



GCE A Level Examiners' Report

Subject: English Language and Literature

Level: GCE

Summer 2024

Introduction

Our Principal examiners' report provides valuable feedback on the recent assessment series. It has been written by our Principal Examiners and Principal Moderators after the completion of marking and moderation, and details how candidates have performed in each component.

This report opens with a summary of candidates' performance, including the assessment objectives/skills/topics/themes being tested, and highlights the characteristics of successful performance and where performance could be improved. It then looks in detail at each unit, pinpointing aspects that proved challenging to some candidates and suggesting some reasons as to why that might be.¹

The information found in this report provides valuable insight for practitioners to support their teaching and learning activity. We would also encourage practitioners to share this document – in its entirety or in part – with their learners to help with exam preparation, to understand how to avoid pitfalls and to add to their revision toolbox.

Further support

Document	Description	Link
Professional Learning / CPD	Eduqas offers an extensive programme of online and face-to-face Professional Learning events. Access interactive feedback, review example candidate responses, gain practical ideas for the classroom and put questions to our dedicated team by registering for one of our events here.	https://www.edugas.co.uk/home/professional-learning/
Past papers	Access the bank of past papers for this qualification, including the most recent assessments. Please note that we do not make past papers available on the public website until 12 months after the examination.	Portal by WJEC or on the Eduqas subject page
Grade boundary information	Grade boundaries are the minimum number of marks needed to achieve each grade. For linear specifications, a single grade is awarded for the subject, rather than for each component that contributes towards the overall grade. Grade boundaries are published on results day.	For unitised specifications click here: Results and Grade Boundaries and PRS (edugas.co.uk)

¹ Please note that where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

Exam Results Analysis	Eduqas provides information to examination centres via the WJEC Portal. This is restricted to centre staff only. Access is granted to centre staff by the Examinations Officer at the centre.	Portal by WJEC
Classroom Resources	Access our extensive range of FREE classroom resources, including blended learning materials, exam walk-throughs and knowledge organisers to support teaching and learning.	https://resources.edugas.co.uk/
Bank of Professional Learning materials	Access our bank of Professional Learning materials from previous events from our secure website and additional pre-recorded materials available in the public domain.	Portal by WJEC or on the Eduqas subject page.
Become an examiner with WJEC.	We are always looking to recruit new examiners or moderators. These opportunities can provide you with valuable insight into the assessment process, enhance your skill set, increase your understanding of your subject and inform your teaching.	Become an Examiner Eduqas

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Executive Summary

All papers functioned as expected and were accessible to all candidates while also being challenging enough to be able to differentiate between them. Examiners and moderators were impressed by the standard of candidate work across all four components. All examiners raised issues regarding poor handwriting amongst some candidates which made assessment difficult.

The Principal Examiner for Component 1 noted that the choice of poem is crucial for Section A with candidates being self-penalising if they choose an ill-fitting poem for discussion. Weaker candidates struggled with extract questions in Section B, especially when the extract was taken from near the end of the novel. This suggested, perhaps, their unfamiliarity with the whole text. Detailed close analysis is essential to a successful response and while some candidates managed this successfully there were still many who labelled word classes rather than identifying techniques more purposefully and linking these to the effects created. The Principal Examiner wanted to remind candidates that they should choose precise quotations and analyse more than one quotation per paragraph to support their arguments.

As with Component 1, the Principal Examiner noted the importance of textual knowledge in Component 2. The most successful candidates were always those who had prepared well and who knew their set texts well. Those who did not have thorough knowledge of the texts were limited to answering on the sections of the plays that they did know, which sometimes restricted their responses. In the best responses, linguistic and technical knowledge went beyond word class and sentence mood which meant that candidates were able to analyse thoroughly and insightfully the ways in which meaning is created by playwrights. It was noted that there was still some evidence of formulaic approaches to questions, where candidates selected a quotation, they had learned without explanation of its place in the play or its significance to the question, and then simply identified its features, paraphrasing the meaning. This approach does not constitute analysis as there needs to be demonstration of how the linguistic or dramatic features create meaning, relevant to the topic under discussion.

For Component 3, the Principal Examiner noted how impressive it was to see how many had been able to respond in detail in both sections. In Section A, candidates seemed increasingly able to identify and analyse *attitudes* to the subject matter rather than simply provide a narrative or descriptive approach. The strongest extract answers in Section B took a systematic approach by tracking through the extract from start to finish. Less successful answers generally used fewer technical terms, left out whole sections of the extract, and did not explore how meanings are created in sufficient depth. Essay responses which scored high marks usually selected two or three specific episodes from the set text and analysed them in reasonable detail, making astute connections to relevant and specific contextual points. The use of context remains variable. Many responses made only brief reference to contextual factors, and a few did not include it at all.

Only 3% of candidates' marks were adjusted in Component 4 (NEA), reflecting the fact that is a well-established component in which teachers are clearly comfortable in assessing both sections. The Principal Moderator stated that centres were gaining confidence in allowing a greater degree of independence. There was a greater sense of candidates finding their own voices and engaging with challenging texts. There was good integration of Assessment Objectives with contexts being used to inform the reading of texts. In the creative pieces, there was some lack of awareness of spoken language but, on the whole, the work in this section was interesting and engaging.

Areas for improvement	Classroom resources	Brief description of resource
Detailed close analysis is essential to a successful response.	Glossary of Terms Catalogue of Online Exemplars	The Glossary of Terms is a useful checklist for teachers and candidates, while the Catalogue of Exemplars will point candidates to responses which demonstrate a range of terms applied successfully to constitute detailed close analysis.
In Component 2, extract questions need more attention, particularly focusing on a range of linguistic, literary and dramatic features and terms, and their effects.	Dramatic Effects	This resource is mainly focused on the extended essay, but the focus on the range of dramatic effects will be useful for candidates as they analyse the extract in Section A as well.
Candidates need to be clearer that spoken texts are delivered by a speaker, not a writer, and are received by an audience or a listener, not a reader.	Spoken Language	While this resource has originally been devised for the WJEC specification in Wales, it is still a useful tool to support teachers and candidates in considering spoken language.
Candidates need to ensure that relevant contextual detail is embedded throughout the essay and assists in developing the central argument of the response.	Integrating Context	Focusing on <i>In Cold Blood</i> , this resource from the 2019 CPD series is useful in supporting candidates with integrating AO3 in their analysis.

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COMPONENT 1: POETRY AND PROSE

Overview of the Component

There were some successful responses on both parts of the Component 1 exam, although few candidates responded with equal success to both Sections A and B. This perhaps acknowledges that, while similar AOs are assessed, the comparison element of the poetry response in Section A provides a different challenge to the whole-text response of Section B(ii). It might also be that timing continues to be an issue, although there were fewer candidates who missed out a task completely.

