

Examiners' Report Summer 2008

GCE

GCE English Language & Literature (8179/9179)

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6381/01: The Spoken Word

A lot of paper was wasted where centres gave out a whole answer book rather than continuation sheets where candidates needed extra paper.

Section A

Many candidates were severely hindered by the quality of their written expression, not just in terms of specifically meeting AO1, but in that they were unable to express ideas coherently enough to gain credit for analysis. Most candidates understood the difference in register between the two texts and were able to apply frameworks, especially in terms of genre, audience and purpose. Less able candidates tended not to recognise the differences between the speakers in text A and this was symptomatic of a tendency in weaker candidates to generalise, so that they tended to reduce the significance of language features as simply being typical of young people, or the upper classes or people in the 1970's, when these observations could have been developed to recognise individuality in speakers.

Most candidates concentrated more of their efforts on text A, possibly because of time management issues. Many opportunities to discuss rhetorical features were therefore missed. Some candidates seemed to think the HRH was some kind of organisation. Many candidates made assumptions about the Prince of Wales' intelligence based on the formality of his register and on his social status. Often, they recognised that his register was elevated, but did not explore what features of language (especially rhetorical devices) made it elevated, and how these devices worked towards lending him authority and fulfilling one of the purposes of the speech: to persuade. Hardly any candidates attempted to explore The Prince of Wales' idiolect, for example the way he uses 'one' rather than 'I' or the royal 'we', although higher band candidates did explore the way personal pronouns can be used to make a formal speech more personal and to include the audience. A key part of the question was about attitudes and values and many candidates did not explore this, or misread it as 'morality' or 'superiority'.

Weaker candidates again tended to list features without drawing any conclusions or applying them to attitudes and values and when they applied theory, it was not always relevant. For example Grice's maxims were often used when they were not particularly relevant. Goffman's concept of face might have been more useful for text A.

Section B

There was surprisingly little of the kind of methodical close reading that the type (a) questions invite and this meant that candidates missed out on AO2i and consequently on making more subtle and personal conclusions about the meanings of the texts (AO3i). There was the impression, even among top band candidates, that they had been prepared very well regarding themes and characters, but there was little evidence of how it is precisely language that makes themes and characters evident.

Q2(a)

This was a popular question and responses were generally competent, especially in terms of verbal techniques, less on dramatic techniques. In some cases, candidates did not address the rest of the play.

Q2(b)

A less popular question, and less competent responses. Candidates tended to explore a limited number of language features in a limited number of characters, with 'social status' virtually ignored.

Q3(a)

Weakness of analysis hindered many candidates who attempted this question. There was a tendency to 'translate' the text rather than focusing on language features and dramatic techniques, although some candidates made interesting observations about the development of Benedick's character and the irony of his change in attitude to love throughout the play.

Q3(b)

This was a popular question and candidates offered some thoughtful and illuminating insights into a range of the relationships in the play, noting the contrasts between Benedick and Beatrice's relationship and Claudio and Hero's. Candidates also addressed the fragility of family relationships.

Q4(a) and Q4(b)

Responses to both the Wilde questions were considerably better than last year, and candidates showed evidence of appreciating the humour and being able to comment on how it was achieved and the points that were being made by Wilde. There were some particularly effective points made about comic inversion, and most candidates understood that the characters were exaggerated for effect. Many candidates who attempted to address cultural and historical context discretely rather than in the context of the question tended to make generalisations about Victorian society, especially the upper classes.

Q5(a)

Lower band candidates tended to write about the characters as if they were real people rather than constructs and there was a tendency to miss the complexity of the relationship between Nora and Torvald and the causes for its failure. Almost all of the candidates commented on Torvald's use of diminutives and possessives when referring to Nora; higher band candidates showed their understanding of Ibsen's concerns of patriarchal society and of the many levels of deception and they understood that the failure of the marriage was not simply the fault of either Torvald or Nora.

Q5(b)

This was a less popular question and responses tended to simply re-tell the story. Most candidates addressed only Nora and Torvald, but amongst the better responses, the wider the range of characters used, the greater the depth of analysis and the more detailed the observation of language features used for characterisation.

Q6(a) and (b) and Q7 (a) and (b)

There were too few responses on *The Rover* and *Trelawny of the Wells* to provide meaningful feedback

6382/01: Desk Study

The Desk Study Unit assesses the candidates' skill in comprehension, editing and summarising; their knowledge of audience and purpose and their ability to shape the pre-release source material to achieve a different outcome through the selection of appropriate genre, format and register. A separate commentary assesses their application of linguistic knowledge to justify the language choices they have made.

Task a

Task a required candidates to reshape pre-released material to produce text for a presentation - held at a local secondary school - to students aged 14-17 and their parents on the issues of underage drinking and alcohol abuse. Bullets provided further focus in terms of audience and purpose

This was a generally successful task which generated an inventive range of responses, some of an extremely high quality.

The vast majority of candidates seemed to find the pre-release material very accessible. The scaffolding afforded by the structure of the question (as in previous series) enabled all but a small minority to cover a reasonable range of source materials although the weakest struggled to fully assimilate the more technical information sections on 'social facilitation' and 'peer guidance' presented weaker candidates with problems in this respect and often resulted in awkward shifts in register/lapses in cohesion which proved to be something of a discriminator for Task A. A significant number failed to draw the distinction between underage drinking and alcohol abuse and characterised their entire audience as alcohol dependent.

Many candidates produced highly effective presentations which conceded fully to the dual audience of students and their parents - others struggled to achieve a balance in this respect and veered between extremes of formality/informality. The best responses also conceded to the student voice/perspective embedded within the question and used this as a 'hook' to engage with and persuade their audience. The requirement to produce a presentation allowed for wider generic frameworks than in previous series. The majority produced a straightforward speech but a significant minority produced power-points using an impressive range of interactive devices and a variety of 'props' from brains to condoms! Candidates whose presentation involved multiple presenters rarely fared well.

A significant differentiating factor in the responses was the degree by which the source material was reshaped or 'slanted' to task. Really good reading and absorption of the pre-release texts showed clearly in the selection, the editing, the organisation and the 'slant' towards audience and purpose. When reading was sketchy the level of inappropriate detail rose, the selection of material became more random and levels of textual cohesion diminished.

At the higher levels of achievement students generated significant amounts of new text. They targeted the given audience with flexibility and imagination, often demonstrating their absorption of the subject matter with fluid movement over the source texts.

Task b

Task b asked candidates to comment on the language choices they had made in order to complete the first task.

This task produced quite a large range of responses. The most successful worked hard to produce a linguistic analysis. These offered a clear and focused justification of the choices they had made, giving clear and appropriate exemplification and applying linguistic terms and features with focus and incision. The best contextualised their choices within the remit of the task, moving beyond the formulaic to stand back from their own work and reflect analytically on their approach.

Lower band responses applied a system which spotted (and often exemplified) features but which went on to generate generalised definitions/comments which did not fully relate to the specific context or the choices candidates had made in order to fulfil the brief. Many centres used acronyms to ensure that a range of features were covered, but this sometimes produced rather mechanical responses across whole centres which failed to move on to the discriminating factor - the justification of language choice.

Many candidates made noteworthy points which lacked exemplification, thus failing to reveal their full understanding and, as usual those candidates with least security with analytical terms and frameworks tended to concentrate on describing their methodology rather than analysing their choices.

As ever some went for quantity rather than quality - huge lists of features with minimal explanation. A surprising number of candidates essentially explained which source materials they had selected and then described how they had changed them - this significantly restricted the potential to reward.

