriet’s mis-education under the tutelage of Emma; Emma’s moral and developmental education; examinations of Jane and Emma as to which of them is the better “educated”; “experiential” learning, or not learning. There were some relevant and supported comments on the role of governess. Too many candidates redefined “education” to answer a rather different question: for example, class, love or marriage, and assertions such as “Mr Elton is badly educated” were common.

Many candidates found it difficult to not to present a simple character study of Emma or a narrative account of her “education”. A few answers focussed mainly on Emma but managed to avoid merely giving an account of her development, looking, for example, at her reading habits and highlighting Mr Knightley’s point about her only ever getting as far as having a list of books she wants to read. Candidates still find it difficult to write about Austen’s craft and generally with this text there is very little attention paid to AO3.

Dickens: *Hard Times*

Q4(a)

Most candidates responded well to the word “function”, moving beyond character studies. Quite a few candidates answering this question disadvantaged themselves, in a way that has been previously highlighted, by memorising long critical quotes and the names of critics, then providing an exegesis of those rather than the novel. There was, however, some very focused differentiation between Gradgrind as a Utilitarian and Bounderby as an industrialist, with some aptly selected quotes (for example, the former as ‘square’ and the latter’s ‘metallic laugh’). Candidates also had a good sense of the two worlds being opposed in the novel, and the limitations of the society analysed by Dickens. They responded well to the prompt “powerful condemnation”, and were able to infer Dickens’s own attitudes and values.

Weaker answers failed to understand fully and to distinguish between ‘industrialisation’ and ‘utilitarianism’. On the other hand, some candidates went into too much detail. Almost all recognised Dickens’s purpose in the way the two characters are presented, with the great majority analysing how Dickens’s language shows this, and providing evidence to demonstrate the significance of the structure of the novel.

The phrase “successful members of society” was important, and there was sustained discussion in many responses of what might constitute “success” in Coketown, with some developed contrasts between Bounderby and Gradgrind: most showed what “success” relative to these characters was and also differentiated between them in terms of Gradgrind’s spiritual “reform”. Candidates also questioned the accuracy of the term “success” in describing these characters’ “achievements”. Some essays became Boss versus Worker simplifications, but across bands there was noticeably effective embedding of context and clarity as to how Dickens’ beliefs and convictions shaped the novel. There was a genuine sense of confidence in the majority of responses here, as candidates engaged with the question’s point about success: “The very fact that a greedy, uncaring man such as Bounderby has made it to the top of society is a criticism of the society itself”.

Q4(b)

The word ‘value’ is central in this question, and was tackled by both the higher and lower band responses. However, it was given a range of meanings which proved useful differentiators. These ranged from value as something positive (to be valued), an opposition of absolute values (i.e. Fact vs. Fancy) to, in the higher band responses, value as something attached to certain beliefs, presented and persuasively manipulated by Dickens. Candidates explored Dickens’s use of language to create the joyless environment, responded to his didactic purpose and personal stance on contextual issues, used textual evidence productively to explore the value placed on individual lives and showed some subtlety in commenting on Dickens’s presentation of character.

Some of the best responses examined Dickens’s descriptive talents in response to “bleak and joyless environment”. Significant numbers of candidates did not do this, hence their responses were one-sided and distinctly visuals-free. There was a real sense of drive in many essays - accompanied by some very perceptive examinations of the tortured quality of some the characters, the hypocrisy, the moral “muddle”. Blackpool as linchpin victim was central to many responses.

Candidates needed to deal with both the presentation of Coketown and with making a judgement about the value of human lives. Weaker candidates responded to the question on a personal level only and failed to explore Dickens’s intentions in this novel. A number of candidates gave their prepared “Coketown” or “Circus People” essays without giving much thought to the question.

James: *Washington Square*

Q5(a)

As in question 1(a) candidates were asked to consider tragedy, and the higher band answers attempted to conceptualise this, rather than seeing it simply in terms of what happens to individual characters. Most candidates centred their responses on Catherine’s “tragedy”: this did not necessarily narrow the scope of their response, though it did place greater emphasis on “power and control”. Some candidates, without going into definitions of tragedy, its scope or magnitude, did emphasise the concentrated unpleasantness of Catherine’s mistreatment at the hands of both Sloper and Morris, seen very much as an intrinsic element in the “game” of control/power. Higher band answers considered James’s authorial attitudes with regard to the men’s “villainy” and Catherine’s “victimhood”.

Some candidates really rose to the demands of this question, exploring and analysing the text and its context with confidence and perceptive understanding. The higher band responses saw the link between power struggles in the novel and “the turbulent fifties before the Civil War that set new standards about what constitutes power” for example. Candidates explored the ideas of power and control through James’s presentation of character: “Sloper loses sight of his responsibilities towards his daughter in his determination to conquer Morris”. Most saw the tragedy as what happened to Catherine, with the ‘power and control’ aspect being linked to gender and age.

Lower band answers tended to be quite narrative, describing what happens to the various characters’ particularly Catherine. A number challenged the proposition, suggesting that Catherine ends up happily. Although many candidates commented on context, very few answers examined James’s use of the omniscient narrator, a striking feature of the text.

Q5(b)

There tended to be a focus on devastating, betrayal and manipulation as opposed to how James “unsettles” his readers. Good engagement and knowledge of the text and social factors was demonstrated. Answers avoided focusing only on Catherine, although very interesting and varied conclusions were made regarding whether she should be pitied at the end or indeed had achieved independence from the smarmy and manipulative Morris. One candidate argued that the biggest betrayal is Morris of Catherine, but it is the least unsettling because the reader sees it coming: it is the unexpected betrayal which unsettles the reader. One candidate argued that “The betrayals mean that the book moves uncomfortably away from the conventional love story of the time.” It was pleasing to see candidates exploring genre in their responses. The weakest candidates simply listed various “betrayals” in the novel, with some comment on their effects on characters, particularly Catherine. However, examiners noted a freshness of response in the answers on this text, with more evidence of independent engagement and judgement.

Unit 3a: Shakespeare in Context (6393/01)

General Comments

Generally centres are encouraging their candidates to produce engaged and contextualised essays, which are well presented and often lively, detailed and analytical, meeting fully the requirements of the specification. Centres had set appropriate tasks, which by and large either directed candidates toward the need for context (AO5i) or allowed scope for context to be integrated into the answer. The higher band answers combined original ideas, textual analysis and well constructed argument.

Administrative Issues

Most centres dealt efficiently with the administrative processes and it was heartening to see that a number of centres had made an effort to address the recommendations made in previous Reports to the Centre. However there were cases where the recommendations had been ignored, and therefore the same problems and issues presented themselves as in previous sessions.

It would, however, expedite the moderation process if all centres could observe the following points:

- Work should be attached by staples or treasury tag. Plastic sheets or cardboard folders are not practical. Please encourage candidates to number their pages. Please do not send loose sheets.
- The mark sheets should be filled in, with word counts, candidate numbers, and ticks in the AO box. Missing candidate and centre numbers make identification of folders difficult, particularly in large centres.
- All work should include a bibliography which is a true reflection of critical works actually used by the candidate.
- The marks on the OPTEMS should match the marks on the actual coursework.
- The coursework mark sheet must be signed by both teacher and candidate.
- The coursework should be sent to the correct moderator by ordinary post, not Special or Recorded Delivery, and not using any form of courier where a signature is required.
- Centres must send the work of the top and the bottom candidates if this does not already form part of the requested sample.
- Work of an absent candidate which forms part of the asterisked sample should be replaced by an appropriate substitute.
- Centres should send only the asterisked sample plus any additional candidates' work required, such as top, bottom or substitute coursework: some centres sent the whole sample to the moderator.
- Centres should ensure that the right work is sent to the right moderator: there were several examples this session of moderators receiving both AS

and A level coursework, or the coursework for more than one subject or the coursework being sent to the centre's coursework advisor.

Word Count

Centres are reminded that essays should be approximately 1500 words long, excluding quotations. Most candidates kept to the recommended word count. Some however, had allowed candidates to exceed the recommended word limit. Some claimed that the work had been handed in too late for any revisions/excisions to be made; more common was the claim that the work was too good to be reduced in any way. A small number of candidates submitted work of greatly excessive length: this did not help candidates in writing purposefully and selectively.

Some candidates adopted the practice of falsifying word counts by entering 'approx. 1500 words' for every candidate; at times they made no comment about word counts which clearly did not relate to the number of words actually written. The vast majority of work is now word processed, which means that it is very simple to produce an accurate word count.

Bibliography

There were a substantial number of centres where candidates had produced scholarly, well-sourced and well-presented folders complete with bibliographies. It is important to note that bibliographies are a specification requirement. Teachers should encourage their candidates to provide sources for all their critical quotations, both in the body of the essay, and in the bibliography.

If Internet resources are used, the full address should be given. The phrase 'Some sites from the Internet' does not constitute identification.

Annotations

There are some centres that offer very little in the way of support of the mark they have given. Annotations which simply read "AO1" or "AO4" were again a feature of some centres' marking. Some centres made no comments in the body of the essay, or used only ticks. Occasionally there were so many ticks on a page it was quite difficult actually to read what the candidate had written. Similarly, summative comments ranged from a page of evaluation to a brief comment on the Mark Sheet. However, some centres had clearly and usefully annotated their students' scripts, had made helpful summative comments and showed clear evidence of internal moderation.

The moderator is always trying to support the mark given by the centre and it is easier to do this when teachers have annotated candidates' essays thoroughly and evaluatively, supported by helpful summative comments in which candidates' achievement had been specifically linked to target AOs. It might be helpful to think in terms of two different audiences for annotation: the candidate who might need help or encouragement, and the moderator who needs to know clear reason for the mark awarded.

Where marks have been changed by internal moderation, it is important that the reasons for such changes are explained and clarified. There were several examples of a mark being changed, usually upwards and sometimes quite substantially, but with no explanation given, and with comments that still indicated the original mark.

Internal Moderation

Whilst careful internal moderation of the folders by at least two teachers was undertaken in the majority of centres, with the front cover 'teacher-examiner' box used to document the outcome, there were still a few centres where this process had not been explicitly carried out.

Centres are reminded to mark in bands, not grades. Some centres had already decided what marks equalled what grades, but inaccurately.

Occasionally, marks had been adjusted on the front cover - or even on the OPTEMS - without any clear justification having been given for why the mark had been amended.

Some centres used their own internal moderation sheet, as well as annotating the work. These sheets were generally valuable in clarifying the internal standardisation process, and revealing the processes and reasons for arriving at a final mark. They contrasted strongly with the centres where there was no discernable centre policy on marking, with practices which varied between one teacher and another.

Plagiarism

As in previous years, there were some examples of coursework which centres suspected of being plagiarised. It is important that centres familiarise themselves with the procedures to be followed in these cases. Work should not be sent to the moderator but to Edexcel's Compliance and Legal Services Department. It is not the job of the moderator to enter into this procedure in any way. Centres are also reminded that by signing the cover sheet they are effectively authenticating the work; it follows therefore that if the centre has any doubts they should not sign or submit the work but refer it to the department above.

Tasks

Question setting is crucial in the coursework units. Many centres set tasks which clearly addressed AO5i, but there were some centres which disregarded this assessment objective entirely. They set questions on characters for the most part, sometimes in conjunction with the 'tragic hero' concept mentioned above. Tasks do need to address AO3, and moderators commented that several centres appeared to have lost sight of this in setting questions and assessing their candidates.

One way of ensuring that candidates write about characterisation rather than character, and respond to the writer's techniques, is to include a reference to Shakespeare in the text, with some indication that he is a writer, and dramatist, at work.

Tasks which focus on possible different responses of a contemporary and a modern audience are very popular. However, sweeping generalisations about different audiences do tend to be unconvincing, particularly when they disregard generic conventions. Such comments need to be detailed and grounded in the text.

It is up to each centre and teacher to decide how many questions to set on a text. Some centres rely on one task, where candidates of all abilities were expected to attempt the same task. This is of course perfectly acceptable, but it should be

borne in mind that it is not always beneficial for all candidates to attempt the same task which is often aimed at the higher band candidate. This can mean that work in lower bands becomes very derivative, and that candidates' own independent judgement is discouraged. Differentiation is an important consideration. A proposition that a Band 5 candidate can tackle eagerly and effectively can confound a Band 3 candidate and prevent them from achieving all that they might do.

Moderators noted that it seems to be the practice in a number of centres to teach to the task, so that candidates appear to be following some kind of template, with the same quotations, the same critical snippets, and the same ideas and interpretations. Sometimes all essays follow the same pattern, paragraph by paragraph. This is not an acceptable way to approach the unit, and severely disadvantages the candidates.

Where candidates insist on writing their own questions, teachers need to monitor the terms used in task-setting particularly carefully to ensure that they will properly target the assessment objectives, particularly the double-weighted AO5i.

Assessment Objectives

AO5i

Centres seem to have grown more familiar with the need to address the double-weighted AO5i. There is, however, still some confusion of AO5i and AO2i: the most common problem here was the setting of questions on revenge tragedy in *Hamlet*. The assumption was that this constitutes context. This issue has been dealt with in previous reports, but the point can be usefully reiterated: if an essay explores ethical and political issues of revenge then it is addressing AO5i, but if it merely tests *Hamlet* against a list of features associated with revenge tragedy, then the target is AO2i which is defined as the 'knowledge and understanding' of 'literary texts of different types and periods'. It is quite possible for a candidate to explore productively the interaction between the demand for revenge and its possible political, religious and moral implications and repercussions as presented in this play. An answer confined to a description of the genre, and of Hamlet as a kind of lax avenger, will not be achieving AO5i.