Detailed close analysis is essential to a successful response, in Section A and Section B, and while some candidates manage this successfully there are still many who label word classes rather than identifying techniques more purposefully and linking these to the effects created. Candidates are reminded that they should choose precise quotations and analyse more than one quotation per paragraph to support their arguments. Context needs to be accurate in order to gain marks.

Comments on individual questions/sections

SECTION A: POETRY

Candidates tackled both poetry tasks with some success, with mostly clear understanding of the unseen texts. Essays were organised well (AO1) with most candidates adopting the approach of writing about two texts per paragraph, enabling focused comparison (AO4). There were some thoughtful responses that engaged with comparing ideas rather than making superficial comparison of elements such as titles or rhyme schemes. The best responses tackled the unseen text in the first paragraph in relation to one *Anthology* poem and returned to it again in the second for comparison with the other *Anthology* poem. This approach ensures clear demonstration of a candidate's ability to apply linguistic and literary analytical skills (AO1, AO2).

There are, however, still issues with candidates choosing poems that do not allow for sustained relevant analysis (AO2) linked to the task set. This has a significant impact on the overall relevance and success of the response. Candidates should remember that the quality of written expression is part of the AO1 criteria and as such they should include an introduction to their essay for each task, as well as remembering to embed quotations into sentences and not use '/' in what should be a formal essay. It is also worth noting that 'whereas' should start a subordinate clause and should not be used in place of 'however.'

There was an increased use of 'positive' and 'negative,' which are vague terms that should be used sparingly, and many candidates used '/' rather than writing 'or,' something that detracts from the academic style of the response (AO1). Candidates are reminded that it is important to use quotations from throughout the texts in their responses, in order to demonstrate an understanding of the whole text as well as including detailed close analysis.

Question 1

Question 1 required candidates to analyse the poem 'Those Winter Sundays', focusing on the presentation of devotion. Many successful responses recognised the love presented by the father to his child, as well as the speaker's regret that he didn't appreciate this at the time. A significant number of responses quoted "love's austere", not recognising 'austere' as an adjective and therefore this as part of a longer noun phrase. Some also read 'offices and 'labor' and concluded that the father was going to work, rather than completing domestic chores. Nevertheless, many candidates wrote well about this unseen text.

Some of the best responses chose 'Sonnet 43: How Do I Love Thee?' and 'To My Dear and Loving Husband', with these poems demonstrating obvious devotion as well as providing numerous opportunities for comparison. Other successful responses focused more on the challenges and hardships of devotion, such as the religious devotion in 'The Collar' or the unrequited love in 'He Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven.' Candidates noted the focus on material wealth in some poems as being central to the speaker's concept of devotion, while in other poems devotion transcends the material world and becomes much more spiritual.

While several *Anthology* poems provided excellent opportunity to focus on the task, the candidates who selected poems such as 'The Flea' or 'A Satirical Elegy on the Death of a Late Famous General' were not able to justify their choices or write a focused and relevant response. 'Sonnet 130' was also a popular choice, managed more successfully by some than by others. With this poem, it is possible to see a link to devotion, but the first twelve lines provide little evidence to support this and, as such, it is difficult to write relevant close analysis. Candidates who chose this poem and failed to write about the final rhyming couplet provided little justification for their choice.

Question 2

Question 2 required candidates to analyse the extract from 'Walking Home', focusing on the presentation of the natural world. Successful candidates noted how the natural world had the ability to affect the narrator's emotional state, as well as the comparisons drawn between the natural world and man-made objects and industry. More so than in Question 1, a number of candidates only wrote about one or two sentences from this text, restricting the breadth and success of their response.

The choice of *Anthology* poem was again a key element in candidates producing a focused and relevant response. The best responses wrote about 'The Passionate Shepherd to His Love', 'To Autumn' and 'Spellbound'. Unfortunately, a significant number of candidates chose unsuitable poems, most notably 'London' and 'Composed Upon Westminster Bridge'. As in previous years, 'Ozymandias' was a popular choice but, while it has an overarching theme of the power of nature, it provides little clear evidence of the presentation of the natural world, making it unsuitable for this task.

SECTION B: PROSE

In Section B it was good to see the majority of candidates managing their time and writing detailed responses to both parts of the task. There were, however, still some who neglected to include context in their part (ii) response, sacrificing 20 marks in the process. Some also included context in part (i) and this couldn't be rewarded. Whole text responses in part (ii) often referenced a wide number of events in the novel, demonstrating good understanding of the whole text. Occasionally candidates only focused on one event in this section and these responses weren't as successful.

As in previous years, *The Color Purple* and *Jane Eyre* proved to be the most popular texts, but a significant number of responses on *Atonement* were seen as well as some on the other two texts.

Jane Eyre

The extracts in Question 3 and Question 4 were analysed with some success by most candidates. Question 4(i) saw some responses noting dialogue and spoken language features, while Question 3(i) provided more opportunities for focus on description and the contrasts the narrator draws between Thornfield Hall and Lowood.

Candidates answering question 3(ii) often structured their response by different houses in the text, although at times there tended to be a focus on events within the house rather than the setting itself. This was particularly true of candidates writing about Gateshead, focusing on the Red Room or the argument with John in the Library without noting Jane's overall unhappiness in the house or her pleasure on leaving it. In Question 4(ii) responses there was good consideration of masters and servants, including understanding of Jane's position as a governess, which allowed for some effective contextual points to be made too.

Great Expectations

Very few responses were seen on this text. Candidates answered successfully on 'illness and suffering,' considering characters such as Mrs Joe, Miss Havisham and Magwitch at various points in the novel.

Atonement

Question 7, focusing on the presentation of loss, proved to be popular, with many candidates recognising that this broad topic covered loss of friendship, loss of innocence, and loss of family relationships. This provided candidates with plenty of opportunities to write about different sections of the novel and the experiences of many characters. Occasionally candidate responses lost focus and wrote more about the relationship between two characters rather than specifically noting 'loss.' The question on the significance of friendships was also answered reasonably well, with many noting Briony's friendships as well as Robbie's army friendship with Nettle and Mace.

The Remains of the Day

Responses were seen on both questions. Those writing about rooms as significant settings (Question 9(ii)) referenced both Stevens' father's room and that belonging to Miss Kenton. Some also noted the significance of the lack of walls when Stevens is on the pier at the end of the story. Question 10 required candidates to focus on narrative perspective and this provided opportunities for detailed referenced to social and historical contexts. Candidates are reminded that this still needs to link closely to arguments and analysis of the text itself.

The Color Purple

Successful extract responses to Question 11 recognised how racist views created an underlying tension to the relationship between Sofia and Eleanor Jane, as well as noting Eleanor Jane's naivety to this. In Question 12, good candidates noted Nettie's excitement at seeing greater freedom in Harlem, but also recognised the uncertainties raised by the visit to the Missionary Society. In both extract responses there was a disappointing number of candidates misunderstanding the events being presented.

