



GCE A LEVEL EXAMINERS' REPORTS

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE A LEVEL

SUMMER 2018

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Component	Page
Component 1: Poetry and Prose	1
Component 2: Drama	9
Component 3: Non-Literary Texts	15
Component 4: Critical and Creative Genre Study	21

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

GCE A LEVEL

Summer 2018

COMPONENT 1: POETRY AND PROSE

General Comments

This was the second time that this Component had been sat; centres and candidates have clearly taken notice of advice following last year's examination. There were fewer problems with time management this year, especially with the handling of the extract and essay questions in Section B. There were also fewer examples of disappointing marks caused by failing to address the double-weighted AO3 (contextual factors) in Section B. Time has been well spent ensuring that the assessment objectives are thoroughly understood. One problematic area this year, however, was the choice of poems from the studied Anthology in Section A.

Section A requires candidates to choose two poems from the Poetry Pre-1914 Anthology to discuss and compare with one of two unprepared texts. While there was some confident and convincing work both on studied poems and unprepared material, tackling the unseen text will always be a challenge and selecting suitable poems for comparisons is an essential skill. Superficial reading of the unseen text led to difficulties on meanings (AO2) and connections (AO4) but more serious and avoidable problems were caused by choosing Anthology poems which did not actually deal with the theme in the question.

In Section B part (i) candidates analyse an extract from the studied novel, followed in part (ii) by an essay on a question related to the extract. Clearly many centres had provided useful timed practice and stressed the importance of addressing the assessment objectives. Very few this year included unrewarded contextual material in part (i) and the discussion of contextual factors in part (ii) is improving in most centres. Section B's open book opportunity means that we expect to see selected textual evidence from relevant episodes. Many candidates clearly had the necessary thorough knowledge of the text essential for brisk and effective selection. Others used a very narrow range of textual evidence, chose episodes which were not helpful for the question or used none at all. Too many still gave descriptive outlines of their chosen topic or told the story.

SECTION A: POETRY

Unseen Texts

Question 1 on 'remembering the dead' featured '**Anthem for Doomed Youth**' by Wilfred Owen.

Question 2 on 'rural scenes' was based on the opening section of *Cider with Rosie* by Laurie Lee.

Question 1 was slightly more popular but produced more unsuitable Anthology choices than Question 2.

Question 1

The unprepared text, 'Anthem for Doomed Youth' elicited some perceptive analysis, especially on the first stanza. Clear and accurate discussion of the sound effects and the blending of war and religion featured in many stronger responses. There were obvious opportunities here to integrate literary terms and approaches with linguistic analysis. But candidates need to be reminded that identifying stylistic features does not amount to analysing them. Spotting the simile 'these who die as cattle' gains credit for AO1 but developed explorations of its implications (AO2) were surprisingly rare. There were also some very common errors. For example the cattle simile was often a 'similie' and almost as often a metaphor. Those who did not realise that Owen was writing about WW1 were less likely to make sense of his attitude. Some scarcely referred to the sestet, although the actual theme of remembrance is most directly expressed in the last three lines.

Anthology choices

Question 1 reads: **With detailed reference to two poems from the Anthology and Text A, compare and contrast how the theme of remembering the dead is explored.** (my underlining). This is not the same as the presentation of death, a question which quite a few decided to answer. The choice of poems was a serious issue.

The most popular choices were 'Song' and 'Remembrance' which both worked well for this question. Other successful choices were 'Ozymandias', 'My Last Duchess' and 'A Satirical Elegy'. Swift's poem shares the subject of war with Owen's 'Anthem' and this was put to good use by a small number of shrewd candidates. Probably the most successful choice, however, was Hardy's 'The Voice' where the theme is central and the contextual factors interesting and memorable. 'The Voice' appeared widely in a few centres, but not at all in others.

Some seem to have skimmed the list of poems and stopped on finding a word connected with the theme; others chose poems with little or no relevance. Unsuccessful choices included 'London', 'Spellbound', 'The Flea', 'The Darkling Thrush' and even 'How do I Love Thee?'. Possibly because it appeared early on the list, Sonnet 73 was quite popular and candidates struggled to make relevant comments. In some centres 'A Valediction Forbidding Mourning' was chosen, even by the more able. In some cases, the context of the poem was misunderstood. A few, however, knew that Donne was soon to be separated by travel from his wife and decided to write about it anyway. When, however, they argued that Donne travelled in a more dangerous age and might not return, credit was given for justifying their choice.

Question 2

The unprepared text, *Cider with Rosie* proved accessible to almost all who chose it. The vast majority recognised the narrator's fear of the unknown and there were several detailed and thoughtful accounts of stylistic features which made the Gloucestershire countryside appear sinister and intimidating. Again, the very best responses made thorough use of literary terms and approaches as well as linguistic analysis. They also balanced their account of the extract by referring to the description of the cottage in the final paragraph.

Anthology choices

Question 2 reads: **With detailed reference to two poems from the Anthology and Text B, compare and contrast how rural scenes are presented.** (my underlining). It was not expected that 'rural scenes' would be misunderstood by anyone sitting an 'A' Level English examination. There were some unexpected and unsuitable choices however.

Popular choices were: 'The Passionate Shepherd to his Love', 'To Autumn', 'Spellbound' and 'The Darkling Thrush'. The best work was on Keats, Brontë and Hardy. 'Spellbound' worked well because of its similarities to the situation in 'Cider with Rosie' and its brevity made thorough coverage of the poem easier. The length of a poem like 'To Autumn' is not necessarily a disadvantage, however, as this choice offered a range of material to select from when developing comparisons. On Marlowe, comment was often thinner and more repetitive. A few also chose to write about the 'Prelude', 'Kubla Khan' and 'Leisure'. The most frequent unsuccessful choices were 'Composed upon Westminster Bridge' and 'London'. One candidate wrote about both of these. Such choices drastically reduce opportunities to produce any relevant analysis in response to the question set.

Contextual factors for the 'unseen' texts

We expect most of the contextual comment in Section A to refer to poems from the Anthology. Many stronger candidates are also able to contextualise the unprepared material. There were clear opportunities to use general knowledge about WW1 for Text A. Several also knew about Owen as a war poet and a few were able to refer briefly to other works. On Text B, a few were led astray by the wartime setting, as there is no actual evidence in the extract that Lee was an evacuee. There were some sensible comments on the autobiographical genre in terms of purposes and most likely readership

Organisation (AO1, AO4)

It is necessary to repeat that empty introductions waste time and gain no marks. Successful introductions always show evidence of thorough reading, focus on the question set and start to address the comparative element meaningfully. Candidates can gain credit straight away for organisation (AO1), understanding (AO2) and connections (AO4).

One key to success here is careful reading: having read and re-read their chosen unseen text carefully and used it to guide their choices, candidates needed to re-read their studied poems thoroughly in the light of the question set. This should enable them to comment on connections between the three writers' treatment of the topic in their introduction and choose links to use as an organising strategy.

The framework approach when used as an essay plan has obvious drawbacks. Many who started with form and structure struggled when trying to make connections and discuss meaning. Organising the essay around similarities and differences leads to a structured response which does not narrow down or compartmentalise the approaches used. This method produced many of the most competent responses.