This kind of interpretation tended to be linked to responses which followed very similar lines, with a list of set references - Seneca, Kyd, and Francis Bacon usually - and a line of argument which showed very little variation between candidates, thus also inhibiting achievement in AO4. This relationship of task to assessment objectives was also demonstrated in tasks on *The Winter's Tale* which asked candidates to write about the genre of tragic-comedy. As with the revenge tragedy question, the result tended to be a list of generic features.

Even less helpful is the notion of the 'tragic hero'. This was applied, by a limited number of centres, to *Hamlet*, *The Winter's Tale* and *Antony and Cleopatra*. In every case this produced reductive responses.

Although most centres had addressed the need for context and recognised its double weighting, in a number of centres there was a tendency to try to cover the context at the beginning, to establish that it had been addressed. This had the effect of a historical account of the period, turning the context into a kind of preface, and therefore a bolt on. In such answers, the opening paragraphs were generally unrelated in any way to the particular play which was being studied.

However, many centres were impressive in the way that candidates had been encouraged successfully to integrate context throughout their answers as part of the overall argument.

Many candidates still assert with no evidence what an Elizabethan audience would have felt. Moderators noted that James Shapiro's *1599* had been a productive and positive influence this session, but also suggested that there is still a good deal of use of sources that are clearly not part of the candidates' own reading and understanding.

AO1

Writing was mostly fluent, with a relatively small number of scripts containing lapses of accuracy. Candidates also generally pursued their arguments well, although this was helped when the task required them to focus on and answer a specific and clear question. The fact that these essays are word processed, and can be redrafted indicates that a high standard of accuracy is to be expected. Some centres included no comment on very inaccurate work.

Some candidates wrote as if the characters were real people and Shakespeare was never mentioned. However, most showed awareness of the characters as constructs.

AO2i

Knowledge of texts and genres was generally sound. It was noticeable, however, that many candidates quoted verse as prose. It should be made clear that setting out blank verse as verse is important, and reveals that the candidate is aware that the genre and form of a text is of central significance to its meaning.

AO3

Some centres were still defining AO3 as quotation. "Analysis of language" was often noted where candidates had made only a brief comment. However, AO3 assesses 'detailed understanding of the ways in which writers' choices of form, structure and language shape meanings'. Some essays had little or no attempted analysis of 'writers' choices'.

AO4

The use of theatre or film versions is a valid way to approach other interpretations of the text, in that performances certainly reflect a particular reading. It can, however, occasionally become a problem when accounts of actors' performances become substitutes for the text, thus making AO3 even more restricted. The directors' choices are certainly interpretations, and there is very likely to be some contextual significance in the approach taken, but the text itself does need to remain central. What Branagh or Olivier emphasise in productions and performances needs to be grounded in the text, and set against the candidate's own interpretation.

As has been mentioned in previous reports, AO4 should not depend on a series of critical soundbites, and candidates should engage with critical views cited, and not merely quote them as absolute authorities. They should as always be set against the text, and serve to elicit the candidate's own independent judgement.

Unit 3b: Shakespeare in Context (6393/02)

General

The vast majority of candidates had clearly enjoyed the studied text, of which *Hamlet* was by far the most popular. Candidates had been prepared well for the examination and many were able to integrate relevant contextual factors and evaluation of language into their answers. Writing was generally clear, both in appearance and expression, but there were a small number that were difficult to read, or who abbreviated words excessively.

There were many candidates who stood out for the originality of their ideas and the thought that had obviously been given to the response. In some Centres very similar responses were common, especially in sections that had obviously been prepared such as the analysis of a particular speech.

Many candidates did not use the time efficiently, a number wrote extensive plans and then ran out of time for the essay; others rushed into a response without considering all the implications of the question. It would be useful to make a brief plan, considering the wording of the whole question, before writing the response.

There was a varied handling of context with higher band candidates able to link context into the response throughout, making relevant and pertinent observations. There were a number of responses that lacked any contextual detail at all, which clearly hampers the overall mark, as context is double weighted on this examination. Some candidates began with one paragraph of contextual information listing audience beliefs, or social values of the period before answering the question; whilst this material may have been relevant, although in some cases it wasn't, it needs to be linked to the text and the argument. There were some vague generalisations, such as 'religion was big at the time', which need to be avoided.

There has been an improvement in register, with more formal language being used, appropriate for a literary study. Quotations were, on the whole, handled well, with text integrated effectively into the response. There are still a number of candidates where extracts of four or five lines are being condensed into a single sentence, on occasion without any indication of verse lines. Some candidates did not include any quotations at all, merely paraphrasing the text throughout. A number of responses did not make use of capital letters for proper nouns or titles, such as Hamlet.

Some students had spent a lot of time on videos and stage productions, which showed up on a number of very lively, personal responses, but at times tipped over into Theatre Studies, when different productions were compared, rather than using the text.

A number of higher band responses examined language in the text, using literary terms effectively to develop the argument. There were a large number of responses, however, that did not look at language at all, or use any literary terms in their responses, merely opting to retell the story with a few simple comments.

Very few candidates looked at other critics' views on the play. Some higher band responses did integrate views effectively into their responses whilst some lower band candidates simply listed critical views without any comment on their relevance; this was rare, however.

There were some excellently balanced responses, where all assessment objectives were clearly being met, but there were a number of candidates who did not achieve this balance. There was some really sound analysis of language, but genre was ignored, often referring to the text as a book or novel throughout. There was interesting contextual background material in some responses, which completely ignored language. Those candidates that had provided the most detailed contextual background often produced responses where it was hard to tell if the students had read the whole text. There were some interesting links made between texts, but again an imbalance did occur when every event in a text studied was linked to an event in another Shakespeare text, without rationalising the link, or using it to develop the argument. One such candidate linked Ophelia's death with that of Juliet on the grounds that they were both revenge tragedies.

Question numbers are still omitted from the vast majority of papers and in some candidates cases it is very difficult to tell which question they have answered.

Many candidates chose to ignore a part of the question set, limiting their answer, as a result. The most successful responses looked at all parts of the question and produced a balanced response. Candidates need to address all parts of the question to achieve the correct balance in their response.

Henry V

Q1(a)

There were some very successful responses to this question, addressing how Shakespeare presents the debate of responsibility, but many candidates did not respond to the word 'debate', choosing to look at what responsibilities Henry has. This meant that the debate in Act IV scene 1 was not fully addressed and material from elsewhere was not handled as effectively.

Making contextual detail relevant was a major issue here and there were not many candidates who found contextual links with religion, war or the royalty from Shakespeare's time compared to today.

Sympathetic portraits of Henry were not enough here. While IV.1 should have been very helpful, the different tendencies of Bates and Williams were not always recognised and the quite subtle contextual idea of the religious implications of death in battle was rarely understood; Henry was sometimes wrongly seen as remonstrating with God in his soliloquy. Some students brought together the bishops' scene, Bardolph, dynastic marriage and IV.1 and developed an argument. Much of the time language was not addressed, which made for imbalanced responses.

Q1(b)

There was limited mention of Chorus but a strong emphasis on the figure of the king, including his relationships with varied classes and his speeches. The speeches provided a natural opportunity for language comment; some candidates went beyond this to discuss Shakespeare's purpose - as pointed in 'seeks to' - in terms of structure, especially juxtaposition. One candidate commented on two different film versions which could have been very relevant, but the contextual points needed to be made clearly and in detail. It was often not defined as to whether Shakespeare was raising the public morale of characters in the play or the audience

of the time and this needed to be stated more clearly, developing the contextual material.

Some candidates used this question to discuss the major battle speeches, which was an acceptable approach, although lacking in range. Some focused on how Shakespeare made the French seem disorganised, over-confident and arrogant, compared to the organised and unified English. There was good comment on the use of English, Welsh and Scottish characters and the class divides and how all are brought together, the King mixing with his soldiers.

Antony and Cleopatra

Q2(a)

Even the more modest responses engaged with the scene given and almost universally commented on the role of Menas in failing to persuade Pompey to let him kill the triumvirate. Higher band candidates explored and analysed the wider applications of 'ruthless' and these looked closely not only at Caesar but occasionally at Antony and Enobarbus' fate which was linked to the reality of politics and war, and was successfully integrated into responses. The word 'essentially' did not receive clear attention but the best responses concentrated on the political dimension and saw this as going beyond a biography of Octavius Caesar. Higher band responses examined several scenes, especially Caesar's response to Cleopatra at the end of the play, looking at politics in Egypt too, while lower band answers limited the argument to Rome and tended to list examples of ruthless behaviour.

There was some confusion over the term "ruthless" which severely hampered some candidates. Though some over-emphasised Pompey's 'honourable' response, others gave a subtler account. Some responses linked Antony's treatment of Lepidus to the wider treatment of Lepidus in the play, whilst accounts of the scene as a whole often suggested a good sense of staging and linked what they said to Shakespeare's purposeful structure. Some candidates made very general comments about Cleopatra's political stance, perhaps because they found it ambiguous, a discussion of this ambiguity could have been productive.

There were a number of candidates who did not understand the concept of ruthlessness in politics and could not define the term, let alone relate it to politics in the play, merely giving character studies of Antony, Caesar and Cleopatra, trying to give examples of what they did that was ruthless.

Q2(b)

There were some very interesting answers here, as there was a wide range of perceptions of "greatness". Successful responses took time to define "greatness" and engaged fully with possible interpretations, both by different audiences and by the characters themselves. Many candidates were able to link the nobility of language, especially descriptions of Cleopatra, and the nobility of death, as staged, to the argument. Some used other tragedies to contextualise Shakespeare's own views on greatness. Lower band candidates responded in terms of character and often wrote relevantly, sometimes giving prepared Rome v Egypt responses. Some candidates read the question as referring to the characters, not the play, so ignored Roman values, whilst others took a more conceptual approach, sometimes linked to definitions of the tragic hero. Concepts of greatness tended to focus on power and display, as a result Antony's generosity was rarely taken into account and his badly

managed suicide was held against him. Varied attributes of Cleopatra were considered interestingly, though the barge scene with its plosive consonants and references to Venus tended to make a routine and sometimes overlong appearance. The best essays focused on 'explores' and understood that it means more than 'shows'.

For lower band candidates 'greatness' caused some difficulty, with a number merely listing things that they were great at. Several based their responses to Cleopatra on Enobarbus' descriptions of her, producing critical analysis, and ignoring any actions. Some restricted answers to Antony.

Higher band responses sometimes looked at the ways in which Antony was still regarded as 'great' despite, and even because of, his fall from influence but these were rarer than those that examined the achievements of Caesar in politics and Antony and/or Cleopatra in love, a choice which could easily become a straightforward Rome-Egypt comparison.

Context was implicit more than explicit in some answers although links to Jacobean uncertainties were made, as were some allusions to figures of the time from King James to the Danish ambassador.

The Winter's Tale

Q3(a)

The unusual angle on Sicilia/Bohemia drew some good responses, particularly with those who noted Bohemia's contrasting treatment of hospitality; the Old Shepherd was used purposefully in some essays. Most candidates provided evidence of their knowledge of both 'worlds' of the play, engaging well with 'use of contrasts and/or parallels', although not always both. Higher band candidates identified a range of dramatic devices and imagery used to portray Bohemia, especially in the set scene, with some connections to winter in Sicilia. There was a tendency to focus almost exclusively on Bohemia. The best answers connected the presentational features to an overall understanding of the structure of the text, looking forward to the reconciliation of the two worlds in Act V. Lower band candidates identified straightforward differences; the best explored problems with such a black-and-white approach and engaged with disguise in the set scene and family difficulties in both worlds. Critics were used sparingly but candidates knew their text well and "positive values" often meant more than mere survival. Not all essays addressed the darker side of Bohemia.

As with previous years, it proved to be a text that provided rather limited context for many candidates. One trend is to confuse the religion of the play with contemporary England, commenting on how people in Elizabeth's time believed in the Gods and even the oracle. Contextual knowledge was sometimes effective as was historical understanding when Romance was not confused with Romanticism. Some centres place great emphasis on film versions of this text, resulting in several candidates placing a great deal of emphasis on the appearance of the Queen appearing in the dock in bloodstained garments.

Many disagreed with the statement, largely because pleasant things happened in Sicilia at the end, so there was a feeling that there had to be as many positive values there as in Bohemia. Candidates had some confusion because there was

evidence of good and bad in both countries, which also produced some good arguments.

Q3(b)

The answers given were often pointed and precise, one candidate disagreeing with the question fiercely and arguing that love superseded friendship as the most significant and rewarding relationship and doing so with well adduced evidence exploring the way in which love itself could be varyingly defined and the way in which friendship (Leontes' version) was all too fragile a concept. The majority tended to agree, however, and treatment was strong on Camillo and, if less frequently, on Paulina.

Context again could be strongly used, but language in this richest of plays was not as fully exploited as it might have been.

Many candidates successfully engaged with 'most rewarding relationship' and assessed different types of relationship, predominantly marital, same-sex friendships and servant-master relationships. There were some intelligent explorations of the portrayal of romantic, courtly love versus marital duty and the damage done by women to male bonds! There was, in some answers, too much focus on all-male friendships, with the loss of any focus on Paulina, Hermione and Perdita. Many candidates focussed exclusively on Sicilia, which limited the fullness of their responses. An interesting approach was to consider the definition of 'rewarding' and to explore what the rewards were. 'Significant' was often ignored.

The idea of Shakespeare's portrayal of friendship sometimes proved treacherous to candidates who wrote at length about the early friendship of Leontes and Polixenes and didn't know where to go from there. Some argued that the breakdown of this friendship was at the centre of the play; others that the close male friendship explained Leontes' extreme reaction to his suspicions. Students who used a wider range of material found it easier to develop a balanced argument. The Old Shepherd's welcoming speech in IV.4 was used productively by one student. One candidate pointed out interestingly that Hermione's role in the Paulina/Hermione friendship was important as she needed to have great trust in Paulina's judgement.