In Question 12, some believed Nettie to be in Africa already, rather than in Harlem. Question 11 saw more misreading, with a significant minority believing Eleanor Jane and Sofia to have the same father or believing that Eleanor Jane was the one pulling down the pile of ironing in a fit of rage. Candidates are reminded to read the extract carefully to locate it within their understanding of the story and to avoid misunderstandings.

Successful candidates answering Question 11(ii) wrote about a variety of child and adult relationships in the novel, including Celie's relationship with her stepfather, Harpo's relationship with Mr, and Nettie's relationship with Adam and Olivia. There were some effective comments made about the significance of womanism and female characters looking after each other's children. Less successful candidates wrote about Celie and Nettie's relationship, or Celie and Shug's relationship, with little justification of how these might link to the task. Question 12(ii) proved to be problematic in that many candidates lost sight of the focus on narrative perspective. The arguments made about society then tended to be more generalised rather than recognising the way the black female perspective affects how misogyny and racial conflict is presented.

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COMONENT 2: DRAMA

Overview of the Component

This year's examination produced a very wide range of responses, both in terms of quality and in the type of approach to the questions. As usual, the most successful candidates were those who had prepared well and who knew their set texts well. Detailed knowledge of the plays meant that they were able to respond to questions appropriately. Those who did not have thorough knowledge of the texts were limited to answering on the sections of the plays that they did know, which sometimes skewed and restricted their answers. Additionally, in the best responses, linguistic and technical knowledge going beyond word class and sentence mood meant that candidates were able to analyse thoroughly and insightfully the way meaning is produced in their chosen texts.

In Section A, *Othello* is still by far the most popular choice, followed by *King Lear*, then *The Tempest* and *Much Ado About Nothing*. As in previous years, no-one chose *Antony and Cleopatra*. In Section B, *The History Boys* and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* are the most popular texts, followed by *Kindertransport*, then *Translations* and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*.

One of the biggest problems in responses to the examination this year was handwriting. An increasing number of candidates write illegibly, meaning that examiners are simply unable to award marks for content they cannot read. If a candidate has accurate word-processing skills, that can offer a solution. Otherwise, candidates could be offered more opportunities to practice handwriting essays during the year.

Some fruitful work was seen on Grice's maxims and conversation analysis, although candidates should be careful in use of terms such as 'mean length of utterance,' which indicates an overview ('mean'), not a description of an individual speech or two, and properly belongs to the study of child language development; 'dominant speaker' does the job well enough. The term 'adjacency pair' is also being misused at times to refer to any exchange, whereas it properly only belongs to those where a particular response is constructed, expected, as in question and answer pairs.

As mentioned last year, the trend towards well-written introductions continues, although in the Shakespeare essays and in Section B responses a number of candidates used the introduction to present generalised contextual information, often not relevant to the question. This cannot attract higher than Band 2 marks for AO3. A few candidates are still including contextual references in the extract question in Section A, where only AO1 and AO2 can be credited. Candidates should be reminded that clear paragraphing and organisation also attract marks in AO1, as well as clarity of expression.

There is still some evidence of formulaic approaches to questions, where candidates select a quotation, they have learned without explanation of its place in the play or its significance to the question, and simply identify its features then paraphrase the meaning. As has been said before, this does not constitute analysis, and cannot be awarded higher than Band 2 as it is not purposeful analysis.

There needs to be demonstration of how the linguistic or dramatic features create meaning, relevant to the topic under discussion. This approach is particularly evident in the Shakespeare questions, where some candidates simply translate the quotation into modern English in the mistaken belief that it equates to analysis.

Many of the same problems recur from year to year, despite the fact that addressing them would be likely to result in higher marks. The following points were made in last year's report, but they are worth repeating here with comments relevant to responses seen from this year's exam series:

- Verbs are very commonly identified as 'dynamic,' often confusing the terms 'dynamic' and 'stative' with active and passive mood.
- Dynamic verbs are simply those that occur at a specific moment in time, which is not often a relevant feature to identify in analysis.
- 'Post-modifying adjective' is another term commonly misapplied, usually where a predicative (as opposed to attributive) adjective is intended.
- Noun phrase structure is widely misunderstood, and noun phrases are often identified without either their pre-modifying (determiners, modifiers etc.) or post-modifying structures (such as prepositional phrases, relative clauses or non-finite clauses).
- Deontic modal verbs such as "You must go with us" are also often misidentified as imperatives.
- Some candidates have clearly been encouraged to use polysyllabic words and complex sentences as a virtue in themselves, without regard to clarity or meaning. Obviously, this results in unclear expression, a Band 1 descriptor, and makes it very hard to understand the points made, so problems may also arise in other AOs.

It is gratifying to see some candidates thinking about grand style as a feature of Shakespearean language, although still very few are identifying it correctly. 'Reading Shakespeare's Dramatic Language' (Adamson et al, 2001) is a reliable reference, pitched at a suitable level, although there are many other texts which candidates would find useful.

Comments on individual questions/sections

SECTION A: SHAKESPEARE

Extract questions

Generally speaking, although some excellent analyses are seen each year, candidates under-perform in this question. The passages are chosen in order to offer a rich array of linguistic and dramatic features, but candidates who only have word classes and sentence mood in their repertoire will not be able to take advantage of what is offered. All the literary and poetic techniques are relevant, so candidates should be encouraged to analyse deeply here. There is however a welcome sign of candidates being taught to offer an initial brief account of the location of the extract in the play with its dramatic and/or structural significance, which almost always attracts marks in AO2.

King Lear

The extract from *King Lear* was accessible to most candidates, and some excellent responses were seen. Most were able to discuss the dramatic irony in the passage, and comment on sympathetic audience responses to both characters. Surprisingly, few took the opportunity of analysing the rich language of Edgar's vivid description of the 'view.'

Sensory details (in this case largely visual and auditory) are very much part of AO1 technical features, and they can then be linked to the sound patterns, for example the assonance of 'murmuring surge'.

Much Ado About Nothing

The extract from Act 2 Scene 1 of *Much Ado About Nothing* offered plenty to discuss. Some candidates did well here with conversation analysis and Grice's maxims, the rhetorical features of Beatrice's speeches, and Hero's contrasting linguistic behaviour when dancing with Don Pedro.