Conclusions need to be succinct. A meaningful sentence or two is preferable to a long paragraph repeating earlier points or offering vague generalisations.

Terminology and analysis (AO1, AO2)

Low achievement on AO1 and AO2 is not always simply because the candidate does not understand the poems studied or the text chosen. This does happen, of course, but sometimes it results from narrow approaches or unproductive application, especially of linguistic and phonological terms.

Some centres seem to have focused exclusively on the recognition and identification of linguistic and phonological terms, to the detriment of reading and understanding skills, producing scripts which score well on AO1 but are basic or limited on AO2 and usually superficial on AO4. Analysis does not mean identification of features. It means understanding meaning and exploring how key meanings have been created.

Here are some cautionary notes, based on work seen this year:

- **Literary approaches** can be overlooked. Using Owen's first image as an example, knowing that 'cattle' is a concrete noun only shows knowledge but considering *why* these deaths are described by using the simile 'as cattle' shows knowledge and understanding.
- A few centres have encouraged over-interpretation of **phonological effects**. Many assertions about the impact of alliteration, sibilance or fricatives (to name a few) were entirely unconvincing and frequently inaccurate. Auditory imagery was important in Texts A and B and should not be overlooked but the best responses combined terms such as onomatopoeia or alliteration with other linguistic and literary terms. Ending with a section on phonology, as the framework approach demands, often produces flimsy analysis and tenuous links, even from able candidates.
- **Word class labels** are difficult to master and easy to mix up. While close linguistic analysis requires some accurate word classing, attempting too much occupies time and space, which would be better used to widen the range of linguistic and literary approaches. As it would be possible to attach word class labels to every single word, selection is a useful skill to practise. It is unnecessary to specify the class of each word in longer quotations but a few centres seem to have encouraged this.
- Most candidates referred to **poetic form** and many with accuracy. It is advisable to avoid spending too long on this and to refrain from unrealistic claims about the impact of form on meanings.
- Pointing out **declaratives** might occasionally be useful, particularly when combined with other terms e.g. the use of the pronoun and the present tense in the simple declarative 'Nothing beside remains.' in 'Ozymandias'. But declarative is the most common sentence mood and it is unproductive to use the term repeatedly. Examples given are often not full sentences and therefore do not actually show sentence mood. It is usually more useful to look for other sentence moods.
- **Unrealistic claims** on the impact of linguistic choices cannot be rewarded. Assertions such as 'The use of the first person pronoun 'I' is used to convey a sense of fear and claustrophobia.' are clearly untrue. This example can gain some credit for AO1 knowledge but not for purposeful application and is in Band 1 for AO2.
- **Literal or vague explanations** cannot achieve higher than Band 2 marks when accurate. Some comments on effect were limited e.g. 'negative' or basic e.g. paraphrasing, using synonyms to give a literal explanation.

Most of these remarks also apply to Section B

Common errors: expression and terminology

Here are some observations about usage. Several apply also to Section B.

- **Connotation** is widely used incorrectly. 'Connotation' means an additional tone, idea or feeling which a word or phrase suggests, beyond its literal meaning. The expressions 'negative connotations' and 'positive connotations' should be discouraged.
- Unfortunately, '**positive**' and '**negative**' are still used far too often instead of more precise and meaningful adjectives for attitude.
- '**Simplistic**' incorrectly used to mean 'simple'
- '**Furthermore**' and '**Moreover**' inaccurately used to introduce new material.
- Inaccurate use of '**similarly**' without a connection to follow it.
- **Lexical sets** are connected by meaning and their identification requires quotation of the relevant words (which do not need to be classed) from the same **semantic field**.
- Texts may contrast with each other but they cannot '**juxtapose**', which refers to the close placing of two things within one text.
- '**Vocative**' used for any kind of naming rather than correctly for a term of address used directly to someone or something.
- Writers **imply**; readers **infer**.

Context (AO3)

It is a good idea to encourage candidates to include a key contextual factor connected with both of their chosen poems in the introduction to their Section A response. Several centres have clearly been advising this. They should also practise choosing the most appropriate contextual factors to discuss for any obvious topics/themes in the poems they would most like to use in the examination, ensuring that a range of topics is covered.

In some centres, the requirement to comment on contextual factors was almost entirely overlooked. This suggests that candidates are not sufficiently familiar with the Assessment Objectives, as contextual influences will have been taught with the poems. Where thorough revision had been undertaken, well-informed candidates could evaluate a range of influences convincingly, especially on Keats, Hardy and Brontë.

Key Points:

- Consider Anthology choices carefully when choosing the question. Ensure that choices deal directly with the theme in the question.
- Read the unseen text very carefully, at least twice, while planning poem choices and connections.
- Revise poetic form but avoid over-interpretation of its impact.
- Make sure that students are thoroughly conversant with the AO weightings.
- Promote the use of a wide range of literary and linguistic terminology, not just word classes or phonology.
- Contextual factors need to be learned and revised.

SECTION B: PROSE

The Color Purple was the most popular novel, followed by *Jane Eyre* and *Atonement*. A few centres had studied *Great Expectations* but none chose *The Remains of the Day*.

Last year the major concerns in Section B were timing and the inclusion of contextual factors in part (ii). Basic arithmetic needs to be applied here: 60 marks (20 + 40) are achievable in 60 minutes. Part (i) needs a brisk and focussed approach to the task, in order to complete it in 20 minutes, leaving at least 40 minutes for the longer essay. This year there were fewer examples of drastic mistiming.

Part (i) EXTRACT ANALYSIS

This section requires clarity, purposeful application of literary and linguistic terms and relevant analysis. Comments on contextual influences should be kept for part (ii) as AO3 is not rewarded on part (i). This year, very few extract responses drifted into context but some included references to characters or issues elsewhere in the novel. This squeezed out analysis and could not gain marks here. A general introduction is unnecessary but a sentence or two establishing the internal context of the extract acts as a shaping device.

The questions on the extract were straightforward: irrelevance was rarely a problem but some repetitive or leisurely approaches dealt only with the opening of the extract or laboured one or two points, at the expense of range. Candidates need to scan the extract in the light of the question, to determine the most productive material. While a chronological approach was adopted by most, the question might suggest other ways of organising the analysis. For example, both of the questions on *The Color Purple* extracts involved the attitudes of two characters and discussing each character in turn could work well.

Part (ii) ESSAY

The quality and range of comment on contextual factors was the most important ingredient for success in this task because of the double-weighted AO3. Other problems involved the absence of terminology and a tendency, still very marked in some centres, to offer rather general overviews of themes rather than selecting relevant parts of the novel to analyse. A chronological approach, which usually included patches of narrative, was still far too common.

Addressing the AOs

AO1

Evidence of integrated study was limited in a significant minority of responses and very sketchy in many others. Those showing sound knowledge of terminology in Section A sometimes failed to use it in Section B part (ii) or used only very general terms. Although close analysis as sustained as in Section A is not expected, candidates need to choose quotations in support of relevant arguments so that they can cover a range of literary devices and linguistic choices in their analysis. Earlier remarks on word class are relevant here: with such a range of studied material to hand, it is disappointing to see candidates who only label individual words. Successful centres make sure that literary techniques are thoroughly discussed and revised, so that the focus is kept on linguistic **and** literary approaches.

