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Vocabulary, Spelling, Punctuation,  
Sentence Structure, Non-Standard English

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# Variations in aspects of writing in 16+ English examinations between 1980 and 2004:

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## Interest in standards of written English

This report describes an extension to the research published by Massey and Elliott (1996), which explored differences in written English in public examinations set in 1980, 1993 and 1994, by the inclusion of a further sample from an examination set in 2004. In 1980 the GCE examinations first introduced in 1951 were still in operation and 1993 and 1994 were, respectively, the final year the initial GCSE syllabuses introduced in 1988 were examined and the year of new examinations incorporating curricular changes reflecting the introduction of a National Curriculum for England. Hence these later years were landmarks in the evolution of what is taught and learned in our schools under the banner of English. The initial study sought to inform the debate on the longitudinal comparability of grading standards across this period by comparing features of writing produced by candidates awarded ostensibly similar grades in the different years. Whilst informative, the research could not reach definitive conclusions on this issue but it revealed substantial variations in aspects of writing reflecting changes in the curriculum and shifts in cultural values affecting how children wrote and what examiners valued. The evidence was displayed in a fashion inviting readers to apply their own value systems to questions of standards. Since 1994 social change has of course continued; arguably apace. The decade since then has seen a plethora of further policy changes introduced in an energetic political effort to drive up standards of achievement. Ten years on it seems timely to replicate the work to see if (and, if so, how) the process of change has continued. Because the 2004 evidence needs to be set in the same historical context this paper repeats many points made previously and we have borrowed freely from the earlier text where it seemed appropriate.

The original report attracted a great deal of press interest – making front page headlines in *The Times*; albeit on Easter Monday, a famously 'slow' news day. This fuelled an unusually well informed episode in the everlasting, if sporadic, debate about changing standards of literacy. For instance the *Times Educational Supplement* (TES) reported that

*'the report was interesting for the amount of precise information it produced about specific areas of language and also for its recognition that it is easy to oversimplify and that there are many different aspects of English that have competing values.'*

TES Extra English 20/9/1996

Whilst the research was – broadly speaking – well received in both academic and popular circles, there were critics. For instance correspondence in *The Times* on Friday 12 April 1996 suggested that

*'The suggestion in the study by the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (report April 8) that 'alright' is an incorrect spelling as against 'all right' is a piece of pedantry long overdue for scrapping.'*

Real issues arise here. Not everyone will agree with the criteria utilised in categorising 'errors' in written English. We readily acknowledge that some decisions in this respect are essentially arbitrary – as did Massey and Elliott's original report. Our language is not frozen but evolves continuously. At any point in time many current orthodoxies of usage will be under challenge. Nevertheless, in the interests of continuity, we have tried to remain consistent in our classifications in this extension to the research. But because language is an ever-evolving medium, one must frame the writing which forms our 'data' from 2004 in the context of its own time and we have recognised this in the course of our analyses. However, whilst spoken English can change rapidly, written English moves more slowly, and the bulk of the conventions against which we measure the sentence samples continue to be widely recognised. Likewise, although the original methodology has been extended by researchers free to select contemporary writing samples to their own designs, we have followed the same procedures as before because the data available from the now quite distant past limit the comparisons we can make.

There is no need here to rehearse the original report's account of the long term tendency for successive generations to complain that the grading standards applied in public examinations (or indeed standards of achievement in the more general sense) have declined since their day. Such speculation has continued to prosper throughout the last decade; not least because the introduction of a system of national tests in mathematics, science and English for all children in England at the ages of seven, eleven and fourteen has massively enhanced the volume of high stakes testing and, moreover, related it directly to government policy and targets. Results in these national tests have improved enormously since 1994 (DfEE, 2001 for instance) but this has not always been accepted as unquestionable evidence that government policy initiatives were bearing fruit. Press coverage following the lowering of test thresholds in 1999 suggested that standards were being eased and government found it necessary to commission an independent enquiry to confirm the probity of the testing system (Rose et al, 1999). Subsequently publication of research investigating the medium term longitudinal comparability of national test standards (notably Massey et al, 2003) generated considerable media interest (see Massey, 2005) and suggestions that government had used test results to overstate the success of their policies (Tymms, 2004), particularly in relation to performance in English at age eleven. This led to the issue of a public reprimand to the Department for Education and Science (DfES) by the Statistics Commission – a public watchdog (Statistics Commission, 2005). Assertions that standards are declining have clearly not yet gone out of fashion. What light can further investigation of aspects of examination candidates' writing shed on such matters?

It is important to consider the educational policy context as it affects our evidence.

Literacy has enjoyed a high profile since 1994 and has been promoted in schools through the introduction of a National Literacy Strategy. Research suggests it was unlikely that the 2004 GCSE cohort (the 'population' from whom our writing sample came) were fully exposed to the strategy's strictures regarding teaching. Many primary schools introduced the National Literacy Strategy from the bottom up, or at least did not implement it for this cohort (then in their final year of primary

education) in this first year of the National Literacy Strategy – 1998/9 – on the basis that it would get in the way of preparation for key stage 2 (KS2) national tests (Beverton and English, 2000). This notwithstanding, Beverton and English noted that, in contrast to previous years, grammar was being taught every day and that all teaching staff in the schools observed had a greater awareness of literacy as a subject in its own right. Frater (2000) in a report on best practice in highly performing schools noted that *'best practice is in a steady line of descent from the best practice of the past'* and that within schools with good practice the emphasis is on use of language rather than specifically on spelling and grammar. We should recognise that changes in emphasis and values such as these might contribute to improvements in teaching and learning.

KS2 English national test results (in 1999) for the 2004 16+ cohort continued the year on year improvement observed between 1996 and 2000 (57% reaching level 4 or better in 1996; 63% in 1997; 65% in 1998; 70% in 1999 and 75% in 2000 – since when they have reached a plateau). But these improved results should be treated with caution. Massey et al (2003) reported research commissioned by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) – the quasi-governmental body responsible for national tests – indicating that about half the rise in KS2 English results was false, being attributable to easing the standards applied by the tests themselves rather than improvements in achievement. This easing appeared to stem from the Reading element of the tests. Writing standards (with respect to both test calibration and to pupils' achievements) appeared to have changed little, if at all, so we have no sound evidence to suggest that this cohort's writing had improved, let alone attribute it to the introduction of the Primary Literacy Strategy.

Beverton (2003) found different levels of awareness in secondary schools in taking forward foundations laid by the NLS at primary level. She studied four secondary English departments selected within an LEA on the basis of the KS2 attainment of their intakes. Vastly differing practice was observed, ranging from one department with a highly structured approach to KS3 English which built on the primary strategy, to another with a very low level of awareness of the KS3 literacy strategy – where the head of department had grudgingly adopted some aspects under duress. If these observations are typical it is likely that candidates within our sample have received very different levels of structured literacy teaching based upon the National Literacy Strategy for secondary schools. We should also remember that this cohort entered secondary schools before the Strategy became a statutory requirement and that whilst it is unlikely to have been unaffected by changes in what schools were being asked to value it is clearly not appropriate to draw conclusions about the impact of the Strategy on the basis of examination performances at 16+ in 2004. For this we will need to wait for a few more years. However, it is likely that this cohort would be affected by changes in emphasis and values promoted via the strategy which may have influenced teaching beyond the statutory requirements.

## Our evidence from GCE in 1980 and GCSE in 1993, 1994 and 2004

### **The writing samples and their limitations**

If we wish to compare the examination work of today's candidates with those from the past there is a fundamental practical problem: archives of candidates' scripts from public examinations set more than a few years ago simply do not exist today. If they did the research design for this study might well have been much wider. Since the first 'Aspects of Writing' report (Massey and Elliott 1996) the writing sample methodology has been developed (QCA 1999) and has given rise to further studies (Myhill 1999). This redesigned the selection of writing samples to enable research to address more complex features of the writing, such as paragraphing and textual organisation. But our capacity to relate back to 1980 stems from our having taken advantage of a rather limited writing sample collected in 1980 – for a quite different purpose (see below) – and matching it with evidence from more recent years (as far as possible, given that examinations have changed substantially) and having made what comparisons these data allow. The interest of this study lies in the long time period rather than in the quality of the data or indeed the complexity of the methodology. We are acutely aware of the methodological weaknesses which restrict our capacity to reach well-founded overall judgements on the equivalence of grading standards or of overall changes in achievement in writing within successive cohorts of 16 year olds, which will be acknowledged as we discuss our analyses. Nevertheless we believe that the analyses which are feasible offer perspectives on achievement in writing which are highly relevant to any discussion of changing standards over time.

#### *1980*

Massey (1982) described aspects of the performance of candidates awarded different GCE grades in English as a contribution to the efforts to define grading standards prior to the introduction of GCSE. This work was based on a GCE Ordinary Level English Language examination set in 1980 by the Oxford Delegacy of Local Examinations and amongst other things analysed features of a sample of sentences taken from the writing of boys and girls at each GCE grade. A stratified random sample of pupils was selected so as to give 30 boys and 30 girls awarded each of the grades A–E (except grade C boys where only 29 were available). This was also drawn so that each pupil came from a different school. Their writing was then sampled, by taking the fourth sentence from each pupil's composition (Paper 1 Part 1, described later). A sentence was defined for this purpose as the writing between two consecutive full stops. Candidates awarded the higher grades made fewer spelling, punctuation and grammar errors and used a richer vocabulary but little evidence of variation in sentence length or syntactical complexity between high and low grades was detected. The writing sample formed an appendix to the report and was thus available for re-analysis in this project alongside similar samples from more recent years.

#### *1993*

An unpublished evaluation of the measurement characteristics of the MEG English 1501 (Scheme 1) examination set in June 1993 (the last year in which the pre-national curriculum GCSE syllabuses were examined) drew on a random sample of 22 schools. These were the source of data for the previous study. Again a stratified random sample of scripts was selected to give 30 boys and 30 girls for each grade A–G, from as wide a range of the schools as possible. The fourth sentence from an extended writing task (Paper 2 – Personal and Expressive Writing; the nearest equivalent to

the compositions of 1980 and described later) was taken from each script to produce a sample of writing similar to that available from 1980. However, so few Grades F and G scripts were available that additional alternate sentences were taken from some, in order to produce writing samples of 30 sentences by boys and 30 by girls for each grade.