Othello

Perhaps because it comes from early in the play and was therefore familiar to the majority of candidates, many strong responses were seen to the extract from *Othello*. Most commented fruitfully on the contrast between Iago's language with Roderigo and his blank verse soliloquy, and on the wider dramatic effects produced here. Those who knew the play well were able to discuss the fact that this is the first of Iago's soliloquies, and the foreshadowing effects it creates. However, Iago does not use grand style, here or anywhere, as some claimed. That is mainly the preserve of the Othello 'music.' Many candidates are still confusing pronouns and determiners (the latter seen here with 'Thus do I ever make *my* fool *my* purse'). This was one occasion when the use of the first-person possessive determiner really does suggest possession and control, in contrast to the claims made for Othello in essay questions where his use of "my wife" is seen as evidence of patriarchal domination. Similarly, a number of candidates saw the importance of Iago's repeated "I hate the Moor" but claimed that it was the use of the first-person pronoun that had the effect. A number of candidates argued that "twixt my sheets / 'Has done my office" was a metaphor, whereas in fact it is a euphemistic but literal reference to what Iago sees as his 'office' or role.

The Tempest

The extract from Act 2 Scene 1 of *The Tempest* similarly invited discussion of dramatic effects and rich linguistic features. The contrast between Gonzalo's rhetorical flourishes and the carping, ironic pair of Sebastian and Antonio offered many opportunities, some of which were taken, although few were able to find more than the basics. Among the dramatic effects included here was the silent, melancholy presence of Alonso, which those who know the play well could have commented on.

Essay questions

King Lear

Question 2c) was the more popular question by far this year. There were few very strong responses to 2b). Perhaps this is because the majority of the suffering of "the poor, the old and the outcast" occurs in the second half of the play and some candidates were not familiar enough with the play as a whole. As usual, many candidates focused on the 'love test' of the opening scene, despite its marginal relevance to the poor, the old or the outcast. Lack of knowledge of the play meant that some even focused on Edmund as an example of 'the outcast', arguing that audiences feel compassion for him based on his Act 1 Scene 1 treatment by his father, but given his political and person dominance for most of the play, along with his appalling ruthlessness and selfishness, this argument rarely stood up.

2c) produced a wide range of approaches, including some excellent accounts of Lear's madness contrasted with that of Edgar, and even some convincing arguments of the Fool's 'mad' talk being the source of real wisdom in the play. Many discussed Lear's 'mad' decision in the first scene as being the source of the madness later on, an argument that did hold some water if well supported. Perhaps again as a result of lack of textual knowledge, some stretched the notion of 'madnesses to mean anger (in the American sense), and tried to use Edmund's first soliloquy as evidence of this, with less success.

Much Ado About Nothing

Very few candidates chose to answer on 3b), the 'mistakes and misunderstandings' question, perhaps because they were drawn to the more obvious topic of 'love and marriage' of the alternative. However, there were real opportunities here to look at the structure and genre of the play, along with the way Shakespeare creates drama and tension, building to the shock of Act 4 Scene 1. Some strong responses were seen to 3c), particularly where candidates were able to offer some precision concerning 'conventional attitudes. A number of others found themselves depending on rather thin accounts of Claudio's behaviour with Hero, attempting to relate it to 'courtly love' or patriarchal conventions, with varying degrees of success. Most, however, were able to offer reasonable accounts of the contrasts between that pair and the less conventional Benedick and Beatrice.

Othello

Some outstanding essays were seen in response to both 4b) and 4c). The best examples of 4b) gave a perceptive and wide-ranging account of both Othello's victimisation by Iago and the way his race constitutes him as a victim, along with nuanced opposing perceptions of him as an aggressor, particularly in the later stages of the play. Most candidates chose this question, and it offered opportunities for a clearly structured and effective argument, even at quite a straightforward level.

4c), on the other hand, produced a wide variety of approaches. The most successful accounts of the 'enemy' in the play compared the external enemy of the Ottoman Turks, which motivates the action of the first act and the move to Cyprus, with the increasingly evident enemy within, namely Iago. The perceived enemy as the racial 'other' was also successfully contrasted with the moral enemy, who in this case is white and European. As noted in previous years, a great deal of excellent work has been done on the context of *Othello*, and this year's responses were no exception, for example focusing on Spain as the enemy of England (associated with Iago through the origins of his name). Some interesting alternative accounts of 'enemies' were seen, including abstract entities such as racism and other forms of social prejudice, although these were not always convincingly argued or evidenced.

The Tempest

There were a number of successful responses to Question 5b), which considered the colonial context behind the play in relation to Stephano and Trinculo's treatment of Caliban, often with purposeful analysis and good question focus. Those who chose 5c) had varying success, largely dependent on how precisely they focused on the issue of 'unanswered questions. Many of the more successful accounts considered the questions surrounding Caliban's future and his relationship with Prospero with relevant and precise details. But again, less successful essays probably resulted from lack of detailed knowledge of the later stages of the play.

SECTION B: MODERN DRAMA

Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?

Few candidates studied *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, but of those who did, most chose Question 6 on the suffering of the female characters. Some relevant accounts were seen, with varying degrees of precise analysis. Where candidates ran short of contextual details to offer, they tended to depend on biographical material relating to Albee, which was not always relevant.

The History Boys

The History Boys is a very popular choice of text, and most this year chose to answer Question 8 on the changing social attitudes between then and now. There were many excellent accounts produced here, offering detailed and insightful accounts of attitudes to, for example, gender, sexuality, class and education in the play.

Less successful responses focused too much on the present day, offering detailed sociological material on current attitudes to these areas of life at the expense of analysis of the play.

As always, we are primarily looking for textual analysis and insight. In both Questions 8 and 9, the perennial temptation to focus on the taboo language of the play proved too much for some, unbalancing their essay somewhat in the process if it was not analysed usefully. However, where candidates chose Question 9, they tended to do very well. Many excellent accounts of the presentation of Rudge were seen, with some very insightful analysis of his character and the way in which Bennett invites audience response to it. One misreading did tend to crop up frequently though, namely that Rudge was accepted at Oxford either as a result of nepotism or through positive discrimination on the basis of his class, when in fact, as Rudge says, they took him because he was "just what the college rugby team needed."

Translations

Responses to questions on Brian Friel's *Translations* were generally very successful and based on detailed textual knowledge. A few candidates wrote on memory and the past (Question 10), but the majority chose Jimmy Jack's resonant words about "exogamein" and the crossing of borders (Question 11). Most had plenty of relevant and insightful analysis to offer, although there was a problem of lack of focus in some cases, where the notion of 'borders' was interpreted too freely. The relationship between Maire and Yolland is probably the principal motivation for Jimmy Jack's comment, and most candidates wrote well about it, but the most successful also discussed Owen's move to Dublin and his initial support for the Ordnance Survey project, along with (in both cases) the "angry" responses from both sides.