AO2

In the most successful centres, candidates began engaging with the question in the introduction, with an overview of their chosen topic in the studied novel. In well-crafted responses this also acted as evidence of planning and indicated the approaches to the question they had chosen. The issue of choice is important: there is much more material to choose from than in Section A. While a written plan is not required, it is essential to have one in mind. It is disappointing to see responses which start at the beginning of the novel and tell the story apparently in the hope that something relevant will turn up.

In some centres, there was clear evidence of useful practice in selecting relevantly and analysing closely. It was not uncommon for different candidates to use several of the same episodes although for different questions. This is fine as long as the material is used relevantly. It is a good idea to extend range by making sure that the focus is not exclusively on the protagonist. When that does happen, there is a danger that whatever the question chosen might be, it will turn into a 'development of Jane' (or Celie or Pip) answer. Another useful strategy is to know some later sections of the novel really well: this adds balance as well as ensuring a wide range of textual evidence.

At the top of the range it was good to see candidates with an excellent knowledge of their studied texts, who had clearly enjoyed close study and were able to select from a wide range in order to shape cogent and convincing essays.

AO3

Including a range of **contextual factors (AO3)** was essential for a respectable mark on Section B. In some centres, every response had at least some basic references to context and the strongest featured integrated and well-informed evaluation at every stage. Context accounts for half of the marks but should not take up more space than textual analysis and needs to be firmly connected to the chosen topic. The keys to success here are: **range**, **relevance** and smooth **integration** into the response. The most impressive essays had contextual points woven into each section of analysis. It is wise, although not essential, to include some key context, such as genre and time period in the introduction. A chunk of biography at the start of the essay will not score as highly and there is a temptation to include knowledge which is not connected with the chosen question.

At the top of the range there was an impressive range which included history, biography and critical opinions. On the whole, discussions concerning the **production** of the text will centre on different factors influencing the writer when the novel was written as well as social and historical issues from when the novel is set (not necessarily the same as in the case of *The Color Purple*.) As for the **reception** of the text it is valid to discuss responses of readers today, in the light of current attitudes and events, as well as the opinions of earlier readers and critics. It is important that candidates have a wide range of factors to draw on: their selection will then depend on the question and the material they choose.

In a few centres, coverage of contextual factors was thin or missing. Overlooking the context altogether meant that even if they wrote and analysed well they could not possibly gain more than half marks. The contextual material has to be learned and candidates should be reminded of its importance, preferably through having practice essays AO marked.

Practise integrating different contextual factors with the analysis of key episodes in the novel. Insist on introductions which link the topic with at least one contextual factor. Ensure that knowledge of dates is accurate, rather than 'When it was written' or 'in that time'.

There is a list of starting points for each specimen question in the AO3 section of the Specimen Assessment Materials and the Mark Schemes.

Jane Eyre

Question 4 was far more popular. The extract elicited some impressive close reading and the best responses used a wide range of literary and linguistic terms. A common error was that many referred to the simple declarative '*She could not charm him.*' In at least two centres the italics were referred to as orthography (spelling) rather than graphology (visual layout). When discussing different ideas about love, strong responses often discussed Helen Burns and St John Rivers, while those who only featured Jane and Rochester could achieve less range.

Great Expectations

Question 5 was far more popular. There were several thoughtful readings of Pip's treatment in the extract, especially those who looked at dialogue and symbolism, as well as the contrast provided by Joe. On attitudes to children, Miss Havisham's treatment of Estella was a particularly useful choice. Some responses however drifted into a focus on 'children', rather than '*attitudes* to children'.

Atonement

Both questions were popular. The best responses to the Question 7 extract included exploration of the literary features, especially the 'bride-to-be' simile and the metaphor of the labyrinth. On the factors influencing Briony's mistakes, those who only considered the character of Briony offered quite narrow views. Those who also discussed social class and upper middle class family life also found it easier to integrate a range of contextual factors. On Question 8, extract responses sometimes dwelt too exclusively on hardship and defeat. Others achieved range by also looking at comradeship and the contrast with civilian life. Some centres had clearly practised writing about the obvious topic of WW2 and this was to their advantage.

The Remains of the Day

There were no responses on this novel.

The Color Purple

Question 11 was much more popular. The extract responses were strongest when they included Harpo's immaturity and vulnerability as well as his learned prejudice. A common error was that most referred to 'Sofia love you. You love Sofia'. Those who identified the key verb only just outnumbered those who called it an abstract noun. Love often turns up in literature (e.g. in Anthology poems) and 'noun or verb?' would be a useful inclusion in targeted linguistic revision. Some essays on attitudes to marriage left out the 'attitudes to'; others generalised the presentation of all marriages as 'negative'. The best responses did not spend too long on Celie and Mr_____, but moved on to Harpo and Sofia as well as the Olinka.

Key Points:

- Make sure that students are thoroughly conversant with the AO weightings. Contextual factors should appear only in part ii).
- Timed practice is strongly recommended, using a 20+40 minute structure.
- Practise literary approaches and readings, where appropriate, on part (i)
- Advise candidates to select at least two key episodes for closer analysis in part (ii).
- Practise integrating different contextual factors with the analysis of key episodes in the novel.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

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COMPONENT 2: DRAMA

General Comments

Many very strong responses were seen this year in Component 2, and centres have generally done a good job of preparing candidates for this closed book paper. Most had been trained in the timing of the paper, and there were relatively few incomplete responses, although some still spent too long on the extract, limiting their performance on the two 48 mark questions.

Most centres have taught an appropriate balance of literary and linguistic approaches to the texts, and some very successful analytical work was seen. There are still however some responses where only minimal teaching of integrated study is in evidence. In these cases even the strongest candidates, with good knowledge of the texts, only achieve very low marks in AO1, and often in the analytical element of AO2 as well, so cannot attain the high grades they may otherwise deserve.

One of the most widespread and serious problems in responses is the quality of language analysis. Many candidates just identify word classes and/or sentence moods without any relevance to the meaning of the text, and often go on to simply paraphrase the quotation. It must be stressed that understanding and analysis of meaning is the primary purpose of all the three tasks, without which a candidate cannot gain a Band 3 or higher mark in AO1, which requires 'purposeful application' of terms. All responses should start from understanding of the text and its effects. To know that in the line 'An old black ram is tupping your white ewe', 'ram' and 'ewe' are concrete nouns, adds nothing to an understanding of the meaning, and will attract very little credit. The antithetical imagery in the noun phrases 'an old black ram' and 'your white ewe' might be seen as significant, with all its contextual relevance, as might the verb 'tupping', including the fact that it is a present continuous form, creating a sense of immediacy and therefore urgency.

A common problem seen once again in responses to the Shakespeare texts is that candidates simply paraphrase instead of analysing. Understanding Shakespearean language does require study and effort, but no marks will be awarded for simply telling the examiner what a line means in modern English. Similarly, analysis needs to be appropriate: the use of the first person pronoun does not necessarily indicate selfishness or egotism, and the use of the determiner 'my' does not necessarily mean dominance or patriarchal possession.

