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Examiners' Report

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Unit 6381: The Spoken Word

Section A: Unprepared Commentary

Section A featured a transcript of an interview of a headteacher by a student, and a written text which was an extract from the television drama 'Boys From the Blackstuff'.

Candidates found both texts accessible, although once again much more confidence was demonstrated in discussing the spontaneous speech extract rather than the representation of speech in writing.

Text A

Candidates responded with evident enjoyment to the familiar scenario of a dialogue between the school principal and a student. Comments were often perceptive, with a lot of responses noting the shifts in register and the evolving relationship between the participants.

Text B

Comments on the play extract were sometimes limited to discussion of how it attempts to mimic spontaneous speech although more perceptive responses were aware of the dramatic qualities and deliberate crafting of the text.

Both texts encouraged candidates to demonstrate their knowledge of how attitudes and values are conveyed by writers and speakers: the address to AO5 was particularly pleasing.

Previous examiner's reports have highlighted the need for candidates to develop a clear approach to the analysis of written/crafted texts ie: candidates need to demonstrate understanding of how and in what ways the spoken word is represented in a range of literary/crafted texts. Many candidates did not pay enough attention to the literary qualities of Text B, although responses to questions in Section B clearly indicate that candidates have substantial knowledge of how literary texts are crafted.

Centres should encourage candidates to have more confidence in their ability to transfer these skills to analysis of the unseen texts in Section A.

Section B: Pre-1900 Drama

Once again, many candidates answered Section B before Section A: this is a good approach if candidates are more comfortable dealing with their familiar drama text before embarking on the analysis of the unseen extracts. There was little evidence of timing problems although a few candidates did not finish.

As in previous years, the most popular texts were the two Shakespeare plays, 'The Importance of Being Earnest' and 'A Doll's House'. There were a number of answers to questions on the 'The Rover' but no responses to 'Trelawney of the Wells'.

(b) type questions are becoming increasingly popular.

All questions contain prompts to direct candidates to explore both linguistic and literary features and the majority of candidates used these prompts effectively as a framework for their answers.

Material chosen was usually relevant with key features of the text identified and explored. There was less evidence of irrelevant or over-prepared answers although less secure candidates, as always, did rely on a mainly narrative approach or one which involved lengthy quotation with paraphrase.

More confident responses demonstrated understanding of a range of features and explored variations in form in detail.

Technical terminology was mainly used appropriately.

Many candidates struggled to address Question 3(a) effectively, failing to discuss 'wit' rather than comedy, and providing limited comment on the extract.

Candidates do need to be given appropriate definitions of different types of comedy and should be encouraged to make distinctions between the different ways in which humour is conveyed.

Centres do need to be congratulated on their preparation of candidates for this unit with the majority of candidates managing time effectively and producing succinct, focused responses to both sections of the paper.

Unit 2: The Desk Study (6382)

The pre-release material had the theme of healthy eating. Task(a) required candidates to re-shape the material to produce the text for an article designed to persuade pupils to accept changes to school meals provision. The article would be included in a local primary school magazine. Bullet points in the question provided further focus in terms of audience and purpose. As always, the more successful responses made effective use of the bullet points as a means of organising the new text.

The pre-release booklet provided material that needed careful selection: this afforded clear differentiation between different levels of achievement. Candidates appeared to find the pre-release material both accessible and interesting. There was generally good assimilation of the texts and a wide range of sources were used.

Task (a)

The main focus of the task i.e., to urge primary school children to eat more healthily, was recognised by the vast majority of candidates but a surprising number paid insufficient attention to the bullet points and failed to root their responses in the context of a specific school changing its school meals provision: this lack of focus led to the inclusion of irrelevant material.

Most candidates recognised that their audience were young children and tried to create an appropriate register, with varying degrees of success, although virtually all articles did have a lively tone and there was a genuine attempt to engage the interests of the target audience.

The higher band answers were aware of the student 'voice/perspective' and foregrounded this effectively.

Candidates do need to be prepared to spend time reading the question as much help is provided to guide them to appropriate re-shaping of the material for a specific audience, purpose and medium.

Some candidates strayed from the key focus of the task (school meals provision and change) to cover the broader aspects of 'healthy lifestyle'. Some experienced difficulty in achieving an appropriately consistent tone for the target audience of children aged 7-11. Other problems included slanting the material too much towards the lower age range or producing material which was too complicated or inaccessible.

It is always a good idea to encourage candidates to 'write as readers' and to attempt to write in a way that is both engaging and accessible.

Task (b)

Task (b) asked candidates to comment on the language choices they had made in order to complete the first task. Responses to task (b) covered a wide range in terms of AO achievement but there is clear evidence of a real improvement each year. The majority of commentaries demonstrated a clear sense of purpose and were coherent and organised.

The higher band responses explained their language choices in the context of Task (a) and demonstrated clear understanding of the link between form and function. Formulaic responses were still apparent in less successful answers but even here there was, in many, at least implicit understanding of how language works.

Features of successful answers:

Task (a)

- judicious selection/editing and re-shaping of pre-release materials
- careful decoding of task (a) in terms of audience, purpose and context
- focus on changes to school meals provision
- consistent register.

Task (b)

- explanation of language choices with clear links between form and function
- consistent exemplification
- accurate use of a wide range of appropriate technical terminology.

Features of less successful answers:

Task (a)

- limited coverage and re-shaping of pre-release materials
- misreading of purpose and/or context
- miscue of audience
- too broad a focus on healthy lifestyle in general
- inconsistent register/tone.

Task (b)

- formulaic 'lists' with minimal specific links to choices made in task (a)
- patchy exemplification
- limited and/or inaccurate use of terminology
- limited analysis beyond word level.

Advice to candidates:

- read the question and use the bullet points
- concentrate on the specific focus of the task
- do not try to guess the task (some candidates seemed to have prepared speeches)
- try to give a specific and suitable 'voice' to the text
- if the task is an article do not spend valuable time on columns and layout (simple presentational features will be effective)
- avoid lengthy discussions of graphology in task (b).

Conclusion

There was evidence of real engagement with the tasks in the majority of answers and many texts were informative, persuasive and, in some cases, a pleasure to read.

Unit 3a: Shorter Fiction Study (6383/01)

General

The creative option was by far the more popular of the two options this year, and some really impressive stories were produced. There were also some very perceptive and detailed critical studies. The understanding of the requirements of this unit was generally high, and folders were mostly well presented and conveyed a genuine sense of enjoyment and engagement. In most cases the short story genre had been studied closely, with a good level of understanding, and general levels of literacy seemed to have improved. Most centres used the system of assessment objectives more successfully than ever.

Most centres seem clear now about the need to study the short story genre, as is indicated by the title of the unit: Shorter Fiction Study. Most now have a good understanding of the concept of the integration of the literary and the linguistic in the whole specification. Having said that, there are still a few who treat this unit as a purely literary one and have no true linguistic focus, especially at word level, in the critical essays or the commentaries on the creative option. Candidates should be reminded of the importance of using a range of linguistic terminology with accuracy and confidence.

It is necessary for candidates to address AO5 explicitly in the commentaries and critical essays. There still needs to be greater stress on the ways attitudes and values are created and conveyed. In the creative option candidates need to write a story that has attitudes and/or values at or near its heart, and they need to concentrate on how to convey these attitudes and/or values. If they have done this successfully, it should then be relatively straightforward to explain in the commentary how it has been done. In the critical option it is necessary first of all to have studied stories that have a strong focus on attitudes and/or values, and then to devise an essay title that allows this focus to be explored, preferably with an explicit steer towards it in the wording of the task.