Overall some candidates were clearly better prepared for the commentary than others and the effectiveness of this preparation significantly impacted upon performance. Those with a good grounding in theory and terminology were keen to show off what they could do. Others simply described content and/or intention and let down some lively responses to the first task. In some centres the focus shifted significantly from Task (a) to Task (b) with the commentaries outstripping the achievement of the creative task due to the thorough and systematic teaching of analysis. In some such centres there was an emerging tendency to consciously incorporate features in task (a) with the commentary in mind - effective in some cases but limiting and disruptive in others.

6383/01: Shorter Fiction Study

As in previous years the creative option remained the more popular, but several moderators reported a slight increase in the proportion of critical essays. The general standard this year was quite high and most centres showed a confident understanding of the requirements of the unit, and an ability to assess their candidates' folders accurately. The very best stories or critical essays in Band 5 were extremely impressive, and showed a quality of thought that was well above the normal expectations for AS level. There were very few really weak folders.

There were very few candidates who seemed unaware of the need to provide evidence of the study of the short story genre, but there were still some who struggled to use any linguistic terms, and a small number whose approach was purely literary. There has been a striking improvement in candidates' linguistic knowledge during the lifetime of this specification, and there was a further improvement this year, with the majority using a range of terms accurately and meaningfully. Those who did not, put themselves at a disadvantage, because the main reason for the scaling of marks this year was for the lack of linguistic focus and analysis. A few centres were over-rewarding folders that showed very little linguistic awareness, and these were mostly the ones that needed some adjustment of marks. The majority of marks were very well assessed and did not require any adjustment. Some moderators reported that the assessment this year was the most accurate that they had seen in the life of the specification.

AO5, the objective focused on attitudes and values, has always been a problem for this unit, with its notional double weighting, which has always seemed excessive. There was an improvement this year, especially in the creative option, where, provided the story had attitudes and/or values as a major aspect, it was not too difficult to consider in the commentary how these were conveyed. Sometimes there was more of a problem with the critical option, if there was no steer towards AO5 in the title.

Angela Carter remained the single most studied writer, followed by Joyce and Fitzgerald, but there was a good range of others, including Rhys, Hemingway, Carver, Chopin, Gardam, Lively, Tremain, Byatt, Poe, Conan Doyle, and Lawrence, among many others, and interesting choices within genres such as horror. There were few texts that failed to offer some challenge and inspiration to candidates.

The Creative Option:

The links made with the source text continued to be a strength of this option, and in most commentaries there was a genuine focus on the language of the source texts. In a few cases there was a tendency to analyse the language of the source text rather than the language of the candidate's own story, but in most a sensible balance was maintained. Where there was no clear evidence of study and of the influence of this on the candidates' own choices, the standard was noticeably lower. There were still a few problems with the citing of inappropriate sources, usually novels, rather than short stories. Some stories were described as a 'play' or a 'novel'.

Some of the best stories were those that clearly emerged from a close study of the genre, but that did not doggedly try to imitate a particular style or model from the source texts studied. Instead, if they were allowed greater freedom in the development of character and situation in creating their own narrative, candidates were usually able to produce something that was truly original and often exciting and sophisticated.

Carter's 'The Bloody Chamber' remained the single most popular text, and again inspired some outstanding stories, as well as a few that were pretty well unintelligible and incoherent. There appeared, fortunately, to be slightly less gratuitous violence than last year.

The Critical Option:

There seemed to be a further improvement this year in the wording of titles that encouraged candidates to focus on the appropriate AOs, but there were still a few that were too enigmatic, too all-embracing, too narrow, or just too difficult. Some would have benefited from having two (or more) sentences in order to give specific steers towards the need to focus on language and on attitudes and values.

Almost all candidates appeared to have been given opportunities for individual choice and personal response, which is what we have always tried to encourage. Some essays began with unnecessarily lengthy biographical details about the writers that were not particularly relevant or well integrated into the study.

Annotation:

Most folders had pleasingly detailed, thorough and helpful annotation and summative comments. Several centres had devised their own internal sheets for comments and internal moderation and the best of these were impressively thorough. Moderators value annotation very highly, as without it they have no indication of the thinking behind the assessment. A few folders had no annotation on the creative work, only on the commentaries, and a very small number had no annotation at all, which was very unhelpful to moderators. The message about addressing comments to the moderator rather than the candidate seemed to have been well heeded by most teachers.

Administrative Issues:

There was some improvement in administration this year, but most moderators still had to send out large numbers of E6 forms. It is good to report that virtually all these requests were responded to speedily by centres. Most requests were for missing candidate or teacher signatures, and a few were for the lowest or highest folder which had not been sent. A few related to discrepancies between marks on the OPTEMS and marks on the front sheets.

While most folders were fastened securely, there were still large numbers using only paper clips, and there were still very large numbers of front sheets with missing details: these included missing centre or candidate numbers, and failure to complete the 'Total number of words' boxes or to tick the AO boxes. There were still a few centres using very ancient versions of the front sheet, with incorrect versions of the AOs. In some cases it would have been helpful to have had a clear indication of which stories had actually been studied.

As this was the last full year of this AS specification, we do not wish to end on a negative note, and indeed the positives far outweighed the small number of negative aspects referred to above. We have all enjoyed moderating this unit, and there has been a very real sense of engagement and enjoyment in most of the work submitted. The best work has been quite outstanding, and very little has been without some merit. We would like to celebrate the hard work of teachers and their commitment to this coursework unit, and to praise the majority of centres for being well organised and inspiring high quality work from their candidates.

6383/02: Shorter Fiction Study

There seemed to be an improvement this year at the lower end of the scale, with a more precise and detailed level of knowledge of the texts, and a more consistent use of detail to support points made. There were few weak scripts, and most were clearly expressed, with a reasonable level of accuracy in the writing.

Another aspect that showed a marked improvement was in addressing the question. There were still some candidates whose focus wavered, or who had chosen their (b) story unwisely and found it difficult to maintain focus, but the majority kept well to the requirements of the question.

In general there was a further improvement in the use of linguistic as well as literary terminology, and some answers showed a sophisticated level of linguistic knowledge. There were, however, still a significant number that used little or no terminology at all, or did not really look closely in any way at the writer's use of language. While these could pick up marks on the other aspects, such as addressing AO5, they were not likely to move into the higher bands. Some candidates were able to use terms but almost always inaccurately.

All questions, as always, had an explicit steer towards AO5, attitudes and values. There was a slight improvement in the response to this steer, but many candidates found difficulty in explaining how attitudes and/or values were conveyed.

In higher band responses, all points were well supported from the text with brief quotations. Some weaker answers quoted very little, or relied too much on over-lengthy quotations that were almost never analysed.

Some candidates irritatingly referred to the text as a 'play' throughout, and to the 'audience' rather than the reader.

The examiners felt that all questions this year were equally accessible, and that for each text the demands of the (a) and (b) questions were roughly comparable. A few answers to the (a) questions made an excessive number of cross-references to other stories in the collection. Cross-references can be very helpful, but when they dominate an answer to the extent that there is more analysis of these references than of the specified text in the question, then the mark will be seriously affected.

Angela Carter's 'The Bloody Chamber' was by far the most popular text, attracting more than half of all candidates. The next most popular was Joyce, this time followed very closely by Scott Fitzgerald. There were very few answers indeed on Alice Munro, but there were several this year on Somerset Maugham.