Some centres are focusing too much on phonemics, particularly place of articulation (fricatives, approximants, sibilants etc.). Although useful at times in the texts, perhaps in intensely poetic, heightened sections of Shakespeare's verse, this framework is by no means widely applicable enough to be depended on exclusively, as some candidates are doing. The over-interpretation that results is often just a cover for unsupported assertion, rather than meaningful analysis.

Common errors: expression and terminology

Many of these are recurrent problems, year after year, and most apply to both Sections A and B.

- Many candidates are not using sentence demarcation accurately, and while punctuation inaccuracy as such is not penalised, as soon as coherence becomes impeded, it is (in AO1). Frequent use of comma splices and lack of capitalisation quickly becomes incoherent.
- Noun phrases: these are commonly just cited as a modifier or two and the head noun, but the full structure extends to all the modification (including determiners and/or pre-determiners at the start, and any amount of postmodification afterwards, such as relative or non-finite clauses and/or prepositional phrases). Sometimes the postmodification is the most interesting part. See Sarah Thorne's *Mastering Advanced English Language*, pp26-28.
- Adjacency pairs: it is gratifying to see that some centres are teaching conversation analysis in their study of dramatic works, as it is clearly a relevant framework here. However, the term 'adjacency pair' is often misapplied to any exchange of utterances, when in fact it belongs only to a single stimulus/response sequence, such as greetings or questions and answers, where a particular response/answer is conventionally expected.
- Determiners: many centres are not teaching the difference between pronouns and determiners, so frequent errors are seen in analysing determiners such as 'my', 'his' etc.
- 'Woman' is frequently mis-spelt as 'women'.
- 'Enforced' is often used inappropriately. Rules are enforced, but literary effects are, for example, suggested, evoked, created, highlighted or implied.
- The oversimplifying adjectives 'positive' and 'negative' are still being used instead of more appropriate, specific descriptions.
- Vocatives can be important elements in an analysis, for example Desdemona's frequent address to her husband as 'My lord' in *Othello*. However the term only refers to a direct address to a character or thing.
- Juxtaposition does not mean contrast: it means placing side by side. Contrast is sometimes the resulting effect, but by no means always.

Section A: Shakespeare

Othello was the most popular text in Section A, followed by *Much Ado About Nothing*, *King Lear*, *The Tempest* and *Antony and Cleopatra* respectively. Responses were of a generally high standard, with some very impressive work seen at times. Dramatic effects are not often analysed, however, and many responses discuss the works in exactly the same way as they would a novel, limiting their range of points, and marks. Features such as entrances, exits, soliloquies, asides, along with dramatic syntax (extra meaning created by the juxtaposition – placing side by side – of scenes or sections of scenes) are rich sources of meaning, to name but a few. Similarly, Shakespeare is well known for his fruitful use of dramatic structure, foreshadowing later scenes proleptically, or analeptically echoing earlier ones. For example the good judgement of the Venetian Duke and senators in Act 1 Scene iii of *Othello*, as they see through deception, is contrasted later in Cyprus (e.g. Act 3 Scene iii) by Othello's lack of the same.

Extract Analysis

In this question candidates are required to respond to an extract from the Shakespeare play they have studied, printed on the question paper. They are only advised to spend 30 minutes on it, so need to work quickly. Because the text of the extract is given, candidates are expected to analyse linguistic and literary features **in detail**, and to discuss the significance of the extract in depth. Although some very good work was seen, this is one area where improvements could be made in future, perhaps by teachers giving candidates more opportunity to practice timed close analysis of extracts. Candidates also need to make sure that they focus on the aspect of the extract indicated by the question. AO3 is not credited in this question, so candidates should not offer extensive comments about context, although if **directly** relevant to the extract, **brief** details can be rewarded under AO2.

Candidates have an opportunity here to analyse the most important lines of Shakespeare's language in the extract in real detail, and many are clearly not able to do this. A text such as *Reading Shakespeare's Dramatic Language: A Guide* (Adamson, Hunter et al, 2001) would be a useful resource.

As mentioned above, improvement could often be made by including analysis of dramatic effects: awareness of what is happening on stage, and the meanings suggested by it.

Antony and Cleopatra

This extract offered a lot of analytical possibilities and was generally done well.

King Lear

Some strong responses were seen here, although many candidates missed the painful dramatic irony of Edgar's presence, and even more failed to understand Gloucester's last two speeches in the extract, where he gives generously to Edgar/Poor Tom, and (like Lear earlier) shows his compassion for the poor and understanding of the need for political change. Some of the weakest misread Edgar's speeches as Gloucester's. Careful close reading is essential in this section.

Much Ado About Nothing

Many good answers here discussed the characterisation of the villains Don John and Borachio very successfully, along with the power dynamics of their relationship as expressed in their language. Some candidates attempted comments about the use of prose, although most often these were rather simplistic. The reasons for Shakespeare's use of prose are numerous and varied, and not restricted to 'low characters', which clearly does not work in this case, as Don John is an aristocrat.

Othello

A wide range of answers was seen in response to this extract from Act 2 Scene 1, most of which correctly identified the occasion in the play as just after their arrival on Cyprus. However some candidates mistook Iago's references to Cassio 's courtesies with Desdemona ('They met so near with their lips...') as Desdemona's behaviour with Othello, causing problems for the analysis. Similarly, many failed to see Roderigo's exit, and Iago's change of stance (and language form) with the soliloquy, and instead wrote as though Iago was still addressing Roderigo in his final speech. There were however some strong accounts of Iago's language, its contrast with that of Roderigo, and the effects of the soliloquy at the end.

The Tempest

Responses to this extract from Act 3 Scene 1, the central scene in the play, often tended to reduce the presentation of the lovers Ferdinand and Miranda to comedy or conventionalised trivia, and most missed the dramatic irony of Prospero's presence on stage throughout, although there were some better examples.

Key Points:

- Needs careful reading of the extract
- Include dramatic effects
- Distinguish meaningfully between prose and verse
- Analyse the important aspects of the language in detail, using an appropriate, wide range of frameworks.

Shakespeare essay

The key feature of this question is the double weighting of context, with AO3 contributing half the total marks. Most centres seem to be preparing candidates well for this, and there were some excellent examples of responses with a range of relevant, well-integrated contextual points. As has been remarked in previous reports, however, pre-rehearsed contextual information just bolted on to the essay will attract very little AO3 credit, and is generally therefore a waste of time. It is still, however, essential to offer linguistic and literary analysis of the text, with tight focus on the question, so a history essay will not suffice.

As this component is all closed book, candidates obviously have to learn quotations for the exam. Furthermore, as it is a Language and Literature exam, the quotations need to be precise if the candidate is then going to analyse the language of the quotation, otherwise the analysis cannot be credited, as does happen quite frequently.

Some candidates are tending to write the essay as essentially a set of unexplained quotations which they analyse, instead of discussing the events, characterisation, dramatic effects and issues of the plays, with linguistic and literary analysis in support of those points.

Antony and Cleopatra

Some responses successfully discussed a range of female characters (major and minor) in response to b), and offered an interesting variety of accounts of Cleopatra in this light. A number of those who answered c) unfortunately tended to list examples of betrayal in the play, resulting in little interesting analysis. It can be useful to ask oneself 'What does Shakespeare seem to be saying about x?' (in this case betrayal), in order to prevent that kind of mechanical response.