The Creative Option

In the commentaries there was a further marked improvement in the links made with the source texts which had been studied. While the major focus in the commentary must be on the candidate's own choices of language and the effects they have produced, there should also be some specific and detailed focus on the language of the source text(s). In general this latter focus was very strong. In a few cases it was taken too far and the commentary became a critical essay of the stories studied, tacked on to an original story that was barely mentioned at all. Where there was detailed linguistic analysis in the commentaries it did serve to provide genuine illumination of candidates' understanding of the language they had used in their own stories, as well as of that in the source text(s).

A trend that was more noticeable this year than in previous years was for some stories inspired by a study of Carter to dwell at length on unpleasant, even unhealthy, areas such as rape, sadistic torture and cruelty, and horrific murders described in graphic detail, none of which was artistically justified or necessary. Obviously there is a very dark side to some of Carter's stories, but candidates should be guided away from an excessive indulgence in these aspects.

The Critical Option

Candidates are likely to be more successful in this option if their title has clear steers towards a language focus and towards AO5. Some titles were restricting, with perhaps a focus entirely on character study or with a wholly literary focus. A small number of centres were setting the same essay title for all their candidates, and, more worryingly, in some cases candidates were using the same two or three stories, and even more worryingly still, making the same points about the same stories. This suggests an excessively teacher-led approach that is wholly against the spirit of the unit, and indeed coursework in general. We would strongly recommend that teachers offer the opportunity for individual choice, and encourage personal response and engagement.

Some candidates again tried to undertake too many stories for one short assignment. Usually two or three stories are sufficient, though others can be referred to briefly in cross-references.

Some specifically linguistic points:

- Complex and compound sentences were frequently confused.
- The term 'semantic field' was often used far too broadly.
- The difference between short and simple (or minor) sentences was not always understood.
- 'Phrase' was often misused for 'clause': eg *vowed revenge* described as a phrase.
- A common error was to make claims about the use of a word class (eg adjectives) and then to quote examples from other word classes (eg nouns or verbs).
- Adopting a negative approach should be avoided: eg 'I have not used any examples of...'

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.

Unit 3b: Shorter Fiction Study (6383/02)

General

The candidature was almost identical to last year's, and the standard was broadly comparable. At the lower end of the scale there was a slight improvement in the general literacy of answers, and in knowledge of the texts.

To be successful in this unit candidates need to:

- answer the question precisely in the terms in which it is framed, and to cover bullet points if there are any;
- show detailed knowledge of the text;
- use terminology, both literary and linguistic, as appropriate, to make precise points about the writer's use of language;
- ensure that they address attitudes and values explicitly, and give some consideration to how these are conveyed by the writer.

Once again, all the questions guided candidates specifically towards a focus on attitudes and values (AO5: which has a double weighting in this unit), as well as to a major focus on language. While the best answers were able to use detailed analysis of language to make precise points that illuminated their discussions, there were many answers that made minimal use of terminology at all and that also failed to focus on attitudes and values. It is necessary to make some specific comment on the effect of the language used, and to use some terminology, rather than just quoting some words and relying on that to illustrate the use of language.

All questions were equally accessible, and that for each text the demands of the (a) and (b) questions were roughly comparable.

Carter and Joyce were the most popular texts, but Scott Fitzgerald is rapidly increasing in popularity.

CARTER: *The Bloody Chamber*

Q1(a)

Answers that responded to the question, which focused on what was unusual or striking in the narration of 'The Tiger's Bride', on the narrator's use of language, and on the attitudes impressions and perceptions of the girl narrator, generally did well. Candidates had to be very selective, for the story is rich in examples of attitudes and perceptions. There could have been more emphasis on what was striking or unusual in the narrator's actual use of language, and this tended to be less effectively addressed than the narrator's attitudes. Lower band answers tended merely to describe the narrative instead of analysing it, or to stray from the question and to consider the Beast's point of view, or simply failed to focus on the narration itself. At times the theme of feminism tended to become the dominant focus, rather than the narration. In lower band essays the explanation of the effect of language use was often limited or formulaic. For example the effect of alliteration or of the use of semantic fields was explained as being simply 'for emphasis'.

A curious point was that many candidates claimed that the opening line of the story - 'My father lost me to The Beast at cards' - was written in iambic metre.

Strictly speaking, only three feet are iambic, but the sentence is certainly strikingly rhythmical.

Q1(b)

This was very popular and produced some very successful and engaged responses, with almost all answers including at least some reference to A05. The question required candidates to consider at least two of the three stories that present wolves, but very few found any difficulty with this, especially if one of the stories was the very short 'The Werewolf', and almost all showed a high level of knowledge of these stories. It was assumed that werewolves would be regarded as wolves (with clear distinctions made between the two), but not that Alice herself in 'Wolf-Alice' would be seen literally as a wolf - as she was unfortunately by a number of candidates, thus missing most of the point and certainly the subtleties of the story. Some choices were wholly unacceptable, such as seeing Mr Lyon, the Marquis in 'The Bloody Chamber', the Beast in 'The Tiger's Bride', or the Erl-King, as wolves, and such choices suggested a very tenuous grasp of the collection.

A significant number of answers were very concerned with the girl(s) in the stories, so that they often became essays about feminism and female empowerment rather than considerations of the presentation of wolves. Some were too general and did not distinguish between the two or three relevant stories, treating them as if they were one story in three parts, rather than separate stories with very different presentations of wolves. Several candidates were too concerned to tell all they knew of the story, especially of 'The Company of Wolves', rather than focusing on the question and selecting relevant illustrations. A frequent misunderstanding was of the phrase 'wild beasts in the forest' in the third line of 'The Werewolf', which was often seen as describing the people living there, and not referring to wolves or other animals at all. While the story as a whole could be seen as presenting wolves more sympathetically than human beings, this particular reference should not have been used to strengthen the argument.

MAUGHAM: *Collected Short Stories. Volume One*

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

JOYCE: *Dubliners*

Q 3(a)

There were some excellent answers that revealed a detailed knowledge of the story together with a thoughtful and perceptive understanding, especially of the ending. If candidates followed the bullet points carefully, they covered all the important strands of the question and maintained a clear focus throughout. Some otherwise very good answers, however, had a minimal focus on language, and some lower band answers were very censorious of Gabriel, showing virtually no sympathy for him at all. Many seemed to view the story as an account of real people in real life situations, rather than as a construct that used language deliberately to create effects.

Q 3(b)

This was far more popular than 3(a), although some did not spend long enough on choosing appropriate stories to illustrate the theme of entrapment. In 'An Encounter', for example, although the theme of entrapment is present early on, there is much less focus on this as the story progresses, and some candidates struggled to remain relevant. 'Araby' is a difficult story to relate to the theme, as many found, and so is 'The Sisters', especially if the boy narrator is seen as trapped. 'Eveline' and 'A Little Cloud' proved very good choices, but perhaps the best choice of all would have been 'The Boarding House'. Unfortunately only a few seized the opportunity. This story illustrates clearly the difference between entrapment and paralysis: while there is much overlap, there are distinctions between the two. Many lower band answers though saw minimal difference, and some even used the term 'paralysis' throughout. Some candidates were determined to write about 'epiphany', and focused too much on this aspect. Some answers, as in 3(a), treated the stories as if they were sociological real life case-studies and wrote about, for example, Eveline's 'problems'.

MUNRO: *Selected Stories*

Q 4(a)

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

Q 4(b)

This was slightly more popular than 4(a), and while it produced some good answers, there were some that were purely literary, with significantly minimal linguistic focus, or that were too general and lacking in specific illustrations. However, almost all maintained a clear relevance to the question and gave sensible examples of stories which presented a father significantly.