#### 1994

An unpublished evaluation of the first examination of the MEG English (Syllabus 1510) examination, introduced in 1994 to match the national curriculum in English, was based on scripts from a random sample of 50 schools. From these a similar stratified random sample of writing was drawn; again from the examination task considered most like the compositions of 1980 (Section B of Papers 2 or 4, described later) and again maximising the number of schools 'represented' for both sexes at each grade.

#### 2004

A 2004 sample was selected for this study. As in previous years a stratified random sample was taken from a question judged to be the most similar to the 1980 question. A free, creative writing task had been a key feature of the previous samples and we felt that this was paramount for continuity. The only suitable question was found on a paper which formed an alternative to coursework; a question which asked candidates to imagine, rather than to inform, explain, describe, comment, argue or persuade – and thus provided a good match to the 1993 and 1994 papers. Coursework and this additional examination option draw different candidatures, to some extent at least as explained in the Principal Examiner's report (OCR 2004), quoted below.

*It cannot be too strongly stressed that unit 2433 is offered as a genuine alternative to coursework and hence requires very different skills. The unit is ideal for the candidate who prefers to offer first draft rather than carefully polished writing ... enjoys the challenge of responding to an unseen question on a Shakespeare text which has been thoroughly revised and fully understood .... rather than one who likes to spend considerable time exploring one question from every conceivable angle .... and has the confidence to respond to a question on any two of the many poems studied, regardless of personal preferences.... Candidates who benefit enormously from teacher guidance and support and almost unlimited time in which to research, plan, redraft, and check their work are unlikely to perform well in this examination.*

This option was taken by only 8.3% of candidates – but these amounted to over 5500 candidates from a wide range of schools. The sample is stratified by grade so the fact that this paper is a minority option should be incidental, as the calibre of a candidate achieving a particular grade should be comparable regardless of the route taken through the syllabus. Whilst the possibility that the curricular choice of schools taking the examination option might reflect systematic variations in curricular values should be considered when interpreting these data, comparison of the examination option schools providing writing samples with the GCSE English entry as a whole did not suggest that the former were unusually socially or educationally selective. The proportions of independent and selective schools as compared with comprehensives and others were the same for the sample as in the overall entry for this English specification.

The 2004 writing samples were taken from candidates from 58 schools, stratified by region. Again, at A\* and G, it was necessary to select alternative sentences to obtain 30 sentences because there were insufficient candidates at these grades.

Table 1 summarises the sources of the writing samples from each year, illustrating the way grading arrangements have changed. Table 2 shows the actual question selected to provide the sample sentences for the candidates from each cohort – in reverse chronological order.

**Table 1 : Sources of sentences forming the writing samples (total n 1679)**

	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	All
<b>1980</b>									
<i>Boys</i>		30	30	29	30	30			149
<i>Girls</i>		30	30	30	30	30			150
<b>Total</b>		<b>60</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>60</b>			<b>299</b>
<b>1993</b>									
<i>Boys</i>		30	30	30	30	30	30	30	210
<i>Girls</i>		30	30	30	30	30	30	30	210
<b>Total</b>		<b>60</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>420</b>
<b>1994</b>									
<i>Boys</i>	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	240
<i>Girls</i>	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	240
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>480</b>
<b>2004</b>									
<i>Boys</i>	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	240
<i>Girls</i>	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	240
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>480</b>



**Table 2 : Questions from which the writing samples were taken**

Year	Question
<b>2004</b> 1900 Unit 3 Paper 1/2	<p>You are advised to spend <b>no more than 45 minutes</b> on this Section.</p> <p><b>Writing to EXPLORE, IMAGINE, ENTERTAIN.</b></p> <p>This answer will be marked for writing.</p> <p>1. Copy out the sentence below, and then continue the story. In your writing, give the storyteller's impressions of TWO different characters in the room.</p> <p><b>Before I even reached the door, I could hear that the waiting room was crowded. Reluctantly I eased my way in, looking anxiously for a seat.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Spend some time thinking and making notes before writing out your answer.</li><li>• You may choose to end at any appropriate point. You do not have to write a complete story.</li><li>• Leave yourself time to check your writing.</li></ul>
<b>1994</b> 1510 Paper 2/4 Section B	<p><b>PAPER 2</b></p> <p>Attempt one task only.</p> <p>You should spend about 45 minutes on Section B.</p> <p>Write 350–500 words.</p> <p>You are now going to use what you have read about in the passages. The examiner wants to see that you have understood them, and can use your imagination to extend and develop what you have read.</p> <p><i>either</i></p> <p>3. Imagine you are one of Hetty's children. You feel guilty about your mother and decide to pay her a visit. Describe your visit from the moment you arrive in the district where she lives and begin to look for her house.</p> <p><i>or</i></p> <p>You feel very strongly about the problem of poverty in the world today. You decide to do something about it and so become a voluntary aid worker. You are sent to work among the beggars of India, in a similar situation to those you have read about. Imagine you have been there a couple of weeks.</p> <p>Write a letter home to a friend or your parents describing your experiences.</p> <hr/> <p><b>PAPER 4</b></p> <p>Attempt ONE task only.</p> <p>You should spend about 45 minutes on Section B.</p> <p>Write 350–500 words.</p> <p>You are now going to use what you have read about in the story or the poems to look at them from another viewpoint. The examiner wants to see that you have understood what you have read, and can use your imagination to extend and develop either the story or one of the poems.</p> <p><i>either</i></p> <p>3. Imagine that you are the kindly policeman in the story. Another officer has recently joined the local force and you are talking to him or her about Rosie. Write what you would tell the officer about her. Describe this particular incident and explain what you feel about her and how you would like the officer to treat her.</p> <p><i>or</i></p> <p>4. Write a story about Rosie when she was a child.</p> <p><i>or</i></p> <p>Imagine you are the writer of 'Old Man, Old Man' or 'It was right for us'. Write about your life at home when you were a child.</p> <p><i>or</i></p> <p>Write a story about a previous occasion when you visited your father.</p>

**Table 2 : Questions from which the writing samples were taken – continued**

<i>Year</i>	<i>Question</i>
<b>1993</b> 1501 Paper 2 Q. 3 or 4	Choose ONE of the following and write 350–600 words.  You are now going to use what you have read about in the poem or Edward Blishen’s description to look at them from another viewpoint. The Examiner wants to see that you have understood what you have read, and can use your imagination to extend and develop either the poem or the description. <i>either</i> 3. Imagine the dinner described in the poem was on the third night of the family’s holiday. Describe their holiday up to that moment, showing how the package had failed to live up to expectations. <i>or</i> 4. Imagine you used to be a pupil at Green Rise Secondary Modern School. Describe to a friend what it was like to live in Green Rise and go to school there.
<b>1980</b> Paper 1 Part 1	Write a composition on one of the following subjects. You should cover about two sides of the writing paper and not more than three. <i>either</i> (a) ‘Just look at that damage! Vandals should be treated more severely.’ ‘No, that’s unfair. Vandalism is the fault of our society.’ What do you think about the causes and cures of vandalism? <i>or</i> (b) Early in the evening. <i>or</i> (c) Write about any social service which you have undertaken. <i>or</i> (d) What part has luck, good or bad, played in your life? <i>or</i> (e) ‘The Challenge.’ Write a story suited to this title.

The nature of these writing samples – each a series of isolated sentences removed from their contexts – clearly restricts the comparisons possible. Consequently the analyses which follow focus mainly on features which lend themselves to quantitative evaluation (vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, sentence structure and use of Non-Standard English) whilst investigation of many vital qualitative features of writing, such as imagination, content and style, is impossible without the further evidence necessary.

We must also recognise that these writing samples may have been affected by their contextual settings. These are broader than the examination questions, specifications and mark schemes and include the nature of teaching and wider cultural influences, which are likely to have varied across the years. The next section of this report explores some of the changes in the educational setting, particularly those relating to the examinations and the curriculum.

A systematic sub-sample of the sentences from each year’s writing sample (from boys and girls in grades A, C, E and G) are displayed in table 3 as examples, so that readers can see the nature of this form of evidence for themselves.

**Table 3 : Example sentences from grades A/A\*, C, E and G**

**A/A\* Grades**

**1980**

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- Boys*
- The four men sat in silence as the Challenge sped on with the tall broad shouldered figure of the red headed Scotsman at the wheel, as he wrestled with it to keep the jeep in the right direction on the ever moving dunes, the other three men staring mindlessly into space.
  - He had always tried to join in with their schoolboy pranks, games of football and teenage parties, but they had never accepted him; instead they would make fun of him and humiliate him in front of other people.
  - But now, over the Afghanistan Crisis, it looked as though World War Three was well on its way.
- 

- Girls*
- How early darkness fell in winter.
  - After this, they are allowed to make short visits on their own.
  - At the same time, in France there was a similar situation with another High School.
- 

**1993**

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- Boys*
- "You're not going out like that, young man!"
  - We had some strange teachers!
  - Bad idea.
- 

- Girls*
- John had misbehaved on the coach to the hotel and Richard expected me to be able to control him.
  - Her dream was shattered by the yelling of her husband and she opened her eyes to see the dull grey of overhead clouds.
  - It had started alright; Mary was sure of that.
- 

**1994**

---

- Boys*
- Yes, that sounds like a good idea.
  - I would get up at eight 'o'clock in the morning, get ready for school, and go downstairs.
  - She was larger than all the others, she stood 3 inches above the tallest boy.
- 

- Girls*
- 'Now, don't be silly Rosie, its time to put your hat and coat on; I can't do that when you're rolling on the floor.'
  - This house appeared rather grim and old in comparison.
  - Other childrens' fathers would proudly show them off to their friends and read out good school reports.
- 

**2004**

---

- Boys*
- Curious smells met my nose and I brushed past two elderly men, whose dull expressions matched the hue of the hospital floor.
  - A solitary plastic chair among the masses of human bodies, all coughing and complaining.
  - As I sat down I noticed another man who looked as confused and frightened as I was.
- 

- Girls*
- My health had rapidly deteriorated over a period of about six months before that and no one had been able to find the cause, that is until I found a lump growing in my left breast.
  - Was it the anticipation of ill people being seen, waiting to resolve any health problems with an educated doctor or the silence that filled the room except for the coughs, snuffle and sneeze that could be heard as some people blew their nose.
  - They looked the unlikeliest of friends.
- 

These examples are a systematic sub-sample of the full writing sample. They are the 10th, 15th and 25th sentences in the samples from boys and girls in grade A in 1980 and 1993 and the 15th grade A\* sentence and the 10th and 25th grade A sentences in the samples from 1994 and 2004.