CARTER: *The Bloody Chamber*

Q1(a): There were many good answers which showed a sophisticated understanding of the two wolf-tales specified, and which focused very well on the presentation of the girl in both, discussing clearly the differences between the two stories and how they were subversions in different ways of the original Red Riding Hood stories. Most answers showed relatively good general narrative understanding of the two texts. Lower band responses tended to focus too much on the village or the villagers rather than the presentation of the girl, or, in spite of being instructed not to do so in the question, focused on the presentation of the wolves and not of the girl.

Q1(b): Most candidates made sensible choices of story to illustrate the significant change or development in a central character. 'The Bloody Chamber' was most popular, and there were also many good answers on 'Wolf-Alice', 'The Tiger's Bride', 'The Lady of the House of Love', and 'The Courtship of Mr Lyon'. Some candidates unwisely chose 'The Snow Child' and struggled to consider change in the Count. 'Puss-in-Boots' was probably not the best choice. There were some successful answers which explored well Puss's change from cynicism to love, but most found it difficult to show this convincingly, or to focus closely enough on the use of language.

Weaker answers often failed to relate the change or development, or their knowledge of Carter's feminist approach, to the language of the text. Good answers showed a greater awareness of the connections between Carter's feminism and the change in a central character, and related this successfully to her use of language.

MAUGHAM: *Collected Short Stories. Volume One*

2(a): Most answers showed reasonable knowledge of 'Gigolo and Gigolette', and most tried to focus on AO5, attitudes and values, with some success. Only a few really tried to focus on the use of language.

2(b): Answers tended to be largely narrative, with little language focus, and did not always consider social differences, being concerned, rather, with vague consideration of differences of any kind. In general this was not as well answered as the (a) question.

JOYCE: *Dubliners*

3(a): Most candidates showed a sound understanding of the contrasts between Little Chandler and Gallaher. Lower band responses tended to be limited to these, while good answers ranged more widely over the many other kinds of contrast in the story. Some candidates wrote an essay on paralysis (always a danger with Joyce) rather than really addressing the question. Only a few were able to relate the use of language closely to the contrasts. A few answers tended to overstate the theme of religion in the story, or to misrepresent the theme.

3(b): This was more popular than the (a) question. As stated earlier, choice of text was vitally important here. Most chose sensibly, and the most popular choices were 'A Painful Case' and 'Eveline'. 'After the Race' had mixed success, some finding it difficult to sustain a consideration of isolation. Several chose 'An Encounter', but often found it difficult to focus on the theme, or to say enough about the loneliness of the man in the field for more than a very brief response. Many answers wandered away from isolation to paralysis, again. While the two themes are often closely linked, they are not synonymous. The best answers responded very thoughtfully to an aspect that perhaps they had not considered very closely before, while weaker ones did not really think through the specific aspect at all clearly, but tried to tell all they knew about a story in which the theme could be perceived to play some part. A few answers were too concerned to convey biographical knowledge about Joyce himself, and wrote the kind of lengthy but largely irrelevant opening paragraph that we have warned against in the past.

MUNRO: *Selected Stories*

There were only a very few answers on Munro. A reasonable knowledge and understanding was shown of 'Images' for the (a) question, and of the individual choices for (b), and there was some attempt to focus on Munro's use of language, which is never easy to do.

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

5(a): This was a very popular question, and good answers showed sound knowledge and understanding. Many, however, did not relate the attitudes and values displayed to what the reader might find amusing or strange or shocking. Several answers spent too long on one of the two characters (Braddock and Kismine) and had little time to do justice to the other. Weaker answers tended to be narrative, or did not consider how the choices of language conveyed the attitudes and values. The question had a very sharp focus, but in too many answers this became blurred.

5(b): By far the most popular story chosen, very sensibly, to illustrate the aspect of rivalry, was 'Bernice Bobs Her Hair'. The most successful answers explored the rivalry between Bernice and Marjorie very well, and linked the theme effectively to Fitzgerald's choices of language. The second most popular choice was 'The Ice Palace'. This produced mixed responses, with good answers maintaining a close relevance throughout, but with some weaker answers tending to focus on differences between North and South, which is a different question. Some candidates chose the first story 'The Diamond as Big as the Ritz', but in most of their answers the relevance wavered a lot and it proved difficult to maintain a specific focus on rivalry. Generally the focus on language was limited, but to some extent this was counterbalanced by quite sound focus on attitudes and values.

6384/01: Writing for Different Audiences and Purposes

Once again much of the work submitted was extremely impressive: ambitious, well written, and clearly based on genuine study of appropriate sources. Candidates on the whole had a good understanding of the conventions of their chosen genres, and most centres were clearly teaching a detailed repertoire of linguistic terminology that allowed their candidates to analyse and comment on their own writing in detail. The best work was characterised by engagement and enthusiasm on the part of the writer, and was a delight to read. Many had clearly been encouraged to explore aspects of their own lives and interests within a close adherence to generic conventions and style models, and the results were genuinely original.

Candidates are required to have studied suitable sources before writing their pieces. Most complied with this very well, and wrote briefly but pertinently about the influence of these sources in their commentaries. Brief but precise comments about features of style were particularly helpful. Some candidates, however, gave no indication in any way that they had studied anything relevant, and some quoted inappropriate sources. There should be a clear distinction between sources studied, when appropriate, for information (which are best listed separately from the commentary), and those studied for genre and style. It is not appropriate in the commentary to claim that the sources studied were 'Wikipedia', or 'various websites', and it is not helpful to refer vaguely to 'novels' without being specific.

Since poetry is not allowed for this unit, there seems little point in studying poetry. A few candidates had studied it and felt obliged to make use of this study - in one or two cases dragging in chunks of Wilfred Owen in the middle of a travel piece, or a whole stanza of 'In Flanders Fields' in the middle of a speech about war. The concept of the integration of literature and language does not mean that in every non-literary piece there has to be an inclusion of literary material.

We would strongly advise centres against offering three pieces. There were quite a lot of these this year, but they are rarely satisfactory, and tend all to be short, in order to keep within the recommended word limits. One piece is usually weak, and this brings down the standard of the folder.

The concept of audience is now well embedded in this unit and is mostly well understood. Some candidates, however, were over precise in delineating their audience by age: '18 year old girls' seemed too limited, and some considered that the typical audience for a broadsheet newspaper was 'the educated middle class aged 25-35'.

Most pieces were clearly differentiated, but some were too close in style. For example, in a few cases a novel extract and an autobiographical piece were virtually identical in style, and read too much like a single piece. The usual problem is with two pieces both in a very colloquial style.

There were some pieces submitted this year that were enjoyable in many ways, and must have been fun to write, but which did not have any very clear purpose or audience. Some of these might have been better used as exercises in style, but not included in the folder. Examples included some pieces of genre transformation. These work well as classroom exercises, and can help clarify features of particular genres, but many of the results did not really stand alone or have any clear purpose or identifiable audience.

It is often refreshing to attempt unusual approaches, but centres need to vet these carefully. One candidate offered a series of letters written by Ophelia to Hamlet, but in the style of Jane Austen. This was not only unnecessarily complex, but also necessitated the study of a Shakespeare play, which is expressly forbidden for the unit. Moreover, it had the same problems about audience and purpose discussed above.