Responses to this question sometimes paid limited attention to contextual issues, which might have been addressed through consideration of the different social and gender groupings in the play. There was evidence in lower band responses of merely listing friendships and passing comment on them.

Much ado About Nothing

Q4(a)

There were some carefully constructed essays on honour and shame. Lower Band candidates wrote about episodes demonstrating either honour or shame, and forgot about the idea of "closely bound together".

Many candidates identified honourable values, usually between the men, and a good number recognised that honour and shame are "bound", although some struggled to define "honour". There was some productive exploration of different values: military, family, gender expectations, with a particular focus on Claudio. At times, this went too far as other characters were ignored. Many developed

perceptive arguments based on the honour of social status and the impact of it on trust, loyalty and the effects of shame. Some struggled with the set scene, although most managed to identify quotations containing the words "honour" and "shame". Many candidates struggled to see the relevance of the set scene and wanted to focus exclusively on Act IV scene 1, identifying reactions to Hero, although fewer looked at the effects on Hero, or indeed the effects of shame on any female characters. There was a tendency in some responses to dwell too much on the values of friendship at the start of the extract, which led them away from the main focus. However, others insightfully examined the role of Don John as a dramatic device.

'Honour' was viewed fairly widely and drew interesting ideas on status, male bonding and military success, many chose to look at Benedick's loss of face at being in love, but only a few explained how it related to honour or shame!

'Bound' proved a problem for some students writing on this question, perhaps because the meaning seemed too obvious. This meant that some candidates looked for complex presence in a single character such as Don John or Claudio. On the other hand, contextual issues abounded in this question and were sometimes addressed as separate topics, with some neglect of the play itself. There were some very capable answers with text and language comment used to good effect. Genre was widely ignored, however and there were few responses that looked at 'comedy' and generic features, most found Beatrice a completely unique character, stating the strong female was unknown in Elizabethan times.

Some were not aware that 'Bastard' could relate to status rather than as a term of abuse, in some degree a promising sign of the times, but it did rather limit their understanding of the character.

A number of candidates responded using the specified scene exclusively but without clear focus on the question and others ignored it completely; some argued that Benedick's embarrassment in the scene was a type of shaming. The most successful essays often used Act III scene 2 to discuss contexts of male solidarity and fears of cuckoldry, relating to Don John's plot.

Higher band responses looked at the audience's reaction to the text, whilst lower band candidates completely ignored the idea of drama or audience. There was some evidence of rehearsed and scripted responses for this question.

Q4(b)

Answers were often knowledgeable, and on occasion proficient. Context was secure and there was much evidence of pleasure in the commentary.

Many started enthusiastically on this question, only to find that they could not say much about Beatrice beyond her use of wit. A number of candidates identified independence and confidence as appealing to a modern audience and could define some specific ways in which she is unconventional, although the definition of "modern audience" tended to be rather vague. There was a tendency to assume that a Shakespearean audience would have been appalled by Beatrice and most responses lacked any consideration of Shakespeare's purposes in portraying her in such a manner. An effective technique was to cite examples of Hero's conventional behaviour and contrast it to Beatrice's. Many examined marriage as conventional and examined Beatrice's "change", with some connecting this effectively to the demands of the genre and theatrical convention.

There were some excellent responses that explored modern feminism, women in the work place, women's rights, making Beatrice's appeal to modern audiences very clear, but a number of candidates preferred to write only about the Elizabethan audience's response. While this material was credit worthy, more detail was needed for "modern audiences" as it was a key term in the question.

'Conventional' needed to be addressed as well, and this was generally pursued in terms of varied and relevant social contexts, though a minority of candidates also set her alongside other Shakespearian heroines. Range was a factor in the best essays, which included Act IV scene 1 and the final scene and, sometimes, productively, Act V scene 2. Hero was used as a contrast and sometimes took over the essay, as 'conventional' was simpler to argue in her case. A few candidates did not understand what "conventional" meant.

A number of candidates did not contrast Beatrice with Hero although those that focused exclusively on Beatrice often examined the character well and many candidates cited her final kiss as being significant proof of her submission. Some resisted this and proposed that the real Beatrice survives beyond marriage, a testament to the force of Shakespeare's portrayal. Some used Hero's private freedom to talk compared to her dutifulness in public to reappraise the question, and did so validly. Others did contrast the two ladies more predictably by describing Beatrice's unconventionality rather than 'proving' it.

Hamlet

Q5(a)

There was much material to access for this question; many used a good range of reference, writing about plot, structure, language and staging as well as Hamlet's soliloquies and the revenge imperative. A few dealt almost exclusively with revenge.

There were different interpretations. Some wrote about Shakespeare's preoccupation, some wrote about Hamlet's, and some wrote about both. Many failed to see '*Hamlet*' as different from Hamlet, missing the idea of Shakespeare's obsession with death. As a result some answers were a little restricted, particularly those that were answered using the soliloquies. The best answers looked at death across the whole play, and some interesting responses included some biographical context. Those answers usually explored issues of genre as well, and this gave a balanced perspective. Many responses simply told the plot, giving no response to language, genre or audience.

The content of the set scene, V.2, sometimes led to a list of deaths with a narrative emphasis and observations like: "It was one death followed by another". More philosophically, one candidate observed that 'Death proves fatal to those living.' This approach was symptomatic of a rather general interpretation of 'obsession' as simply 'something there's a lot of.'

Not many candidates considered cultural contexts showing a preoccupation with death, most turning to revenge (which is more a genre here), regicide/fratricide or attitudes to suicide for contextual comment that was locally relevant but not always central.

This question tended to lack answers that probed 'obsession'. Examination of 'preoccupation' was, implicitly or explicitly, much safer territory and much evidence was adduced either, in weaker answers, by a procession of death descriptions (ending with much about Act V) or, in better answers, by Hamlet's soliloquies and his conversation with the gravedigger which allowed linguistic comments. The best of all analysed why the preoccupation became obsessive by looking at the tone and the imagery of Hamlet's speeches, especially in the first soliloquy and the closet scene. Context was used sensibly and the role of the Ghost was examined in relation to Hamlet's mental state.

Most candidates successfully identified a range of ways in which death is presented: the ghost, Hamlet's thoughts on it and the physical deaths. Almost without exception, the character change in Act V and the acceptance of fate was identified. Many engaged with religious influences of Catholicism and Protestantism, which led to some very informed and studious answers. However, too much "contextual" information sometimes clouded the focus on the text. Another tendency was to focus on the preoccupation as being with revenge and, whilst this could be effectively argued, some shifted the focus to an exploration of the play as revenge tragedy, with death playing only a small role in their discussion.

There were also many responses that lapsed into a different question and looked at Revenge, Madness or the Ghost, only returning briefly to the subject at the end. There were some excellent responses, which did consider Shakespeare's concerns as revealed by language and structure and brought in evidence from all parts of the play.

Q5(b)

The higher band answers engaged with the whole atmosphere of 'rotten' Denmark and explored the relation between Hamlet and truth. Textual knowledge was secure although little time was found to bring in critics, but the compensation was a clear understanding of the legal and spiritual contexts especially regarding 'incest', suicide, the ghost and afterlife in the context of contemporary religion and revenge. Candidates also found interesting links with contemporary political intrigue. Answers were refreshing on many occasions in their tackling a certain amount of text with argument and drew reasoned conclusions without being overwhelmed by examples.

'A lying world' needed some discussion here. Often 'lying' was substituted for spying, manipulation and a more general account of the rotten state of Denmark. Audience doubt was addressed intelligently: students considered the Ghost but did not confine themselves to it. Hamlet's madness and Gertrude's awareness/behaviour were some of the other points that were considered. Sometimes the link between lying and doubt was forced so that a few candidates were questioning Claudius's guilt right through to the end.

Some candidates tried to use prewritten responses, but found appearance and reality required a great deal of shaping to fit the question. Higher band responses examined Claudius's presentation as a political leader and the imagery of corruption infecting the whole world of the court, leading to character and audience doubt. Some students discussed 'doubt' in terms of ambivalent feeling, which was a little askew to 'believe', though it might be complementary. Doubt

was sometimes discussed in terms of Hamlet's doubt, which needed careful linking to the audience.

There was a tendency to focus either on lying world or on audience doubt, and the two needed to be combined to produce a full response. Some focussed on audience doubt and examined many examples of ambiguous presentations: Hamlet's madness, the ghost, Gertrude. However exploratory this was, unless it was tied to "presentation of a lying world", it did not fully meet the demands of the question. Some identified examples of lying and spying, but again the connection needed to be made to the reasons for lying and the effects of it.

Lower band responses tended to take a narrative approach and simply list examples of lies, often only covering Act 1, but there were some exceptional responses from more confident candidates, who responded well to the challenge of the question and explored a variety of examples, often making perceptive points on the language of deceit.

Unit 4a: Modern Prose (6394/01)

General Comments

It is worth stressing at the start of this report that there was much that could be described as thorough, perceptive and scholarly - in short folders of real academic substance. There was a sense of engagement with the text in many cases. However, it is also true that a number of essays provided little more than narrative paraphrase which does not satisfy any of the specification requirements.

Administrative Issues

Most centres dealt efficiently with the administrative processes and it was heartening to see that a number of centres had made an effort to address the recommendations made in previous Reports to the Centre. However there were cases where the recommendations had been ignored, and therefore the same problems and issues presented themselves as in previous sessions.

It would, however, expedite the moderation process if all centres could observe the following points:

- Work should be attached by staples or treasury tag. Plastic sheets or cardboard folders are not practical. Please encourage candidates to number their pages. Please do not send loose sheets.
- The mark sheets should be filled in, with word counts, candidate numbers, and ticks in the AO box. Missing candidate and centre numbers make identification of folders difficult, particularly in large centres.
- All work should include a bibliography which is a true reflection of critical works actually used by the candidate.
- The marks on the OPTEMS should match the marks on the actual coursework.
- The coursework mark sheet must be signed by both teacher and candidate.
- The coursework should be sent to the correct moderator by ordinary post, not Special or Recorded Delivery, and not using any form of courier where a signature is required.
- Centres must send the work of the top and the bottom candidates if this does not already form part of the requested sample.
- Work of an absent candidate which forms part of the asterisked sample should be replaced by an appropriate substitute.
- Centres should send only the asterisked sample plus any additional candidates' work required, such as top, bottom or substitute coursework: some centres sent the whole sample to the moderator.
- Centres should ensure that the right work is sent to the right moderator: there were several examples this session of moderators receiving both AS

and A level coursework, or the coursework for more than one subject or the coursework being sent to the centre's coursework advisor.

Word Count

Centres are reminded that essays should be approximately 2500 words long, excluding quotations. Most candidates kept to the recommended word count. Some however, had allowed candidates to exceed the recommended word limit. Some claimed that the work had been handed in too late for any revisions/excisions to be made; more common was the claim that the work was too good to be reduced in any way. A small number of candidates submitted work of greatly excessive length: this did not help candidates in writing purposefully and selectively.

There were a significant minority of essays this year which fell short of 2500, sometimes consisting of as little as 1000 words. It is extremely unlikely that such a short response will satisfy the requirement to be 'sustained' (Band 3 and above) and will not give the candidate sufficient space to develop a considered argument. Centres did not always take these factors into consideration when assessing such essays.

Some candidates adopted the practice of falsifying word counts by entering 'approx. 2500 words' for every candidate; at times they made no comment about word counts which clearly did not relate to the number of words actually written. The vast majority of work is now word processed, which means that it is very simple to produce an accurate word count.

Bibliography

There were a substantial number of centres where candidates had produced scholarly, well-sourced and well-presented folders complete with bibliographies. It is important to note that bibliographies are a specification requirement. Teachers should encourage their candidates to provide sources for all their critical quotations, both in the body of the essay, and in the bibliography.

If Internet resources are used, the full address should be given. The phrase 'Some sites from the Internet' does not constitute identification.

Annotations

There are some centres that offer very little in the way of support of the mark they have given. Annotations which simply read "AO1" or "AO4" were again a feature of some centres' marking. Some centres made no comments in the body of the essay, or used only ticks. Occasionally there were so many ticks on a page it was quite difficult actually to read what the candidate had written. Similarly, summative comments ranged from a page of evaluation to a brief comment on the Mark Sheet. However, some centres had clearly and usefully annotated their students' scripts, had made helpful summative comments and showed clear evidence of internal moderation.

The moderator is always trying to support the mark given by the centre and it is easier to do this when teachers have annotated candidates' essays thoroughly and evaluatively, supported by helpful summative comments in which candidates' achievement had been specifically linked to target AOs. It might be helpful to think in terms of two different audiences for annotation: the candidate who might need

help or encouragement, and the moderator who needs to know clear reason for the mark awarded.

Where marks have been changed by internal moderation, it is important that the reasons for such changes are explained and clarified. There were several examples of a mark being changed, usually upwards and sometimes quite substantially, but with no explanation given, and with comments that still indicated the original mark.

Internal Moderation

Whilst careful internal moderation of the folders by at least two teachers was undertaken in the majority of centres, with the front cover 'teacher-examiner' box used to document the outcome, there were still a few centres where this process had not been explicitly carried out.

Centres are reminded to mark in bands, not grades. Some centres had already decided what marks equalled what grades, but inaccurately.

Occasionally, marks had been adjusted on the front cover - or even on the OPTEMS - without any clear justification having been given for why the mark had been amended.

Some centres used their own internal moderation sheet, as well as annotating the work. These sheets were generally valuable in clarifying the internal standardisation process, and revealing the processes and reasons for arriving at a final mark. They contrasted strongly with the centres where there was no discernable centre policy on marking, with practices which varied between one teacher and another.