## C Grades

### 1980

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- Boys*
- The second kind of luck is much more likely to influence somebody's life.
  - The second time I had almost landed him, but as always he had fought off the Challenge.
  - On this, my attention was distracted by my younger brother who wanted me to show him how he should fix his cycle.
- 

- Girls*
- Just before evening the school bells ring to dismiss the millions of schoolchildren allowing them to overflow the streets.
  - If his friends are in the same position, they may all go off together without the parents even knowing, and start trouble.
  - However if she does go to work, on that particular day, I ride my bicycle down to the bus-stop in the morning so that I can get home in the evenings.

### 1993

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- Boys*
- The plane came at 11:30 am, two and a half hours late, they climbed aboard and sat down in the packed seats, the wife commented saying "I feel like sardines in a can."
  - To their disappointment and annoyance already large dark and heavy rain-clouds had covered the sky when they got out of the car.
  - We used to get into trouble more times than I could remember.
- 

- Girls*
- Everyone drifted off after dinner so they went for a little walk, as the rain had stopped.
  - Half an hour it took us to find it.
  - There had been strong gales and no aeroplanes were departing.

### 1994

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- Boys*
- She's always whairing wellingtons and a black beret and she whairs glasses with cracked lenses.
  - Due to this fact Rosie has to have thing explained to her carefully.
  - My father was sat in his old chair watching the television with his walking stick clutched in both hands.
- 

- Girls*
- My father loved his garden, if ever there was a spare minute, he would be outside doing something.
  - Mum had a couple of cleaning jobs but she either got the sack for being late or the company would close.
  - I knew this because the hands on the clock were almost in a straight line down the middle of the clock.

### 2004

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- Boys*
- People standing, sitting, but they all had one thing in common, sorrow.
  - As soon as I sat down a feeling of worry mixed with anticipation struck me.
  - Subconsciously I knew I didn't want to be there but I had no choice, I wanted to know, I needed to know.
- 

- Girls*
- She wasn't ugly, but I wished she had been.
  - "Michele cradle" they called.
  - He seemed to be blind or parshly sighted as he had one eye tightly shut and the other one squinting through huge, thick round glasses which I don't think helped him much.
- 

These examples are a systematic sub-sample of the full writing sample. They are the 10th, 15th and 25th sentences in the samples from boys and girls in grade C.

## E Grades

### 1980

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- Boys*
- In my opinion the greatest majority of vandalism occurs at football matches, where two rival teams of supporters get together and start firing slogans and abuse to one another.
  - The race was to start at 1.30 p.m.
  - This is just a minor offence to be committed within vandalising, when kids are travelling they tend to have nothing to do, so they off course get their pen out and start scribbling.
- 

- Girls*
- Rick was nicknamed, "Whizz Kid", by his friends as they said he drove hard and like a wild cat.
  - I was sipping my cool orange juice and different ideas than on a normal evening filled my head.
  - Such things as drinks and drugs.
- 

### 1993

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- Boys*
- The brick work was painted red, and a porch came out to rest on the pillars.
  - It was a small school with many children some times 35 in a class, and only 13 teacher, I funny enough use to like to get to school because at home my parents were always arguing and I use to try and seek refuge at school but sometimes I was shown a more traumatic a time at school than at home.
  - Its a mess as well rubbish every where the local council have tried to clean it up.
- 

- Girls*
- My mum keeps on telling me that I am not older enough to go out and socialize but that only because if I wanted to go out she knows that I most probably going with somebody else she doesn't know, and doesn't like me walking around the small village by myself or with just one person, just incase something happens.
  - I can remember all the horrible things about it I wished I never went there.
  - When we walked a little bit up the corridor we came to a door with the headmasters board hanging from the door.
- 

### 1994

---

- Boys*
- As I was looking I found smashed glass everywhere graffiti all over the walls, where young people have come and vandalised the place.
  - I have seen very old weak exhausted men and women who have tried to find shelter in alleys and in shop door ways beaten by gangs of drunken youths.
  - I told her to charge them as in prosecute them but, she thought I meant charge as in go and Fight back do what they do to you.
- 

- Girls*
- Well I hope you are all fine I am.
  - My work experience is not present I wish I could come home now I am feeling so ill.
  - At first we looked at each other then she asked me to come in she got the cat down from a chair and asked me to sit down.
- 

### 2004

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- Boys*
- So I started to talk with him.
  - I don't know any body here and every one keeps staring at me.
  - I heard my name being called out, I stood up to see.
- 

- Girls*
- I sat down, I could tell I could be waiting for ages.
  - We Finally found a seat by the window we sat by the window for about two hours with the overwelming heat from the sun boiling us like a lobster.
  - I passed through everyone exusing them as there was a tight squeeze.
- 

These examples are a systematic sub-sample of the full writing sample. They are the 10th, 15th and 25th sentences in the samples from boys and girls in grade E.

## G Grades

### 1993

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- Boys*
- I had about 2 days to go before I started school my mum took me shopping to get a school uniform and a bag finally the day come to go to school my mum walked me down there at about 8:45 school started at 9:00 I hoped we wouldnt get there on time but we did.
  - They got hot dogs and chips and went to there apartment.
  - I used to be a pupil at green rise secondary modern school it was great fun well mind you it's not like it now when it was then it's completly changed.
- 

- Girls*
- It has about one hundred tables and I feel like you are sitting on peoples knees I am enjoying my stay at Green rise.
  - When I went to Green Rise Secondary school I found it very pieceful and yes you had to do what you were told or else.
  - But we did enjoy doing it, it was somthink different and very misterest.
- 

### 1994

---

- Boys*
- So I get all my cares and went up the Steps I find the number to the room 1 nocked on it, this old Lady open it I said Mum show Just Look at me' Jason is it you Yes Mum it is.
  - I am not very happy with the standed of this place.
  - "And she said yes" so I said Sunday.
- 

- Girls*
- "Why dose is world put up with the thing in these congres".
  - Sometime's it make you whet to cry.
  - I am working over the beggars because It's not very nice for them living In the streets there Should be In houses like us and eat the same food as us as well.
- 

### 2004

---

- Boys*
- By now she had been shouting at the receptionist for ten minutes, she wouldn't accept that she wont be seen next.
  - Then I got up and got a drink and started dancing with two girls.
  - I apoched him and I saed do you minde I saw that seat first he sead did u now than how did I get here frist then I saed but didn't I come in the waiting room befor you and looking around the room to find a seat then I hard came in then alla a sudden yoy pust me out way that sat in seat.
- 

- Girls*
- I was only there because I had broken leg, the doctors told me to go back, so I did.
  - so i said thank you.
  - and the went to go sit down.
- 

These examples are a systematic sub-sample of the full writing sample. They are the 10th, 15th and 25th sentences in the samples from boys and girls in grade G.

## These 16+ examinations and the changing curriculum in English

The last twenty years have seen rapid change in the curriculum and assessment in England. The detailed descriptions of the examinations providing writing samples from 1980, 1993 and 1994 in Massey and Elliott (1996) illustrated the evolution of the curriculum in English over this period; including the move from the dual GCE and CSE system to the GCSE and the rise and fall of 100% coursework syllabuses between 1980 and 1994. In the following decade the format of GCSE English has remained relatively stable. Table 4 compares the four examinations documented in this report. The detailed discussion of the developments in teaching and examinations in English between 1980 and 1994 is not repeated here as the first 'Aspects of Writing' report can be consulted by those wishing to read it, but full coverage is given to the examination which was the source for the 2004 writing samples. We will however – briefly – summarise some of the main threads of development, so that readers can better appreciate the 'historical' context of writing in these examinations.

### 1980

The Oxford Delegacy of Local Examinations GCE English 01 examination consisted of two written papers. Paper 1 (1 hour 30 minutes) offered a choice of (one from) five composition titles plus the production of a short article, using information supplied, ostensibly for a school magazine. Paper 2 (1 hour 45 minutes) contained reading comprehension questions based on two passages. There was no written coursework or assessment of speaking or listening. GCE was targeted selectively, so in 1980 less able candidates would have been prepared for CSE examinations in English. This system was castigated by some for its divisiveness. In Caperton's (1989) caricature

*'While GCE people were reading Shakespeare and serious poetry, the CSE classes were stuck with what seemed relevant to their lifestyle – typically novels about underprivileged boys (yes, mostly boys) from council estates... CSE children were encouraged to be creative since being correct was the preserve of the clever, and GCE pupils were the ones who were taught to think critically and consecutively....'*

We should also note that in addition to their English Language examinations (from which the writing samples were drawn) many of 1980's candidates (especially the more able ones taking the GCE examination) would also have attempted examinations in English Literature – having been prepared for both by the same teacher within a single timetable slot allocated to English.

### 1993

The Midland Examinations Group (MEG) (1501 scheme 1) 1993 examination (introduced in 1986 and hence a representative of the initial generation of GCSE syllabuses) followed the then common model for GCSE English of a common question paper for all ability levels. This was a 'unitary' English examination, requiring 30% of the marks to be awarded for responses to literary texts, and in 1993 most candidates would not have taken a separate examination in English Literature. Paper 1 (2 hours) assessed argumentative and informative writing via three related tasks about an imaginary job application. Paper 2 (2 hours) provided two literary extracts and for their extended writing task candidates were required to choose one from four/five questions/topics on each around which to structure their responses. Coursework counted for 30% of the marks in 1501 – the minimum under the regulations of the day, which allowed coursework to account for between 30% and 100% of total marks, according to the syllabus chosen. In addition, a separate oral grade was awarded on the basis of assessments by candidates' own teachers.

Whilst the 30% option had been the most common choice in 1986, by 1993 the majority of schools had moved towards 100% coursework options for their GCSE English provision, including MEG's own English 1501 scheme 2 option. GCSE English papers were much longer than their predecessors. The MEG 1993 papers consisted of 9 A4 pages containing extensive stimulus materials and detailed questions designed to show candidates how they might be expected to respond. In 1980, GCE English had run to only 4 pages.