Kindertransport

Most candidates who had studied *Kindertransport* chose to answer Question 12, on the presentation of men and women in the play. Some detailed, focused accounts were seen, contrasting these two aspects of the drama. There were also successful responses seen to Question 13, with comparative analyses of the presentation of Helga and Lil. As always, where candidates did less well in either case it was usually the result of lack of textual knowledge, meaning that they could only discuss the opening scene, or the memorable taboo language used by Faith. It has been said in previous years' reports that one of the fruitful areas for study in this play is the range of dramatic techniques used by Samuels, and there is a gratifying increase in analysis of these, although still rather thin and infrequent.

Cat on a Hot Tin Roof

Along with *The History Boys*, the most popular modern drama play is *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. This year's candidates mostly chose to answer Question 14 on the male characters in the play. Successful candidates (of which there were many) gave detailed and nuanced analyses of the presentation of Brick, Big Daddy and Gooper, and the relevant contextual elements that inform them. Less successful accounts (usually again because of lack of textual knowledge) depended on a few quotations from Brick and/or Big Daddy, or just the opening scene of Brick in the shower.

Summary of key points

There is much evidence of good practice, but knowledge and understanding of the set texts must be prioritised. Extract questions need more attention, particularly focusing on a range of linguistic, literary and dramatic features and terms, and their effects. Introductions continue to improve, but should not be a vehicle for irrelevant, 'bolt-on' context.

Once again, this year, centres are encouraged to keep developing the range of linguistic approaches that candidates can use in their analyses. In so doing, they do not have to resort to sentence mood and word class when it is not useful to do so.

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COMPONENT 3: NON-LITERARY TEXTS

Overview of the Component

In Section A of this component, candidates are required to compare and contrast three unseen spoken texts on the same broad topic but with differing purposes, genres and attitudes to their subject-matter. As noted in last year's report, it is a real challenge for candidates to respond to this volume of unseen material within a relatively tight time limit and it was again impressive this year to see how many had been able to respond in detail, demonstrating the analytical skills that they had learnt and practised throughout the course. As last year, the great majority also showed evidence of at least a sound knowledge of the set text studied in Section B and most were able to go beyond this to engage in close analysis. In Section A, candidates seem increasingly able to identify and analyse 'attitudes' to the subject matter (in this case, railways and rail travel) rather than simply provide a narrative or descriptive approach, and this is encouraging. A few candidates are still spending time discussing the generic differences between transcripts and non-transcribed texts, but such answers are very much in the minority.

As in past years, the strongest extract answers in Section B take a systematic approach by tracking through the extract from start to finish. Candidates make a range of sharp and concise points about meanings and how the author conveys them and employ a good variety of technical terms with precision. Equally, less successful answers showed the same characteristics as in previous years. They generally used fewer technical terms, left out whole sections of the extract, and did not explore how meanings are created in sufficient depth. Essay responses which scored high marks usually selected two or three specific episodes from the set text and analysed them in reasonable detail, making astute connections to relevant and specific contextual points. The use of context remains highly variable: many essay responses made only brief reference to contextual factors (only showing an 'awareness') and a few did not include it at all. As last year, many are still referring to context in the extract response (where it is not assessed), a self-penalising approach as these references to context often come at the expense of detailed textual analysis which is, of course, assessed in the extract answer.

Comments on individual questions/sections

SECTION A: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SPOKEN NON-LITERARY TEXTS

This year, the common theme between the three unseen texts was attitudes to railways and rail travel, with the extracts including several points of comparison and contrast for candidates to explore. The most successful made a wide range of specific points about each text, included a variety of technical terms applied precisely. They explored in detail how meanings were created, including implicit meanings, and confidently moved between the three texts, identifying and commenting on a variety of connections between them. Introductory paragraphs still vary in quality. Although few candidates are copying the descriptor paragraphs, many are still writing poorly organised and repetitive introductions. There was still overuse of the terms 'positive' and 'negative' to describe the speakers' attitudes, which only counts as 'basic' analysis for AO2.

Text A, an extract from a 1949 BBC news report, enabled candidates to explore the presentation of new trains as an exciting technological advance, and nearly all were able to identify this. Most candidates went on to develop their analysis to include consideration of how the speaker achieves this effect, for example by making comparison to the 'older and dirtier' steam locomotives that the new trains were replacing and in the references to their power and speed. Several, however, described the reference to 'over three thousand horsepower' as 'hyperbole' (it is merely a statement of fact). Some recognised that the speaker's reference to 'the joys of engine driving' was most likely intended to be ironic. A few candidates mentioned spoken language features such as stress, intonation and even the speaker's accent, although there was no textual evidence of any of these features as the text was not presented as a transcript.

Text B was more challenging for many candidates. Nearly all of them did identify the speaker's attitude of admiration for the construction workers but several were under the impression that Chris Tarrant was describing the railway journey itself as a 'nightmare.' This misconception then hindered their ability to make accurate points about how meanings were conveyed. Others, whose analysis was more secure, were able to make productive connections with the other two texts, for example by discussing the similar and different connotations of the noun 'nightmare,' which also appears in Text C.

Candidates' approaches to transcribed texts are always variable, and this year was no exception. The most effective explorations of Text C clearly recognised the ways in which the speaker uses stress, intonation and pausing to reinforce his linguistic choices in expressing his strong attitudes towards rail travel. Conversely, some showed no real awareness of the spoken nature of the text, with a few candidates even referring to the 'writer' and the 'reader.' Nearly all commented on the simile 'like sardines' (although some described it as a metaphor), and while some confined themselves to describing this as 'negative,' most were able to explore the connotations of confinement and dehumanisation that it suggests.

Summary of key points

AO1, AO2 and AO4 are all assessed in Section A, with AO4 having double weighting. The following points outline features of successful answers and areas for improvement for each Assessment Objective. Most have appeared in previous reports on this Component but are still worth reiterating here as answers tend to demonstrate the same strengths and weaknesses from year to year.

AO1

Characteristics of successful responses:

- A wide range of technical terminology applied accurately.
- When analysing a transcript, the use of specific technical terms such as micropause, intonation etc.
- Fluent and controlled written expression adopting a formal register appropriate for analytical study at this level.
- Evidence of an integrated linguistic/literary approach, including both linguistic and literary terminology.
- A clearly structured response with a coherent line of argument.
- Made a clear distinction between written texts designed to be spoken by using the term 'sentences' and spoken transcripts by using the term 'utterances.' Referred to 'speaker' and 'audience' rather than 'writer' and 'reader.'

- A short, sharp introduction identifying and comparing attitudes, before quickly moving on to close analysis.

Areas for improvement:

- Many candidates still show confusion about the basic definitions of the different word classes by misapplying terminology.
- The term 'declarative' is still being used extensively, often to label a phrase or even a single word.
- Many candidates quoted entire sentences (or sometimes more than one sentence) and then began their analysis with (for example) 'The noun phrase suggests...' without identifying the noun phrase within the sentence, e.g. by underlining it.
- Some responses were again poorly structured, with much repetition and without a clear line of argument.
- Misuse (or overuse) of certain technical terms, e.g. 'hyperbole' when the quotation identified is not an exaggeration of the truth, or 'oxymoron' to describe a juxtaposition or contrast rather than a contradiction/paradox.