Plagiarism

As in previous years, there were some examples of coursework which centres suspected of being plagiarised. It is important that centres familiarise themselves with the procedures to be followed in these cases. Work should not be sent to the moderator but to Edexcel's Compliance and Legal Services Department. It is not the job of the moderator to enter into this procedure in any way. Centres are also reminded that by signing the cover sheet they are effectively authenticating the work; it follows therefore that if the centre has any doubts they should not sign or submit the work but refer it to the department above.

Tasks and Assessment Objectives

The significant majority of tasks set by centres encouraged candidates to focus on the AOs (particularly A04) and enabled them to tease out and comment on the particular qualities of the novel and engage with them in a committed and focused way.

However, some centres continue to set tasks which do not do this. Questions which encourage a narrative or descriptive answer or direct candidates towards a character study do not encourage open and independent responses, and with weaker candidates, can lead to rather facile discussion of the 'people' in the novel rather than an analysis of the writer's method.

Some candidates have difficulty including the views of others in a structured and organic way because the task itself does not encourage this. Some questions still ask the candidate to 'discuss' or 'explore', when a far more appropriate form of words would be along the lines of 'how far do you agree...?'.

The text should always remain at the centre of any response and again tasks should allow for this. It follows that task wording which tends specifically to encourage A05ii should be discouraged unless the focus remains on the text itself, as otherwise, responses can become too weighted towards the socio-political.

Centres which provided a range of tasks, suiting them to the interests and abilities of the individual candidate, encouraged far stronger results from the able and provided clarity and support for those who were less confident.

Candidates need to be aware that A01 is double-weighted in this unit. A number of moderators pointed out that many essays were poorly proof-read with a range of inaccuracies and misspellings. It is vital that candidates realise the importance of presentation in all its forms, and that coursework carries with it the expectation that errors of this sort have no place in a final draft.

Other uncertainties of expression were the use of an inappropriate register for formal writing, poor paragraphing and an avoidance of even the simplest examples of critical terminology. It is not necessary, of course, to pepper the essay with critical jargon (in fact, quite the reverse) but the use of such a simple phrase as 'narrative voice' would have enabled some candidates to focus their work more effectively.

Centres need to be aware that providing a detailed template for candidates to follow, with suggested quotations and references, does not allow responses to show evidence of achievement at A04.

Unit 4b: Modern Prose (6394/02)

All of the set texts are popular with *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* and *Howards End* leading the way. Candidates should be reminded that when responding to the questions they must ensure that they read the proposition or question carefully. In addition to paying specific attention to the instructions to candidates as these are designed to assist the candidates meet the required Assessment Objectives.

Typical lower band responses

Lower band responses often lacked a literary approach (AO1), focused on character sketches, failed to create an argument (AO4) and ignored contexts (AO5ii). Responses that fell into band 1 were often brief, did not respond directly to the question, and the punctuation and spelling were at times inaccurate.

The following response, which was in band 2, indicates a limited approach to question Q1(b). It is descriptive and refers to the text in a rather generalised way:

Pelagia's love for Corelli shows her character changing throughout the novel. She still has the determination even though the war has taken place and still carries on with her daily life in Cephallonia. Also gender role was a fixed practice in Cephallonia, towards the end of the novel, Pelagia is seen wearing trousers and owning a business. This was once abnormal in society as women were not seen outside their homes.

There is some textual knowledge and some awareness of issues but they remain undeveloped and lack precise illustration. Examiners noted writing which was often ungrammatical and inaccurate at this level and this candidate was by no means the worst. She can at least spell Cephallonia, Corelli and Pelagia correctly and she almost gets the author's name right.

On a higher level, band 3, the candidate, in response to Q4(a), is trying with some success to make a point and to support it from the text:

In Chapter XIX (19) we the readers are shown (and not for the first time) how irrational Helen can be. There are almost two sections in this chapter, before Margaret's return and after it. We see the two different sides of Helen's 'odd' behaviour. First we are shown a sense of how childish she can be, "The great Wilcox Peril will never return. To a reader this shows that she is covering up her anguish of being 'jilted' by Paul, but it implies that she is still very emotional over the situation as it is not spoken about in an adult manner. Secondly.....

The link between point and text can be noted here a limited sense of how this episode might relate to other sections of the novel and an emerging awareness of the character as a literary construct by virtue of the references to 'we are shown' and the reader.

Typical higher band responses

A band 4 response is likely to have a clear sense of the literary, in the following extract responding to Q2(b) it was pleasing to see the enumeration of genres on which Atwood draws:

Margaret Atwood also uses realism and forms of fictionalising through first person narrative which includes the use of letters, public records and documents. Different points of view and versions of events and characters are evident through letter writing which can be found in 'Letter X'.....

She is also able to conclude by challenging the terms of the proposition:

I disagree with the statement as I believe that the different viewpoints and versions of events actually enhance the "the sense of fragmentation and confusion" rather than suppress it, it is difficult to know what to believe through the ballad form and letters provided by Atwood.

Some higher band responses incorporated apposite quotations into the discourse to support effectively made points:

Chapter 63 is the end of the ironic "Liberating the Masses" process - "Liberation". Pelagia compares the new atrocities to an anarchic genocide, "as if the Nazis had had only been a police force whose departure was eagerly awaited by the fratricides". Indeed, the Communist ascension is likened to a beast that "emerged from....a state of hibernation". The British supplies that were meant to fight the Nazis were used to "impose" the regime on the people.

This comes from a high band essay responding to 1(a) which really tackled the issues and contexts with considerable confidence and detailed contextual knowledge.

The following response deals with the issue of marriage in *Howards End* and addressed all aspects of the question in detail this essay is a well constructed argument, and is consistently literary in manner:

The issue of class is dealt with through the broad range of characters....

Throughout the novel there is also a large level of class snobbery....

Forster also presents the theme of marriage....Leonard and Jacky' marriageanchors him permanently to the lower classes....Eve and Mr Cahill is a second marriage - although minor to the novel. Through Margaret's scathing comments Forster mocks the pomp of the ceremony - as ridiculous 'a blend of Sunday church and fox hunting'.....The last and most important marriage however is Margaret and Henry's....

de Bernières: *Captain Corelli's Mandolin*

This continues to be a very popular choice and the level of engagement with the text is often very high, although examiners noted a much greater enthusiasm in writing about character than about the wider social and political issues with which the book concerns itself.

Q1(a)

A comparatively small number of candidates chose this question. There was an appropriate knowledge of and reference to contexts relating to the reception of the novel and its portrayal of the communists. The idea of 'caricature' was not universally understood. There was an ability to refer to a range of related passages

with some candidates, who were aware of the meaning of 'caricature', referred to the portrayal of Mussolini and ELAS. A thoroughly literary approach including the ability to deal with the narrative voice, the language used and the use of dialogue characterised higher band answers including references to Hector's use of clichés in his indoctrination of Mandras. Some good responses commented on the irony of Hector's name.

Q1(b)

Despite the considerable popularity of this question and the enthusiasm with which candidates seized upon the opportunity to write about a favourite character, most answers did not address the full implications of the proposition.

The knowledge shown of the post-war section of the novel was often minimal. There was detailed exploration of the early part of the novel and the ways in which even at this stage, Pelagia was an independent woman by the standards of the time. Her love for Mandras was best addressed when the ways in which this was presented through a range of narrative techniques and references were identified and illustrated. Her love for Corelli was dealt with in a more romanticised way. The changes in the place of women and the portrayal of the changes that occurred in Cephallonia after the war and the earthquake were, to our disappointment, either ignored or dealt with in a purely descriptive way. The higher band answers considered such issues as the social/cultural background, Pelagia as a proto-feminist with her father (and her later completion of his work as a doctor and historian) and, after the earthquake, in a domain with Drosoula and young Antonia, together with her symbolic role as a representative of Cephallonia or a Penelope figure.

Atwood: *Alias Grace*

Q2(a)

This was the more popular question on this text. Lower band answers concentrated on a narrative manner, recounting the events of the prescribed chapter and describing the differences between rich and poor. Better responses dealt more analytically with the hypocrisy of the middle and upper classes and the ways in which this was presented through the point of view of the servants. Simon Jordan's own double standards in his dealing with women provided similarly useful material.

Higher band answers observed the beginnings of the links between Mary Whitney and Grace and made useful links to sections dealing with the murders or the hypnotism scene and the question of identity. Higher band responses were also able to deal with the complex relationships between the fictional world of the nineteenth century and the complex narrative techniques that characterised a late twentieth century text. The key word to define this technique was meta-fiction rather than post-modernism on this occasion.

Q2(b)

Lower band answers tended to answer this question by dealing with Atwood's interest in the Grace Marks story and the different ways it was presented by referring, for example, to the ballad, contemporary newspaper reports and Susanna Moodie's *Life in the Clearings*. Higher band answers were further characterised by knowledge of, and the ability to identify and use, the different voices and variety of sources including the different language styles used. Really

enlightened answers were able to challenge the proposition successfully and create interesting and sometimes original arguments. The references to dreams and the embroidery motifs were used successfully and many answers referred to Grace's own asides in which she admitted to being economical with the truth. Many good answers dealt successfully with the fragmentary structure of the novel and the ambiguities which this proposes.

Murdoch: *The Bell*

Q3(a)

Lower band answers were often content to deal with mere exemplification of the 'comic' or 'frivolous' only occasionally making straightforward comparisons with the more serious sections of the chapter and of the novel as a whole. Good answers were able to perceive that the episode was being described through Dora's perspective, at first as a distant spectator, later as someone directly involved with the rescue of Catherine. The comic portrayal of the various participants in the celebrations and the shift into the more serious account of Catherine's attempted suicide did not escape anyone's attention but references to details in the writing with effective quotation characterised higher band answers.

Q3(b)

Lower band answers dealt with the two sermons in a fairly descriptive way, drawing fairly obvious contrasts. Another popular approach was to provide a character study of James. Many answers spent as much time dealing with Michael as with James. This approach might be inferred from the proposition, but the question itself makes it clear where the emphasis should lie. Higher band answers were not only aware of the key term in the question: 'moral force', but were able to provide insightful analysis of matters dealing with sexual morality, religion and philosophy.

Forster: *Howards End*

This remains a very popular text with a large number of answers to both questions with Q4(a) being the more popular choice.

Q4(a)

Lower band answers showed a very selective approach to proposition and question and provided a character sketch of Helen. A more considered approach was to see Helen as a literary construct used by Forster to highlight oppositions such as Charles v Helen, Helen v Margaret and Schlegel v Wilcox as well as issues such as social class and the role of women in the early twentieth century. The idea of 'the family foe' was largely ignored at the lower level. However, those who perceived the essential opposition in values between the two characters were suitably rewarded. Passages referred to effectively were the opening chapters depicting the initial contact between the two families, Helen's dramatic intervention with the Bastards at Evie's wedding and the final scenes when Helen and her baby are in possession of Howards End. Some candidates were able to deal successfully with the epistolary conventions employed in the novel's opening chapters. The scenes relating to the stolen umbrella and the Beethoven concert were also used quite frequently to illustrate features of Helen's behaviour and responses to the music. These passages were also used in response to the (b) question to demonstrate features of class. The prescribed chapter was noticeably underused. Examiners noted that some

candidates used the 'only connect' essay as the basis for their answer. They would also like to point out that merely repeating the point made previously in a quotation is not very helpful or effective in developing an argument.

Q4(b)

The key words in the proposition enabled candidates shape a basic argument. The ability to deal with all three terms was a discriminator with marriage often being treated very briefly. The ability to perceive and discuss the fine gradations in the class structure in the early twentieth century usually identified a higher band answer. There was some excellent knowledge of historical and social contexts as well as of the author and his circumstances and these could be related effectively to the proposition. A methodical approach to class, property and marriage in turn was a valid approach. Some more adventurous answers integrated issues, seeing and discussing the links between marriage and class in the early chapters where Helen's social status as a possible spouse for Paul is debated, or the sections where Leonard and Jacky's marriage is presented. Another approach linked properties and attitudes towards them with social class. Although some answers only dealt with *Howards End*, others brought in the various locations inhabited by the Schlegels, Wilcoxes and the Basts and linking them in the main to social class. Examiners noticed that *Howards End* was the text in which candidates quoted named critics most frequently and these references were often little more than lists or token references. An approach which relates the candidate's own personal response to the topic was much to be preferred.

Achebe: *Things Fall Apart*.

Q5(a)

This was a popular question with the readers of this text and many responses achieved a high level. A key discriminator was how candidates used the prescribed chapter. Whether or not 'rigid' and 'fragile' should be related to Igbo society or Okonkwo was addressed by many candidates. At worst this led to a character sketch of Okonkwo; at best it led to a debate about his place in society and hence a more thematic approach. Some saw him as a flawed Shakespearean hero. Many candidates were aware of the contexts of the novel's composition as a nation-founding postcolonial text. Good knowledge of issues such as religion, leadership, ceremony, ritual, African myth and the roles of women characterised good answers.

Q5(b)

The focus on change and rebirth was appropriate although limited. The references to colonisation and family relationships provide another valid focus. Some candidates dwelt on the topic in relation to Okonkwo's response to colonialism making some links to Igbo culture generally, not always noting the complexity of 'historical decay, continuity and rebirth', taking the issues rather too literally. Higher band answers dealt with the historical and literary contexts which they were able to root firmly in the novel.

Unit 5: Poetry and Drama (6395)

General

There were some excellent answers on this paper and candidates had been well prepared. The most successful candidates are the ones who chose their poems, or their extracts from plays, or the quotations they use, in the light of the question. They chose what works best, not what they have just been revising. They also read the question closely. Many candidates often seem to have a heavy burden of knowledge that they feel they must off load in their responses regardless of the question.