There were fewer examples this year of work that was too narrowly informative, but there were some. We are looking to reward not the ability merely to find information from the internet and then to cut and paste it, but the ability to find an individual voice and produce some writing that is original and the candidate's own. Guides of various kinds are especially prone to a lack of originality. A guide to a town or city that merely lists attractions, restaurants, and transport links is not likely to demonstrate the creative potential of a candidate, and the result will almost always be inferior to a similar guide that can be picked up free from a Tourist Information Office. Such attempts may be beautifully produced, but in this subject it has to be the use of language that is rewarded, not presentation on its own.

Most candidates kept well to the recommended word limits, but a few commentaries were absurdly long, and still a number of pieces were far too short. A few centres seemed unaware of the requirement for pieces to be 'extended', and were allowing pieces of 300 words or less to be submitted, instead of the norm of 1000-1200, with an absolute minimum of about 700.

We are pleased to report that assessment was mostly very accurate and realistic, with a good understanding of the criteria and objectives, and on the whole not over-rewarding in Band 5. A few adjustments had to be made, but not very many.

The commentary

The commentary does still remain a major discriminator for the unit, but once again the general standard continued to improve, and most candidates showed an ability to use at least some linguistic and literary terminology to make precise points. The best showed an impressive knowledge and a confidence in using a wide range of terms.

Any candidates who do not attempt some detailed analysis of their own use of language are seriously disadvantaging themselves, though there was still a tendency in a few centres not to take enough account of this in their marking.

There should be only one commentary: still too many candidates were writing two, and these tended to be far too long, with no comparative element. The commentary should follow the pieces in the folder, not precede them.

Some comments on specific genres:

Blogs: These are probably best avoided altogether. They tend to be shapeless and self-indulgent. One or two candidates this year tried to write a blog in dialect, and the results were almost unreadable.

Chapter of a novel: There were some really impressive examples of these this year, which showed a thorough knowledge of conventions and some real creativity and originality. The reader was left genuinely wanting to read on. There were fewer examples of a complete narrative, which is effectively a short story, but there were some. There should be a genuine sense of the chapter being part of something much longer. It is helpful if the kind of novel can be specified: referring to it as an 'extract from a book' is not at all helpful.

Dramatic Monologues: Many of these were very successful, but there were some that had no sense of drama and no development.

Leaflets: There were very few of these, and the message seems to have got through that they are best avoided, unless they are 700-1000 words in length. Brochures or pamphlets are usually more productive formats. Leaflets are a difficult form in which to adopt a strong voice. There were just a few this year that were absurdly short, and should not have been submitted.

Radio/TV Interviews: These are not really acceptable, since they are essentially spontaneous spoken language, and this unit is titled 'Writing...'. What is perfectly acceptable, and works well, is a written interview for a magazine, which is an edited and tidied-up version of an interview, usually with comments and reflections by the writer in addition to the replies of the interviewee (which can be in direct or indirect speech form).

Speeches: A few were really articles, and would have been more acceptable if they had been described as that. Speeches need a clear occasion and audience.

Textbooks for children: There were problems here, as it proved difficult at times to include a strong personal voice. Admittedly, the style has to be simplified somewhat for the audience, but candidates should avoid subjects that are too purely informative.

Travel Writing: The best travel writing had a strong personal voice but at the same time was informative and revealing about the place(s). It is helpful if candidates give some thought to where the travel writing might be published. In terms of style, candidates should be aware that a publication such as the 'Sunday Times Travel Supplement' rarely contains clauses or phrases such as 'My Mum said...', or 'Me and my Dad...'. Travel writing of the kind that describes a visit to a local town and employs Brysonesque 'humour' can come across as patronising and crass. The genre does not have to be a celebration of some exotic remote location visited, but it does need to engage genuinely with, and to inform about, the place described.

Web-site forms: are best avoided, as they tend to become very fragmented, whereas we are looking for extended pieces of writing.

Administrative Issues

It was good to see some improvements in some of the administrative processes, such as the need to send the highest and lowest folders. However, there were still cases where the recommendations made last year had not been acted upon, and therefore the same problems and issues still remained as in previous sessions. Large numbers of E6 forms had to be sent out to centres; it is good to report that all were returned very promptly.

If all centres could observe the following points, this would speed the moderation process, and lessen the burden not just on moderators but on centres themselves. Centres could avoid receiving E6 forms or adverse comments on their E9 reports by following the points below:

- The coursework front sheet must be signed by both candidate and teacher.
- Centres must send the work of their top and bottom candidates, whether or not they have been asterisked on the OPTEMS forms.

- The work of an absent candidate which forms part of the asterisked sample must be replaced by the work of another, comparable, candidate.
- The marks on the OPTEMS should match those on the coursework front sheets. The mark in the top right hand box should be the final centre mark, and this must be changed if an original mark has been altered as a result of internal moderation. The box must not be left empty. It is not there for the external moderator to fill in.
- If separate authentication sheets are included, they should be placed underneath the top sheet.
- It is helpful if folders include a bibliography that accurately lists materials or texts that have been studied.
- Work should be fastened by staples or treasury tags, not paper clips. Plastic or cardboard folders should not be used. Please encourage candidates to number their pages.
- Pieces should be submitted in the right order, as numbered on the front sheet.
- All details on the front sheets should be filled in, including word counts, centre numbers, candidate numbers, and ticks in the AO boxes. Missing centre or candidate numbers can create problems in identifying the folder. It is helpful if centres could use up to date versions of the front sheet, rather than those dated 2000 or 2001, which do not have the correct AOs.
- Folders should be sent in candidate number order, not in rank order. Centres should send only the asterisked sample, plus any additional work required such as the highest and lowest and any substitute coursework. Some centres sent all their folders to the moderator.
- Centres should ensure that folders are sent to the correct moderator, to arrive by the designated deadline, using ordinary first class post, and not by any method that requires a signature, such as Special or Recorded or Courier delivery.

The most popular genres in June 2008 were:

Travel writing
 Newspaper or magazine articles
 Speeches
 Chapters (usually opening chapters) of novels
 Autobiographies
 Dramatic monologues
 Diaries
 Film Reviews
 Theatre Reviews
 Written interviews
 Satire/Parody
 Letters
 Sports reporting/writing
 Music Reviews
 Scientific writing/articles

6384/02: Writing for Different Audiences and Purposes

General

In general candidates responded very well to the material on the evacuation of children at the beginning of the Second World War. There was a genuine sense of engagement, and they were stimulated to produce some interesting writing.

If there were problems they usually resulted from a failure to read the source material carefully. Those who read it closely were able to note details that could be incorporated into the writing task, and possibly some features of style that could be used and later commented on in the commentary.

It was also vitally important to read the actual task, including all the bullet points, very carefully, at least twice. There were several strands in each task, and the bullet points offered a mixture of instruction, information and guidance. If they were largely ignored, as they were in a small minority of responses, then the mark was likely to be seriously affected.

Task (a)(i): This was much more popular than (a)(ii), but while there were many excellent answers, some candidates might have found the second task more suited to their abilities. The first task asked for an extract from a novel, focusing on the arrival of one or more evacuees at their foster home. The best responses were imaginative, and used the material extremely well. Some weaker answers made very little use of the material, in some cases virtually ignoring it altogether. As a result they did not always fulfil the demands of the task. Candidates were told to include some brief details of the journey to the destination, but some spent far too long on this, so that the arrival at the foster home, which should have been the main focus, happened only in the last few sentences. Candidates were also instructed to extend the extract beyond the first meeting, but not to go into much detail about subsequent developments. Some ignored this and spent far too long on quite complex subsequent events. Attitudes and values were mostly well addressed in this task. Most wrote in the past tense, but some attempted the present. This was difficult to sustain, and while there were some successful attempts, most struggled and often drifted into past tense later or intermittently. Some tried to write in dialect, sometimes with considerable success, but this was an unnecessary complication for many, and would have been difficult to sustain for a whole novel.