1994

The 1994 MEG 1510 syllabus was one of a new generation of syllabuses designed to assess the national curriculum in English in response to new criteria for GCSE English examinations introduced by the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA). The Assessment Objectives followed the national curriculum in English, through which the 1994 GCSE cohort had been prepared. They were described under four 'attainment targets' (ATs): AT1 Speaking and Listening, AT2 Reading, AT3 Writing and AT4/5 Presentation (Spelling, Handwriting and Presentation). These continued to recognise the value of experience and appreciation of a varied range of forms, topics, contexts, purposes, and audiences for language and stressed the importance of drafting and revision in the production of high quality writing. They also stipulated the need for knowledge about language and its use and emphasised the importance of Standard English, together with presentation, explicitly including spelling, layout and neatness as integral parts of all writing tasks.

Again most candidates took only the one unitary English examination, which now assessed speaking and listening within the overall grading process. The introduction of two separate 'tiers' of papers designed to differentiate (in both curricular and assessment terms) between more and less able candidates was a major and more contentious change – re-introducing ability-related curricular division redolent of GCE and CSE but with greater curricular cohesion and softer structural limitations on teaching, learning and entry policies. The 'Standard Tier' was targeted at grades C–G and the 'Higher Tier' at A–E. In 1994 about three-quarters of all candidates entered for the Higher Tier. Paper 1 (Standard) and Paper 3 (Higher) – both lasting 2 hours and concerned with non-literary and media texts – were similarly structured, albeit using quite different materials. In each case Section A presented three 'sources' and two writing tasks based on them; whilst Section B allowed a choice of one from three topics for extended writing. Papers 2 (Standard) and 4 (Higher) – again 2 hours – assessed Literature; in each case poetry and prose passages were available for study prior to the examination and repeated within it. In Section A two tasks required analysis and comparison respectively, whilst Section B offered a choice of one from three questions asking candidates to develop themes from the passages further via extended writing. The volume of question papers continued to grow. 1994 standard tier papers ran to 10 A4 pages whilst the higher tier papers required 12 pages. Coursework was restricted to the 40% of total marks now allowed by the SCAA – which had outlawed the 100% coursework option formerly taken by most schools. Speaking and Listening were assessed wholly by coursework and were required to account for 20% of total marks, with the remaining coursework split evenly between assessment of reading (10%) and writing and presentation (10%).



The Examiners' report on candidates' work (MEG, 1994) suggested that in some schools lack of familiarity with formal examinations in English had created difficulties in 1994; citing time management and identifying the focus of the questions as examples. Preparation using pre-released material had varied so that some candidates appeared to tackle such tasks unseen whilst others repeated remembered notes without establishing their relevance to the tasks set. The examiners asserted that teaching for the national curriculum had produced evidence, in both coursework and written papers, testifying to '*an increase in the amount and quality of work in the classroom on the study of language*'. However, they were in several places critical of candidates' use of language which was not appropriate for the purpose, including inappropriate use of colloquial language and, conversely, failure to employ an oral register when drafting talks. The examiners were, on balance, satisfied with standards of presentation and accuracy, including spelling and punctuation, declaring that 'a majority of examiners feel that a gradual improvement is taking place'.

2004

OCR's GCSE English 1900 specification (which replaced the English 1500 specification providing the 1994 writing samples) was first examined in June 2004 and may be viewed as representing a further step in curricular evolution, which introduced a key new feature – unitisation. This involves a modular assessment structure whereby modules may be assessed at different times/stages in a course of study and where some elements of choice might apply. As in 1994, the Assessment Objectives followed the National Curriculum in English: AO1 Speaking and Listening, AO2 Reading and AO3 Writing. Candidates took four units, through either a linear or a staged assessment route. Each candidate attempted Units 1 and 2 – both written papers – and Unit 5, Speaking and Listening, assessed by Coursework. In addition, candidates (or, in reality, their teachers) chose either a third Unit examined by written examination (Unit 3) or, as an alternative, an extended coursework portfolio assessing the same area – Literary Heritage and Imaginative Writing.

For 2004 'Standard Tier' was renamed 'Foundation Tier' and candidates of intermediate ability could select the most appropriate tier within each unit to suit their ability profile. About 65% of candidates entered for the Higher Tier compulsory units, although this may be misleading as unitised syllabuses enable candidates to attempt Foundation Tier in Y10 and then Higher Tier in Y11.

*Unit 1: Non-Fiction, Media and Information (1 hour 45 minutes)*

The Foundation Tier Section A presented two sources looking back on the achievements of Sir Edmund Hillary: a *Daily Mail* article (around 550 words) and a magazine piece (around 400 words). A short comprehension exercise on the first article was followed by an extended response looking at the feelings and motivations of people in the article. The second question asked candidates to show how the author of the magazine piece presented Sir Edmund Hillary as one of her heroes. The mark scheme for Section A explicitly instructs the marker not to mark for writing. Section B required candidates to compose their own piece – similar to the magazine article – about someone they admired and was marked for quality of writing.

The Higher Tier Section A paper followed the two sources, two responses model of the Foundation Tier. It included two articles; one about an experimental school, the other a newspaper article dealing with the issues of media derision of rising standards and pupil behaviour. The first question asked candidates to produce a detailed summary of the piece, giving some pointers as to what to

include. The second question, in a similar vein to the Foundation Tier, required candidates to consider how the author put forward his own views. Section B asked candidates to write their own article about schooling for a school magazine or newsletter describing how an ideal school would be run.

Differentiation between tiers was achieved through the complexity of the subject matter in the sources. Additionally, the Foundation Tier paper began with five marks available through short comprehension questions before the first extended response was attempted.

#### *Unit 2: Different Cultures, Analysis and Argument (1 hour 45 minutes)*

In Section A the papers for both tiers began with one question on a text or set of texts which the candidates have studied. Three texts were set and candidates had a choice of two questions for each text. All the available questions required some degree of connection and comparison to be made, either between two short stories, two characters in a novel or two different views expressed within a novel.

The Foundation Tier Section B presented candidates with a set of five statements with short explanations on the theme of 'learning from the past'. Candidates then answered two questions in which they could use either the stimulus material, their own experiences or link the two. The first question was an extended response asking candidates to write about lessons they have learnt through making mistakes. The second asked candidates to write a letter to their head teacher persuading them to make changes to improve school life.

Section B for the Higher Tier presented candidates with four statements and four related but abstract sentences on the same theme of 'learning from the past'. Candidates then answered two questions, one a comment piece asking if lessons from the past make our present lives happier, the other a persuasive piece asking candidates to argue about the value of visiting museums, castles and heritage sites. Higher Tier questions were shorter than those for Foundation Tier candidates. Some questions explicitly asked for a comparison of two texts or two elements within a text, whilst others left candidates to determine their own strategies. All questions reminded candidates to support their answer by quoting from the text.

Tasks for the two tiers were very similar and differentiation was largely effected through the complexity of the materials. The higher tier stimulus material was more abstract and the questions more open and wide ranging.

#### *Unit 3: Literary Heritage and Imaginative Writing (exam option) (1 hour 45 minutes)*

Unit 3 written papers for both tiers had two sections. Section A, writing to explore, imagine and entertain, provided candidates with two stimulus sentences and asked them to continue the story. The 2004 writing samples were taken from this. Differentiation between Foundation and Higher Tier was achieved through the mark scheme. Section B examined candidates' understanding of literature that they had studied via a question on Shakespeare and a question on a poetry collection. Foundation Tier candidates answered structured questions requiring them to explain how an idea is conveyed within a passage. Higher Tier candidates answered more open questions with 'explore' as the command word, requiring them to write on an idea or concept within a passage.

#### *Unit 4: Literary Heritage and Imaginative Writing (coursework option)*

Coursework folders had to contain a piece of imaginative writing, a piece on Shakespeare and a piece on the set poetry.

#### **Some strands of change**

In 1980 candidates' speaking and listening ability was not assessed. By 1993 oral performance was assessed, but via a separate grade rather than the oral grade counting towards their overall grade, as became the case in 1994. Both the 1994 and 2004 examinations had 20% of the marks devoted to speaking and listening. The 1994 guidelines required teachers to assess speaking and listening in a range of group and individual situations, although the number and type were unspecified. By 2004 guidance had become more proscribed and required assessments within three contexts: individual contribution, group discussion and drama.

The contribution of coursework to assessment of English at 16+ has varied considerably in the last twenty-four years. In 1980 the entire Oxford 01 GCE assessment rested on two written examination papers and teachers played no part in the assessment process. This remained the norm for assessments at GCE Ordinary Level in 1980 – although other syllabuses were becoming available which introduced elements of coursework and teacher assessment. These were more common in the CSE examinations of this era, which provided for the assessment of less able candidates. From the introduction of the GCSE examination in 1986 it became the norm for examinations in English to include a coursework element, typically counting for about 40% of the marks at this time. By 1993, although some schools continued with syllabuses including a substantial examined element, the majority had opted for syllabuses providing a 100% coursework option in English. Many teachers believed that this enabled candidates to demonstrate qualities which they could not have shown in formal examinations. However, in 1994 SCAA imposed a 40% ceiling on coursework. In the 2004 OCR 1900 specification described above, candidates had the option of taking a third written paper instead of submitting written coursework; an option taken up by a minority of schools.

The 1980 GCE examinations were not tiered but GCE O Level was part of the dual system, with the CSE examination catering for the lower ability candidates. How best to ensure that examinations provided a suitable basis for an appropriate curriculum and valid assessments tailored to the abilities of the full range of candidates at 16+ was the subject of active debate when GCSE was first mooted. In the first generation of GCSE syllabuses (MEG 1501 being one such) English was one of the few subjects where there was only a single tier of examination – with the same stimulus materials and questions being deemed suitable for all. 'Differentiation', as this issue became known, was thus effected solely by means of the variety observed in candidates' responses. In 1994 the examination regulator (SCAA) required more complex structures to be adopted, so that differences between the tasks set for standard and higher tier candidates were evident. Differentiation was achieved through the complexity of the stimulus material and by giving Standard Tier candidates more 'scaffolding' – typically sets of subheadings – to structure their answers. Higher Tier candidates analysed the material and formulated their own arguments, although they too were given some direction about the structure of their reply. Differentiation through complexity of stimulus material continued to form the basis of much of the 2004 examination, although the task from which the writing samples for this study were taken differentiated only through the mark scheme, with all candidates responding to the same question.