SCOTT FITZGERALD: *The Diamond as Big as the Ritz and Other Stories*

Q 5(a)

There were some very intelligent and thoughtful responses, which conveyed a real sense of engagement with 'The Ice Palace'. Many wrote very well about the differing values of the North and the South, and generally AO5 was targeted very strongly. Details of the story were well used and the level of knowledge displayed was mostly very high. There were a few candidates who, in spite of the guidance in the question about which aspects to consider, covered few of the suggested areas, often spending far too long on the opening. Many candidates referred to the story as a 'novella' (some saw all the stories as novellas), and a few called it a 'novel'.

Q 5(b)

The responses to this question were not as strong as those to 5(a). Many wrote about 'The Diamond as Big as the Ritz' and focused on the 'love affair' between John and Kismine, treating it entirely seriously as a realistic picture of real life as it was lived by the well-off, and failing to see the satire and humour. Few answers really focused well on Fitzgerald's use of language to present and develop the relationship. Some dealt with 'The Ice Palace' but found difficulty in maintaining a

focus on the relationship(s), and sometimes drifted into a consideration of the (a) question.

Some ways in which candidates could improve their answers:

- Support all points made with appropriate quotations or close references from the text;
- Make sure that most, if not all, quotations are analysed, using some appropriate terminology;
- Make precise points and avoid vague generalisations or answers that are purely descriptive;
- Ensure that the focus is on how the writer uses language and produces a construct, rather than a sociological or psychological treatise;
- Make sure that there is a focus on how attitudes and values are conveyed;
- Work out precisely what the question is asking for and then stick to that;
- Avoid quoting too much, as this inevitably leads to a lack of analysis;
- Avoid referring to the short story as a 'play' or a 'poem' or a 'novel';
- Avoid a long introductory paragraph which makes no specific points about the question, but which gives lots of general background information about the writer or the period.

Unit 4a: Writing for Different Audiences and Purposes (6384/01)

General

The best pieces of writing were exceptionally accomplished, and there were very few folders which failed to evidence work of some merit. Year on year there has been an improvement in the appropriate use of linguistic, as well as literary, terminology in the commentaries, and this trend was again apparent this year. Few candidates are now over-concerned with process, and most do attempt to analyse the effects of their language choices.

Most of the work was very fairly and realistically assessed, showing a good understanding of the criteria and of the marking grids, and on the whole not over-rewarding in Band 5. Very few candidates were awarded marks in Band 1, and not many in the lower reaches of Band 2. This reflected the generally sound understanding of the requirements and expectations of the unit that most centres now have. However, this was not universally the case, and this report will seek to clarify the issues that arose this year.

Most centres now appreciate the need to have some focus on AO5, but there were still some examples of purely factual or too narrowly informative pieces (such as a travel guide entirely about facilities available at a holiday resort, or an entirely factual encyclopaedia entry, or a science textbook aimed at Year 7) which were not lifted above the researched material on which they were based by any sense of an individual or distinctive voice. One candidate who wrote an informative piece about anorexia, claimed to have used a piece of work from the A Level Psychology Course. In this case there was not only no addressing of AO5, but no sense of audience at all. A factual piece cannot address AO5, and obviously this objective cannot be assessed. Once again we must urge centres to encourage their candidates away from purely factual source material, or to make clear that they must use it to produce something distinctive. There is surely no shortage of rich possibilities for candidates to develop viewpoints, opinions, outlooks and attitudes.

The message flagged strongly last year, about the need for pieces to be 'extended' in length, seemed to have got through to most centres, but unfortunately not all. Some speeches this year were very short, and there were many examples from other genres. Centres should note that a single piece should be about 1,000 words, and the absolute minimum should be above 700. It is not acceptable to have two very short pieces and then an inordinately long commentary and claim that the folder is within the 3,500 word limit. The pieces should be significantly longer than the commentary. If they are short they do not meet the requirements of the specification and cannot receive high marks.

There were very few cases of three pieces being offered, and although this is allowed by the specification, we must advise centres to avoid offering three, especially by good candidates. There were a few instances of three pieces with a thematic link, but there are real dangers in adopting a thematic approach to the unit. The main focus has to be on different audiences and purposes, and this requires a study of genres rather than of themes. It is more beneficial for the candidate when there is no thematic link between pieces.

A problem found in a number of, mostly new, centres this year was that the two pieces were both in the spoken mode. Given that the title of the unit is 'Writing for different purposes and audiences', candidates tended to concentrate entirely on the spoken mode – such as a dramatic monologue and a speech. We would strongly recommend that centres do not allow this in future, and that at least one of the pieces should be clearly in the written mode. We have always allowed a spoken piece, but it must be remembered that this should be clearly crafted (a piece written to be delivered by an actor or a speaker) and should avoid being at all like spontaneous speech such as that studied in Unit 1. A radio commentary on a football match is not appropriate: why could the candidate not offer a written newspaper report of the match? Transcripts must be avoided, as they are only appropriate for spontaneous speech.

PowerPoint presentations should be avoided, as they inevitably consist of very fragmented materials, and do not fit the criteria for an extended writing unit.

Centres should avoid using the material and tasks from the previous year's Unit 2 (Desk Study) exam. There were a few examples this year of speeches on bullying, and even if these were delivered to an altered audience, they showed a lack of initiative, and were based on the thematic study of a collection of texts, rather than on the study of the genre.

Some candidates are still presenting folders that show insufficient differentiation between the two pieces. A folder, for example, with a dramatic monologue and a series of diary entries from a holiday in North Africa, easily became indistinguishable when the two pieces each had first person address, a similar register and tone, and a similar gradual revelation of the narrator's situation and attitude.

Last year we asked for greater detail and clarity on front sheets as to the nature of the pieces. Unfortunately, there were many cases where what was written on the front cover gave no indication of what the pieces were, and where moderators had to read the commentaries first in order to discover what was being presented. Centres should ensure that the nature of the pieces is clearly indicated. These descriptions need not be long, but they should give precise details of what their pieces are in terms of genre, audience and purpose. A mere title is not enough. It is useful to know, for example, exactly what sort of magazine or newspaper candidates are writing for, or in what situation a speech is being delivered.

The commentary

The commentary remains a major discriminator for this unit. The higher band answers were well focused on choices for audience and purpose, and showed a very high level of linguistic and literary knowledge which was used to make precise points. Lower band answers often made a few precise points and showed very limited knowledge.

There should be only one commentary to cover the two pieces, not one commentary on each (this inevitably leads to excessive length). The single commentary makes possible an element of comparison and contrast between the pieces, and although this should not be a major focus, some element of comparison is usually helpful if only to point out the different purposes and audiences, and a few stylistic features perhaps. It is better not to adopt a wholly comparative

structure, however, and we would advise that each piece should be considered separately, with the comparative points made in passing.

The commentary should follow the pieces in the folder, not precede them. A few commentaries were much longer: the suggested length is 1,000 words.

More focus in the commentaries on the influence of the source texts or material studied. There could be a little more consideration of genre conventions and of a few examples of language features in the texts studied, but of course the main focus in the commentaries must be on the language of the candidate's own texts, not on that of the source texts. In some folders, however, there was limited evidence of anything having been studied at all. In some commentaries that did refer to source materials, there were references to sources that were entirely inappropriate. For example, a book review citing the book itself as the source, a dramatic monologue and a diary citing an autobiography, or a letter citing World War I poetry. The confusion here was that texts that had been read for content (and to do this is wholly commendable) were being cited as the source material, whereas what should have been cited were the examples of the genre that had been studied. Perhaps it is helpful to distinguish clearly between what is read (for content or ideas) and what is studied (other examples of the chosen genre or style).