Section A: Pre-1770 Poetry

Chaucer: *The Merchant's Prologue and Tale*

Q1(a)

This question asked how contextual knowledge enriches the readers' understanding of the poem by taking their response beyond simple amusement, and therefore addressed the leading assessment objective of the unit (AO5) very directly. There was evidence of much knowledge - terms such as *senex amans*, the *fabliau* tradition and courtly love appeared very often - and the best answers applied it well. The wedding night was the given scene and candidates responded to it with feeling. Chaucer's grand-daughter Alice who was married in her teens to a much older Duke of Suffolk was often used as an illustration of a mediaeval arranged marriage. One candidate wrote: "The depiction of May and Januarie's wedding night could easily be one from the present time as we see an older man prey upon a younger, more beautiful woman with distasteful results," illustrating a successful and involved response, recognising how Chaucer works in the modern age. Answers explored the term "simple amusement" to discover that, when the Tale does offer amusement, it is far from simple: the jokes at the expense of the courtly love tradition, the blending of Christian and pagan elements, the subservient relationship of Pluto to his ravished bride Prosperpine, the word plays on wax, blindness and small green pears were all picked up by discriminating candidates who saw the rich blending of subtlety and coarseness in the Tale.

Q1(b)

The question was about May: was she cold and calculating, as mediaeval moralists might have found her, or should we as modern readers celebrate her ingenuity? Apart from a very few answers that did not understand ingenuity this was answered well. Candidates had a natural sympathy with May - as they had in 1(a) - and grand-daughter Alice was mentioned here too. The better marks tended to go to candidates who picked out the phrase "Chaucer's depiction of May" and therefore did not simply write about May as if they were in her position and she was a real person, but detected Chaucer's and the Merchant's voices telling the Tale. The wedding night scene (or the "scene of marital rape" as it was often called) was used a great deal in this answer too and equally popular was the scene in the garden, with a number of candidates saying that May is again being used here, with a short and loveless sexual encounter in the pear tree.

Milton: *Selected Poems*

There were too few answers to these questions to enable general comment in this report.

Edexcel Poetry Anthology

Q3(a)

Shakespeare's famous sonnet, beginning "My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun" (number 130) was given as a starting point in the *Anthology* question 3(a). Candidates were given this opinion to reflect on: "When Shakespeare rejects conventional similes and declares instead that his mistress's eyes are 'nothing like the sun', he finds a voice that speaks clearly and directly to his readers." Then came the injunction to use 130 as a starting point and examine at least two other poems and "consider how different poets have found clear and direct voices."

The most popular poems chosen to accompany the sonnet were the ballad, "Sir Patrick Spens" and Sarah Egerton's "The Emulation". They worked well: candidates could illustrate finding a clear and direct voice by referring to the oral tradition of ballads and the speaking voices of the mother and her sons. "The Emulation" also fits with its wonderful challenging vocal opening, "Say, tyrant Custom, why must we obey / The impositions of thy haughty sway?" It is quite possible to argue that *any* poem in the *Anthology* has a clear and direct voice. The popularity of these two poems could be put down to the fact that they have appeared previously in examination papers, "The Emulation" was the given poem in June 2004 and "Sir Patrick Spens" in June 2005 and therefore candidates have become familiar with them in preparation for the current examination.

The point is there were candidates who produced more nuanced answers, picking up on the first part of the quotation in the question - about the rejection of conventional similes. These candidates explored this point first of all in Shakespeare's sonnet. They tended not to be the candidates who saw Shakespeare's poem in simple terms, about his love for an unfortunately ill favoured woman, but as a literary joke, a satire, a satire even of some of Shakespeare's own love poetry in which he eschews the trappings of linguistic finery and ends with the clear direct voice of the final couplet. And these answers moved on to, say, Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress", another poem rejecting the approaches of the conventional wooer and playing with wit. This is not a case of a particular choice of poem being wrong. Candidates next year should not avoid writing about Shakespeare's sonnet if it fits their answer, and there will not be any prejudice against them if they do, but they should avoid going into the exam room determined to write about it at all costs.

Q3(b)

The question was about poets employing different methods but invariably finding something to celebrate, though that celebration often comes after a struggle. Answers were sometimes rather content driven, candidates as ever finding it more difficult to write about form or method. As with question 3 (a), "The Emulation" and "Sir Patrick Spens" were popular choices, possibly because they were known well known though they might at times be a rather procrustean fit to the answer. There were some excellent answers using Milton's sonnet on his blindness, Herbert's "Love" and, a less obvious but quite subtle choice, allowing candidates

to explore the appropriateness of the assertion, Drayton's "Since There's No Help".

Eight Metaphysical Poets, ed. Dalglish

Q4(a)

Donne's "A Valediction: of weeping" was given as the starting point poem in a question that invited candidates to look at imagery in poetry ("we are constantly reminded of the age of exploration in which this poetry was written.") There were some interesting responses from candidates who said that the seventeenth century age of discovery was one very much like our own and related to the poetry in that way. One quoted from Jo Shapcott and Matthew Sweeney's introduction to their anthology of contemporary poetry *Emergency Kit* - "It occurs to us that, just as Donne and Marvell were compelled by the discoveries of their time, so the poets in this book are responding to or reflecting the surprises of ours." Donne's playful use of scientific exploration was referred to: the conceit of the moon drawing up the sea in the given poem and his apparently geocentric view of the universe in "The Sunne Rising" being examples. Geographical locations were mentioned, such as the Indian Ganges in Marvell's "To his Coy Mistress", as well as more visionary and metaphysical locations, as when Vaughan saw Eternity "the other night". One candidate made very good use of Herbert's "Affliction", which describes the temptations, the hedonistic delights and the opportunities opening out to a young man on his journey of discovery through life: "Such starres I counted mine: both heav'n and earth / Payd me my wages in a world of mirth."

Q4(b)

This, as a gender based question, was very popular. The assertion given was that metaphysical poetry treated men and women as equals. These poets did not put women on pedestals to be worshipped from afar. All who tackled this could make some sense of it: it was a very accessible question. There were debates over "She's all States, and all Princes, I" and different interpretations. Most felt it put women in an inferior place, under the rule of men, but not all. Here is an example of the other side of the argument: "Donne puts himself distinctly in second place here, well after the caesura. The line begins asserting her importance; he is delighted to be her prince, but only a prince, not a king, and without her territory he would be nothing."

Pope: *The Rape of the Lock*

Q5(a)

This text is increasing in popularity, year by year, perhaps as centres feel more at home with the style of question being asked on it. This one was about Belinda: candidates were asked to examine the point of view that Pope portrays Belinda as an innocent in a world of treachery. "The sometime naïve ingénue does not hold back in the fight where woman fights against man with sexual confidence and aggression," wrote one answer. The best focused on Pope's rather ambiguous portrayal of Belinda, rather than Belinda as a real person which tended to lead to mere character study. Many answers were able to make some comment on the double entendre in the last two lines of the given passage, "Oh hadst thou, cruel! Been content to seize / Hairs less in sight, or any hairs but these!"

Q5(b)

This question, on the nature of Pope's so called "trivialities", produced interesting responses. Most recognised that what was presented as trivial was far from being so, and were alert to ambiguities. Belinda's toilette featured in answers with "Puffs, Powders, Patches, Bibles, Billet-doux" often quoted as a line which shows Pope's deliberate commingling of the serious and the trivial. "The fact that bibles are only placed in the middle suggests muddled priorities, as if they are lost among the cosmetics. It also suggests she feels protected and empowered by her beauty regime." Some answers wrote about Pope as suffering from Pott's disease - as a result he could not enjoy the luxury and flirtatious element of the court, but excessive autobiographical detail was not always helpful.

Section B: Post-1770 Poetry

Tennyson: *Selected Poems*

Q6(a)

It is pleasing to note the degree of engagement with the text that was seen in the response to this question. The question asked candidates to consider whether or not Tennyson gave equal consideration to the emotions of both men and women despite his "conventional Victorian view of male dominance". As it is such a large collection of poetry candidates were not given a single starting point poem but given the choice of any appropriate poem from "The Princess". Candidates were not necessarily expected to have read all of the of "The Princess" as this collection only includes the Songs from it; however candidates who were aware that these Songs collectively presented a conventional picture of women's roles (in contrast to the unconventional heroine of the longer poem) used that knowledge well in their answers.

Q6(b)

Not surprisingly "Mariana" featured repeatedly in these answers on Tennyson as a poet who could read meaning into landscape. One examiner commented that he had found a single candidate only who had read the opening line correctly - as flower-plots not flower-pots. Another described the responses she had received as exemplary because landscape was seen not just as symbolic but mentally real and quoted one typical example: "The personification of the sheds gives us insight into Mariana's mood. She is a prisoner in her own home and her own mind. She is detached from the outside world and her own past self." As with so many answers, selection of poems was a significant factor in the success of answers, often influenced by what candidates had written about before: "Crossing the Bar" was a popular choice.

Yeats: *Selected Poems*

Q7(a)

In fact this very disturbing poem worked very well and produced engaged responses. Almost all candidates placed the poetry into its context with pleasing assurance. They had a confident grasp both of Yeats's fascination with, and use of, myth and his response to the growing political problems in Ireland. They made good

connection with "a terrible beauty is born", the oft and appropriately quoted line from "Easter 1916".

Q7(b)

There were fewer answers on this question on Yeats's love poetry. This maybe because the Celtic twilight poems are perceived to be more difficult to write about contextually, though those who chose them found some mileage in writing about the conflicting worlds of love and politics in Yeats's poetry and how he expresses feelings powerfully and directly.

Duffy: *Selected Poems*

Q8(a)

As ever Duffy was a very popular choice. The only drawback with Duffy as an exam text is that candidates are sometimes so taken up with the content of the poems that they neglect other issues, focusing on what is said rather than how it is said. However most do not do this and this question about Duffy making her readers confront "a new and startling realism" was handled well. "Those who really demonstrated how Duffy used form and diction to startle and compel her readers produced some magnificent answers," wrote one examiner and her response was typical of many. There was a tendency however for some candidates to present prepared analyses of poems with the phrase "new and startling realism" tagged on at intervals. The higher band answers responded to the assertion in the question closely: it was about how Duffy *made her readers* confront this realism, not just about poems being realistic. The realism was also described as new and startling, so the higher band answers were the ones that investigated how Duffy startles her readers. "Lizzie, Six" was an example that worked really well here.

Q8(b)

"Standing Female Nude" worked very well in response to this question (on the dramatic monologue) and was often selected, candidates enriching their answers by demonstrating some applied knowledge of Georges Braque and cubist painting. They needed to concentrate on form however and how the speaker is "brought vividly to life". Candidates often mentioned Browning, and how Duffy gave new life to a Victorian form. One examiner reported "there was a good deal of contextual material on Thatcher, lesbianism and feminism, sometimes well integrated, sometimes an undigested lump." Occasionally candidates made inappropriate choices as the poems they wrote about were not dramatic monologues at all. However the overall picture was very positive and as with 8(a) the answers that picked up on the detail in the question, applied the contextual knowledge appropriately and wrote about form were often superb.

Larkin: *The Whitsun Weddings*

Q9(a)

The assertion was made that "women are dismissed as insignificant in Larkin's poetry" and candidates were invited to respond. "Afternoons" was given as a starting point and on the whole was used very well, the more astute candidates focusing on the key words in the question "dismissed" and "insignificant". They saw shades of meaning here: women might be seen as less significant as men for example (after all it was the men who were in *skilled* trades) but the tone of the

poem was not totally dismissive. Women were seen as significant, but in the role of mothers, pushed to the side of their own lives. "Sunny Prestatyn" frequently appeared and again candidates were able to consider whether "insignificant" was the right word to use as clearly the girl in the poster had produced such a remarkable effect (some argued here that it was advertising itself that was being dismissed). Marks & Spencer in Hull was often referred to as the source for "The Large Cool Store", where Larkin was to be discovered inspecting women's nightwear, but on the whole candidates avoided the trap of talking about Larkin the man, the women in his life and his alleged misogyny, and concentrated instead on the poems themselves.

Q9(b)

"There were some outstanding answers here," was a comment from more than one examiner on this question. It required candidates to balance two concepts - Larkin the master of the exact descriptive phrase, and Larkin getting his readers to ask fundamental questions about the world they live in. Some found the second concept difficult and answers tended to flounder as a result, but most could see that a poem like "Mr Bleaney" pins down an exact situation and then moves on from there to make the reader think about "how we live". "An Arundel Tomb" was also a popular and well used choice, many candidates judging the tone of the last line of the collection, "What will survive of us is love", exactly.

The Heinemann Book of Caribbean Poetry

Q10(a)

Many answers rejected the proposition in the question, that poetry makes sense of the present by not letting go of the past, arguing that these poets reject history and look to the future, wanting a new beginning. Form was seen as part of this attitude: irregular stanzas, lack of conventional punctuation, rejection of the confining structures of the oppressors and their Standard English Literature. "Nation language" was used as a demonstration of this refusal to conform to traditional "poetic" style. Many answers handled this well, "Letters from Home" (Faustin Charles), "Patriot" (Cyril Dabydeen) and "Pan Recipe" (John Agard) being popular choices. Less successful were responses that said all this without exploring the language and style of the actual poems; features were sometimes listed without examples.

Q10(b)

Candidates were given the observation that the collection "creates a world populated by characters who argue with one another, fight with one another and love one another. But whatever they do, the poetry depicts it with passion." Again a number of responses disagreed with the observation: some said that Caribbean people are united by their shared history of colonial oppression and are too busy fighting this legacy to fight among themselves. Others stated that many poems do not show "passion" but can be calm, detached, unexcited; or agreed that yes there is passion but also much else besides. Popular choices included Jane King's "Hymn" (one interesting answer recognised its eroticism but also went on to write about its "passionate blending of cultures") and Marina Ama Omowale Maxwell's "Our Revolutions Must Be Different" which encouraged candidates to write about performance poetry. Contextual awareness and understanding of form marked the best answers from candidates who could not only talk about the diaspora or dub poetry but link this to specific poems and thereby enhance their analysis.