In 1980 syllabuses simply described, briefly, what might be taught / learned and the examination papers themselves were considered largely adequate to define what was expected of candidates. The introduction of GCSE heralded more formality in describing 'assessment objectives' in terms of the content and skills to be addressed in syllabus documentation. In 1994 the assessment objectives were tied to the statutory Attainment Targets as set out in the new National Curriculum, which in itself provided much more specific guidance for teachers. Whilst the national curriculum continues to provide a basis for GCSE syllabuses, a notable change by 2004 is the removal of a specific assessment objective covering spelling, (previously AT4/5.1) which is particularly relevant in the context of this study. This requirement has been moved into AO3 with the descriptor, 'use a range of sentence structures effectively with accurate spelling and punctuation'. Whether this has altered the emphasis given to spelling and punctuation in the classroom is not known.

It is also possible to discern a general trend of greater proscription of task, manifested at two levels. At the first, examination components (papers or units) have been given increasingly specific titles (see table 4) describing the component and giving an idea of its purposes. For example 'Non-literary and media texts' versus 'Literature' define elements in MEG's 1510 1994 examination. In OCR's 1900 2004 examination further titles had entered the structure of the syllabus: Writing to Inform, Explain, Describe; Writing to Analyse, Review, Comment; Writing to Argue, Persuade, Advise; Writing to Explore, Imagine, Entertain. This brings us to the second level, as these titles were also applied to questions within the paper, in effect as guidance (for candidates) as to the sort of writing expected. This may be seen within a more general context whereby greater consideration is increasingly given to question language in an attempt to improve the validity of the assessments. Questions have also shed some of their formality over the years, as the need to make it plain what candidates are expected to do was increasingly recognised.

Unitisation, exemplified by the OCR1900 2004 examination, added a further novel structural element. It allowed candidates (or often their schools) flexibility in both study and teaching; to mix and match tiers across units, to decide to take assessments for some units before the end of the course of study and, if they wish, to re-sit them subsequently to try to improve on their results.

### **Were these examinations (and their grading standards) typical of their era?**

The syllabuses/examinations providing the stimuli for our samples of writing were widely used by schools throughout England and were fairly typical of their times – as discussed above.

Research evidence exists from two of the four years to suggest that the examinations concerned set standards consistent with those applied to 16+ candidates on a national basis. A review of the content and standards of writing in the 1978 English Language examinations of all the GCE boards (Massey, 1979), suggested that the Oxford Syllabus 01's examination papers and grading standards were indeed typical of their era. It is also likely that the standards set by MEG's examiners were reasonably typical of those in other examining groups in 1994. A study of inter-group comparability in the 1994 GCSE examination included MEG English 1510 (Gray, 1995). This suggested that whilst MEG may have set rather demanding questions, candidates' work was broadly equivalent to that from other GCSE groups at the grade C/D borderline – although there were hints of severity at grade A and lenity at F.

The absence of similar evidence relating to 1993 and 2004 should not be taken to suggest that the standards set in the examinations providing writing samples in these years were not typical. Such studies are not carried out annually and are indeed very much the exception rather than the norm.

For reference purposes, the examination papers for 1980, 1993 and 1994 described above were reproduced in full in Massey and Elliott (1996). The 2004 examination papers are provided as an appendix to this report.

**Table 4 : The examinations of 1980, 1993, 1994 and 2004 compared**

	<i>Description</i>	<i>Weight</i>	<i>Length</i>	<i>Stimulus material</i>
<b>1980</b>				
Paper 1*	Creative and Informative Writing (not an official title)	50%	1hr 30	Composition – single sentence Article – 120 words
Paper 2	Comprehension paper (not an official title)	50%	1hr 45	Article – 500–600 words Literary extract – 800 words
<b>1993</b>				
Paper 1	Argumentative and Informative Writing	35%	2hrs	Five source documents – between 100 and 350 words
Paper 2*	Personal and Expressive Writing	35%	2hrs	Poem – 175 words Literary extract – 800 words Composition – Two sentences
Coursework		30%	n/a	
<b>1994</b>				
Paper 1	Non-Literary and Media Texts (Standard Tier)	(30%)	2hrs	Letter – 350 words Article – 550 words Graph
Paper 2*	Literature (Standard Tier)	[30%]	2hrs	Literary extract – 1200 words Poem – 150 words Literary extract – 650 words
Paper 3	Non-Literary and Media Texts (Higher Tier)	(30%)	2hrs	Article – 500 words Article – 1300 words
Paper 4*	Literature (Higher Tier)	[30%]	2hrs	Literary extract – 2000 words Poem – 200 words Poem – 300 words
Coursework	Speaking & Listening	20%	n/a	
	Reading	10%	n/a	
	Writing & Presentation	10%	n/a	
<b>2004</b>				
Unit 1	Non-Fiction, Media and Information	30%	1hr 45	Foundation – two articles, 400 and 550 words Higher – two articles, 550 and 800 words
Unit 2	Different Cultures, Analysis and Argument	30%	1hr 45	Specified extracts from set texts – texts available during exams
Unit 3* Examination option	Literary Heritage and Imaginative Writing	(20%)	1hr 45	Composition – Two sentence Specified extracts from set texts – texts available during exams
Unit 4 Coursework option	Literary Heritage and Imaginative Writing	(20%)	n/a	
Unit 5 Coursework	Speaking and Listening	20%	n/a	

\* Papers from which a writing sample was taken.

## Empirical comparisons

### Preamble

In all comparisons, including those relating to grading standards, it is best to compare like with like in so far as it is possible and to consider if it is reasonable to expect similarity given the circumstances and nature of the comparisons made. In this case, as in most other investigations of comparability and educational standards, this is not necessarily as straightforward as it might seem. For instance, the curricular contexts from which these writing samples were drawn, as described above, may not always lead to the view that it would be fair to expect sets of candidates awarded equivalent grades from these three years to write in a similar fashion, or even (in whatever sense) equally well.

Moreover, even the equivalence of some of the grades across the years is disputable. Is it entirely fair to compare those awarded GCSE grades D and E in 1993 and 1994 with those awarded similar GCE grades in 1980, when the CSE examination would have provided an alternative curricular route for many pupils in this ability range? Note also the effects of introducing the A\* grade in 1994, thus sub-dividing the A grade. Separate A and A\* samples for 1994 were drawn in the belief that the distinction would be of interest, but to be strictly fair comparisons with previous years would need to amalgamate them (weighted appropriately to reflect the pupils gaining each). Note too that because the 1980 writing sample was taken from a GCE examination, there were no materials from CSE examinations available which would be required to represent grades equivalent to GCSE's F and G.

But in the first instance we will put such matters aside and simply compare the writing samples as though all things were equal, to see if we can detect any overall differences in the writing of pupils awarded ostensibly equivalent grades in different years. Whether or not the null hypothesis implicit in this is reasonable will be discussed at a later stage.

The extensive analyses which follow are fairly straightforward. Statistical significance tests are again deliberately abjured. As before this is partly due to technical reservations (about equivalence of some grades in different years as described above, the nature of the data – often the incidence or proportion of errors/attributes identified in the sets of sentences from each grade/year – and the large numbers of comparison being made). But mainly it is because it seems preferable to display (and summarise) as much of the data as possible and allow readers to decide for themselves if they are convinced by it. Where trends in differences between years are consistent across (the series of small writing samples 'representing') a range of grades they speak for themselves.

### Sentence length

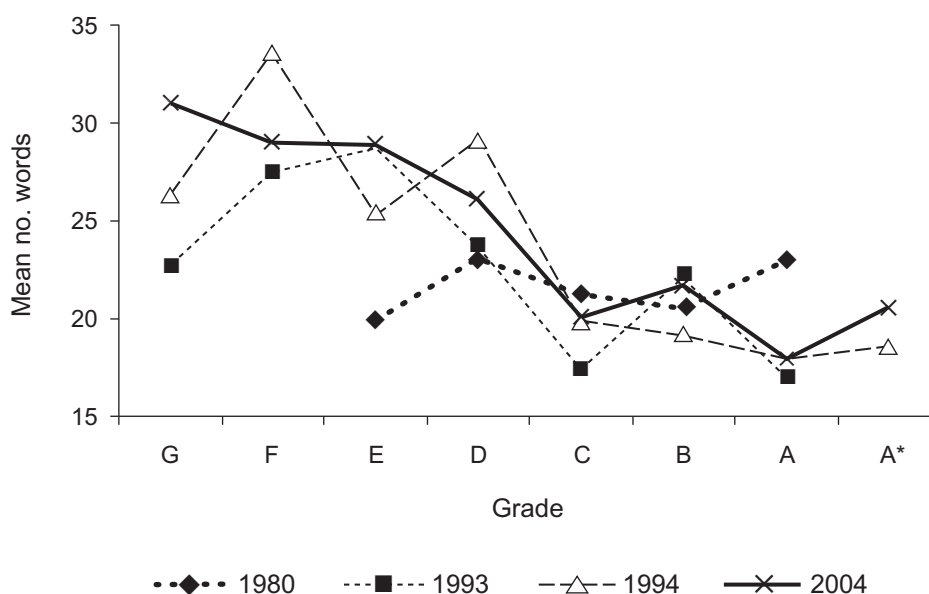
Counts of the length of the writing samples from 1980, 1993 and 1994 were made by a research assistant, who obtained initial estimates from word processing software and checked and corrected these clerically. Counts included both the number of words per sentence and the total number of characters involved so that average word length could also be estimated. For the 2004 writing sample equivalent counts were obtained following the same methods as had been used previously. Table 5 shows the average number of words per sentence and the average number of letters per word for male and female candidates by grade and year.