AO2

Characteristics of successful responses:

- Consistent analysis of specific attitudes to railways and rail travel (beyond simply 'positive' and 'negative'), and an ability to address contrasting attitudes within the same text.
- Relating these differing attitudes to the identities and experiences of the speakers, and the audiences, purposes and genres of the texts.
- Using a range of precise and detailed comments on how meanings are created.
- Showing an ability to go beyond obvious, surface meanings to explore more implicit meanings.

Areas for improvement:

- Candidates still need to avoid repeating the terms 'positive' and 'negative' throughout the essay: this only counts as 'basic' analysis, which is a Band 2 descriptor.
- Similarly, there is overuse of the terms 'formal' and 'informal.'
- On the whole, candidates need to be clearer that spoken texts are delivered by a speaker, not a writer, and are received by an audience or a listener, not a reader.
- Making only a small number of points about each text, which may be conveyed in exhaustive and often repetitive detail.
- Paraphrasing quotations rather than analysing them.

AO4

Characteristics of successful responses:

- Devoting a substantial amount of the answer to making connections between texts: this is important as AO4 accounts for half of the marks on Section A.
- Exploring specific similarities and differences between the attitudes of the different speakers, and ideally relating these to genres, audiences and purposes.
- Moving confidently between the three texts. There is no need, however, to compare all three texts all the way through the essay. For example, some productive comparisons could be made between Texts A and B, and then between B and C, and so on.

- Including a good balance of similarities and differences.
- Clearly signposting when links are being made (Similarly, Equally, However, In contrast etc.) but then ensuring that this is followed up with a specific and meaningful link.

Areas for improvement:

- As in previous years, some candidates devoted a considerable amount of time to describing obvious generic differences between spoken and written texts without referring to meanings or to attitudes. Such comments are irrelevant as they do not address the question and will not score marks. However, this approach does seem to be less prevalent than it used to be, which is encouraging.
- Several candidates were still not including many links, and this will be heavily self-penalising. Answers which essentially consisted of three mini-essays on each individual text, followed by some brief comments at the end about links, were unlikely to score highly for AO4. However, only a few candidates are now taking this approach, another encouraging sign that messages from previous reports are being heeded.
- Some candidates are still using 'signposting' without supporting this with really specific and meaningful links between texts. Examiners will not award AO4 marks simply for including terms such as 'Similarly' or 'In contrast'. This needs to be followed by genuine comparative analysis.

SECTION B: NON-LITERARY TEXT STUDY

In Cold Blood was once again the most popular choice of text in this section, with *Once in a House on Fire* and *Homage to Catalonia* being studied by smaller numbers of candidates. No responses were seen on *Skating to Antarctica* or *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius*.

As with Section A, the characteristic features of strong, and also of less successful answers, have not substantially changed over the years. The more successful candidates were those who paid close attention to the writer's use of linguistic and literary techniques to convey theme, character and setting, tracking carefully through the extract and showing a sensitive awareness of how specific meanings were created. Again, others often produced poorly structured answers, sometimes making only a limited range of points and ignoring sections of the extract. As mentioned in previous reports, the key to a good-quality extract response is systematic close reading, meaning that candidates should home in on short quotations, give sharp and precise analysis of how meanings are created, and then quickly move on to the next point. A concern that has been developing for some years is that many candidates are including very detailed contextual information in their extract responses. It should be noted that no marks are awarded for AO3 on this task, so such an approach is likely to be self-penalising as it draws candidates away from close analysis of the extract.

The essay question is still more of a challenge for many candidates, sometimes as a result of timing issues (although very short or completely missing essay responses are becoming less frequent), uncertainty about the requirements of the task, or sometimes simply lack of sound knowledge of the set text. This tends to result in answers which include little close analysis of key episodes. The application of contextual factors (AO3) remains highly variable. Some candidates are including very brief references to context, often over-simplified (and a few included none at all), while some others are writing context-led essays that included very detailed biographical, social and historical contextual information at the expense of close textual analysis.

As mentioned in last year's report, the most successful approach is to use relevant contextual points to illuminate analysis of the text, embedding these points in every paragraph. The 'learnt essay' is still evident, in which candidates appear to learn a standardised response and then try to adapt it to the wording of the question. This approach is restrictive and often prevents candidates from accessing higher marks as it usually results in rather generalised answers with only tenuous links to the question.

Once in a House on Fire

In their extract answers, most candidates made at least some sensible points about how the descriptions of the condition of the house in Parkfield Street, and of the immediate neighbourhood, illustrate both the poverty and desperation of Lorraine in her determination to 'go it alone with her girls.' Most were able to connect this with a desire for independence and for escape from the control of males. Some candidates were able to go a little further in their analysis, for example by interpreting the 'collapsing' house as a metaphor for the family and their situation. Some simply ignored the last two paragraphs of the extract but many of those who did analyse it were able to comment thoughtfully on some of Ashworth's language choices, for example by seeing that the nouns 'spank' and 'smack' carry connotations of physical punishment, echoing the behaviour of Peter Hawkins even in his absence.

Most candidates did not take the opportunity to produce a really considered exploration of Ashworth's presentation of 'houses and homes' in the rest of the memoir. Those who did were able to connect this to the fluctuating fortunes of the family, with homes often serving as an indicator of relative wealth and poverty, and of social class. A few cited descriptions of more middle-class homes, such as Tamsyn Lee's, seeing them as evidence of Andrea's aspirations to better herself. However, most candidates produced rather generalised essays which often focused heavily on the presentation of domestic violence: although there is a connection with the question in that most of this (by definition) takes place within the home, this connection was often quite tenuous. Contextually, many candidates referred to specific points such as the 'right to buy' legislation of the early 1980s, but often struggled to connect this with textual analysis.

Skating to Antarctica

No responses were seen on this text.

A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius

No responses were seen on this text.

In Cold Blood

The extract gave candidates ample opportunities to explore the presentation of the prison, and most did so at least competently. Many were able to see the irony in Capote's likening of the prison to a 'palace,' but some were confused by this reference. Nearly all selected the simile 'like a coffin' and most could see that this image is intended to prefigure the fate of Perry and Dick, as was the imagery of the 'widow's veil.' Most were also able to comment sensibly on how the treatment of the prisoners is intended to regiment and dehumanise them. As usual, some candidates moved away from close analysis of the extract by including contextual information, for example about incarceration and public attitudes to prisoners, an approach which is self-penalising as AO3 is not assessed in this task.