Heaney: *New Selected Poems*

Q11(a)

It was originally thought that perhaps not all candidates would fully understand the word “compassion” (which was described as a driving force in Heaney’s poetry)? Therefore, to ensure they did, the term was further explained in the question - Heaney seeks “kindness and pity in a cruel world”. There were still a few who interpreted it as meaning “passion” but they were a distinct minority. The given poem “Limbo” was well and sensitively handled: answers noted the bitter satirical edge to the references to religion. An interesting twist to the history of the setting of this question was that some candidates argued that Heaney shows compassion but does not seek answers, querying the second part of the statement (which was originally conceived merely as a helpful gloss.)

Q11(b)

Candidates were asked to consider how Heaney’s poetry finds significance in situations “which society often overlooks or takes for granted.” As always with Heaney, contextual knowledge, handled sensitively, was beneficial and led to an enriched comprehension of the poems. Many candidates wrote about “Strange Fruit”. Some linked it to the Billie Holiday song of the same name, which they knew was inspired by a photograph of a lynching in the American South, and noted how this song was denounced by some of the media as a piece of musical propaganda while the rest of the world overlooked it; some showed a knowledge of the first century BC and Diodorus Siculus’s accounts of the Germanic tribes; some knew about Denmark’s fourteen year old Windeby girl. And some knew about all of this and could blend it together without losing sight of the poetry or its contemporary significance.

Section C: Pre-1770 Drama

Shakespeare: *Othello*

Q12(a)

The *Othello* question showed some of the benefits of coming at a question fresh, especially when this, the most popular question, offered such a challenging proposition - that, in the morally chaotic world of the play, love can be more destructive than hate. The best answers saw that this proposition contained two ideas together- one that the fictive world of the play was somehow upside down, “morally chaotic”, and that this led to the second idea, the paradoxical idea that love can be more destructive than hate. They looked at a range of characters too, including of course Desdemona’s love of Othello - surely absolutely central to the play but often amazingly completely overlooked - and to a lesser extent Emilia and Bianca’s love. There were some candidates however who only wrote about the love of Othello and the hatred of Iago and as a result reduced any subtlety and originality the question might have had to a very straightforward almost self-evident issue: it is Iago’s hate that is destructive because without it Othello would still have loved Desdemona. These were also very character based responses, missing out on the opportunity to explore the first part of the proposition that underpins the second part. One examiner wrote, “Character study based responses, often based on the Leavis / Bradley debate, have to be stretched to accommodate a question like this, but those answers which talked about race, or the relationship between Venice and Cyprus seemed much more in tune with the assessment

objectives and the style of the question here." A05 (context) is, of course, double weighted in this unit.

Q12(b)

This question was about the need of those in power to obey the social and moral conventions of the day. "If they do not," the proposition continued, "the state itself becomes threatened". Many answers limited their response on "those in power" to Othello himself (miscegenation was an often and correctly used term) and sometimes Iago. When the Duke and Cassio and Lodovico were included this was often done very well. Brabantio was a particularly interesting example when he was used. One answer said: "Brabantio, an influential Venetian, argues strongly for the Duke to take heed of his case. He warns to the senate to follow the moral standards that would have been upheld by the vast majority, but Shakespeare presents him as failing, and the state rejecting him. This leads to his angry rebuttal, "So let the Turk of Cyprus us beguile, / We lose it not so long as we can smile", made all the more mocking by the rhyming couplets used to imitate the Duke. We see a powerful man following common moral standards and yet threatening the state by accusing their best general. This is an interesting variation of the scenario presented in the assertion."

Another candidate wrote "Cassio, a man in power, threatens the state by both conventional and unconventional behaviour. He follows conventions by taking a mistress. She suggests marriage. He, conventionally, laughs at the idea. But it is this laughter, this following of convention, that Othello overhears. Here Cassio's conventional behaviour leads to disaster. His unconventional behaviour also leads to a threatening of the state and personal tragedy when he steps out of line by getting violently drunk and disgracing himself in front of his subordinates." There was some clever use of the ironic significance of Iago's drinking song, "'tis pride that pulls the country down."

Marlowe: *Dr Faustus*

Q13(a)

If miscegenation is the most often used word in the Othello answers, psychomachia was the most popular here. And appropriately used too - the question was about Faustus's "self inflicted inner conflict" and its dramatic presentation. The assertion claimed it is conveyed with a "poetic and psychological intensity" that speaks as dramatically to the modern audience as it did to Marlowe's own contemporaries. The question differentiated answers well: most could make something of Faustus's self inflicted inner conflict. But the higher band answers saw the play as a play, put themselves in the audience, and listened to the poetry - all the concepts that are involved in the assertion which are at the heart of this play. One examiner said, "Some answers used the question to tell the story but the more able candidates picked up the word 'language' and wrote very well indeed. They saw the intensity of the poetry and the intensity of the drama and brought the two ideas together with much close reading and subtlety."

Q13(b)

Whether this is a play about secular or religious conflict was at the heart of this question, the assertion being "the play reflects a world of social intrigue and political scheming rather than of religious conflict". Candidates often felt that religious conflict could not be separated at all from social intrigue and political

scheming, as religion is so inextricably wound up in politics and the social fabric. Many pointed out that Faustus wished at first to have great worldly power, but when confronted with the Pope and the Duke he simply plays silly tricks, and in fact gains no earthly power at all. One candidate wrote: "Marlowe uses the character of the unnamed knight to replicate something of the lively banter and intrigue that would have gone on at court. The knight takes every opportunity to discredit Faustus ... Faustus retorts with the story of Actaeon then uses his magic to discredit the knight. There are similar social power struggles and collaborations in the comic scenes, with examples such as the newly literate Robin who can use his power to help Rafe seduce the kitchen maid."

Another wrote: "The Seven Deadly Sins scene gives us the sense of a rising up of an underclass and a new freedom - Gluttony's parents are dead and he is left with a pension of thirty meals a day. His background mixes the respectable and the not so respectable - he comes of royal parentage, yet his godmother, Mistress Margery March-Beer was well-beloved in every town." Another wrote that Marlowe appears to be mocking this "middle class" that Faustus has joined, where he cannot converse freely with the upper class yet cannot do any menial task himself. He sends Mephistophilis to fetch grapes for the duchess - he appears to be a servant who can only rely on a servant to succeed." It was good to find students exploring the comic scenes and not just seeing the play as a collection of soliloquies. Valdes and Cornelius are often overlooked, but not by this answer: "Faustus knows he needs them to help him with his task and carefully manipulates them, calling them gentle friends, inviting them into his world of social intrigue. He claims he wants to be as cunning as Agrippa; he wants them to believe he will use his powers for important, respectable purposes."

Webster: *The Duchess of Malfi*

Q14(a)

The assertion claimed that virtue has no power to defend the innocent against the cruelty and corruption of the wicked in the world of the play and asked candidates how far they agreed. A number of answers saw this as a question about good and evil characters and wrote a series of straightforward character sketches in response, but others were able to explore "the world" that Marlowe creates and this made quite a difference to the quality of the answer. One wrote, "Webster presents us with a world where good and evil, virtue and corruption, have ceased to function, where the rich and evil are raised to high office," and this way of seeing the play, as opposed to a simple character based approach, proved very productive. Of course, successful answers still wrote about characters, often querying the term "virtuous" and asking if it was totally applicable to the Duchess, but they also latched onto the idea of virtue in the abstract as presented in the question - the issue of virtue having no power to defend itself - and saw how virtue was presented in the play, quoting for example Antonio's "I have long served virtue / And ne'er ta'en wages of her" and the Duchess's reply, "Now she pays it." One wrote "The duchess outwits her brothers by achieving the eternal salvation of Heaven. Her virtue has defended her soul against Ferdinand's attempts to make her fully despair."

Q14(b)

This question was about the inevitability of the play's outcome and how this inevitability, not so much the violence of the society being portrayed, is what appals the modern audience. Candidates approached this in a variety of ways:

through genre - it is a revenge play; through the semantic field of darkness, violence, power and revenge that the play presents us with; from the idea of outside forces, whereby individuals are doomed from the start; and because the play's characters are taken from historical figures. All of these approaches, usually in combination, worked well. The subject of violence as entertainment was well aired, some feeling that the Jacobean audience, accustomed to public hanging, drawing and quartering, was more hardened to the violence, while others felt the modern audience was more accustomed to graphic images of a horrific nature. The play's outcome was not seen as entirely hopeless, with the succession of the Duchess's son and the remorse of Bosola.

Congreve: *The Way of the World*

Q15(a)

It was suggested to candidates that, despite the comedy, Congreve forces even a modern audience to attend to deeply serious matters. They were invited to say how far they found this to be the case using the beginning of Act IV as a starting point. This includes the comic passage of Lady Wishfort's preparations to make a good impression on "Sir Rowland" (in reality the servant Waitwell) followed by the famous proviso scene in which Millamant and Mirabell stipulate the rules of their marriage. This scene helped candidates establish the satirical tone of the play and successful answers were able to comment on the poignancy of the fifty-five year old matron trying to look young and the pathetic nature of her decision to "loll and lean upon one elbow, with one foot a little dangling off, jogging in a thoughtful way." As one answer explained, "her self image does not, comically and very sadly, match the way she actually appears, and this self deception is matched by that other deception, the non-existence of Sir Rowland. It is a plot that borders on cruelty if it were not for the serious topic of Lady Wishfort's hypocrisy." Answers responded well to the proviso scene. One described it as "a very modern exchange touching on the deeply serious issues of equality and the freedom to be oneself within a partnership." In contrast to this, some answers suggested that Congreve's dialogue is often too flippant to suggest any sort of genuinely deep seriousness.

Q15(b)

This was a question about the importance of reputation in the play. The assertion suggested that the idea that appearances are everything "presents a problem for the modern audience". Candidates tended to agree that appearances were important in the play but not all-important, and often used the beginning of Act IV. They commented on the juxtaposition of the visual humour of Lady Wishfort's preparations for meeting Sir Rowland and the proviso scene, where appearances were far from being everything, and in so doing took issue with the assertion. Love was regarded as having supreme importance in the play and evidence was given to show it was a very modern play, the proviso scene again being used as an example of this. The significance of appearances was not, however, overlooked: "Millamant knows she must marry in order to have a reputable life. Mrs Fainall will remain married to her despicable husband for reputation's sake." Nearly all the answers dismissed any idea that the play was just about fops. However, had they thought so, and argued the case well, their views would have been listened to.

Farquhar: *The Recruiting Officer*

Q16(a)

"Part farce, part social history and part pacifist propaganda" was the description of the play offered to candidates, with the question "how far do you find this a helpful way of looking at the range of Farquhar's play?" Candidates were quick to spot the issues - the position of women in society, marriage, urban versus country life, the relationships between rich and poor, the unfairness of the law, and knew that contemporary critics took issue with the play's supposed anti-military elements. Candidates were also aware of Farquhar's contribution to the contemporary debate on marriage and divorce. Many answers focused on gender: "Plume will not duel with Brazen over Melinda but will do so over Silvia when she is disguised as a man. Thus, as a man, Silvia takes on a new-found importance and power."

Overall the given scene Act V, scene I, persuaded answers that farce takes precedence over gender relations. "The hyperbole and sheer ridiculousness of the transvestite Silvia exclaiming 'the man dies that comes within reach of my point' and calls the constable a 'blockhead' obscures the more serious points made in this scene." There were some excellent answers and a real sense of the play in performance.

Q16(b)

It was suggested to candidates that the concept of social duty is a central motivation of recruits in the play - "though even here Farquhar manages to add a comic dimension" - but all answers rejected this claim. One wrote: "Sending recruits to do their social duty is a euphemism for sending them off to their deaths, just as the bed of honour is a euphemism for the grave." Another wrote: "The play parodies the idea of social duty. A butcher in civilian life is promised he can become the surgeon general in the army - the real attraction lies not in the social duty of saving lives however but in raising his social status. Kite's opening speech was used to good effect in seeming to offer a better and fairer world - "if any ... have a mind to serve Her Majesty, and pull down the French king; if any prentices have severe masters, and children have undutiful parents; if any servants have too little wages ..." but this, argued candidates, was the central joke in the play. Many used Act V, scene v with the reading of the Articles of War, where any conceivable offence is punishable by death, as an antidote to the comic dimension. One examiner reported, "The answers on this text were so well done I was sorry not to have had more to mark." It is surprising that relatively few centres choose to study this play.

Section D: Post-1770 Drama

Sheridan: *The Rivals*

Q17(a)

Candidates were presented with a very contentious statement: because Sheridan was only twenty-two when he wrote the play its prejudices are all in favour of the young against the old. The starting point scene was where Sir Anthony presents his son as a future husband to Lydia, but she is in love with "Beverley" (Jack in disguise as an impoverished ensign) and comic confusions result. Candidates pointed out that the older generation, Sir Anthony and Mrs Malaprop, are fooled at this moment, but the tables are turned when they leave and the young people themselves fall out - Lydia being bitterly disappointed that her romantic dreams of marrying into poverty have been thwarted. Mrs Malaprop was singled out as the main object of fun, and therefore there was prejudice against her, but not, the

more astute answers argued, because she was old, but because she was pretentious. Malapropisms (sometimes almost too many) were quoted as evidence of this. The higher band answers had a sense of the play's theatricality.