King Lear

Some similar pitfalls arose with c) here, as many candidates simply listed examples of injustice, however there were many well-crafted, well-informed analyses. 2 b) was most successful when candidates not only discussed but evaluated Goneril and Regan's transgression of gender roles, looking at whether they are in fact subverting or confirming the gender ideology of the period by their behaviour.

Much Ado About Nothing

Although the great majority of responses on this text were to 3 (c), attitudes to romantic love, those that did attempt b) were often more successful, largely because they concentrated on dramatic effects, as the question demanded. There were some excellent essays here, many of which combined insightful and detailed accounts of the language of Dogberry, Verges and the Watch with their comic and ironic functions, and the way they intensify the dramatic tension. 3 c) was by far the more popular choice however, and although there were many strong responses, some had clearly practised an essay on marriage and simply reproduced it in the exam, losing considerable relevance and focus in the process, as the topics are not the same.

Courtly love was often mentioned as context in 3 b) answers, but usually just in passing and without real understanding. Both Claudio's naive idealisation of Hero early in the play, and Benedick's knightly task to kill Claudio in Act 4, invite discussion of courtly love, but need a bit more precise historical knowledge of the phenomenon than tends to be seen at the moment.

Othello

Most candidates answered b) for the *Othello* essay, and it was often done well, with the best answers discussing contrasts between Desdemona's early and later presentation, between Desdemona and Emilia, and often comparing attitudes to Desdemona, Emilia and Bianca on the basis of class. However it was common for responses to cite Iago's misogynistic language as though it is representative of the norm, rather than seeing how the play distances itself from it morally in a number of ways. Answers to c) saw an interesting range of aspects of appearance and reality, sometimes in the same essay, and not just relating to Iago's duping of Othello.

The Tempest

Few responses to 5 b) were seen, although as in the *Much Ado* question b), when it was done it tended to be successful, because the question steered candidates towards the analysis of dramatic effects. Again, those who answered c) often listed examples of imprisonment, thus losing marks for AO2 analysis, and perhaps AO1 organisation, rather than asking themselves 'What does Shakespeare seem to be saying about imprisonment?'.

Key Points

- Learn quotations precisely.
- Context is double weighted. There should be a good **range** of **relevant** context points, all **well-integrated** into the analysis.
- Read the question carefully. Don't rewrite practice essays.

Section B: Modern Drama

Most centres seem to be preparing candidates well for the contextual element of Section B essays, which forms one third of the marks. As with the Shakespeare essay, there should be a good range of relevant contextual points, all well-integrated into analytical points, and there were many excellent examples of this good practice. Again as with Shakespeare, centres could encourage students to include dramatic techniques in their analyses, in order to extend the range of points and gain higher marks in AO2 (and AO1 if appropriate terms are used).

It is of course a challenge to memorise large numbers of quotations for closed-book exams, but the more precise examples a candidate has at their command, the more relevant and apt their analyses can be. Very often the same few quotes are resorted to throughout a centre, with the result that candidates often cannot respond in meaningful detail to the question task. *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* was again the most popular modern play chosen, followed by *The History Boys*, *Kindertransport*, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* and then *Translations*, respectively.

Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf

Question 7 was chosen by the majority of candidates on this text, and some very competent essays were seen, most including relevant language analysis and contextual content. There are many opportunities for analysing dramatic techniques in the play (entrances, exits, visual and auditory jokes, for example), and the pairing of characters offers fruitful structure points, although neither of these appear often in essays. More could be done to capture the wide range of meanings created in Albee's generally realistic dialogue, perhaps with conversation analysis, and especially in this play with politeness theory.

The History Boys

Candidates generally wrote well on this text, and seemed to have enjoyed studying it. Most opted for Q9, and many were able to find a range of aspects of the play that they considered 'serious issues about the society in which it is set'. Bennett's relaxed approach to historical period can be awkward when discussing context: the not-contemporary films and songs, for example, and the Headmaster's references to 'league tables', which are not quite appropriate for the 1980s since they were not brought in until 1992. Q8 gave candidates the opportunity to demonstrate thorough knowledge of the text, with a wide range of different aspects of failed ambition discussed overall. Candidates find it hard to resist citing the 'taboo language' of the play, although it is not always relevant to the question.

Translations

Almost all candidates writing on the Friel play chose Q 10, a quite general question on the conflict between the English and the Irish, and again it was generally done very well, with detailed knowledge of the play and its context being demonstrated by most. As with other plays, more could perhaps be done if conversation analysis and/or pragmatics were used as approaches, and visual and dramatic effects might be brought more to the fore, to prevent essays being 'genre neutral', as often happens. Some candidates successfully considered the structural presentation of the conflict by contrasting aspects of the beginning and end of the play, and many discussed the relationship of Maire and Yolland in relation to the conflict.

Kindertransport

Most candidates chose Q 12, and many successfully discussed mother/daughter relationships in the play, although some focus and relevance problems were encountered at times with the 'pain and passion' element of the question, suggesting that it was difficult for some to grasp the nature and intensity of the suffering represented in the play. Most were well versed in the contextual background, however, and there were some good responses. Again, there are rich pickings to be had in *Kindertransport* as far as dramatic effects are concerned, yet these are rarely discussed. A few who chose Q 13 did analyse the dramatic effects created by the Ratcatcher, and scored well in AO2 as a result.

Cat on a Hot Tin Roof

Many centres taught the Tennessee Williams play, and it was generally done quite well, with about a third of candidates choosing Q 14 and two thirds Q 15. There were some very apt discussions of dramatic effects from some centres, who are to be commended, as candidates who supported their analysis with such points scored well in AO2 and often AO1 as well. The use of props was well discussed (the bed, especially), as was the effect of the shower as an opening symbol of blocked communication between Brick and Maggie (relevant in both questions). Some centres have taught Williams' use of symbolism and expressionist techniques very appropriately, and their candidates seemed to have digested these well on the whole, so could write effectively about them.

Key Points:

- Learn a good range of quotations on a wide range of topics
- Write about dramatic effects: they are not novels!
- Consider using conversation analysis and/or pragmatics as extra frameworks for the plays
- Context is generally being taught very thoroughly

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

GCE A LEVEL

Summer 2018

COMPONENT 3: NON-LITERARY TEXTS

General comments

In Section A of this component, candidates are required to analyse three spoken texts of different purposes and genres but with a thematic link. It was encouraging to see that many candidates were able to analyse the texts with some perception, focusing on how each text conveys precise meanings, and comparing and contrasting the attitudes to education expressed by the speakers. However, many candidates are still producing rather descriptive responses which do not tackle the attitudes shown in each text and how these are created through form, structure and language use. Additionally, many are not developing their points of comparison and contrast and, as AO4 accounts for half of the marks on this section, this is significantly impacting on their overall attainment.

In Section B, candidates analyse an extract from the non-literary prose text that they have studied and then produce an essay response with a thematic link. The best responses track through the extract carefully, using an extensive range of technical terminology to make precise points about how meanings are created. They also relate these points closely to the requirements of the question. Less successful responses tend to use a restricted range of technical terms (or apply them incorrectly), leave out relevant sections of the extract and do not develop their points about meaning in sufficient depth. High-quality essay responses select a few key episodes from the text and analyse them thoroughly, also embedding relevant contextual points with confidence. On the other hand, many candidates are hindered by their lack of sufficient knowledge of the text and their inclusion of more general contextual points that are not relevant to the question.