Strengths in responses included:

- an appropriate understanding of the 'general adult audience' specified, with suitable and reasonably sophisticated lexis and grammar.
- adopting an interesting narrative perspective: having an adult narrator looking back retrospectively on past experiences often worked well, and distinguished between the naive childish perspective of the evacuee at the time and the more considered reflections of the adult later in life; using an older child usually produced more interesting writing than having a very young one as narrator
- using appropriate literary techniques
- appropriate selection of details from Texts A and B, well embedded into the writing
- clearly conveying emotions, and attitudes to the experiences
- appropriate additions, if attempted

Weaknesses in responses included:

- poor expression
- many technical errors including lack of control of punctuation and sentence structures, and inaccurate spelling
- ignoring the requirement to write for a general adult audience, and writing for children. Inevitably this resulted in a style that was too simple or unsophisticated to meet the requirement
- writing for an inappropriate genre of novel such as the horror or the thriller genre, which did not fit with the material provided; some attempted a Carter-esque version of a fairy story, usually Hansel and Gretel, but few of these were at all convincing
- bringing the extract to an inappropriate conclusion: in one, for example, the child was shot by the foster parent while attempting to escape immediately after her arrival
- ignoring all the source material, and as a result lacking any clear context: in one, a boy had seemingly stumbled into a house of vampires; there was no reference to evacuees at all
- changing tense too frequently for no apparent reason, often within a single sentence
- an excessively melodramatic treatment, with the child evacuees kept in cellars and fed on scraps
- setting the events in 1940 or even later, with some children orphaned as a result of bombings at home or of fathers killed fighting abroad (this was not making use of the actual material provided). Many had mothers working in munitions factories, and fathers at the front, but this was not always a serious problem if the material had otherwise been well used
- using a very young child as a first person narrator: the resulting very childish language was no doubt authentic, but was usually very limiting, and not very appropriate for a novel aimed at a general adult audience
- writing 'a women' instead of 'a woman': this was prevalent in both tasks, and was found in what seemed like a majority of scripts
- references in a few cases to a 'peasant shoot' (instead of 'pheasant')

Task (a)(ii) This was attempted only by a minority of candidates, but produced some very good answers, mostly with a clear sense of audience and purpose. The task, of writing a report from a welfare officer on three different foster homes, made careful reading and use of the material essential, and good answers made extensive use of well chosen details from the texts. A bullet point guided candidates towards matters such as food, accommodation, clothing, health, schooling, relationships with foster parents, etc., and if candidates read the texts carefully, they found plenty of references to these and other matters which they could adapt in their reports.

The other most important aspect of the task was to use an appropriate tenor, with a reasonable degree of formality and suitable lexis. Most answers showed a sound understanding of an appropriate reporting style. Curiously, some included far too much dialogue, or very lengthy quotations in direct speech from individuals (usually records of arguments), instead of turning these into reported speech, which would have been appropriate. Some had too much emotive comment by the welfare officer, or forgot to make any recommendations, which was a requirement of the task.

Rather than dealing with each home separately, some tried to amalgamate them into the report, using various sub-headings. This did not work well and was usually very confusing.

Some weaker answers included too many chunks of the material copied out more or less verbatim. As with task (a) there were problems with the control of tenses.

Most candidates managed very well to avoid including anachronistic references, and most of those that did occur were not serious, such as the odd reference to televisions or car radios.

A quite large minority of candidates used dialectal or non-standard forms of the verbs 'sit' and 'stand': 'I was stood' and 'I was sat', which often jarred in a formal report.

Task (b) The Commentary:

The use of terminology continued to improve this year, and most candidates were able to use some - in many cases an impressively wide range. Sadly, a sizeable minority still seemed unable to use any at all, and resorted to vague generalisations, or descriptions of the content of their writing, instead of analysing their use of language. This led in some cases to very wide discrepancies between the mark for the writing task and that for the commentary, and because of this the commentary proved to be a major discriminator for the paper as a whole.

Candidates on the whole seemed to find more difficulties in explaining how they had created an extract from a novel than how they produced an effective report.

In order to help their commentary writing some candidates were annotating their own writing to an unacceptable degree, in some cases so obscuring their original writing that it became difficult for the examiner to read at all.

A few candidates were still adopting the 'what I could have done better had I had more time' approach, which cannot be given any credit.

Some specific points on the commentary:

- 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. This was the commonest reason for marks being lost.
- Examples must be appropriate: some candidates gave entirely inaccurate support for claims about features such as compound/complex sentences, or the use of pre- or post-modifiers.
- For the report, it was not sufficient to assert that it was written formally: it was necessary to provide some evidence to show how this had been achieved.
- A few candidates listed linguistic features that were not illustrated: eg 'I used grammar, syntax, semantics...' etc., but this was less of a problem than last year.
- Some candidates wrote too much about their use of punctuation or confused punctuation and grammar.
- Few candidates were able to spell 'elision' or 'ellipsis' correctly.
- Many quotations were far too long: they should be as brief as is necessary to make a point; often a single word is enough.

6385/01: Wider Reading

General

There were fourteen texts on the paper with a choice of two questions on each. The established format is that Q(a) gives a specific focus and invites candidates to discuss their reading of a text in light of this. Q(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 on this Summer's Paper

Approach: most candidates seemed clearly focused on the integrated nature of the Specification. Centres are to be congratulated for utilising suggestions made in 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 both interesting and 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 precise 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.

However, some candidates are still too focused on the literary aspects of the texts and need to strike a more balanced approach. 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 fail to interpret the question accurately, or merely write down what they know regardless of the question. These approaches lead to a narrative and explanatory response 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.

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.

Many candidates are listing linguistic terminology indiscriminately at the expense of evaluation. Technical terminology must be used with discrimination, it does not replace close reading and analysis. Assertion of general points rather than detailed analysis is a key discriminating factor in all responses. Candidates must always link form and techniques to effects and purposes.

There were fewer candidates answering questions on the Anthology for both sections of the paper this year but there are still some. Centres are reminded that this is the **Wider Reading** unit and when candidates answer question 4 and question 11 on the Anthology, they need to be aware of the dangers of taking a similar approach to each and the increased risk of repetition.

Rubric: candidates were as usual well prepared on the format of the paper but they need to make sure they comply with the requirements of the answer booklet which is marked online.

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 and 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, Atwood, Plath, Lessing, *Eight Metaphysical Poets* and the Nichols anthology. There were also a few responses to the Milton, Pope, Stoppard and Barnes questions.

CHAUCER: *The Merchant's Tale*

This was one of the two most popular texts and it elicited some excellent 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. Most responses showed engagement and interest in the text, and there was much awareness of provenance, context, and multiple narrative voices. The discriminating factor was whether candidates could analyse literary features and apply some linguistic analysis rather than quote without commentary. Part of the specification's requirement is to demonstrate understanding of a text's socio-cultural-historical contexts. The use of distinctively modern terms such as *feminist* rather undermines that aim, as in "*The Merchant is anti-feminist*" or "*Proserpine is known as a feminist*". Candidates would demonstrate a more subtle understanding by using less modern culture-specific terminology. There are still too many of the responses referring to the text as a '*play*'.