Q17(b)

Candidates were presented with the proposition that deception is acceptable to an audience only because of the comic way in which it is presented. Less successful answers were the ones that tended to keep the two concepts of deception and comedy apart, giving examples of each in turn. The higher band answers integrated the two and had a real sense of how this comic deception might work in the theatre. Sir Anthony's outrage at his son, and the delight his son has in deceiving him, was often quoted; and the maid Lucy's financial gains through aiding and abetting were seen as very acceptable. One candidate said that Lucy's part was the best part in the play - "the scene where she counts what she has earned, in spite of Mrs Malaprop's warning that, if she betrays her, she will lose her 'malevolence' forever, is a sheer delight."

Walcott: *The Odyssey*

There were too few answers to these questions to enable general comment in this report.

Shaffer: *Amadeus*

Q19 (a)

This was a very popular text. The proposition offered in the question was that Shaffer exposes a society too self-absorbed to acknowledge the genius within Mozart's eccentricity. The given scene was the one where Mozart is told the emperor has forbidden the inclusion of ballet in his opera. The less successful answers were the ones that fell back on character sketches of Mozart as an eccentric. The higher band responses picked up on the word "exposes" and saw that this implies moral condemnation. The very best answers were aware of the two contexts of this play - the eighteenth century world and our own world as depicted through it. They saw the interrelation of the two: Mozart's life being reinterpreted with a modern view of a historical society, and our own self absorbed society failing to acknowledge what is different.

Q19(b)

Although the proposition began with "the conflict between Salieri and Mozart" it broadened out to suggest that what was really represented in the play was not so much the old versus the new but the triumph of the second-rate. Less successful answers stayed with the character debate and wrote at length about Salieri, the Apollonian plodder, and Dionysian Mozart. However many moved beyond that and found that the proposition led them to heart of the play. As with (a), awareness of the two contexts, the contemporary and the modern, distinguished the better answers. They also wrote about the play as a play, as a text written for performance.

Wilde: *Lady Windermere's Fan*

Q20(a)

The proposition was that “central to the play is the tension between the wit of Wilde’s dialogue and its much more sinister undertones”. There were some excellent answers. Appalling hypocrisy was seen as the most sinister undercurrent, as it seemed to be propping up the artificial society. The melodramatic nature of Mrs Erlynne’s plea to her daughter was sometimes felt to be another example of artificiality, and the fact that the happy outcome was based on a lie made Lady Windermere’s change of heart seem equally false.

Q20(b)

Candidates were asked to consider the proposition that Wilde portrays a social world in which the privileged classes allow themselves the privilege of behaving as they please. The vast majority who chose this question argued very convincingly that only the men could really do as they pleased (Lord Darlington, Augustus and Lord Windermere were all cited here), and produced plenty of evidence to support this (unfaithful husbands were a case in point, the Duchess of Berwick’s advice to Lady Windermere being frequently quoted). Some argued that the very code of the privileged classes meant that paradoxically no-one was free to transgress it without consequently losing their place – Wilde’s own life being the example cited, as well as Lady Windermere and Mrs Erlynne who have to “go abroad” after the fan episode.

Wertenbaker: *Our Country’s Good*

Q21(a)

This was a very popular text and candidates responded well to it as a piece of theatre. The question asked about redemption, the proposition being that working together on a play not only brings divergent groups together but offers a form of redemption to them all. Most candidates did not fail to point out that redemption is only partial – Arscott is still violent, Dabby only uses the performance as a cover for her escape and Ross is completely unchanged. The Aborigine, as many pointed out, has not been redeemed and is still feared by the “redeemed” convicts. Close analysis of the prescribed extract proved extremely useful in developing a relevant argument. Answers that were less successful often took insufficient care with the term “redemption”.

Q21(b)

Candidates were asked how far they thought Wertenbaker uses a historical perspective to comment on the nature of justice. There were many thoughtful and knowledgeable answers, fully aware of the context both modern and historical, and some interesting inclusions of the wider concept of justice. A few were carried away into political theory and even polemic, but most did not lose sight of the theatre and the techniques used by Wertenbaker to put her point across. The play’s continuing relevance in the modern climate, which demands harsher penalties for wrong-doers, was often pointed out. Margaret Thatcher was mentioned often, and one candidate referred to her period in office, without any apparent intended irony, as her “reign”.

Unit 6: Criticism and Comparison (6396)

General

It is pleasing to see that candidates are now becoming thoroughly familiar with this paper and the quality of the work presented has improved considerably over the years. There were very few candidates this year who infringed the rubric by answering on only one of the three literary genres represented on this paper.

The two tasks presented in this unit are of differing natures and focus upon different AOs; they are also unique to this paper. Candidates are asked in Section A to read a piece of unprepared prose or poetry and to write a commentary that focuses on form, language and structure. Many responses subject the given material to a rigorous textual analysis and write fluently and perceptively of the piece as a whole, selecting appropriate detail to illustrate their appraisal of the writer's technique. The sensitivity and confidence with which such candidates present their readings are both impressive and admirable.

In Section B the focus shifts to comparison and contrast with AO2ii becoming the key element to address but with AO4 and AO5ii requiring consideration also. The questions are worded in such a way as to guide candidates to meet the relevant criteria in their responses and the most successful responses are those which take into consideration the key terms of the question in planning their answers. The comparative nature of the task is now clearly understood and the majority of candidates move confidently between their texts, comparing and contrasting as they go. Differences arise in the quality of the argument being advanced and the nature of the textual support that is offered. In general, answers were well balanced between the two texts chosen with candidates giving equal weight to each in their responses. Occasionally it seemed that the compulsory text was more familiar to the candidate and that the second text (perhaps carried over from AS) had not been revisited as thoroughly as it might have been.

Comments have been made for a number of years on candidates who produce answers of inordinate length but this still remains a problem. It is often the case that a very lengthy answer is an answer which is not focused on the question and that the candidate has simply decided to display their knowledge of the texts they have studied in the hope that it will be of some relevance. It must be stressed that it will always be more profitable for candidates to spend time on reading the question carefully and planning the general lines of their argument before starting to write. A clearly structured response with some textual support will always gain the candidate more marks than one twice its length with no clear argument. An additional problem is that overlong answers become increasingly difficult to read as the handwriting deteriorates under the self-imposed pressure to write more,

Section A: Unprepared Prose Or Poetry

Q1 Unprepared Prose

The first two paragraphs of the extract from Annie Proulx's novel *That Old Ace in the Hole* provided such a richly descriptive account of the storm that a number of candidates concentrated their attentions here and failed to move on and see the passage as a whole. However many candidates saw how the passage conveyed varying perceptions of the storm and enjoyed the hints of humour and mystery to

be found in the second half of the extract.

The passage seemed to be very accessible to candidates and they were able to respond to the physical nature of the description of the storm, even if the less successful answers tended to write about it descriptively rather than analytically. There was some confusion over the narrative viewpoint and also about the tense, perhaps because, as one candidate neatly expressed it, 'Proulx writes in a way that makes the past tense appear like the present'. While recognizing a lowering of the tension in the second half of the passage many candidates did not go on to analyse this in great detail, focusing instead on LaVon's Texan accent. A number noted how the focus was taken away from the storm by the introduction of the mysterious 'story of her grandfather's scarred back' while others explored the implications of the description of the storm cellar and its contents. The most successful responses saw the text as a whole, commenting both on its structure and on the wide range of literary devices employed by Proulx and their effects on the reader.

Q2 Unprepared Poetry

Elaine Feinstein's *Ninety Two* provided a wide variety of responses. There was considerable debate as to the significance of the title, most seeing it as the age of the uncle but offering a number of other possibilities such as the number of his room, the miles the niece had travelled to be there, a golf score or the number of sexual partners he had enjoyed. Some explored more productively, seeing the age as providing the identity of the uncle, who is not otherwise named. Perhaps because this was a situation with which the candidates could readily identify it led to quite a lot of social comment which at times overshadowed any critical analysis. Polemics on the treatment of the elderly abounded.

As usual, there was much counting of line numbers and noting of devices but a reluctance among some candidates to focus clearly on language and technique or engage with the content of the poem. In spite of the first person and the name of the poet there was a unwillingness to identify the voice as that of the niece; for many it was the nephew or the persona. The nature of the niece's feelings of guilt was frequently analysed but this did not always lead to an examination of her relationship with her uncle or how it developed during the course of the poem.

A surprisingly large number of candidates made little or no mention of the grasshopper image whilst others revealed a depth of biological knowledge on the subject. The appropriateness of the comparison of the uncle to a 'thin, dusty-coloured brown, frail insect' was often sensitively explored with one candidate suggesting that this alienating image 'introduces us to the idea that the poet's relationship with her uncle is lacking in warmth or emotional understanding'. The grasshopper was also seen by some as indicative of youth and activity and served, for these candidates, as a reminder of the uncle's earlier life, an interpretation which was equally valid.

There was some careless reading of the second stanza with some candidates concluding that the uncle had been married at some time or that he had had an illegitimate son. Most though noted the shift in tone with the mention of a son triggering a reaction of 'sudden clarity' in the old man and a corresponding development in the niece leading to her curiosity over his past in the final stanza. Many responded perceptively and sensitively to the poignancy of the last line.

There were numerous responses which were a delight to read. Candidates

responded thoughtfully to the situation, were alive to the links between form and content and were able to explore the tensions and shifts in the relationship by close examination of the textual detail.

Section B: Comparative Study

The Comic Perspective

Q3(a)

This continues to be a popular choice with the great majority of candidates choosing to study two works by Jane Austen. There appeared to be fewer centres studying *Larry's Party* this year which is a shame because, as noted in last year's report, it provides comparison with *Pride and Prejudice* on a number of literary, critical and contextual levels. Q3(a) this year asked candidates to compare and contrast their chosen novels in a way that defined their comedy and were offered a possible definition as a starting point. Examiners commented that in less successful answers there was some difficulty in defining 'comic' and that exploration of 'essentially optimistic' remained very limited. As a result, candidates wrote about a number of relationships and their qualities, showing extensive knowledge of their texts, but not focusing sufficiently on the specifics of the question. There were some rather sweeping generalisations about the society of Jane Austen's time and of the novel and one examiner was somewhat horrified to be told that 'Darcy's fortune was a relatively new one and was based on the eighteenth century slave trade.'

There were many impressive answers in which candidates often challenged the limitations of the proposition but in all cases pursued an argument supported by reference to the full range of methods by which Jane Austen/Carol Shields achieves her comic resolution.

Q3(b)

This question invited candidates to examine their two texts in terms of the ways in which the author(s) lead the reader to form the judgements necessary to the success of the novels' moral structure. This was the more popular of the two questions. Once again examiners reported some uncertainty over the terms of the question with 'environment' being very variously interpreted and in one case being considered as the geographical locations for the events of the novels. For many candidates the verb 'to judge' seemed to mean 'to judge harshly' which clearly limited the response. Again, there was a tendency to write about the society of the time in general terms without relating it to the terms of the question. That said, there was a range of excellent answers which explored the influence of the social and historical context on the characters' attitudes, values and behaviour.

The Tragic Perspective

Q4 (a)

The combination of Bronte and Hardy remains a popular one although no examiner reported seeing any answers on the alternative choice, *Petals of Blood*. The proposition was a mirror of 3(a) and invited candidates to compare the novels in a way which examined the extent to which the narrative plot and the tone of the writing rely on an essentially pessimistic authorial philosophy. Examiners found that candidates often spent time outlining theories of tragedy not always

relevantly and tended not to engage with 'essentially pessimistic'. The focus was often on the social influences, to the extent that in some answers it was uncertain whether it was the a. or b. question which was being tackled. Candidates often demonstrated an excellent knowledge of both their text, the context and of a range of critical views. Such knowledge was sometimes used to extend the length of answers without any close relation to the question; in more successful answers it was used to add substance to a well-formed argument. The range of relationships considered was often limited to Catherine/Heathcliff/Edgar and Eustacia/Clym/Wildeve although some ranged more widely and saw hopeful signs in the surviving relationships within the two novels.

Q4(b)

This question offered candidates clearly defined areas for comparison and contrast. It was by far the more popular question on these texts but a number of candidates concentrated on providing an illustrated list of the social influences and largely ignoring the presentation of individual characters. Such responses tended to agree with the proposition by default rather than presenting any clear argument.

Higher band answers explored the inter-relationship between the presentation of character and the social influences shaping their lives, making thorough and perceptive use of their textual and contextual knowledge. One examiner wrote with great enthusiasm of candidates who drew on their detailed and sophisticated knowledge of the Victorian period, integrating it analytically with the authors' tragic presentations 'sometimes in a manner which would not embarrass cultural criticism at a higher level.' There continues to be a very high level of critical writing which some candidates are able to produce.

Divided Societies

Q5(a)

The question invited candidates to consider where the divisions occur in *Divided Societies*. A number of candidates who struggled to find, or perhaps to understand what was meant by, the conflict of generations. In less successful answers the proposition was often rejected out of hand so that candidates could rehearse their prepared material on social conflict and masters and men. The majority of candidates wrote on the two nineteenth century novels but a growing number of candidates are studying *Atonement* which they clearly enjoy. They were able to make a number of pertinent contrasts between the context of these novels and between Gaskell's and McEwan's authorial method and viewpoint.

Candidates, whatever their choice of novels, knew and understood their material well, enabling most to engage enthusiastically with the question and to offer a range of closely argued responses as to where the main divisions lay.

Q5(b)

This question, which invited candidates to explore the extent to which their chosen novels rely for their background on social and historical truth. was also tackled well. There was some tendency to sidestep 'nothing fantastical' and to view 'speak the truth' rather simplistically. However, there was a number of very finely argued responses which linked relevant socio-historical information to the texts, selecting detail with care and dexterity. Others drew sharp distinctions between

their chosen authors in terms of style and motivation, demonstrating how the novel can be used in different ways to convey a social message.

Overall, many candidates responded to the texts in this option which clearly interest and engage them. It is a pity that it is not a more popular choice with centres.