Candidates took a variety of approaches to the essay question on the presentation of justice and punishment. Many focused exclusively on how Perry and Dick ultimately face justice and are punished for their crimes, and this was a perfectly valid approach as long as the candidates were engaging in close textual analysis and making links with relevant context. Others ranged more widely, for example by considering the presentation of Dewey and the investigation into the Clutter murders. Some argued, with varying degrees of success, that the murder of the Clutter family could be seen as an unjust ‘punishment’ for their achievement of the American Dream. Less successful answers usually offered a more general overview of Capote’s presentation of Perry and Dick as characters, often with limited reference to the question. Contextually, many candidates confined themselves to rather generalised and over-simplified comments about attitudes to the death penalty in 1960s America, but some were able to make interesting connections to Capote’s own opinions and how these were revealed in the process of researching and writing the book.

Homage to Catalonia

Most candidates tracked carefully through the extract and were able to see how Orwell conveys both the psychological and physical hardships arising from the Spanish Civil War. Many commented on the former by discussing the imagery of the ‘huge evil intelligence’ described in the first paragraph, while there were plenty of opportunities to explore Orwell’s presentation of physical injuries to his comrades and his description of the treatment he received for his own. Some candidates were confused by the quotation from the Duchess of Atholl, thinking that her words were in fact Orwell’s own. As mentioned in last year’s report, some candidates are taking the opportunity to include detailed contextual points in their extract response, a self-penalising approach as AO3 is not assessed here – however, fewer candidates seemed to be doing so this year.

Candidates had plenty of scope to write about ‘physical and emotional hardships’ from elsewhere in the text, with several referencing his descriptions of trench warfare and his experience of being shot and recovering from his injury. Many others were able to explore his references to the atmosphere in Barcelona on his return, as examples of emotional hardships. This is a text that lends itself very easily to contextual analysis and most candidates were able to take advantage of this. Some, however, included excessively detailed references to contextual points that were not fully relevant to the question.

Extract Questions

Characteristics of successful responses:

- A variety of technical terms used accurately and purposefully (AO1).
- A suitable balance of literary and linguistic terminology, demonstrating evidence of ‘integrated study’ (AO1).
- Attaching at least one technical term to every quotation (AO1).
- Showing clear awareness of the writer’s reasons for employing linguistic and literary devices, making sensible comments on how specific meanings are created, and showing at least an awareness of subtext (AO2).
- A thorough approach, tracking sequentially through the extract and covering a good range of points (AO2).
- All points about meaning are relevant and linked back to the question (AO2).

Areas for improvement:

- Similarly to Section A, there was still often confusion about the definitions of basic features, particularly word classes (AO1).
- Some candidates wrote at length (and often repetitively) about very specific parts of the extract (often a single short quotation) and omitted many other potentially valuable points, thus not demonstrating full coverage of the extract (AO1/AO2).
- As in Section A, some over-used the terms 'positive' and 'negative' at the expense of more precise analysis (AO2).

Essay Questions

Characteristics of successful responses:

- Beginning with a clearly focused introduction, including a clearly defined line of argument (AO2/AO3).
- Including some reasonably detailed reference to two or three key episodes from different parts of the text to exemplify/illustrate the line of argument: given the time constraints of this task, this should be realistic for candidates (AO2).
- Referring to specific contextual factors which are relevant to the wording of the task, including social/historical and, if appropriate, relevant information about the production of the text and biographical details about the writer (AO3).
- The best responses skilfully interwove this specific and relevant contextual information with analysis of meanings, showing a clear grasp of how these contextual factors influenced the production of the text (AO2/AO3).
- Finishing with a meaningful conclusion that sums up the argument and does not simply repeat points already made (AO2/AO3).

Areas for improvement:

- Some candidates ignored the wording of the question and wrote answers with limited relevance, possibly reflecting a lack of sound knowledge of the text, or suggesting that they had memorised a set response and then tried to adapt it to the question. This approach is strongly discouraged.
- As half the marks for this question are awarded for context, candidates self-penalised if they included no, little, or irrelevant contextual material.
- On the other hand, some candidates wrote essays that were context-led, with less detailed textual analysis.
- Again this year, some answers were brief, suggesting that some candidates have issues with timing: it is recommended that they should spend twenty-five minutes on the essay question. However, relatively few candidates failed to attempt the essay response.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

GCE A level

Summer 2024

COMPONENT 4 (NEA): CRITICAL AND CREATIVE GENRE STUDY

Overview of the Component

This component is internally assessed and externally moderated. It gives opportunities for learners to independently select an aspect of prose study that interests them and to study one text (chosen from a list in Appendix A) provided by WJEC Eduqas within that genre. In addition, learners are given the opportunity to select wider reading to inform their studies in this component and to reflect on the learning that has taken place. Learners complete a comparative assignment on their chosen genre and texts. In reflecting on their studies, learners will then be required to produce two pieces of original writing related to their selected genre.

Comments on individual questions/sections

SECTION A: GENRE STUDY

It was pleasing to see a wide range of texts and tasks in evidence in the work submitted this year for moderation. Centres had taken a range of appropriate approaches to Section A this year with a number of candidates being given the flexibility to select either their texts for study, their tasks or both. In some centres there had been even more freedom given for candidates to choose their own genre to focus on, which resulted in a wide range of interesting responses. A minority of centres had prescribed both genre and texts which offered their candidates limited independence in their study. There was a tendency in these cases for candidates to refer to similar extracts in their responses and as result they produced rather formulaic and uniform outcomes. The NEA is an opportunity for candidates to offer independent ideas and interpretations of meaning.

Once again, dystopian and gothic genres proved popular. There was an increase, however, in centres opting to study texts from the genres of crime, romance and war/conflict this year. Very little work was seen in the life-writing, journalism and adventure genres. As with previous years, certain texts remain popular including *The Handmaid's Tale*, *1984* and *Brave New World* in the dystopian genre. *Frankenstein*, *The Woman in Black* and *The Bloody Chamber* are often used for the gothic genre studies. Increasingly though, centres are guiding candidates to a broader selection of texts for the wider reading. In the romance genre, *Pride and Prejudice* is a popular choice but moderators also saw work this year on *Breakfast at Tiffany's* and *The Great Gatsby*. The strongest pairings allowed candidates to explore the texts in their selected genre and consider the differing social and historical perspectives on their chosen topics. It is pleasing to note that centres have been able to guide their candidates on appropriate wider reading texts which offer sufficient level of challenge for study at this level. It is worth highlighting, however, that if candidates study a collection of short stories, then they should refer to at least three stories in their essay, thus ensuring sufficient breadth and depth.

A wide range of tasks were seen this year and the majority of centres offered candidates the flexibility to choose a topic in which they were individually interested.