Q1(a)

This was a very popular question and in the best responses there was some good discussion of the comic and serious elements focusing on a range of literary and linguistic features. A common response to this question was to narrate selected parts of the story with some comment on why a given part was funny or serious. 'Mockery' was frequently commented on, but some candidates claimed that Chaucer was mocking marriage or courtly love, rather than identifying his target with more precision. Irony was often identified but less well handled in general was how irony produced both serious and comic effects. Episodes which worked effectively were: the wedding and wedding Night, May and Damyan in the garden with Pluto and Proserpine's interventions, and Damyan's letter.

Q1(b)

There were some excellent answers which did exactly as asked, creating a well-balanced response which examined the extract in detail and related it to the rest of the tale. Other responses paid superficial attention to the extract before moving on to look at other episodes. There were some outstanding responses which were able to use the context of the extract to show differences in lexis and style, and there were also quite a few references to courtly love. Most candidates were able to discuss the comedy element of the question but many were observational, with detailed paraphrases of some long copied out quotations. There were too many narrative accounts of the episode, and although there were references to rhetorical features, these were often only identified rather than evaluated. Too many candidates offered paraphrases of the speeches by Placebo and Justinus.

MILTON: *Selected Poems*

There were only a few answers here but they were generally impressive, the best using biographical information in a highly selective way.

EIGHT METAPHYSICAL POETS

There were a limited number of 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)

Here the element 'logical argument' was often downplayed in favour of a more general examination of the poets' persuasive techniques. The *language* of reasoned argument often received less specific attention than it should have done, as did *structure*. Marvell's *To His Coy Mistress* was a common and sensible choice, but the three sections of his argument were missed by a number of candidates, though many rightly identified and examined the three-part dialectic (thesis, antithesis, synthesis). Successful poems were *To His Coy Mistress*, Donne's *Valediction* and *The Sun Rising*. Some candidates paraphrased and assessed how "positive" or "negative" the poet's attitude was, without further evaluation.

Q3 (b)

There were not many answers on this question. What distinguished higher from lower band answers was the ability to analyse literary and language features and assess their effectiveness in terms of audience reaction. There were some interesting and engaged responses which referred to quite a range of well-chosen poems. Where candidates opted for *The Flower* as a starting point, there was some very good analysis. Vaughan's *The World*, by contrast, seemed more daunting and often candidates fell back on demonstrating that they understood the poem by paraphrasing it.

EDEXCEL ANTHOLOGY: Pre -1770 Section

There were some perceptive, personal responses to these poems which investigated the texts with great sensitivity. 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 give 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 ignored content. Clearly there needs to be more of a balance.

Q4 (a)

The focus on the imagery of the natural world produced some good choices of poems for discussion with some excellent analysis of the ballads. The highest band responses presented very detailed readings in which the analysis of language and form was original and related closely to their effects. Some candidates chose poems with which they felt confident, but which lent themselves less fully to the question. The most popular choice in was Donne's *Death Be Not Proud*. *To His Coy Mistress* and *The Sun Rising* were also popular options but these often presented quite a challenge to candidates in the context of the question. The 'human concerns and preoccupations' element sometimes received a fairly cursory treatment and too many of the responses were narrative / descriptive in approach rather than analytical.

Q4 (b)

There were many excellent responses to this question with *Death, Be Not Proud* and *To His Coy Mistress* being the favourite choices. The other choices included: *The Emulation*, *The Passionate Shepherd to his Love*, *The Nymph's Reply* and *To Daffodils*. There were some very good explorations of linguistic and literary features with focus on imperatives, personal pronouns and. Most candidates were conversant with the idea of rhetorical devices and many were secure with the use of modal verbs, first and second person address, adjuncts of time, imperative verb forms, as well as the literary features of enjambment, metaphor, caesura etc. The 'specific audience' element of the question was often not so effectively discussed.

POPE: *The Rape of the Lock*

Though there were only a few responses on this text, they were well prepared, quite engaged, and communicated the enthusiasm with which it has been taught. The social and cultural background was generally well integrated into accounts, though some candidates showed a tendency to write too much about contexts without adequate integration.

Q5 (a)

Candidates were obviously well prepared and showed a very good understanding of the text and the techniques employed. Some candidates produced a pre-prepared answer on the nature of Pope's satire and his presentation of characters. Consequently they omitted reference to the phrase '*an amused grown-up writing of children*' and the question's focus on '*gentle mockery*'. There was also a tendency to ignore the directions to refer to '*at least two specific episodes*' and instead a linear and narrative observation of Pope's techniques occurred.

Q5 (b)

This was less popular than 5(a) but the responses contained an excellent portrayal of the Sylphs and a very good understanding of the poem, and the poet's literary and linguistic techniques.

FRIEL: *Translations*

Most students showed contextual knowledge of the play and had quite a detailed knowledge. The best responses integrated the analysis of linguistic and literary techniques effectively and there were many interesting readings of the play. However, quoting Grice's maxims or Richard Pine is not useful as it is rarely linked to an analysis of the text. Many candidates misinterpreted the scene between Maire and Yolland making sweeping assertions about the triumph of love over language, or saying the scene contradicted the notions about language in the rest of the play. These kinds of statement were made in responses to both questions. Examiners reported that in quite a significant number of responses there was too little discussion of linguistic or dramatic features, and rather limited use of technical terminology.

Q6 (a)

This question was generally well answered showing engagement and enjoyment of the text. It drew a wide range of responses ranging from superficial narrative description to fully cohesive analysis. The question's focus on analysing Friel's '*dialogue, interaction and dramatic techniques*' did not prevent some candidates offering only a general overview of the play with a lack of clarity about what '*power*' means here. Otherwise there were variety of interpretations of '*power*' which provided interesting insights covering the personal circumstances of the characters, as well as the wider political issues. Higher band answers explored Friel's dramatic and linguistic techniques and showed an appreciation that language is a key theme in the play and is important on numerous levels. Quoting Steiner was common but very little analytical comment accompanied such references.

Q6 (b)

Responses here were often differentiated by the candidate's ability to discuss and analyse the text beyond the extract. Lower band answers tended to focus predominantly on providing a narrative commentary of the passage without linking it cohesively to the rest of the text. However, this question also drew a number of very good answers which analysed the exchanges between Maire and Yolland and made effective reference to the themes that applied to the entire play. In these responses there was a good balance of the details of this scene being linked with the rest of the play and between linguistic and literary

approaches. There was evidence of improved understanding the contexts and there was a much greater focus on the presentation of character than on character relationships.

MAMET: *Oleanna*

Generally there was close textual analysis of the text and interpretations were possible as candidates chose appropriate examples and quotations of the linguistic features of discourse.

Both questions elicited discussion of the shifts in power as the play progresses as well as a lot of personal response, usually very positive.

Q7(a)

This question saw some very effective responses which picked up on the prompt '*craft*' in the question and provided a sound technical analysis of Mamet's dramatic and linguistic techniques in controlling pace and creating tension. Higher band candidates displayed confident abilities in linguistic analysis and were able how to comment on how language affects pace using appropriately terminology. The majority of candidates showed clear understanding of the text and its contexts. Less successful answers provided a limited discussion of the relationship between John and Carol and did little more than describe it and how it develops.

Q7(b)

This question was also well answered, though the focus on the topic of the question sometimes became blurred. Higher band answers grasped the opportunity to offer a fully integrated response which offered a sustained reference to how the specified extract related to the rest of the play. The most successful responses demonstrated a good linguistic awareness in their discussion of language and these candidates showed perceptive understanding of John's downfall and how his own arrogance led to his demise. Some candidates shifted their discussion to Carol's faults without developing this to link to John's lack of judgement or any other points being made. Lower band responses focused on the cited section and tended to catalogue John's errors.