**Table 5 : Average word length (letters per word) and sentence length (words per sentence)**

	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
<b>Boys</b>								
1980		4.5 24.9	4.3 20.5	4.3 22.3	4.4 22.1	4.2 19.7		
1993		4.1 15.0	4.5 19.7	4.2 17.5	3.9 23.7	4.0 33.0	3.8 27.8	3.8 27.8
1994	4.3 18.0	4.2 19.3	4.1 19.5	4.1 19.3	3.9 33.7	3.9 31.2	3.7 37.7	3.5 30.4
2004	4.9 21.1	4.3 20.9	4.1 23.7	4.3 18.0	3.9 32.5	3.6 25.7	3.7 26.3	3.6 38.5
<b>Girls</b>								
1980		4.2 20.8	4.3 20.3	4.1 19.8	4.0 23.8	4.1 20.0		
1993		4.1 18.8	4.3 24.7	4.2 17.1	4.0 23.8	4.0 24.3	3.9 27.0	3.8 17.5
1994	4.1 19.1	4.3 16.5	4.0 18.9	4.0 20.2	3.9 24.5	3.8 19.5	3.7 30.0	3.8 30.0
2004	4.4 18.1	4.6 15.2	4.1 19.7	4.1 22.3	4.1 19.7	4.0 32.1	3.7 31.7	3.9 23.5
<b>All</b>								
1980		4.4 22.9	4.3 20.4	4.2 21.1	4.2 23.0	4.2 19.9		
1993		4.1 16.9	4.4 22.2	4.2 17.3	4.0 23.8	4.0 28.7	3.9 27.4	3.8 22.7
1994	4.2 18.6	4.2 17.9	4.1 19.2	4.0 19.8	3.9 29.1	3.9 25.4	3.7 33.6	3.6 26.3
2004	4.5 20.63	4.4 18.0	4.1 21.7	4.2 20.1	4.0 26.1	3.9 28.9	3.7 29.0	3.7 31.0



Figure 1 Average sentence length



The weaker (below C) 1993 and 1994 GCSE candidates wrote markedly longer sentences, on average, than abler ones, most especially in 1994, as figure 1 illustrates. A glance at the writing samples will suffice to show that this is a result of the inability of some candidates to put full stops where required. The 1980 GCE sample shows most consistency in sentence length across the range of grades – only A–E in this case. Within this range, while weaker 1980 GCE candidates wrote shorter sentences than their grade mates from the nineties, abler candidates (C+) produced relatively long sentences. In general sentence length appears to have changed little in the decade since 1994.

Average sentence length in the 2004 sample is for the most part similar, grade by grade, to those for the nineties, with the plot sitting within or close to the envelope bounded by the 1993 and 1994 lines at most grades except at the extremes. At both G and A\* the 2004 average sentence length is noticeably higher than both figures from the previous decade. At A\* this might be interpreted more positively, with longer sentences suggesting more complex writing by abler candidates, although deeper analysis is required to establish this. But for the weak writers awarded grade G, longer in no sense means better, as further analyses explaining variations in sentence length will show.

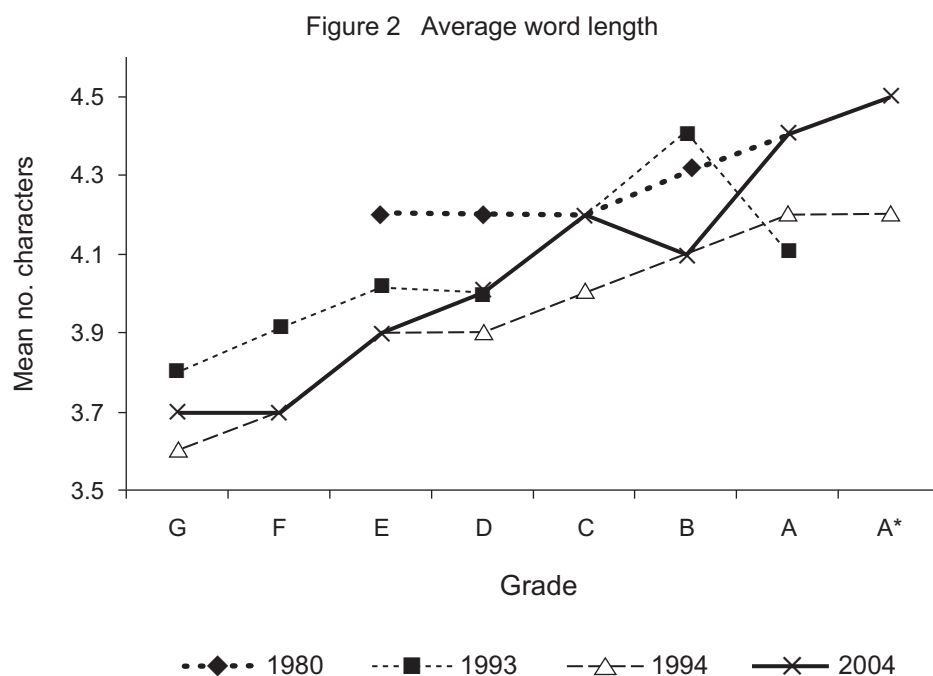
In 1980 the variations between genders in respect of sentence length were small and inconsistent. In 1993 and 1994 very long sentences produced by a few of the boys accounted for much of the overall difference between these years and 1980. The data from 2004 are in keeping with those from the nineties in this respect too.

### Word length

Table 5 and Figure 2 show that in general, candidates awarded higher grades tended to use longer words. This holds across all four years investigated. Grade for grade the candidates from 1980 tended to display higher average word length. The 2004 writing samples for each grade appear similar to those from 1993 and 1994, with the 2004 plot again falling within the envelope defined by the plots from the 1990s – except for the ablest candidates, where average word length for the 2004 grade A writing sample matches that for the 1980 sample and the 2004 A\* sample achieves an average not seen previously.

Gender differences lack consistency. Average word length for boys exceeded that for girls in four of the five 1980 GCE grades, but this pattern did not recur in 1993, 1994 or 2004. However, explanations for the variations observed will be revealed by exploration of further aspects of these writing samples.

## Vocabulary



To estimate variations in the vocabulary ranges the research assistant classified each word according to the Cambridge English Lexicon (Hindmarsh, 1980). This is based on the lexicographic and pedagogical literature relating to word frequency counts, as moderated by a teacher's discretion.

It consists of approximately 4,500 lexical items, each of which is graded on a seven point scale according to their frequency of use. Level 1 contains the most frequently used 598 words; level 2 the next commonest 617 words; level 3 has 992 words; level 4 1034 words and level 5 has 1229 words. Cumulatively, level 5 is said to correspond to the everyday language forming the comprehension vocabulary of competent learners of English as a foreign language. The Lexicon attempts to list all lexical items up to level 5 only. Points 6 and 7 on the scale represent later stages in the development of a passive vocabulary and are used in the Lexicon to classify alternative and less common meanings. The earlier analysis of 1980 candidates' vocabulary suggested that the

Lexicon's scale provided an effective means of comparing the active vocabularies of the native speakers entering 16+ examinations, as a high proportion of the words used fell within the range of levels 1–5. Accordingly each word in the writing samples was classified into levels 1–4; level 5; or level 6 or above. Words which did not appear in the lexicon were counted as level 6, since the previous levels are fully inclusive.

Table 6 gives the percentages of words in each of these categories for boys and girls awarded each grade in each year. As would be expected the great majority of words used by candidates at all grades were within the lower category used here (4 or below on the Cambridge Lexicon's scale). In 1980 (most emphatically), 1993 and 1994 small but consistent sex differences tended to favour boys – in the sense that their sentences tended to include a slightly higher percentage of words from the higher lexical categories than girls, grade by grade. But this did not hold for 2004, where marginally greater use was made of higher level vocabulary by girls in grades A\* to B, with no very obvious gender pattern in writing samples from grades below this.

**Table 6: Vocabulary – % of words at each lexical level**

	A		B		C		D		E		F		G		A-E										
	<=4	>=6	<=4	>=6	<=4	>=6	<=4	>=6	<=4	>=6	<=4	>=6	<=4	>=6	<=4	>=6									
<b>Boys</b>																									
1980	88.8	3.0	8.2	88.4	3.8	7.8	92.0	2.2	5.8	89.8	3.4	6.8	90.2	3.1	6.7	89.8	3.1	7.1							
1993	93.2	1.4	5.4	91.0	2.7	6.3	93.9	1.2	4.9	95.0	0.7	4.2	95.1	0.9	4.0	96.8	1.4	1.8	98.0	0.5	1.5	93.9	1.3	4.8	
1994	92.2	1.9	5.9	95.4	1.8	2.8	92.8	2.6	4.6	94.8	1.4	3.8	95.6	2.1	2.3	97.6	1.4	1.0	98.3	0.5	1.2	95.3	1.7	3.0	
2004	85.1	5.3	9.5	87.6	5.3	7.2	88.6	5.6	5.8	89.6	4.7	5.8	94.4	2.9	2.7	92.5	2.6	2.8	94.4	3.1	2.5	90.4	4.5	5.2	
<b>Girls</b>																									
1980	92.1	1.9	6.0	93.8	1.8	4.4	89.0	5.0	6.0	93.8	1.8	4.4	93.2	2.1	4.7	92.4	2.5	5.1							
1993	93.9	1.6	4.4	92.1	2.4	5.5	92.5	1.8	5.7	96.6	0.6	2.8	95.6	1.1	3.3	96.2	1.5	2.3	96.0	2.0	2.0	94.2	1.5	4.3	
1994	93.5	2.9	3.6	94.6	1.8	3.6	97.0	1.4	1.6	97.5	0.7	1.8	96.6	1.9	1.5	97.8	0.9	1.3	97.8	1.8	0.4	96.2	1.5	2.3	
2004	84.6	5.9	9.6	87.0	5.5	7.5	88.1	5.4	6.4	91.6	4.4	4.1	93.6	4.1	2.2	93.6	4.1	2.2	96.1	2.3	1.6	91.1	4.4	4.4	
<b>All</b>																									
1980	90.3	2.5	7.2	91.1	2.8	6.1	90.6	3.5	5.9	91.8	2.6	5.6	91.7	2.6	5.7	91.1	2.8	6.1							
1993	93.6	1.5	4.9	91.6	2.6	5.8	93.2	1.5	5.3	95.8	0.7	3.5	95.3	1.0	3.7	96.6	1.4	2.0	97.2	1.1	1.7	94.1	1.4	4.5	
1994	92.9	2.4	4.7	95.2	1.9	2.9	93.7	2.2	4.1	97.0	0.9	2.1	96.0	2.0	2.0	97.7	1.2	1.1	98.1	1.0	0.9	95.7	1.6	2.6	
2004	84.9	5.6	9.6	87.3	5.4	7.4	88.4	5.5	6.1	90.6	4.6	5.0	94.0	3.5	2.5	93.1	3.4	2.5	95.3	2.7	2.1	90.8	4.5	4.8	