SECTION A

This year, the linking topic was education, and candidates were expected to compare and contrast the presentation of this topic in the three unseen spoken texts. In this year's examination, two of these texts were transcripts, with one of these transcripts featuring interaction between two speakers, allowing candidates to explore issues such as how co-operation and turn-taking impact on meaning. As last year, the strongest candidates were able to cover a very wide range of features in their answers. Another characteristic feature of strong answers was that candidates consistently focused on similarities and differences in attitudes towards education. Conversely, many candidates are still producing introductory paragraphs which do nothing more than repeat the descriptor paragraphs which are printed on the examination paper before the three texts – sometime copying them word-for-word. Many are also writing very long and often repetitive introductions which make very general points about the text and include no quotations for analysis. The advice given on last year's report still applies: the most effective approach is a short and sharp introduction, identifying the purposes and key ideas of each text, before quickly moving on to closer analysis.

Text A, an extract from Malala Yousafzai's speech to the United Nations Youth Assembly, gave candidates opportunities to analyse how some key rhetorical techniques are used in order to convey the speaker's attitudes about education. It was encouraging to see many candidates correctly using rhetorical terms such as anaphora, and also investigating how the speaker uses ethos and pathos appeals to win the support of her audience. Nearly all recognised that the speaker's key message was to defend the rights of all children to access education, thereby illustrating the great value that she places upon it. A few candidates referred to Malala as male, suggesting that they had not carefully read the descriptor paragraph.

Text B was a transcribed extract involving two speakers, giving candidates the chance to explore how attitudes to education are conveyed through interaction. The best responses made precise reference both to the speakers' language choices and to how features of spontaneous interactive speech such as fillers, hesitations, repairs, turn-taking and latch-ons, contribute to meaning. Many, however, made no reference to the spoken features of the extract, treating it as a written text – for example, by referring to the speakers using sentences rather than utterances. Many of those who did address attitudes correctly concluded that the speakers were conveying nostalgia for a time in which corporal punishment was acceptable, though those who argued that Dave's non-fluency features were a result of recalling the trauma of being physically punished were perhaps on less certain ground.

Many candidates recognised that the speaker of Text C articulated her changing attitudes about education, starting with her dismissive and rather flippant remarks about school being a 'day out' to her self-realisation at the end. Several, however, did not move beyond the opening few lines of the extract so did not register that her attitudes develop significantly, often simply describing her attitude as 'negative' - a vague and over-simplified response. Others were quick to make value judgements about Leah's use of non-Standard English, sometimes describing it as 'incorrect', 'sloppy' or 'bad grammar'. As with Text B, some candidates were very adept in relating the production of meaning to the speaker's use of specific prosodic features, while others appeared confused about the differences between spoken and written texts.

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.

AO1

Characteristics of successful responses:

- A wide range of technical terminology applied accurately.
- When analysing a speech, the use of technical terms specific to rhetoric, e.g. anaphora, ethos/pathos/logos etc.
- Fluent and controlled written expression.
- Use of a formal academic register.
- A clearly structured response with a coherent line of argument.
- Made a clear distinction between written texts designed to be spoken, such as Text A, by using the term 'sentences', and spoken transcripts by using the term 'utterances'.

Areas for improvement:

- Candidates are increasingly using the term 'collective' to mean 'plural'. A collective noun describes a group of people or objects (e.g. 'a class of pupils'). The word 'pupils' is a plural noun, not collective. Equally, the pronouns 'we', 'us' and 'them' are plural, not collective.
- There was also confusion about pronouns in general, with the terms first, second and third person often being used incorrectly.
- Many candidates were uncertain about sentence moods, for example describing interrogatives as imperatives (or vice versa).
- Similarly, technical terms for word classes were often used interchangeably, with many candidates apparently having little grasp of the definitions of such basics as noun, adjective, verb and adverb.
- Basic spelling errors included: 'sentense', 'sentance', 'similie' and 'speach.' 'Caning' (which appeared in Text B) was often spelt 'canning.'
- Some responses were poorly structured, with much repetition.

Examiners are noticing an increasing use of a casual/non-academic register. Examples this year included: 'A negative vibe' and 'majorly'. The pleonasm 'pre-prepared' (or 'pre-planned') was also used by some.

AO2

Characteristics of successful responses:

- Consistent analysis of attitudes to education as revealed in the three texts.
- Relating these differing attitudes to the identity 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.
- Recognising that different attitudes to education could be displayed in the same text: particularly Leah's changing attitudes in Text C.

Areas for improvement:

- Many candidates are still using the terms 'positive' and 'negative' repeatedly. While these terms may provide a useful overview, they are too vague when discussing the detail of a text.
- The terms hyperbole/hyperbolic were also over-used. For example, when Malala states that 'the Taliban shot me on the left side of my forehead', this is not hyperbole but a statement of fact. Some candidates also appeared to believe that 'hyperbole' is a synonym for 'metaphor'.
- 'Oxymoron' was another over-used term – when they used it, candidates usually meant 'opposite' or 'contrast'.
- The terms 'audience' and 'reader' were often used interchangeably. Spoken texts – whether transcribed or not – have an 'audience', not a 'reader'. (Conversely, many referred to the 'audience' when analysing written texts in Section B.)

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.
- Examining how different genres, audiences and purposes could account for these differences in attitude.
- Including a good balance of similarities and differences.
- Clearly signposting when links are being made (Similarly, Equally, However, In contrast etc.)

Areas for improvement:

- Many candidates devoted a considerable amount of time to describing generic differences between spoken and written texts ('On the other hand, Text B is spontaneous as it includes fillers...' etc.) without referring to meanings or to attitudes to education.
- Several were quite simply 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.
- Some used the term 'juxtapose' when comparing/contrasting two texts: a juxtaposition can only occur within a text.

SECTION B

As last year, *In Cold Blood* was easily the most popular choice of text, with *Once in a House on Fire* being studied by a fair number of candidates and a small number of answers on *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius* and *Homage to Catalonia*. No responses were seen on *Skating to Antarctica*.

Whichever text they were studying, many candidates produced detailed responses to the extract, carefully tracking through to trace the development of characters and/or themes, and making a series of precise and well-argued points using terminology accurately and exploring how meanings are created. Those who scored less highly tended to spend a long time making a single point very exhaustively or repetitively, used a restricted range of terminology and/or ignored sections of the extract.

Essay technique remains an issue for many candidates. Successful responses focused on a selection of key episodes in order to illuminate a line of argument, and embedded specific context successfully. Many candidates, however, wrote vague and poorly structured responses which often only had marginal relevance to the question. These candidates also tended to have a poor grasp of context, offering contextual points that were very general or irrelevant to the question, or sometimes not including any context at all. Others simply ran out of time and produced extremely brief essay responses – often only a few lines. In some centres, it appears that candidates had learnt an essay response which they then attempted to adapt to the question, usually shown by all or most candidates in a centre using the same quotations or referring to exactly the same episodes. Such an approach is penalising as most candidates find it too difficult to make the learnt essay fit the question and end up writing answers which are largely irrelevant.