STOPPARD: *Jumpers*

There were not many responses on this text this year but there were some good ones which demonstrated engagement with the philosophical propositions and the dramatic techniques the playwright employs.

Q8(a)

Candidates managed this question well, the best ones finding a very sound balance between the philosophical context and the comic techniques. The middle ground questions tended to favour one over the other. Very few answers were narrative or simply descriptive and it is evident that there has been some good instruction on both the philosophical and the theatrical sides of the text. Candidates clearly knew the play well and this allowed them to put their contextual knowledge to good use.

Q8(b)

There were very few responses to this question which was not as well managed as (a). There was much more focus on the characters and their relationship with a narrative approach, with candidates being less secure in their knowledge of the play, and ideas about the philosophy seemed confused at times.

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)

Good answers were very well engaged and were analytical, exploring keenly how Plath communicates with her reader using the prompts in the questions. There were generally good textual references and appropriate use of terminology although some responses seemed formulaic and were not focused on the question. Contextual knowledge sometimes got in the way in these responses where candidates concentrated on spotting the personal references in the poems rather than discussing how Plath communicated with her readers. In fact there were few responses that actually addressed the idea of how successfully Plath communicates with her reader.

Q9(b)

There were far fewer responses to this question and many tended to focus on literary techniques rather than linguistic. However, candidates engaged with the themes and issues arising in the poems and expressed a personal response. Stronger responses gave a detailed and in depth discussion of poetic devices and their effects. Most responses demonstrated knowledge of the texts with awareness but often did not refer to the prompts in the question. Higher band answers offered a more critical assessment of Plath's achievements and were able to integrate biographical and contextual information into their answers where relevant. Some candidates seemed to have a checklist approach and were restricted in the range of features and techniques for analysis.

NICHOLS: *The Fat Black Woman's Poems*

A limited number of candidates answered on Nichols but it was clear that there had been some good personal engagement with the text.

Q10(a)

There was generally effective textual references and appropriate use of terminology. Higher band answers identified Nichols's use of characters and voices to express the same ideas through different eyes to create a theme in her work. There was some confident analysis of imagery and language choices but verse form was often commented on without discussion of the effects. Many responses followed a simple narrative approach and didn't concentrate on addressing the key feature in the poems

Q10(b)

Many of these responses were very well focused because the higher band candidates carefully considered the response Nichols tries to evoke from her readers. The best responses focused clearly on the political challenges as well as more personal ones and wrote well on the effect on the reader of Nichols' style. Many higher band answers demonstrated confidence in their approach to analysing a variety of techniques used by the writer. In other cases candidates observed the effect of the poetic techniques and devices, but their analysis was often not linked closely to the question or evaluated in depth. There was appropriate use of terminology throughout most answers.

Q11(a)

The general scope of this question proved popular with candidates and drew some detailed answers, the best of which ably linked form to function and offered pertinent comparison of the techniques present in the selected poems. Most responses chose appropriate poems and used appropriate terminology throughout the response. The least successful responses were narrative in style and commented heavily on content and not on meaning. Few of the responses were able to explore the focus of the question '*how effectively*' and merely commented on poetic devices and how they showed sorrow or anger. These responses provided a limited evaluation of the emotional moods in the poems and discussed the words that indicated these moods.

Q11(b)

Higher band responses took into account the contexts and conventions of portraying nature, making relevant references to these and relating them to the themes and issues of the poems. These candidates' responses were engaging and demonstrated a full understanding and appreciation of the texts studied. The less successful answers showed a limited awareness of context and were either descriptive or gave a superficial analysis. For example, they only identified natural imagery and didn't extend beyond the 'flow' of enjambed lines or vowel sounds.

ATWOOD: *Surfacing*

Many candidates took a discursive approach to both questions on this text. They described the attitudes of the narrator and the writer and explored the issues, but comments were often quite general and there was too much quotation without much evaluation. These responses were often explanatory in nature and did not demonstrate a clear focus on language or use of terminology sufficiently. There is a tendency for candidates to make a quotation and follow it with comments like "this shows that ..." etc which is neither evaluative or clear.

Q12(a)

In this question there was a clear distinction between the lower band narrative responses and those who provided a cohesive answer which selected pertinent textual episodes in order to offer a detailed analysis of Atwood's structural and stylistic devices. Many were of a high standard, discussing the narrator's psychological journey and making connections between this and the natural setting. The most successful responses integrated a literary analysis with discussion of linguistic techniques and provided a sound focus on the structure of the novel and the use of characters, rather than discussing the characters themselves.

Q12(b)

A frequent comment here was that the presentation of the relationships between men and women in chapter sixteen was typical of the novel as a whole, without making specific links or using examples to substantiate this statement. Higher band answers were able to move beyond a simplistic discussion of sexual stereotypes and provide detailed analysis which was applied to the whole novel and not only the cited chapter. The discussion of contextual elements at the expense of textual analysis was the key feature of less effective responses, but what was much improved was the discussion of how characters were portrayed to make certain points rather than only seeing them as people.

BARNES: *Flaubert's Parrot*

Q13(a)

There were only a few responses on this text but the candidates demonstrated a good understanding of both narrative and language techniques. Many answers were knowledgeable and the candidates explored the journey and narrative techniques well without getting too focused on Braithwaite's psychology. Comments about postmodernism were toned down and pertinent and the ambiguity of the ending was well handled.

Q13(b)

The most successful responses here made the link between Ellen and Mme. Bovary, and reflected on how this is revealed through the narrator using various techniques. A few interesting answers argued that Ellen is entirely unimportant in the narrative, her only purpose being as muse. This approach made for thoughtful and incisive essays making careful distinctions between plot and narrative etc. Higher band answers used both the language and literary frameworks and appreciated the complexity of the text.

LESSING: *The Memoirs of a Survivor*

Q14(a)

Most candidates showed a very good understanding of the text and its themes and they attempted to make good use of textual references. Lower band answers identified the different social groups in the novel, but did not go on to analyse how they reflected social breakdown. Some responses were mainly narrative in approach and offered little linguistic or literary analysis but did show engagement with the text. Higher band responses attempted analysis of the language used by the different social groups.

Q14(b)

This question elicited some very good answers which were well focused and demonstrated a good linguistic and literary balance. Such responses showed a clear understanding of the text, focusing on the question and exploring the various expressions of love in some depth, and with insight. There was discussion of a wide range of relationships, including the dog, and there was relevant use of terminology and appropriate sections from the text. Less successful responses provided little analysis and the answer was too focused on Emily and the narrator.

6386/01: Genre Studies

The texts featured in both questions provided many opportunities for candidates at all levels to display their literary and linguistic knowledge, while also proving good discriminators between those candidates who had read and assimilated the texts carefully and then applied their subject specific knowledge, in contrast to those who identified the genre of each text and then relied to a large extent on preconceptions of what they expected to be there.

There was a marked sense of confidence and enjoyment in the responses and a readiness to explore spoken word aspects. There were many pleasing examples of candidates transferring their knowledge of the spoken word gained at AS.

There were very few short or fragmentary answers: most responses were substantial and there is evidence that time management skills have improved so that the third text to be commented on was not neglected or apparently done in haste.

Q1

The three texts were all accounts of significant events which mixed public and private aspects. Many candidates were clearly attracted to the title of this question and engaged with the occasions described (this may account for the slight preference for Question 1).