Some comments on specific genres:

Autobiography: The genre works best if candidates do not write about their own lives, but present an 'autobiography' of someone they have studied, perhaps real or historical or from fiction. It is helpful if there is a clear sense of audience and if the writing is seen as part of a book or an article in a publication.

Diaries: These are best seen as written for publication, and again tend to work best if they are not the candidate's own personal diary (as suggested above under autobiography). There should be a clear sense of an audience other than the writer.

Dramatic Monologues: A monologue with dialogue is possible but any dialogue should be kept to a minimum. Some had so much that they would have better if presented as play-scripts. Some others, usually citing Alan Bennett as their claimed source, were in effect nothing more than chunks of speech with no progression or drama or beginning or conclusion. A monologue by an animal is not appropriate: how would it be performed?

Speeches: Some speeches had far too much unassimilated information and lacked a personal voice as well as signs of crafting. Some were really just factual essays on a topic, forgetting the audience being addressed. It is helpful to provide a clear indication of who is speaking, to whom, and if appropriate when and where. There should be a proper framework for a speech, including a suitable opening and a conclusion.

Miscellaneous points:

- Some candidates were unduly concerned with graphics and layout: in this unit it is the writing that matters. Layout should be appropriate, but should not be dwelt on at great length in the commentary.

- Some work was heavily annotated by the candidate: this is unacceptable as it makes the work difficult for the moderator to read. If candidates wish to annotate their work prior to writing their commentary, then they should print out another copy.
- A newspaper front page is not appropriate for this unit as it inevitably must consist of a collection of unrelated short pieces, and not the single extended piece that is required.
- Drafts: Please do not send drafts, because the moderator can only be concerned with the final product. Naturally we expect work to have been drafted and re-drafted, but only the final versions should be submitted.

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:

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- 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.

The most popular genres in June 2006 were:

- Travel writing
- Magazine articles
- Chapters of novels
- Speeches
- Reviews (of films, books, music and theatre)
- Dramatic monologues
- Autobiographies
- Scripts (for Stage, TV and Radio)
- Articles for broadsheet newspapers
- Reportage/broadsheet newspaper reports
- Letters
- Biography
- Sports Writing
- Diaries/Journals
- Obituaries
- Satire/Parody
- Reviews of Restaurants and Games

Unit 4b: Writing for Different Audiences and Purposes (6384/02)

General

The extract from 'Hard Times' chosen for the paper proved to be entirely accessible to candidates, but it was also sufficiently challenging to provide discrimination in the writing tasks. The extra material in Text B was also easily understood by all, but perhaps it was the abler candidates who were best able to make use of it seamlessly. The texts did act as a lively stimulus, and some good interesting writing was produced in response to the tasks, with a real sense of engagement.

There are many centres where a high level of analytical skill has been developed, and whose candidates were able to produce a detailed linguistic analysis of their writing in their commentaries, using a wide range of terminology to make precise points, and discussing the appropriateness of their language features for audience and purpose. Many candidates, however, seemed unprepared for a linguistic analysis of their own writing, and were unable to make precise points with use of appropriate terminology. In many cases there was a huge discrepancy between the mark for the task and that for the commentary. General descriptive accounts do not score many marks: it is essential to use a wide range of linguistic and, where appropriate, literary terminology to do well.

Task (a)(i)

Required a report on Gradgrind's school from a School Inspector. The report had to be critical of the system inspected. There were some outstanding answers which were well organised, adopted a formal tenor, made intelligent judgements and demonstrated an overall coherence and conviction, with the professional polish of a real inspector's report. Most candidates indeed who chose this option were able to make a fair attempt at achieving a reasonably formal tenor. However, in some cases the attempt to achieve formality resulted in distorted expression. A few found it difficult to perceive the difference between the style of an official report and that of a novel, and this resulted in some inappropriately immoderate condemnation of the school regime.

Strengths in answers included:

- a clear sense of the audience - the Ministry of Education
- an appropriately critical approach
- intelligent judgements about the harmful effects of the educational system on the individual pupils
- a reasonable proportion of educated, polysyllabic, low-frequency words
- varied sentence patterns, but with a high proportion of compound or complex structures
- clear overall recommendations (a requirement of the task)
- a full coverage of the areas suggested in the guidance for the task
- appropriate selection of details from Texts A and B
- clear conveying of reactions, reflections, attitudes etc. (ie addressing AO5).

Weaknesses in answers included:

- poor expression
- many technical errors including lack of control of punctuation and sentence structures, and inaccurate spelling
- inappropriately extravagant flourishes for a report (eg referring to the *black blinds capable of sucking a soul and sending it straight to hell*, or referring to the teacher as *the prison guard* (not even as a simile)
- using inappropriate literary features, such as referring to Bitzer as *the really pale boy who looks like my albino rabbit* (this would have been very good in (ii), but was quite out of place here), and using figurative language to describe Gradgrind
- writing a report that sounded too much like a speech, with frequent rhetorical questions and flourishes such as: *I fear for the future of our nation*
- adopting an excessively emotional approach: even if this was deliberate, it was still inappropriate
- beginning the report in a style more suited to the opening of a novel or a story: eg *While all is still clear in my mind I am beginning my report*
- using the present tense, which was wholly inappropriate, and producing a piece that sounded more like a spontaneous spoken commentary than a considered written report (with sentences such as *Oh no, wait, I see a door.*)
- ending the report with 'Yours faithfully', as if it were a letter
- seeing the school as a boarding school, and describing the dormitories, the washing facilities, and similar domestic features (this was not a serious weakness, but was a curious approach)
- aiming at a 'light-hearted tone' (as some claimed in their commentaries)

Task (a)(ii)

This was slightly the more popular of the two tasks, but produced some lower band answers, as well as some high band ones. It asked for an entry by Sissy Jupe in her journal, covering her first day at the Coketown school. It was difficult to do this really well if candidates chose to write as a very young child aged 4 or 5. This was both a misreading of Text A and also a very unwise decision, as it limited the stylistic and linguistic opportunities of the task.

Many candidates chose to make deliberate grammatical and spelling errors (or in some cases claimed to, while making the same errors themselves in their commentaries). Some claimed that they had deliberately avoided any structure in the journal because personal journals were spontaneous and because Sissy was a child. Some attempted to show accent or dialectal features, is unwise if it led to distorted spellings and mostly non-standard grammar.

Most candidates did well in this option, and many managed subtly to suggest the harm that the school regime was already doing, or would potentially do, to the child, without disturbing the child-like tenor of their piece. Irony was often introduced in a similarly subtle way. High band answers had some precise descriptive detail and accurate observation, which raised the mark in many cases. Most included appropriate reactions and feelings to the events described, and only a few gave a purely factual account of the day, mainly just paraphrasing Text A: these were tedious to read.