Andrea Ashworth: *Once in a House on Fire*

In the extract response, nearly all candidates were able to make meaningful points about the presentation of Terry and the ways in which Lorraine, Andrea and her sisters, and the reader respond to him. They recognised that meeting Terry represented a fresh start for Lorraine and focused on details such as his appearance and behaviour and how they create an initial impression which suggests that Terry compares favourably to Peter. Several candidates did not go beyond this positive appraisal, but many were able to see implicit meanings which contradicted these good impressions: for example, they cited phrases such as ‘lump of gold nestled behind the knuckle’ and ‘knocked out’ as foreshadowing Terry’s subsequent behaviour.

In the essay response, candidates had a wide variety of material to draw on and the most successful answers were very impressive in the breadth and depth of their reference to the text. Many candidates, however, were narrower in their focus, sometimes looking only at one of Lorraine’s relationships. The better responses contrasted these dysfunctional relationships with more benevolent ones, for example citing Andrea’s relationship with Jamie.

Jenny Diski: *Skating to Antarctica*

No responses were seen on this text.

Dave Eggers: *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius*

A small number of candidates answered on this text. Most responses saw the narrator’s fascination with the police in this extract and better answers used this as a starting-point for commenting on how Eggers uses language to suggest his attitudes to power and authority. Some saw the rhetorical question ‘Is that possible?’ as ambiguous, suggesting either that Eggers is impressed at the police’s efficiency or suspicious that a suspect could have been found so quickly.

In the essay response, several candidates were able to cite a range of valid examples, including references to authority figures other than the police, such as the teachers at Toph's school. Better answers drew some valid comparisons and contrasts in Eggers's attitudes at different points in the text.

Truman Capote: *In Cold Blood*

In the extract response, nearly all candidates were able to make meaningful responses to the ways in which the police officers conducted the interview with Perry. Most were able to see that they are dominant and in control, with many candidates exploring a variety of ways in which the officers exert this control: for example, through their extensive use of interrogatives and imperatives; the description of Duntz's physically imposing presence; and making Perry feel remorse by mentioning 'Nancy Clutter's birthday' at the end of the extract. There were some misreadings, however: some candidates attributed 'He shifted in his chair; with the tip of his tongue he wet his lips' at the start of the extract to Dewey rather than Perry, and one or two thought that Dick was present at the interview with the dialogue near the end of the extract about taking away Perry's aspirin being a discussion between Perry and Dick.

Essay responses varied widely in quality. Most responses focused heavily on Dewey but the better ones looked at the presentation of other police officers in the text, drawing some useful comparisons and contrasts. Many related the presentation of Dewey to the 'American Dream', potentially a useful contextual point, as was discussion of Capote's real-life dependence on Dewey to supply much of the background material for the book. Weaker answers often lost focus on the question, writing extensively about issues such as mental illness, homosexuality and race relations, with only tenuous links to the presentation of police officers.

George Orwell: *Homage to Catalonia*

A small number of candidates answered on this text. More successful responses were able to comment in reasonable detail on how Orwell conveys the atmosphere on board the train, with reference to some specific linguistic and literary choices, for examples the use of dynamic verbs to suggest noise and activity. Some also pointed out the contrasts between this and Barcelona, as cited at the beginning and end of the extract.

In the essay response, candidates had a wide range of examples to draw on. The best responses linked Orwell's description of journeys to his attitudes, as suggested in the quotation accompanying the question, and write quite convincingly about comparisons and contrasts. Several candidates included detailed descriptions of the political situation in Spain without relating this closely to their analysis of the text.

B(i)

Characteristics of successful responses:

- A good range of technical terminology used accurately and purposefully (AO1).
- A good balance of literary and linguistic terms, to show 'integrated study' (AO1).
- Attaches a technical term to every quotation (AO1).
- Tracks through the extract carefully, tracing changing and developing attitudes, ideas and presentation (AO2).
- A thorough approach, including points from throughout the extract (AO2).
- All points about meaning are linked back to the question (AO2).

Areas for improvement:

- As in Section A, some candidates expressed themselves too casually. Examples included: 'Guilt-tripping', 'From the get-go', 'The kinda good-cop persona', 'He finally addressed the elephant in the room' and 'Capote isn't the biggest fan of these police officers.' (AO1)
- As with Section A, there was often much confusion about pronouns, sentence moods and word classes (AO1).
- Some candidates wrote at length (and often repetitively) about very specific parts of the extract and omitted many other potentially valuable points (AO1/AO2).
- Candidates who did not track through the extract sequentially found it more difficult to recognise changes and developments in the presentation of characters, themes and attitudes (AO1/AO2).
- Similarly to Section A, many over-used the terms 'positive' and 'negative' at the expense of more precise analysis (AO2).

B(ii)

Characteristics of successful responses:

- Starting the essay with 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 (AO2)
- Referring to specific contextual factors, including social/historical and, if appropriate, relevant information about the production of the text (AO3)
- The best responses skilfully interwove specific and relevant contextual information with analysis of meanings (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 that were barely relevant, possibly reflecting a lack of sound knowledge of the text
- Candidates who attempted to adapt a learnt response were rarely successful: such answers tended to be irrelevant or to have only tenuous links with the question.
- As half the marks for this question are awarded for context, candidates self-penalised if they included no, little or irrelevant contextual material.
- Several answers were extremely brief, suggesting that some candidates have issues with timing: it is recommended that they should spend twenty-five minutes on the essay question. A few candidates did not attempt the essay question at all.
- Candidates were often hindered by poorly structured answers without a line of argument. Such answers generally consisted of very generalised points or the recounting of episodes from the text without a clear link between them.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

GCE A LEVEL

Summer 2018

COMPONENT 4: CRITICAL AND CREATIVE GENRE STUDY

General Comments

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. In reflecting on their studies, learners will then be required to produce original writing related to their chosen genre.

Section A: Genre study

Centres had taken a range of valid approaches to this part of the non-examination assessment folder. The majority of centres had given candidates access to one or two main texts with more flexibility being given in the choice of wider reading texts. Some centres had given candidates complete free choice of both genre and texts leading to an entirely independent approach to the Unit. A minority of centres had prescribed genres and texts offering their candidates limited independence in their study. All centres had selected main texts from Appendix A of the specification as required. The most popular texts for study included *The Handmaid's Tale*, 1984, *Never Let Me Go* and *The Road*. The majority of wider reading texts were appropriate for study at this level. However, a minority of candidates selected texts which did not offer sufficient challenge such as *The Hunger Games*. A minority of candidates also used texts which are examined elsewhere on the specification such as *In Cold Blood* - an approach which is prohibited. Work was seen from almost all of the genres on offer. Dystopia and Gothic were by far the most popular genres but both Identity/Outsider and Adventure were popular this year. Bibliographies included with the work were very useful and demonstrated the care and attention that candidates had given to researching their chosen genre. Many had read texts other than those analysed in their genre study and had undertaken critical reading which they engaged with effectively in their responses.