Text A—an entry from Queen Victoria’s journal encouraged the most empathetic response. Candidates were able to write in detail on this text as it featured a single event told in chronological order with little that was challenging in terms of interpretation. Almost all appreciated Victoria’s love and excitement, and many found this endearing.

Many noted the distinction between the private nature of Text A and the commercial motive of C and were able to build on this to discuss clearly some relevant differences in language features, but some did not pause to consider the original personal intent of the journal and so the resulting analysis lost a clear focus. A number were unsure about the audience and pursued a very literary approach by attempting to see deliberate rhetorical devices at work eg, the white dresses symbolising innocence.

The starting point for interpretation for some less confident candidates does seem to be literary fiction: the more discerning considered the circumstances in which the text was produced and used this to account for the repetitive lexis and the air of naivete, as well as the examples of ellipsis and elision.

Text B—Harold Pinter’s response to his Nobel Prize award.

This text allowed many candidates to demonstrate their knowledge of the spoken language features and to discriminate between the shifting tones, but many found this text the most difficult to penetrate concerning attitudes and values and the tone then became a challenge, with varying descriptions of Pinter as ‘modest’ or ‘arrogant’.

The ‘chimpanzee’ section and the deleted expletive were noted in all responses but many were unable to explain the humour in the chimpanzee reference and for many the use of the expletive just added to Pinter’s appeal.

Where the spoken language nature of this edited transcript was acknowledged this enriched the response and was used to explain the mixture of formal and informal styles. As with Text A, those who took account of the circumstances of the text production wrote the best answers by showing awareness that it was an oral text which had been subject to editing and was defined by its topicality. Many candidates were good at commenting on generic features of reportage (another indication of very good work done at AS level).

Text C—a description of the funeral of Princess Diana from the diaries of Deborah Bull.

Many candidates found this text difficult. While most were able to discern its entertaining and literary approach which made it suitable for publication, and its opinionated bystander account, only a minority were really clear about Bull's attitude.

Many were confused by the polemic and were uncertain about the distinction between description and opinion. Too many read the text superficially and responded quickly to the triggers of Princess Diana and Bull's occupation as a ballet dancer.

The most successful saw that there was a generic difference from Text A with the diary-like format being used here as a vehicle for the expression of personal opinion.

Very few were clear about Bull's attitude to Earl Spencer with many thinking that she praised him and confusing him with Prince Charles. Only the more perceptive responses noted the change in tense which marks the shift from description to argument. References to Shakespeare and catharsis were often noted (sometimes with a sense of relief at having found something familiar) but the lack of explanation indicated that the references had not been understood.

Although candidates would have been very young when this event took place, prior knowledge of the events surrounding Princess Diana's death distracted some from the particular perspective offered by this account.

Q2

The three texts all concerned challenging or dangerous situations

This title caught the imagination of many candidates and produced some very thoughtful and perceptive answers.

Text C-a letter from the poet Thomas Gray to his mother.

Many candidates were able to see past the complexity of the language to make relevant points about Gray's descriptions of his travels. Candidates were able to respond to the text on two levels: the narrative element concerning the journey and the inevitable poetic nature of some aspects of the description. Although some were puzzled about what the letter suggested about Gray's relationship with his mother, there was an appreciation of the personal but also formal tone and the likelihood that he was writing ultimately for a wider audience helped to put the text's highly literary style into context. Less confident candidates struggled with this text as it diverged dramatically from their concept of a letter. In some cases there was an over-emphasis on Gray being a poet and therefore using literary devices (the inevitable assonance and alliteration featuring prominently). Those who considered that the author probably was aware of future publication were able to see that the descriptive and narrative devices were meant to place the reader in the situation being described and to provide a kind of vicarious experience.

The historical aspect was not seen as a barrier by most candidates with many making pertinent comments about orthography and out-dated grammatical constructions and then moving on smoothly to other aspects.

Text E-an article from a sports website about the athlete Jesse Owens.

This text was a definite discriminator. The mix of genres, when pertinently handled, resulted in some mature and insightful discussion. Most were confident in discussing the attitude of the writer to Owens and were often able to explore in some detail how his achievements were emphasised by the contrast with Nazism. The Americanisms and sports-related references provided opportunities for fruitful exploration although some treated the political argument as an unnecessary intrusion into a sports article and demonstrated a surprising (if not disturbing naivete) about fascism.

Text F-an extract from Elena Vladimirovna's internet diaries giving an account of biking through Chernobyl.

Candidates found the text appealing and showed some appreciation of her mixture of informal blog style and more complex scientific information although some did identify it solely as a 'science text'.

Discussion of her attitude towards travelling in such a dangerous environment was usually restricted to a general sense of her being a 'thrill-seeker' and underplaying the risks involved, with little consideration of the particular attractions she suggests of the deserted environment. More successful and thoughtful responses commented on the interpersonal element of the text and saw its style as engaging and intimate—a good contrast with the more detached and densely structured prose of Text D. Disappointingly, the underlying sense of menace and horror was often neglected, with a tendency to see it as more light-hearted than it was intended. Almost all commented on the Biblical reference although not always meaningfully.

General comments and advice to centres.

Candidates are generally well-informed about genre conventions but are far less secure when presented with texts which are in mixed genres. Knowledge of generic conventions can sometimes take over so that candidates respond too rapidly without a proper consideration of provenance. There is also a narrow interpretation of the purposes of each text being either to inform or entertain. Centres should encourage candidates to recognise that texts may seek to celebrate or provoke etc, and to achieve high marks they need to be aware of multi-layered texts.

There is still a tendency to search for literary features in texts that are not primarily literary with identification of assonance and alliteration where it was not intentional.

Observations on sentence types and complexity are often little more than that with general statements about compound or complex sentences or polysyllabic lexis without exemplification or purpose. However, there has been a significant improvement in the numbers of candidates recognising the concept of discourse markers and how they are used to structure texts and to provide guidance for the audience.

The achievement of many candidates would be improved if technical terminology was used with precision. There is still too much casual and vague application of technical terms with imagery being confused with image and 'hyperbole' being used to describe almost anything which is not factual and prosaic.

A number of candidates had been taught to use a systematic approach which they employed rigidly and indiscriminately, leading to a very general commentary at the expense of any real analysis. It is preferable to read a response where the candidate engages honestly with the texts and what they see in them rather than a formulaic mention of each possible 'framework'. This approach disadvantages candidates as it is often difficult to find evidence, resulting in statements such as 'diaries don't usually have complex sentences, so this text is not like a diary because it has lots of complex sentences'.

A more academic touch would be added to responses if candidates used the more formal identification of writers by their surname rather than the very 'chummy' 'Victoria', 'Harold' and 'Deborah' which appeared in large numbers of answers. Yet there were no references to Gray as 'Thomas'.

Some centres may need reassurance that candidates do not need to explicitly explain or justify the analytical approach they take with the texts, or to comment on which aspects of their English studies have enabled them to complete the task.

Candidates who felt they needed to do this spent time writing paragraphs explaining how they had gained their knowledge rather than giving themselves more time to engage with the texts and demonstrate their subject knowledge and ability to make choices about analytical approaches.

Conclusion

Centres should be congratulated on the successful and interesting work which has been done on genre. Most candidates appeared genuinely enthusiastic about the tasks, and this must be a reflection of good teaching.

As with previous years, examiners reported enjoyment and satisfaction at their experiences of marking this unit.

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