Strengths in answers included:

- sound interpretations of Sissy's viewpoint
- effective concentration on Sissy's feelings and thoughts and reactions
- sensible judgements about Bitzer, Mr. Gradgrind, M'Choakumchild and any others mentioned individually
- choosing details wisely, and avoiding distortion of the original text
- inventing extra details of their own that enhanced the spirit of the original text
- using an appropriate personal style
- maintaining a consistent tenor and style
- using some vivid lexis, without making it too educated or elevated
- using appropriate syntax: not too many very long complex sentences, but not just short simple sentences
- use of precise detail and accurate observation in the account of the day
- a clear sense of audience (hopefully her father at some time in the future, but without overdoing references to him)

Weaknesses in answers included:

- many technical errors and much confused expression: lack of control over punctuation was a serious fault in this task
- inappropriate lifting from Texts A and B - inevitably in an inappropriate tenor
- adopting an excessively cheerful and positive approach, with Sissy pleased that was now clearly going to get a good education, and referring to 'dear Mr. Gradgrind'. Some referred to *a marvellous first day*
- referring to Gradgrind as 'Sir Gradgrind'
- presenting Bitzer as a very attractive character (several suggested a blossoming love affair between Sissy and Bitzer, with comments like *I think I may marry Bitzer, father - he is very clever* or *I think you will like him father*)
- presenting M'Choakumchild (ignoring the implications of the name) as a friendly, child-centred, fun-loving character, cracking jokes, and sometimes trying to subvert the whole Gradgrind system
- describing Gradgrind as very pleased to hear about the occupation of Sissy's father (a misreading of Text A)
- excessively long introductions, where too much was invented about Sissy's home, getting up and preparing for the day (often a page before she reached the school)
- excessive repetition of 'father' as the directly addressed audience (sometimes five times in as many lines)
- writing a letter rather than a journal
- including an excessive amount of dialogue, not just the odd line, but often exchanges of six or more turns
- ignoring the instruction to write an account of the first day at the school, and covering the first week, with daily entries
- using strange dates for the journal - eg 1906, 1819, 1804 with no clear reason for doing so (only a minor point, but an odd one)
- not seeing 'Sissy' as a shortening of 'Cecilia', and thus thinking that Gradgrind was imposing an entirely new name on her, rather than insisting on greater formality

Task (b) The Commentary:

Many candidates were able to use linguistic and literary frameworks very effectively to analyse their own writing, but there also many who made little or no attempt to analyse using appropriate terminology. The latter tended merely to describe the content of their text, with much vagueness and generalisation, and although some of these commentaries were intelligent and well written, it was impossible to give them much credit. In several cases a weak commentary considerably lowered the overall mark after a very successful first piece. High band responses demonstrated a high level of technical knowledge, with a wide range of points, referred sensibly but briefly to Texts A and B, and discussed the effects of their language choices very perceptively.

Some specific points:

- All points made must be supported by quotations from the candidate's writing. Many potential points were invalidated by lack of examples, or were expressed far too broadly.
- There was sometimes no attempt to show how attitudes and values had been conveyed through language choices. A few candidates thought that they were required to write about their own values rather than how they had conveyed the attitudes of Sissy or the inspector.
- It is not appropriate in the commentary to write at length about 'what I could do better next time' or about 'everything I thought of before I started writing'.
- A negative approach should be avoided (eg 'I did not use any examples of...'): candidates should concentrate on what they have written. Many took a negative approach to Texts A and B: analysing features of these often quite elaborately, but then explaining that none had been used. It is better to take a positive approach and mention a few features of the source texts that have influenced the writing of the task.
- For Task (i), it was not enough to assert that a 'formal tone' had been adopted: it was necessary to provide evidence and proof of how this had been achieved.
- In the journal in Task (ii), there was often too much on the character and background of Sissy, rather than on the language choices that had been made to indicate these aspects.
- There was frequent confusion between 'report' and 'reportage', and between 'journal' and 'journalism' (with references to 'journalistic writing').
- Some candidates confused the written and spoken modes, claiming for example that they had used underlining to indicate intonation patterns.

Unit 5: Wider Reading (6385)

There were fourteen texts on the paper with a choice of two questions on each. The established format is that question (a) gives a specific focus and invites candidates to discuss their reading of a text in light of this. Question (b) directs candidates to an extract and invites them to select other material from the whole text to discuss. Both questions require a demonstration of knowledge of the whole text and have specific prompts to encourage a combined linguistic and literary approach.

Requirements of the Assessment Objectives

The key element of this unit is the integration of linguistic and literary approaches to the texts. Central to this is the study of the varied uses of language in literature, that is, investigating literary texts through a linguistic lens while still recognising literary techniques and concepts. Both literary and linguistic approaches are required, not in equal competencies but in an application of both strands of knowledge as appropriate depending on the nature of the text. Every question contains a linguistic prompt and a literary prompt and there is always an evaluative element.

AO2ii requires candidates to demonstrate their comprehension of the writer's intended meanings using linguistic and literary evaluations, showing an awareness of the contexts.

AO4 is concerned with the dynamic nature and shaping of the text. Candidates need to show how meaning is conveyed by the structure and development of the text, and by the language features and range of techniques used. The linking of form to function is crucial here and candidates must be able to explain the effects achieved by the writer.

AO3ii examines the candidate's use of linguistic and literary approaches through analysis and a discriminating use of linguistic and literary terminology.

AO1 looks for an engaged, evaluative and balanced response which completely answers the question using a careful selection of material to discuss. Like AO3ii this will involve an appropriate use of technical terms.

General Comments

Approach: most candidates seemed clearly focussed on the integrated nature of the Specification. Centres are to be congratulated for applying suggestions of previous examiners' reports and for guiding candidates to a more seamless integration of literary and linguistic knowledge. Where candidates had command of the integrated frameworks, the results were often absorbing to read and were quite impressive given the limits of a timed exam.

The majority of candidates seemed really engaged with their texts and wrote thoughtfully and reflectively. The best answers were personal, engaged and often concise, with judicious use of terminology and quotations and a real sense of how language works in literature. Knowledge and understanding of genre was generally impressive and indicates a genuine link between different aspects of the Specifications. For example, questions on the plays give the opportunity to employ

knowledge of spoken language features and demonstrate an awareness of dramatic techniques and effects.

However, some candidates are still focussed on the literary aspects of the texts and need to strike a more balanced approach. This is a Language and Literature paper but it is clear that some candidates are not being as well-served by the few centres which neglect to teach texts for both their literary and linguistic content, and the ways in which these features can be recognised and analysed accordingly. The analytical and well argued literary responses are not as successful as they should be because they do not satisfy the linguistic elements of the AOs. A detailed, systematic linguistic analysis is needed for AO4 and AO3ii achievement.

It remains a feature of many lower band answers that they do not interpret the question accurately. This leads to a narrative and explanatory approach which often relies on quotations without accompanying analysis. Candidates should be encouraged to read the question carefully, highlight and consider the key words and phrases and then select material accordingly. More encouraging is that there was less incidence of candidates answering last year's questions or simply writing down what they knew.

Introductory paragraphs and conclusions which re-state the terms of the question and make general statements do not gain marks. Candidates should start with a relevant, evaluative point. The best answers made critical points straight away, selected material carefully, integrated knowledge of contexts where relevant, used brief, contextualised quotations and were discriminating in their application of analytical frameworks and technical terminology. Candidates this year were much better at identifying and explaining precise effects of verse / dramatic form. There appeared to be a greater understanding generally of how form relates to function.

Centres are clearly teaching linguistic terminology but some candidates are listing this indiscriminately at the expense of evaluation. Technical terminology must be used with discrimination, it does not replace close reading and analysis. *Hyperbole* and *imagery* are over-used and often inaccurately; *hyperbole* is not just any expression of emotion, and *imagery* is too often used loosely to mean anything descriptive or visual. *Oxymoron* was widely used, again, to mean *contrast*, and as a synonym for *juxtaposition*. *Onomatopoeia* and *syntax* are also frequently not understood.

There are candidates who are being prepared to answer questions on the Anthology for both sections of the paper and Centres are reminded that this is the Wider Reading unit. When candidates answer question 5 and question 11 on the Anthology, they need to be aware of the dangers of taking a similar approach to each as well as of the increased risk of repetition.