This is recommended as best practice and is in the spirit of the specification. Questions were often carefully worded to allow candidates to focus on the relevant assessment objectives. Moderators saw some excellent work on the themes of secrets and deceit in the crime genre, the suppression of the individual in dystopian fiction and female identity in the gothic genre. Some centres used critical quotations as part of the task and often these worked well to engage candidates in their argument. Where the question focus was narrow, candidates had a tendency to craft perceptive responses. Bibliographies included in the work were useful to demonstrate the breadth of candidates' wider reading on their selected genre.

Centres have continued to address the range of terminology used by candidates in their essays however there is still a tendency to focus on word level and some feature spotting was evident in responses. In stronger responses, candidates applied a much broader range of literary and linguistic terminology from the framework with confidence and precision. Moderators also noticed some terminology used incorrectly which could have been addressed during the drafting process. Similarly, candidates should be encouraged to proofread their work in both sections of the folder as written expression and technical accuracy are assessed in AO1 and AO5, respectively. Stronger responses adopted a fluent academic style in the writing and introductions were often used effectively to establish a clear overarching argument and were often well focussed on the genre and comparative from the outset. Less successful essays contained introductions which were more generalised and contained contextual information unrelating to their lines of argument. Biographical or historical contextual information relating to the question should be embedded as part of the close textual analysis which should be at the core of the response.

As in previous years, AO2 was a strong aspect of the genre study. Generally, candidates engaged well with meaning, considered a range of interpretations and supported responses with evidence from their chosen texts. Weaker responses were often characterised with descriptive detail from key moments within the texts and feature spotting without developing ideas with detailed analysis.

Many candidates engaged well with contextual detail and used the information to drive forward the central argument in their essay. Fewer responses are 'bolting on' context in either the introduction or conclusion and instead are embedding relevant points throughout the essay. Effective task setting and wider reading is important to assist candidates in this aspect of the genre study. Consideration of a range of contextual factors allowed candidates to be purposeful in their study. It should also be noted that candidates should demonstrate the influence of the context in both the production and reception of the text. Where candidates addressed both aspects here this often offered an interesting perspective in their work. Selection of appropriate contextual points remains as important as the selection of sections of extracts from the texts to address the central argument of the essay.

As this is a genre study, there is an expectation that candidates demonstrate clear awareness of how their chosen texts fit in with the selected genre. Some tasks had been carefully worded to encourage candidates to consider this as part of their central argument. Some of the stronger responses considered how their texts subverted or conformed to the conventions of their chosen genres. This was particularly apparent in some of the responses considering the genres of romance and the gothic this year.

The comparative element of the essay is important, and candidates were generally able to make clear connections between their chosen texts, allowing them to access the full range of marks available for AO4. Task setting generally allowed candidates the opportunity to explore different points of comparison and contrast throughout the essay. A few weaker responses tended to deal with the texts separately or make under-developed statements regarding connections. Candidates should be encouraged to plan genre studies comparatively in order to ensure that the wider reading illuminates the study of the core text.

Summary of key points:

Candidates should:

- apply a broad range of literary and linguistic terminology that moves beyond word level analysis to consider phonology, literary approaches, sentence level analysis etc. (AO1)
- ensure that terminology is applied with precision and accuracy (AO1)
- adopt a suitably academic register, avoiding the use of first person in the essays (AO1)
- establish clear links between terminology and meaning, supporting points with relevant evidence from the chosen texts (AO2)
- ensure that relevant contextual detail is embedded throughout the essay and assists in developing the central argument of the response (AO3)
- make specific reference to the conventions of the chosen genre and consider how the texts chosen to adhere to, or subvert those conventions (AO3)
- select texts of an appropriate level of challenge to allow for comparison (AO4)
- adopt a comparative approach to the essay through careful and detailed planning (AO4)
- avoid superficial comparative comments or links which have little or no relevance to the task (AO4).

SECTION B: RELATED CREATIVE WRITING

Candidates are required to submit one literary and one non-literary piece of writing in this section. Where centres had encouraged candidates to include a brief text descriptor to contextualise their writing, this was useful for moderators to understand the authorial intent in the production of these pieces. It is also an opportunity for candidates to highlight the link between their genre study and their work in this section of the folder. The majority of centres offer candidates a wide range of choice in this section, allowing them to write to their individual interests which often leads to some excellent work.

Short stories and novel openings remain the most popular form for the literary piece, with moderators also seeing work on monologues and screen plays. Some of the strongest responses made interesting choices with narrative voice and form which led to some engaging responses. Characterisation and setting were used well in the genres of gothic, crime and dystopian fiction to establish clear links with the genre studies. In a few cases this year, candidates had produced work through the narrative voice of an existing literary character. This type of task should be avoided as it limits the originality and flair that candidates need for this section of the folder.

Moderators saw a range of non-literary text types in this section including reviews, speeches and articles. Some candidates had written extracts from podcasts this year, which is an interesting style for candidates to explore. Stronger film or book reviews had a real grasp of the genre and were intended for publication in existing formats. Some of the weaker reviews tended to retell plots and, in some cases, read more like essays on their selected films. Planning and drafting are important for this section as is the need for quality writing as a model when preparing for this task. When candidates had written texts intended for a spoken audience, stronger candidates had demonstrated awareness of performance in their writing. A very few candidates had used fictional content for non-literary pieces which should be avoided.

Technical accuracy and the quality of written expression was generally good, but inaccuracy in the mid and lower ranges was more notable. Careful proofreading and editing are a crucial part of the drafting process, and candidates should build this into the preparation and work on their writing.

Summary of key points:

Candidates should:

- ensure that they establish a clear audience and purpose for both the creative tasks
- plan carefully and show a clear awareness of genre in their writing
- use a style appropriate for audience, purpose, form and genre
- proofread carefully to ensure a high degree of technical accuracy and build this into the planning and preparation for the NEA.

Administration

With very few exceptions, centres are using the Non-examination Assessment Checklist and including this with the sample sent for moderation. This has assisted in eliminating administrative errors such as the omission of a sample list, missing signatures etc. On some folders, candidates had neglected to enter their word counts on the front sheet and on the work itself. Annotation on the cover sheets and on the work was generally very good, giving a clear indication of where marks were awarded. In a minority of cases annotation on the cover sheet or work was minimal. As indicated on the checklist, centres are required to provide sufficient annotation on the quality of the work being assessed.

Conclusion

Moderators saw a great deal of strong work again this year. It is pleasing to see that centres are encouraging candidates to adopt an independent approach to the NEA. A broader range of texts and genres are being studied and candidates have often been given the opportunity to write to their strengths and interests. Centres are to be commended for their hard work in preparing candidates for this unit.

Supporting you

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Our friendly subject team is on hand to support you between 8.30am and 5.00pm, Monday to Friday.

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