Figure 3 Vocabulary - % of words at lexical grade 5 or higher

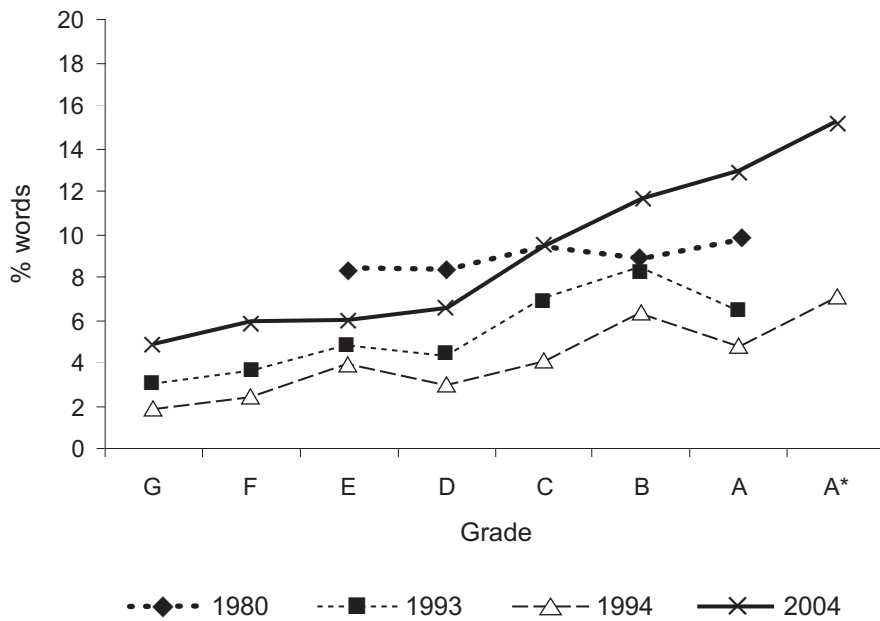


Figure 3 illustrates trends in vocabulary, grade by grade, between years, showing the percentage of words used by pupils at each grade which are at or above lexical grade 5. In all four years investigated writing by those awarded successively higher grades tend to use a relatively extensive vocabulary. This pattern (revealed by the extent of the slope of the lines in figure 3) was least strong in 1980, where vocabulary levels are fairly similar across the grades (A–E only in this case). The 1980 writing samples do however display a noticeably wider vocabulary, grade by grade, than either the 1993 or, worse still, the 1994 samples. Interestingly, the 2004 writing sample does not conform to the pattern set in 1993 and 1994 in this respect. Writing by 2004 candidates displays use of a wider vocabulary than was evident in writing by candidates awarded similar grades in 1993 or 1994. Moreover, vocabulary use gets noticeably more adventurous for candidates awarded higher grades, as the 2004 line's relatively steep slope indicates. This is such that, although the vocabulary use of 2004 candidates awarded grades D and E does not quite match those displayed by those awarded equivalent GCE grades in 1980, the vocabulary levels displayed in 2004 match those for 1980 GCE at grade C and exceed them at grades A and B.

A limitation to lexical analysis commented on by Massey and Elliott (1996) was that it takes no account of whether or not words are used correctly. Their subjective impression was that candidates awarded higher grades in any given year (1980, 1993 or 1994)

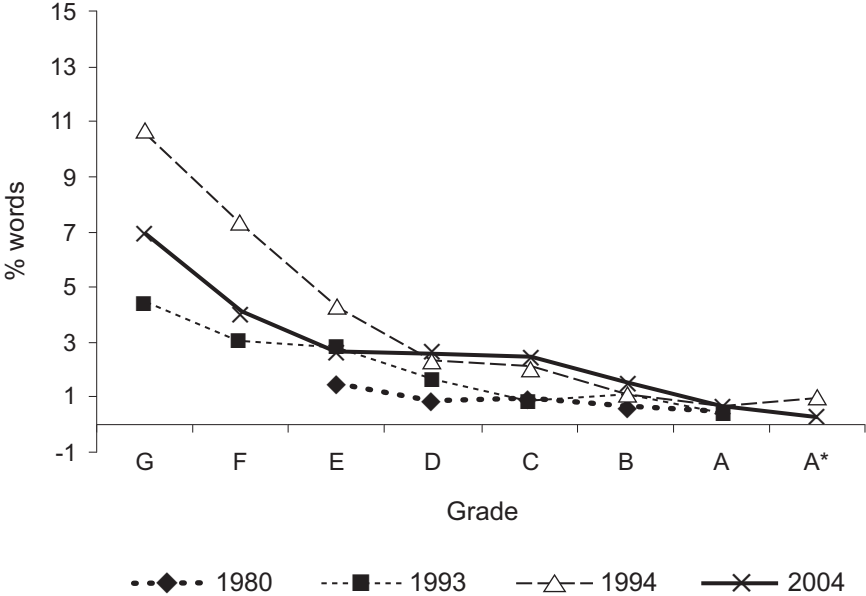
*'were more likely to use their vocabulary appropriately and that this problem did not affect the comparison between grades.... Note also that ...the lexical analysis closely matches the data for word length, as might be expected, but shows less overlap between grades and years'.*

Our, again subjective, impression is that we are rather less confident of the capacity of 2004's highly graded candidates to use their vocabulary appropriately. A fragment from the second sentence by an A/A\* girl displayed in Table 3 illustrates such uncertainties in usage – e.g. '...waiting to resolve any health problems with an educated doctor...'. But whilst some of 2004's candidates might have over-reached themselves, the contrast with the tendency for vocabulary to become weaker in the 1990s has without doubt been reversed.

**Spelling**

The writing samples were scrutinised to detect incorrect spelling using both computerised spellchecking and clerical checks. Table 7 shows the number of spelling errors for male and female candidates awarded each grade in each year. It distinguishes between straightforward misspellings and homophone errors (correctly spelled words with a different meaning but which sound alike e.g 'there' for 'their') and also gives the percentage of errors, to assist fair comparisons between groups with longer or shorter sentences. Table 8 lists all the spelling errors encountered, year by year, providing a reference list which might be of considerable interest to teachers and also serving as a powerful visual representation of the variations in spelling quality across the years being compared. Figure 4 plots the overall percentage of spelling mistakes at each grade for 1980, 1993, 1994 and 2004, providing a graphical summary of these data.

Figure 4 Percentage of spelling mistakes



It is readily apparent that, grade by grade, 1980 GCE candidates made the fewest spelling mistakes. In the A to C grade range 1993's GCSE candidates performed almost as well as 1980 candidates in this respect, but candidates in lower grades performed comparatively poorly, with 1993 grade E candidates displaying twice as many spelling errors as their 1980 counterparts. But spelling was worse still in the 1994 writing sample. In the upper grade range (from A to E) the 1994 writing sample had about three times more errors than 1980 GCE candidates and in grades F and G the number of spelling mistakes swelled to more than twice those observed in equivalent grades in 1980.

Taking the indisputable superiority of 1980 GCE candidates in this respect as read, Massey and Elliott (1996) noted that 1994 coincided with the abolition of the 100% coursework route to GCSE English formerly taken by the majority of schools and speculated that the difference in spelling between the 1993 writing sample (from the minority of schools continuing to choose a syllabus with only 40% of the marks allocated to coursework) and the 1994 sample (from a specification with an entry including a host of formerly 100% coursework schools) might reflect differences in curricular values harking back to the previous dominant curricular regime. Might the schools which had formerly opted for 100% coursework have placed less emphasis on correct spelling? No other explanations were forthcoming for the huge and sobering increase in spelling errors noted in the 1994 writing sample.

What then of 2004? For the higher grades (A\* to D) the proportion of spelling errors is in general much the same as was observed in the 1994 writing sample. Thus for abler 16+ examination candidates the rot in spelling appears to have stopped. Better still, in the lower ability range (E to G), where the 1994 sample had appeared so much worse than their grade equivalents in 1993, the data for 2004 suggest a substantial recovery. The incidence of spelling mistakes falls substantially by comparison with 1994, matching the levels observed in the 1993 sample at grade E, approaching this at F and moving substantially in the right direction at grade G.

Interestingly, spelling by 2004 boys does not seem any more error-prone than that of 2004 girls – a departure from previous decades, where girls have consistently, and in some cases considerably, outperformed the boys.

It would be inhuman not to take a prurient interest in the nature of the mistakes themselves. Only two instances of spelling errors arising from the recent proliferation of telephone 'texting' were identified amongst the entire 2004 sample; one being 'thanx' and the other 'u' (for 'you'). In some respects this was surprising – it would not have been unexpected to see a greater number of such errors, particularly amongst the lower graded candidates – given the prominence of this form of communication amongst today's adolescents. It is quite heartening to see that for the most part candidates seem to understand that there is no place for it in their English examination.

Two common spelling mistakes in the 2004 writing sample are noteworthy. The use of 'were' for 'where' and vice versa occurred with a certain amount of regularity in the lower grades in 1993 and 1994, with one instance at each of D, F and G in 1994, and two instances at F and three at G in 1993. In 2004 this particular error has spread to grade C and occurs nine times overall. Another common error is the use of 'women' for 'woman' (the reciprocal form 'woman' for 'women' was not encountered) which occurs ten times in total in 2004, and appears at every grade from B–G. This was only encountered twice before – both in 1994; once at C and once at F.