Rubric: Generally candidates are clearly well prepared on the format of the paper. There continues to be a problem with some candidates' treatment of the questions on *The Poetry Anthology*. There were instances of those who had answered the post-1770 questions but used pre-1770 poems, and vice versa. Others ignored the 'two different groups' instruction in Q.4(a) or the 'two different poets' instruction in Q.11. Also, a few candidates who had clearly studied the Anthology answered Q.3(a) *Eight Metaphysical Poets*. Centres need to remind candidates that rubric infringements of this kind can result in a loss of marks.

Contexts: knowledge of these should only be included when relevant to the question and the argument being presented. Higher band answers focus on analysis and integrate contextual comments when appropriate. Less successful responses include contextual and biographical detail as background information without relating it to the question or the evaluation of the text.

Time management: most candidates achieved a good balance and answered both questions fully and in a coherent, well structured manner. Some candidates made over-elaborate plans which reduced the time spent on the answers, while others appeared to have spent too much time selecting their own choice of poem(s) in the poetry questions. There are also those who write too much, at the expense of cogency and quality. Candidates need to be aware that a detailed, concise answer is what is required.

Comments on Specific Questions

The most popular texts were *The Merchant's Tale, Translations, The Edexcel Poetry Anthology* and *Oleanna*. There were a number of responses on, *Surfacing* and Plath. A limited number of centres selected, *Eight Metaphysical Poets* and the Nichols anthology. There were also a few responses to the Milton, Pope, Stoppard, Barnes and Lessing questions.

CHAUCER: *The Merchant's Tale*

This remains one of the most popular texts and it elicited some of the best answers from candidates again this year. The richness of the poem lends itself well to the demands of this paper in terms of its literary and linguistic requirements, and candidates of all abilities are able to write with some confidence about it. In both questions all candidates demonstrated considerable knowledge of the poem and the literary conventions on which it draws. Most responses showed engagement and interest in the text, and there was much awareness of provenance, context, and multiple narrative voices. There were far fewer instances of candidates answering last year's questions. However, centres need to be mindful of the fact that this is a text which particularly lends itself to using partially assimilated learned material. For example, the identification of an allusion was often thought to be adequate by itself: "*This is a reference to courtly love,*" or "*This is a reference to Adam and Eve*" or even "*This is a biblical reference*" were sometimes deemed to be complete remarks that did not require elucidation on why the writer might have used the allusion. The discriminating factor was whether candidates could analyse literary features and apply some linguistic analysis rather than quote without commentary. There are still too many of the responses referring to the text as a '*play*'.

Q1(a)

This question on the Merchant's disillusionment elicited the strongest response from many candidates with answers which showed confidence, assurance and impressively detailed knowledge of the poem. There was also ample evidence of excellent knowledge of literary and linguistic devices and an arresting and engaging discussion of the narrator's embittered tone. Higher band answers demonstrated a perceptive awareness of the Tale's narrative layers and influences, and engaged with the evaluative element of the question. Some candidates focussed on the Merchant as the sole narrator while others allowed Chaucer to have been pulling the strings; both approaches were equally valid. However, lower band answers tended to refer indiscriminately to the Merchant and/or Chaucer as the narrator

without understanding that the Merchant was a fictional creation of Chaucer, and that this might be significant for the levels of irony which they rightly wanted to discuss.

Q1(b)

This alternative question also produced strong responses from candidates with most demonstrating Januarie's physical and moral blindness and the dramatic irony of the Tale. There were candidates who appreciated that it was the Merchant addressing Fortune and those who thought it was January - often then continuing with a line by line paraphrase helped by textual notes. Higher band answers provided a fully integrated analytical framework which addressed all of the elements in the question, and were able to discern the voice of Chaucer at work in the ironic use of apostrophe and in Januarie's self pitying. These closely analysed the impact of Fortune and the astrological context as well as discussing other literary conventions beside the apostrophe, like hyperbole and imagery. Lower band responses listed examples of dramatic tension but offered perfunctory analysis and did not address the wider contextual relevance.

MILTON: *Selected Poems*

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

EIGHT METAPHYSICAL POETS

There were few responses on this text but candidates showed some strong engagement with the poems and a sound knowledge of the metaphysical nature of the work. There was some sustained, pertinent analysis which engaged with the demands of the questions.

Q3(a)

This question generally elicited good answers from the candidates who chose it. It was handled at all levels with some degree of success and evidence of subject knowledge but 'the intimate and personal narrative voice' was the element which eluded some. Also, whilst there was generally successful discussion of literary devices, consideration of linguistic devices was less evident.

Q3(b)

This was also a very successful question with candidates' intimate and detailed knowledge of this text being very much to the fore of their discussion on Donne's literary methods and feelings. This question allowed candidates to draw on the specific features of one poem and they evaluated the language and literary techniques in detail and to good effect.

EDEXCEL ANTHOLOGY: *Pre -1770 Section*

There were some genuine, personal responses to these poems that investigated the texts with great sensitivity and awareness of subtext. The better answers brought the texts to life. It is also the case that too many responses tended to be either rather literary in focus at the expense of any linguistic analysis, or, in some cases, were accounts of poems that had densely described the linguistic form but did not

given enough indication of how the poems work as poems. This was sometimes also true of candidates who wrote quite fully about literary *form*, but in doing so ignore content. Clearly there needs to be more of a balance.

Q4(a)

This question seemed to play to the strengths of many candidates with the metaphysical poets popularly chosen and where effective use was made of historical and bibliographical contexts. There were some highly detailed and cohesive responses here as the demands of the question allowed a full exploration of the texts. Higher band answers chose contrasting poems thus providing themselves with a ready framework for comparison and contrast. Poems which worked well were two of: *Love, Sonnet XVI, The World*, though there were others which were equally well discussed. Lower band answers tended to use poems with which they were familiar and comfortable rather than poems which allowed them to address the terms of the question. They often faltered on framing an argument about creating an individual voice in relation to religious, social or intellectual convictions. Those candidates who chose to write on ballads here found pertinent analysis difficult and mostly offered narrative overviews of the chosen poems.

Q4(b)

This question proved to be a very popular choice with candidates. Successful contrasting poems were: *The Emulation, Since There's No Help, Sonnet 130, They Flee From Me, To His Coy Mistress, The Sun Rising*. There were many perceptive responses and candidates fully engaged with the contextual details of their chosen poems, attaining an appropriate and significant balance which interlinked the relevant material. Lower band answers offered discursive explanations of the poems' narrative content and in some cases, inappropriate second poems were chosen. They were often distracted by biographical speculations in discussing *On Monsieur's Departure*. What distinguished higher band answers was the ability to apply literary and linguistic analysis with equal skill.

POPE: *The Rape of the Lock*

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

Q5(a)

There were some very pleasing responses to this question. Possibly, the satiric nature of the poem meant that candidates were predisposed to write about the various levels of the poem and there was a clear awareness of the poem's ambiguities and possible interpretations. Candidates did tend to repeat the word 'dazzling' in the hope that the point could be made without too much proof but they had clearly understood the text and conveyed real enjoyment. Lower band answers tended to be rather explanatory and did not discuss the poem's satiric nature.

Q5(b)

There were too few answers to this questions to enable a general commentary in this report.

FRIEL: *Translations*

Both questions seemed to work well and candidates of all abilities were able to respond with a good deal of comprehension and knowledge. However, examiners reported that in many responses there was little discussion of linguistic or literary features and rather limited use of technical terminology.

Q6(a)

This question drew a wide range of responses most of which showed a good general awareness of identity and some succinct language analysis. Candidates used their sound knowledge of the text to discuss Friel's theme of identity, exploring the language and history and using the re-naming of place names to discuss the full implications of the question. For example, compelling use was made of such episodes as Owen's account of Tobair Vree. Despite the cited quotation, some candidates ignored the importance of history and presented general character descriptions, writing generalised identity essays without exploring the significance of the quotation.