Broken Communication

As has been noted in previous years, this is by far the most popular option. Sadly, it remains the case that candidates who have studied this drama option often seem unwilling to engage with the terms of the questions set, relying instead on prepared material which they are determined to use, come what may. This is particularly the case when the second text studied has been *Translations* where candidates are armed with ideas on language as power which they write about, irrespective of the actual question set.

Q6(a)

The intent of this question was that candidates should examine relevant personal relationships in such a way as to explore the moral structures of their two plays. In the event, examiners found that many candidates struggled with the idea of forgiveness and found it difficult to apply to their texts, particularly *Translations*. The second part of the proposition was often ignored and there was a tendency to list examples which showed forgiveness as giving power but not using these examples to support any ongoing argument. Far fewer candidates chose this question, presumably because there was less scope for rehearsing their prepared answer on language. There were, of course, some excellent and thoughtful responses to this question. One examiner remarked of a centre that had studied *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* alongside *The Tempest* that there was 'pleasingly, a sense of the equal, but very differently formulated hierarchies at work in the two plays, making the most of the parallel of Prospero's island and George's apartment, to which the writ of Milan and of the History department, respectively, do not run'.

Q6(b)

This was easily the more popular question but too many candidates were eager to produce prepared material on language as power and the post-colonial context. 'Sadly' was almost totally ignored and many answers gave little or no consideration to 'something else is needed'. Some relied on producing examples of the power of language for good against examples of the power of language for bad but without any firm argument. Amidst a welter of rather loose responses on language generally there were also very fine answers, which engaged thoughtfully with the question, supporting their own views with detailed reference to the texts. One candidate, for example, argued persuasively that language can be a force for good in preserving tradition and history and that 'the simple mythologies of Irish culture will be lost unless transported to English, where they will be renewed rather than fossilized'. Those who had chosen to study Albee were also prone to rely on learnt material about character parallels and the power of language, showing little sense of the profound shifts in historical and theatrical contexts between the stage of Shakespeare and that of 1960's America. Once again though, there were impressive responses perhaps best summed up by the candidate who wrote: Just as Prospero ultimately needs to abandon his magic books and language to restore social harmony and reclaim his dukedom, George needs to abandon his history books and games with Martha in order to progress in life and relationships.

Nature and the Imagination

Q7(a)

Only a few centres choose this option. On this occasion Q7(a) was attempted by so few candidates that it is difficult to make any general comment. One examiner reported that in the few answers he had seen candidates had struggled with 'sublime' although there had been one who had clearly understood the term and written intelligently and relevantly about the poets and the poetry.

Q7(b)

The invitation to consider how far it was true to say that these poets explore their own selves as much as the world around them proved by far the more attractive option for the minority of candidates who study these texts. Biographical material abounded but it was not always well linked to the question. Those who did try to tie it in to 'explore their own selves' were more successful but tended to ignore 'the world around them' which led to rather unbalanced answers. For some the biographical material and the socio-historical context formed the main basis of their answers and the poetry itself gained only a passing mention. The best answers considered the terms of the question and formed a balanced argument and one examiner at least was pleasantly surprised by the detailed textual knowledge on show.

The Social Observer

This remains the more popular of the poetry options and it was pleasing to see a number of centres choosing to study Auden this year. Many candidates know their texts extremely well and are able to quote from them in considerable detail to support their points.

Q8(a)

Candidates were offered a direct and straightforward challenge here although some got bogged down in the terms of the question or were flummoxed by the terms used. Candidates were happy enough to apply the terms of the question to Blake but found it less easy to cross-reference them to Betjeman/Auden. Both here and in the (b) question there was sometimes an over-reliance on biographical and socio-historical material and one examiner spoke of answers which were 'history essays with cursory reference to literature'. By and large though candidates responded thoughtfully to the question and knowledge, understanding, a wide-ranging choice of poems and perceptive analysis were all apparent. Those who had studied Auden were able to make fruitful comparisons and supported their points by quoting freely from the poems.

Q8(b)

This question invited candidates to focus on the link between method and content by comparing and contrasting appropriate examples from their chosen poets. It was the slightly less popular choice, perhaps because candidates are often reluctant to write on form. The less successful responses were rather general, often making reference to only one poem of each poet and that in scant detail; 'London' and 'Slough' often featured in such answers. More competent responses ranged widely, moving confidently between the work of their chosen poets and developing their own argument with appropriate textual support. A pleasingly wide

range of poems was cited by candidates from all the poets. In the past it has sometimes seemed that candidates come to the examination with only two or three poems on which they are prepared to write, whatever the question. It is good to report that there was far less evidence of this in this summer's responses.

Statistics

Unit 1: Drama and Poetry (6291)

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	100	71	61	51	41	32
Uniform boundary mark	120	96	84	72	60	48

Unit 2: Pre-1900 Prose (6392)

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	50	35	30	25	21	17
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

Unit 3a: Shakespeare in Context (6393/01)

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	50	42	36	31	26	21
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

Unit 3b: Shakespeare in Context (6393/02)

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	50	33	28	23	19	15
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

Unit 4a: Modern Prose (6394/01)

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	50	44	38	33	28	23
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

Unit 4b Modern Prose (6394/02)

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	50	33	28	23	19	15
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

Unit 5: Poetry and Drama (6395)

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	100	71	62	53	44	35
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

Unit 6: Criticism and Comparison (6396)

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	100	73	65	57	49	42
Uniform boundary mark	120	96	84	72	60	48

Notes

Maximum Mark (Raw): the mark corresponding to the sum total of the marks shown on the mark scheme.

Boundary mark: the minimum mark required by a candidate to qualify for a given grade.

Edexcel Advanced Subsidiary and Advanced GCE

ENGLISH LITERATURE (8180/ 9180)

Set texts

Range of reading

'English Literature' includes American and Commonwealth writing. The set texts are drawn from a range of historical periods between 1370 and the present day, and candidates are required to study a **minimum of eight texts**, which must include:

AS • a **minimum of four texts** covering prose, poetry and drama, including one text by Shakespeare and at least one other text published before 1900

A2 • a **minimum of four further texts**, covering poetry, prose and drama, including at least one text published before 1770 and at least one other before 1900.

Teachers are reminded that it is desirable to extend students' reading beyond that covered at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4.

The following texts will be set for this specification:

Unit 1: Drama and Poetry (Open Text)

Section A: Drama

The following prescribed editions of the texts will be set in January 2006, June 2006, January 2007, June 2007, January 2008 and June 2008:

- Aphra Behn – *The Rover* – (New Mermaids ISBN: 0713639415 or New Mermaids ISBN: 0713666714)
- Brian Friel – *Translations* – (Faber ISBN: 0571117422)
- Caryl Churchill – *Top Girls* – (Methuen ISBN: 0413554805)
- Tennessee Williams – *A Streetcar Named Desire* – (Penguin ISBN: 0141182563)
- Tom Stoppard – *Professional Foul*, from '*Every Good Boy Deserves Favour/Professional Foul*' – (Faber ISBN: 0571112269)

Section B: Poetry

- *Edexcel Poetry Anthology* (Section One)
- John Betjeman – *The Best of Betjeman* (poetry only) – (Penguin ISBN: 0141184329)
- John Keats – *Selected Poems* – (Everyman ISBN: 0460878085)
- Geoffrey Moore (editor) – *Penguin Book of American Verse* – (Penguin ISBN: 0140585788)
- Gillian Clarke – *Letter from a Far Country* – (from '*Collected Poems*' by Gillian Clarke, Carcanet ISBN: 1857543351)

The following section is prescribed for study: *Letter from a Far Country* – all the

poems in this section beginning with the 'White Roses' and ending with 'The Water Diviner'.

Students study **one** text from Section A and **one** text from Section B.

Unit 2: Pre-1900 Prose (Closed Text)

The following texts will be set in January 2006, June 2006, January 2007, June 2007, January 2008 and June 2008:

- Thomas Hardy – *The Return of the Native*
- Mary Shelley – *Frankenstein*
- Jane Austen – *Emma*
- Charles Dickens – *Hard Times*
- Henry James – *Washington Square*

Students study **one** text.

Unit 3a/3b: Shakespeare in Context (Open Text)

Penguin Shakespeare editions specified above must be used.

Unit 4b: Modern Prose (Open Text)

The following texts will be set in January 2006, June 2006, January 2007, June 2007, January 2008 and June 2008:

- Louis de Bernières – *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* – (Vintage ISBN: 0749397543 or Vintage ISBN: 0099422042 (now out of print))
- Margaret Atwood – *Alias Grace* – (Virago ISBN: 1860492592)
- Iris Murdoch – *The Bell* – (Vintage ISBN: 0099283891)
- E M Forster – *Howards End* – (Penguin ISBN: 0140111603 or Penguin ISBN 014118213X)

The following text will not be available for examination after January 2006:

- *R K Narayan – *The Man Eater of Malgudi* – (Penguin ISBN: 0140185488)

Additional text for Unit 4b Modern Prose

The following prescribed edition of the text will be set in January 2006, June 2006, January 2007, June 2007, January 2008 and June 2008:

- Chinua Achebe – *Things Fall Apart* – (Heinemann ISBN: 0435121626)

Students study **one** text.

The following texts will be set in June 2006, June 2007 and June 2008:

- *Henry V* – (ISBN: 0140707085 or 0141013796 (*new edition expected in 2006*))
- *Antony and Cleopatra* – (ISBN: 014070731X or 0141012285)
- *The Winter's Tale* – (ISBN: 0140707166 or 0141013893)
- *Much Ado About Nothing* – (ISBN: 0140707093 or 0141012307)
- *Hamlet* – (ISBN: 0140707344 or 0141013079)

Unit 5: Poetry and Drama (Open Text)

The following texts will be set in June 2006, June 2007 and June 2008:

Section A: Pre-1770 Poetry

- Chaucer and Hussey (editor) – *The Merchant's Tale* – (Cambridge University Press ISBN: 0521046319)
- Milton – *Selected Poems* – (Dover ISBN: 048627554X)
- *Edexcel Poetry Anthology* (Section Two)
- Dalglish (editor) – *Eight Metaphysical Poets* – (Heinemann ISBN: 0435150316)
- Alexander Pope and Elizabeth Gurr (editor) – *The Rape of the Lock* – (OUP 0198319584)

Section B: Post-1770 Poetry

- Tennyson – *Selected Poems* – (Penguin ISBN: 0140445455)
- Yeats – *Selected Poems* – (Everyman ISBN: 0460879022)
- Carol Ann Duffy – *Selected Poems* – (Penguin ISBN: 0140587357)
- Philip Larkin – *The Whitsun Weddings* – (Faber ISBN: 0571097103)
- The *Heinemann Book of Caribbean Poetry* selected by McDonald and Brown – (Heinemann ISBN: 0435988174)
- Heaney – *New Selected Poems* sections: from 'Death of a Naturalist', from 'Door into Dark', from 'Wintering Out', from 'North' – (Faber ISBN: 0571143725)

Section C: Pre-1770 Drama

- Shakespeare – *Othello* – (Penguin Shakespeare ISBN: 0140707077 or 0141012315)
- Marlowe – *Dr Faustus (Text A)* – (New Mermaids ISBN: 0713632313 or New Mermaids ISBN: 0713667907)
- Webster – *The Duchess of Malfi* – (New Mermaids ISBN 0393900665 is now out of print, but may be used, or New Mermaids ISBN 0713650613 or New Mermaids ISBN: 0713667915)
- Congreve – *The Way of the World* – (New Mermaids ISBN: 0713639431 or New Mermaids ISBN: 0713666625)
- Farquhar – *The Recruiting Officer* – (New Mermaids ISBN: 0713633492 or New Mermaids ISBN: 0713633492)

Section D: Post-1770 Drama

- Sheridan – *The Rivals* – (New Mermaids ISBN: 0713631511 or New Mermaids ISBN: 0713667656 from September 2005)
- Walcott – *The Odyssey* – (Faber ISBN: 0571168566)
- Peter Shaffer – *Amadeus* – (Penguin ISBN: 0140481605)
- Timberlake Wertenbaker – *Our Country's Good* – (Methuen ISBN: 0413737403)
- Oscar Wilde – *Lady Windermere's Fan* – (Penguin Popular Classics ISBN: 0140621733)

Candidates study **one** text from either Section A or Section B and **one** from either Section C or Section D.

Unit 6: Criticism and Comparison (Closed text)

Section B: Comparison

The following texts will be set in June 2006, June 2007 and June 2008:

1 The Comic Perspective: *Pride and Prejudice* Jane Austen and either *Emma* Jane Austen or *Larry's Party* Carol Shields

2 The Tragic Perspective: *Wuthering Heights* Emily Bronte and either *The Return of the Native* Thomas Hardy or *Petals of Blood* Ngugi wa Thiong'o

3 Divided Societies: *North and South* Elizabeth Gaskell and either *Hard Times* Charles Dickens or *Atonement* Ian McEwan

4 Broken Communications: *The Tempest* William Shakespeare and either *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* Edward Albee or *Translations* Brian Friel

5 Nature and the Imagination: *The Prelude Books 1 and 2* William Wordsworth and either *Selected Poems* John Keats or *Selected Poems* Edward Thomas

6 The Social Observer: *Songs of Innocence and Experience* William Blake and either *Best of Betjeman* (poetry only) or *Selected Poems* W H Auden

Candidates study the first named text within the chosen theme and compare it with one other listed text. Equal treatment should be given to both the chosen texts.

NB students who answer a question on unprepared poetry in Section A must answer a question on either drama or prose texts in Section B, and students who answer a question on unprepared prose in Section A must answer on either drama or poetry texts in Section B.

***Texts marked with an asterisk will be withdrawn after the examination series indicated.**

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