The majority of centres had offered candidates a wide range of tasks allowing for an appropriate level of independent study. This is undoubtedly best practice as a common task tended to result in genre studies with very similar content and a more limited overview of the genre being studied. Tasks on gender and power proved to be popular. Moderators also saw some very effective work on the manipulation of language in dystopian texts, the use of setting in Gothic literature and the role of the outsider in adventure narratives. Candidates who chose a narrow focus such as this tended to craft focused and perceptive responses. Some centres provided a critical quotation in the task which candidates were required to engage with when constructing their argument. This approach worked well and allowed candidates to make some perceptive observations. Candidates who responded to tasks which signposted the relevant Assessment Objectives tended to have more structured arguments.

In terms of AO1, moderators were looking for work which had an appropriate academic register and which applied a range of literary and linguistic approaches. Use of terminology was varied across the work seen. In stronger responses, candidates applied a wide range of literary and linguistic terminology with confidence and precision. Where marks were awarded in Band 5, moderators expected to see candidates engage with language on both word and sentence level. In a minority of centres, the range of terminology across the sample of work submitted was too narrow and in rare cases, was entirely absent. This heavily impacted candidates' access to both AO1 and AO2 marks as the identification of terminology should always be linked to meaning. This resulted in some generosity in the assessment of AO1, particularly in Band 4 and 5. Imprecise application of terminology or incorrect identification of terminology was evident across a minority of the work seen this year. As candidates have the opportunity to edit and draft this work, errors should be avoided and terminology should be applied with precision. For example, 'The noun 'The castle is a veritable prison...' suggests...' is an imprecise application of the term. In this instance, the noun should have been highlighted within the quotation. Stronger responses adhered closely to the Statement/Evidence/Analysis approach and applied terminology to all quotations. Arguments were generally well structured with the strongest responses including a focused introduction, clear topic sentences on paragraphs and a conclusion which effectively summarised points. Detailed exploration of a small number of key points in both the core and wider reading texts resulted in a focused response which consistently engaged with the task set. Where candidates had tried to cover a wide range of ideas, this resulted in rather undeveloped responses. In a minority of cases, introductions and conclusions were generalised and unconnected to the argument being explored. Introductions are not the place to offer a biography of the author or an overview of the genre's history. Effective introductions should, instead, be comparative and offer an overview of the argument which will be explored in the genre study.

The use of contextual detail was also varied across the work seen. The strongest responses dealt with the conventions of their chosen genre, and the typicality of their texts within it, in some detail. This was a very effective approach and allowed candidates to demonstrate the knowledge they had gained from critical and literary research. Some candidates made very little reference to the genre of their texts. As this is a genre study, candidates should explore their chosen theme or issue and its significance within the chosen genre, not just within the texts themselves. Many candidates were also able to make useful references to biographical, historical and cultural factors surrounding their texts. In less successful responses, candidates included whole paragraphs of descriptive contextual points which did not connect to their argument and were, therefore, irrelevant to the demands of this Section. There was a tendency toward generosity in the assessment of AO3 where candidates did not embed contextual detail or did not include sufficient reference for the number of marks available.

AO4 requires that candidates offer comparisons between their core and wider reading texts. In the most successful responses these links were made from the outset and interwoven through the entire genre study. Less successful responses dealt with the texts separately and made only brief reference to the wider reading which had been undertaken. These responses also tended to be characterised with general linking statements such as 'This text also uses setting to establish isolation.' with no further development of the link offered. Candidates should be encouraged to plan their genre studies comparatively in order to ensure that the wider reading illuminates the study of the core text. Text selection is crucial in this and candidates should consider the key issues they wish to explore from the core text whilst selecting their wider reading.

Key Points:

Candidates should

- apply a wide range of literary and linguistic terminology (AO1)
- ensure that terminology is applied with precision and accuracy (AO1)
- select terminology from all aspects of the framework, making comments on word, sentence and phonological levels (AO1)
- write in an appropriate academic style (AO1)
- clearly structure the argument including a focused introduction and conclusion to aid with organisation of ideas (AO1)
- establish clear links between terminology and meaning - HOW do the identified literary and linguistic features create meaning/effect (AO2)
- use the Statement/Evidence/Analysis approach to structure the analysis of key quotations (AO2)
- integrate contextual details (AO3)
- make specific reference to the conventions of the chosen genre and how the selected texts fit into that genre (AO3)
- embed contextual detail into the argument (AO3)
- ensure all contextual points are relevant to the task being addressed (AO3)
- adopt a comparative approach from the outset (AO4)
- select texts of an appropriate level of challenge for comparison (AO4)
- avoid superficial comparative comments or links which do not address the task (AO4).

Section B: Related creative writing

Candidates were required to submit one literary and one non-literary piece of writing in this section.

Nearly all of the writing pieces seen by moderators had obvious links to the genre study and it was clear that candidates were able to apply their knowledge to their own writing. Some candidates included a brief preface with their writing which explained the link. This was particularly useful when candidates were using non-literary work or when they had chosen to focus on a specific aspect of the author's style rather than mirroring the conventions of their chosen genre. Technical accuracy and the quality of written expression was generally good. In some cases, technical errors marred the quality of the work. Thorough proof reading and editing during the drafting process would allow candidates to craft more polished writing pieces.

Short stories and opening chapters were by far the most popular choices for the literary piece but a range of non-literary writing was seen by moderators. In general, the narrative pieces worked well and allowed candidates to establish a clear sense of genre. The most effective pieces were engaging with a strong sense of characterisation. A minority of candidates submitted monologues again this year. This genre can be very effective indeed and is a very valid alternative to a first person narrative. If candidates choose this form, however, they must ensure that the appropriate features for this text type are included e.g. stage directions. Literary work which is a continuation of an existing text or features existing literary characters should be avoided as it limits the originality and flair candidates need for this Section. There were some very effective non-literary pieces this year. Travel writing worked very well for candidates who had studied the travel genre or who had explored setting in their genre studies. There were also many effective speeches, TED talks and articles which explored issues linked to the candidates' arguments. Other tasks such as fact sheets and agony aunt letters were self-limiting and did not allow candidates to develop a convincing and authentic voice.

Key Points:

Candidates should

- have clear links to the knowledge gained from the genre study
- show clear awareness of genre by either conforming to or subverting conventions
- use a style which is appropriate for audience, form, genre and purpose
- produce original and engaging writing
- use language choices which reveal detailed knowledge of literary and linguistic features and their impact
- proof read work carefully to ensure a strong degree of technical accuracy, particularly in terms of punctuation of speech
- use wide ranging vocabulary
- select the best genre for their writing. For example, in some cases first person narratives would have been better as monologues
- have a clear sense of audience and purpose.

Administration

Administration on this component was greatly aided by centres' use of the Non-examination Assessment checklist. Where centres did not supply the checklist, administrative errors such as the omission of a sample list, incorrectly totalled marks, missing signatures etc. tended to occur. Annotation on the cover sheets was generally very good with the majority of centres providing a very useful overview of how final marks were arrived at. In a minority of cases annotation on the cover sheet and on the work itself was minimal or absent. As indicated on the Non-examination Assessment checklist, centres are required to provide sufficient annotation on the quality of the work being assessed.

Conclusion

Moderators saw a great deal of excellent work in this component. Successful folders included thorough comparative essays which showed a real engagement with the selected genre and engaging writing pieces which showed flair and originality. Centres should be commended on the hard work that had clearly gone into preparing candidates for this component - it was a pleasure to read the work submitted in this year's moderation process.



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