Q6(b)

This question drew very mixed responses with many detailing the change in characters and their relationships. Many candidates showed good understanding of the text but were not always able to discuss Friel's dramatic techniques. Lower band answers tended to focus on the plot or analysed the extract without further development. Higher band responses connected their discussion to the broader contexts of the play and showed a clear awareness of the playwright's techniques - such as the significance of Manus's exit - writing about dramatic effect and relating it to stagecraft, symbolism and theme. It was felt that there was evidence that some candidates had seen the play and had managed to integrate discussion of dramatic techniques in their answers very well.

MAMET: *Oleanna*

Both questions elicited discussion of the shifts in power as the play progresses as well as a lot of personal response, usually very positive. Lower band answers often focussed on telling the story of the play while higher band responses noted linguistic features of speech and analysed discourse using the terminology studied in Unit 1.

Q7(a)

This question invited candidates to discuss 'interpretation' and the more discerning candidates provided contextual information and showed an awareness of the characters as dramatic constructs. Most responses demonstrated a sound knowledge of the text and considered the significance of dialogue, action and stage directions and how this related to the rest of the play and wider themes. There was some very successful use of the knowledge of spoken discourse to discuss the dialogue in detail. Less successful answers detailed the shift in power between the characters and ignored the question's evaluative invitation to 'explore the extent'. These tended to show a limited literary or linguistic approach with insufficient use of terminology.

Q7(b)

Candidates seemed to feel quite comfortable discussing the power balance in the play and there were many perceptive responses that integrated the play's socio-historical contexts and the linguistic relationship between the two characters. The most successful responses demonstrated a good linguistic awareness in their discussion of language and power, and the shaping of the dialogue was confidently evaluated by many candidates who were clearly engaged by the issue. Others either limited their discussion to the extract or explained the development of the relationship between the two characters and how this changed. These were generally more limited in their approach, often being quite narrative and not very detailed in literary or linguistic analysis.

STOPPARD: *Jumpers*

There were very few responses on this text this year but there were some very good ones which demonstrated engagement with the philosophical propositions and the dramatic genres the playwright employs.

PLATH: *Selected Poems*

A limited number of candidates studied this text but for both questions they chose appropriate poems which were discussed with genuine personal engagement.

Q9(a)

This question elicited a very strong response from candidates who were aware, for the most part, of the need to discuss the poet's techniques and use a linguistic / literary register when doing so. Some candidates had difficulty with the idea of 'challenging readers by subverting their expectations' in this question, tending to treat this as an issue of Plath's biography or the readers' social conditioning rather than a matter of challenging the readers' linguistic or literary assumptions. Successful responses demonstrated close textual analysis with a good range of examples as well as a clear engagement with the question asked.

Q9(b)

Whilst this question was not as popular as the previous one, responses were still quite arresting. Those who responded to it with most success were aware of having to discuss Plath's use of literary and language techniques, and these candidates were able to evaluate effectiveness in terms of conveying purpose. The question also brought a number of responses which were primarily biographical and / or presented a discussion of the two poems in terms of imagery but found the evaluation aspect more difficult.

NICHOLS: *The Fat Black Woman's Poems*

A limited number of candidates answered on Nichols but it was clear that the text had been well received. For both questions, the main emphasis was on the status of Nichols as a writer about black Caribbean women's lives. There was a good deal of enthusiastic personal response and some focussed discussion of technique. Good responses linked theme, language and form, but there was a less successful handling of the linguistic features of Creole as well as the phonological features which figure so clearly in the poetry.

EDEXCEL ANTHOLOGY: *Post -1770 Section*

There appear to be fewer centres choosing this section of the anthology, possibly because they are heeding advice about the risks involved for candidates in studying the Anthology for both sections of the paper. Candidates had a free choice and there was a selection of poems chosen. Most candidates were fine on form and lexis but there was very little explicit or confident discussion of syntax as required in (b).

ATWOOD: *Surfacing*

Q12(a)

There was a lot of strong personal response to this question and answers ranged widely. Some candidates offered a catalogue of technical terms but most selected pertinent textual references and identified the construction of themes in the novel and acknowledged the realisation that the narrator is not fully reliable. 'Journey' was interpreted in a number of ways although most picked up on the word 'psychological' and focussed on the development of the narrator within the novel. Lower band answers tended to retell the story with lots of assertions about identity. Higher band answers focussed on imagery and symbolism, selecting quotations appropriately and discussing the implications of the language. Many of these answers were very well organized with evidence of excellent textual knowledge and the ability to integrate a language and literary approach. One problem was that identifying Atwood as a *feminist*, or the ideology of *Surfacing* as *feminism*, was deemed by many candidates to be a fully self-explanatory comment.

Q12(b)

Candidates were very engaged with the text and there was a lot of evidence that the candidates had enjoyed it. It was also evident that there was real engagement with the issues. Most candidates competently identified the novel's main themes and discussed the indication of these in Chapter 5. They rightly discussed context, themes, gender, and the angst of the novel's protagonist. They also showed a good knowledge of the whole novel and were able to cross-reference effectively and to offer pertinent contextual information. Lower band responses had less to say about Atwood's narrative techniques and there were a number of answers that detailed the narrative content of Chapter 5 but offered little else.

BARNES: *Flaubert's Parrot*

Only a small number of candidates answered either question on this text but they included some excellent responses in which much was discussed, and some illuminating insights offered. They were generally good on narrative techniques and had a clear focus on the wording of the question. A real enjoyment of the techniques was evident.

LESSING: *The Memoirs of a Survivor*

There were very few answers on this novel. Those candidates who did study it offered very engaged, personal responses with an obvious appreciation of the text. The (a) question was more successfully done with candidates able to link the 'wall'

sequences with the social realism and narrator as observer. In the (b) question, some candidates could identify themes but were less secure on relating them to narrative techniques or language choices.

Unit 6: Genre Studies (6386)

General Comments

There were many positive responses and a high level of engagement with the texts. Slightly more students chose Question 2, possibly drawn by the thematic link. Question 1, however, seemed to attract historians due to the texts' firm and accessible historical links.

Candidates seemed comfortable with the length of the extracts and most felt able to explore the whole text and to provide generous coverage of all three. There were fewer incomplete answers and of those that were unfinished, many gave clear indications in the form of concise notes of where their argument was leading.

Many more candidates than in previous years used the comparative element as a means of structuring responses and this, as well as the requirement to comment on attitudes and values, was often very successfully integrated into the analysis. The pre-21st century texts were handled with more confidence, with candidates resisting the tendency to apply a set of stereotypical assumptions and instead analysing the texts in their own right.

Candidates were clearly able to apply their knowledge and insight gained from other parts of the course, particularly with characteristic literary and rhetorical techniques, journalism and the spoken word. Centres have provided candidates with appropriate frameworks to be able to probe and sift language effectively and there is an increased awareness of how form shapes meaning.

Better answers used an appropriate and discrete range of frameworks to comment on the purpose, the subtleties, the pragmatics and attitudes and values. Candidates continue to use a range of technical terminology, usually to advantage but there were still a number of less secure responses where terminology was used as a prop rather than as a tool to be used selectively to aid analysis.

Some terminology is being used casually and loosely without real understanding of the feature and effect e.g.

- any consecutive series of letters is referred to as alliteration
- 'imagery' is used as an all purpose word to mean anything which creates a visual impression, or sometimes to refer to just anything
- 'hyperbole' is a massively over-used term which is being used to describe any forceful choice of lexis (many candidates were convinced that the writers of all texts were 'hyperbolic' and given to sensationalism even when facing execution, a shipwreck and imprisonment in a Bangkok gaol).

Centres should encourage candidates to appreciate the value of using terminology more selectively and thoughtfully. AO5 was very well addressed and the opportunity to explore both overt and perceived attitudes and values seemed to provide an enjoyable challenge for many.

The ability to read and assimilate the texts is still a major discriminator. Lack of thorough reading lead to misinterpretations of meaning, tone and audience. A few candidates spent time pointlessly speculating on the provenance of the texts when this had been clearly signalled in the rubric. Maybe candidates need to be

reminded that it is as important to read the question details as the texts themselves.

Q1

This question featured three texts linked by the theme of espionage/treachery. There was a good understanding of how historical and cultural contexts might affect meaning and interpretation. AO3ii was tackled with more confidence and there was less feature-spotting without an attempt at worthwhile comment. Some answers worked without considering the whole text so, despite demonstrating knowledge of features, this was of limited value if it was not text-specific.

Text A provoked thoughtful comments from candidates who responded to the tragic tone of the letter with perception and insight.

Text B was explored in detail by many candidates with sensitivity to the fact that Fraser is both an historian and novelist.

Text C was sometimes found to be more challenging, although insecurities with this text were often due to a lack of general knowledge rather than challenges imposed by the language.

Higher band answers, however, were able to identify and comment on the shifts in register and also took care to search for evidence of the writer's affiliations and convictions.

Q2

The question offered three texts which provided different perspectives on women's lives. The thematic link interested candidates and prompted discussion on feminist issues. When this was related to the texts it resulted in focused and engaged analyses but in some cases it led to unrelated observations. A familiarity with the genre of letter writing enabled a confident approach to Texts A and C. There is much better recognition of the nature of primary and secondary audiences with many showing awareness of the dual/multiple audiences for Texts A and C. More insightful answers were able to note the patronising tone underlying the praise of 'female heroism' in Text B. The mixed genres of Text C gave candidates the opportunity to demonstrate knowledge of a variety of genres, including fiction and travel writing as it was often noted that Gregory's approach did integrate elements of both.

Conclusion and advice to centres

Continue to advise candidates to avoid the check-list approach and to resist the temptation to engage with superficial technical features e.g. the presence of pronouns, verbs, conjunctions when there is very little to say about them. Candidates should make a positive effort to learn the meanings of technical terms: there were far too many examples of the inaccurate use of metaphor, simile, adjective, adverb.

Centres should be congratulated on the commitment to the unit exhibited by the majority of students. There were many personal, independent responses which appreciated the multi-layered nature of the texts and which drew upon knowledge and skills acquired throughout the course.

Statistics

Unit 1: The Spoken Word (6381)

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	100	69	60	51	42	34
Uniform boundary mark	120	72	63	54	45	36

Unit 2: Desk Study (6382)

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	50	34	30	26	22	18
Uniform boundary mark	120	96	84	72	60	48

Unit 3a: Shorter Fiction Study (6383/01)

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	50	40	34	29	24	19
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

Unit 3b: Shorter Fiction Study (6383/02)

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	50	34	30	26	23	20
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

Unit 4a: Writing for Different Audiences and Purposes (6383/01)

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	50	40	34	29	24	19
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

Unit 4b: Writing for Different Audiences and Purposes (6383/01)

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	50	38	33	28	23	19
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

Unit 5: Wider Reading (6385)

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	100	81	71	61	52	43
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

Unit 6: Genre Studies (6386)

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	50	36	31	26	21	17
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 LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE (8179/ 9179)

Set texts

Range of reading

'English Literature' includes American and Commonwealth writing, and significant works in translation may also be included. The set texts are drawn from a range of historical periods between 1370 and the present day, and candidates are required to study a range of texts, which must include:

AS • a range of literary and non-literary texts, including a minimum of two texts covering two literary genres (prose, poetry and drama) one of which must have been published before 1900. The non-literary texts must include both spoken and written language.

A2 • a wider range of literary and non-literary texts, including two additional literary texts and at least one text published before 1770 ensuring coverage of prose, poetry and drama. The additional non-literary texts must include both spoken and written language.

The following texts are set for this specification:

Unit 1: The Spoken Word (Closed Text)

Section A: Unprepared Analysis

This section will consist of an unseen extract which may involve a transcription of spoken language.

Section B: Pre-1900 Drama Unit

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

- Shakespeare: *Henry V*
- Shakespeare: *Much Ado About Nothing*
- Wilde: *The Importance of Being Earnest*
- Ibsen: *A Doll's House*
- Aphra Behn: *The Rover*
- Pinero: *Trelawny of the Wells*

Candidates study one of the above texts.

Unit 2: Desk Study

This unit sets pre-released textual material for writing tasks.

Unit 3a: Shorter Fiction Study

There will be a free choice of text for this unit.

Unit 3b: Shorter Fiction Study (Open Text)

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

- Angela Carter: *The Bloody Chamber* (Vintage ISBN: 0099588110)
- W Somerset Maugham: *Collected Short Stories Vol. 1* (Mandarin ISBN: 074930345X) or *Collected Short Stories Vol. 1* (Vintage ISBN: 0099287390)
- James Joyce: *Dubliners* (Penguin ISBN: 0141182458)
- Alice Munro: *Selected Stories* (Vintage ISBN: 0099732416)
- F Scott Fitzgerald: *The Diamond as Big as the Ritz and Other Short Stories* (Penguin Popular Classics ISBN: 0140622381). All stories in this volume are prescribed.

Candidates study one of the above texts.

Unit 4a: Writing for Different Audiences and Purposes

There will be a free choice of at least two texts selected from a variety of literary and non-literary sources for this unit.

Unit 4b: Writing for Different Audiences and Purposes

Candidates will be given two texts as stimulus material. The texts will be drawn from literary and non-literary material.

Unit 5: Wider Reading (Open Text)

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

Section A: Pre-1770 Poetry

- Chaucer: *The Merchant's Tale*, editor Hussey (CUP ISBN: 0521046319)
- Milton: *Selected Poems* (Dover ISBN: 048627554X)
- Dalglish (editor): *Eight Metaphysical Poets* (Heinemann ISBN: 0435150316)
- *Edexcel Poetry Anthology* (Section Two)
- Pope: *The Rape of the Lock* (OUP ISBN: 0198319584)

Candidates study one of the above texts.

Section B: Modern Literature

Drama

- Friel: *Translations* (Faber ISBN: 0571117422)
- David Mamet: *Oleanna* (Methuen ISBN: 0413626202)
- Tom Stoppard: *Jumpers* (Faber ISBN: 0571145698)

Poetry

- Sylvia Plath: *Selected Poems*, editor Hughes (Faber ISBN: 0571135862)
- Grace Nichols: *The Fat Black Woman's Poems* (all four sections) (Virago ISBN: 0860686353)
- *Edexcel Poetry Anthology* (Section One)

Prose

- Margaret Atwood: *Surfacing* (Virago ISBN: 0860680649)

- Julian Barnes: *Flaubert's Parrot* (Picador ISBN: 0330289764)
- Doris Lessing: *Memoirs of a Survivor* (Flamingo ISBN: 0006493254)

Candidates study one of the above texts.

Unit 6: Genre Studies (Closed Text)

This unit will focus on unprepared texts and extracts. Students will be required to read and understand the stylistic features and characteristics of both whole texts and extracts from the following areas: a) travel writing; b) letters, diaries and journals; c) biography and autobiography; d) speeches; e) reportage; f) scientific writing. Examples of suggested texts for this unit are given in the list of *Textbooks and Other Resources* on page 37 of the Specification.

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