**Table 7 : Spelling errors – misspellings and homophone errors**

		1980			1993			1994			2004		
		<i>M</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>All</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>All</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>All</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>All</i>
<b>A*</b>	<i>n misspellings</i>							8	2	10	3	2	5
	<i>n homophones</i>							0	0	0	0	0	0
	<i>n total</i>							8	2	10	3	2	5
	<b>Percentage</b>							<b>1.5</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>0.4</b>	<b>0.4</b>	<b>0.4</b>
<b>A</b>	<i>n misspellings</i>	4	0	4	1	1	2	3	2	5	4	2	6
	<i>n homophones</i>	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1
	<i>n total</i>	4	1	5	1	2	3	3	3	6	5	2	7
	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>0.2</b>	<b>0.4</b>	<b>0.2</b>	<b>0.4</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>0.6</b>	<b>0.6</b>	<b>0.8</b>	<b>0.4</b>	<b>0.6</b>
<b>B</b>	<i>n misspellings</i>	5	1	6	5	5	10	6	5	11	3	11	14
	<i>n homophones</i>	0	1	1	2	1	3	1	0	1	0	4	4
	<i>n total</i>	5	2	7	7	6	13	7	5	12	3	15	18
	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>0.8</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>0.6</b>	<b>1.2</b>	<b>0.8</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>1.2</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>0.4</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>1.4</b>
<b>C</b>	<i>n misspellings</i>	7	2	9	4	3	7	15	9	24	14	13	27
	<i>n homophones</i>	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	2	2
	<i>n total</i>	8	2	10	5	3	8	15	10	25	14	15	29
	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>1.2</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>0.8</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>0.6</b>	<b>0.8</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>2.1</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>2.4</b>
<b>D</b>	<i>n misspellings</i>	7	4	11	8	11	19	24	11	35	24	11	35
	<i>n homophones</i>	0	1	1	0	2	2	1	4	5	2	3	5
	<i>n total</i>	7	5	12	8	13	21	25	15	40	26	14	40
	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>0.8</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>2.6</b>
<b>E</b>	<i>n misspellings</i>	8	6	14	22	13	35	41	18	59	17	21	38
	<i>n homophones</i>	2	0	2	6	7	13	6	1	7	4	3	7
	<i>n total</i>	10	6	16	28	20	48	47	19	66	21	24	45
	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>2.6</b>
<b>F</b>	<i>n misspellings</i>				26	19	45	95	45	140	31	28	59
	<i>n homophones</i>				5	7	12	7	1	8	4	7	11
	<i>n total</i>				31	26	57	102	46	148	35	35	70
	<b>Percentage</b>				<b>2.7</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>9.0</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>7.3</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>4.0</b>
<b>G</b>	<i>n misspellings</i>				18	20	38	86	64	150	87	34	121
	<i>n homophones</i>				14	7	21	12	5	17	3	7	10
	<i>n total</i>				32	27	59	98	69	167	90	41	131
	<b>Percentage</b>				<b>3.8</b>	<b>5.3</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>10.7</b>	<b>10.4</b>	<b>10.6</b>	<b>7.8</b>	<b>5.8</b>	<b>7.0</b>
<b>A–E</b>	<i>n misspellings</i>	31	13	44	40	33	73	89	45	134	62	58	120
	<i>n homophones</i>	3	3	6	9	11	20	8	7	15	7	12	9
	<i>n total</i>	34	16	50	49	44	93	97	52	149	69	70	139
	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>0.8</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>1.9</b>



**Table 8 : Incorrect spellings observed**

	1980	1993	1994	2004
<b>A*</b>			abundance (abundance) lantern (lantern) tress (trees) clamed (calmed) seargent (sergeant) wan't (wasn't) figidity (fidgety) slience (silence) hopskotch (hopsotch) studid (stupid)	aclimatised (acclimatised) asortment (assortment) embarassment (embarrassment) practicle (practical) suprisingly (surprisingly)
<b>A</b>	boistorous (boisterous) imaginery (imaginary) shear (sheer) tarmaced (tarmacked) tendancies (tendencies)	accomodation (accommodation) dissapointment (disappointment) their (there)	alright (all right) their (there) inchs (inches) metally (mentally) sanctury (sanctuary) setee (settee)	comotion (commotion) inevitably (inevitably) of (off) plasic (plastic) unaturaly (unnaturally) unoccupied (unoccupied) whos (whose)
<b>B</b>	benneath (beneath) chaeous (chaos) inquired (inquired) occaision (occasion) phenomina (phenomena) stepted (stepped) wringing (ringing)	aloud (allowed) apollogetic (apologetic) assembly (assembly) coctall (cocktail) dae (dare) dissapointment (disappointment) mared (marred) overun (overrun) scrufily (scruffily) sneek (sneak) to (too) x 2 uncontrolably (uncontrollably) virtually (virtually)	apreciation (appreciation) believe (believe) dispursed (dispersed) dissapointment (disappointment) eaat (ate) innosence (innocence) of (off) patients (patience) seperately (separately) sourse (source) suddenely (suddenly) tounge (tongue)	alot (a lot) alright (all right) assiting (assisting) attempted (attempted) deap (deep) edge (edge) egere (eager) examaning (examining) feminin (feminine) finaly (finally) funnyly (funnily) greatful (grateful) harrassed (harassed) imediately (immediately) minuets (minutes) on (one) past (passed) presumably (presumably) registd (registered) scowered (scoured) skatebord (skateboard) ther (there) women (woman)
<b>C</b>	adolecents (adolescents) challenge (challenge) dazerling (dazzling) farfill (fulfil) farfilled (fulfilled) freind (friend) graffitti (graffiti) meters (metres) severly (severely) whitness (whiteness)	assembly (assembly) bumbper (bumper) dissapointment (disappointment) everywere (everywhere) experienced (experienced) finaly (finally) gails (gales) Hawian (Hawaiian)	adolent (adolescent) agrovatated (aggravated) allways (always) blinked (blinkered) breifing (briefing) bullys (bullies) enoght (enough) faught (fought) have (half) he (her) his (him) i (it) offensivly (offensively) out (it) outta (ought to) peacefull (peaceful) pek (speak) shock (shook) stubben (stubborn) to (too) tourchered (tortured) vigourously (vigorously) whairing (wearing) weathers (whether) women (woman)	costrophobic (claustrophobic) devestating (devastating) diden't (didn't) disrupte (disrupt) easily (easily) ever (every) gentelman (gentleman) grove (groove) layed (laid) minuites (minutes) newspaper (newspaper) pachy (patchy) panicy (panicky) parshly (partially) quiettly (quietly) quiot (quiet) re-esuring (reassuring) secutary (secretary) siting (sitting) stifly (stiffly) subconsciously (subconsciously) suficate (suffocate) survay (survey) tanoy (tannoy) their (there) untill (until) x 2 where (were) women (woman)

**Table 8 : Incorrect spellings observed – continued**

	1980	1993	1994	2004
<b>D</b>	alright (all right) attension (attention) behaved (behaved) freind (friend) mischive (mischief) opportunaty (opportunity) preasent (present) prehaps (perhaps) privilages (privileges) progremms (programs) relativley (relatively) to (too)	affraid (afraid) alright (all right) x 3 apologize (apologise) x 2 arithmatic (arithmetic) arived (arrived) creat (Crete) dosile (docile) excetement (excitement) finaly (finally) murmered (murmured) normaly (normally) of (off) regestra (register) restarant (restaurant) sinys(?) sneek (sneak) waitor (waiter) where (were)	accross (across) x 2 allways (always) alright (all right) behaviour (behaviour) buisness (business) closly (closely) conjests (congests) contageous (contagious) couping (coping) difficultys (difficulties) draged (dragged) finaly (finally) he (her) helplessley (helplessly) horrieible (horrible) hostpital (hospital) is (it) ladle (lady) lake (take) leased (least) liveing (living) murning (morning) noone (no one) officialy (officially) on (are) opend (opened) or (on) oxygn (oxygen) piece (piece) properely (properly) roeroach (reproach) senial (senile) sewerage (sewage) storted (started) their (there) there (their) to (too) where (were) witch (which)	alls (all) behide (behind) blacks (blackouts) canures (cancerous) closeing (closing) consious (conscious) definatly (definitely) enviroment (environment) formiler (familiar) gourgues (gorgeous) he (her) highley (highly) hopeing (hoping) hospitel (hospital) imaging (imagining) x 2 minuet (minute) new (knew) nieve (naive) openned (opened) partening (parting) piecefully (peacefully) plesant (pleasant) popped (popped) slightley (slightly) stiped (striped) studing (studying) sufering (suffering) throt (throat) to (too) trappling (trampling/tripping) trough (true) tumer (tumour) uncomfertable (uncomfortable) unnaturally (unnaturally) use (used) warn (worn) were (where) x 3 where (were) x 3 women (woman) x 2

**Table 8 : Incorrect spellings observed – continued**

	1980	1993	1994	2004
<b>E</b>	are (our) committed (committed) defience (defiance) distruction (destruction) except (accept) jealousy (jealousy) memorys (memories) occaision (occasion) off (of) pasting (passing) pigedn (pigeon) planely (plainly) soceity (society) the (they) vandilism (vandalism) varified (verified)	activities (activities) aloud (allowed) alright (all right) x 2 biulding (building) boar (bore) bycycles (bicycles) communitae (communicate) corridor (corridor) dirrection (direction) embarrassing (embarrassing) exiting (exciting) fashion (fashion) horrible (horrible) horriorable (horrible) Jew (due) kenewing (canoeing) manor (manner) of (off) x 2 pillers (pillars) plain (plane) playfields (playing fields) prepaired (prepared) propley (properly) quite (quiet) reastabish (re-establish) reconciation (reconciliation) rember (remember) round (road) rubish (rubbish) runing (running) scool (school) shere (share) slowly (slowly) socialize (socialise) suppose (suppose) their (there) thoughts (thoughts) tiered (tired) to (too) x 3 trafic (traffic) trobles (troubles) tromatic (traumatic) vocies (voices) your (you're)	a nother (another) be (by) beeten (beaten) beggers (beggars) x 3 builded (build) buter (butter) carfully (carefully) closit (closet) concuil (council) diffrent (different) dissapolntingly (disappointingly) door ways (doorways) drungen (drunken) eachother (each other) enorn (enough) experiance (experience) feal (feel) finilly (finally) found (fund) gangerine (gangrene) graphity (graffiti) happend (happened) he (her) hear (here) heard (heard) hend (hand) high (hi) jung (young) laying (lying) leggs (legs) luxery (luxury) matriss (mattress) mays (may) mices (mice) misteaken (mistaken) mixeded (mixed) ninghls (nights) occured (occurred) peeple (people) plesent (pleasant) pritty (pretty) proling (prowling) quility (quality) rais (raise) realy (really) recieved (received) recieving (receiving) senseless (senseless) shoudler (shoulder) smached (smashed) smidging (smidgen) speensidl (?) steped (stepped) suddenly (suddenly) x 2 their (they are) though (thought) to (too) x 2 tried (tried) visted (visited) whrite (write) wich (which) wonder (wander) wonderd (wondered)	atempt (attempt) babal (babble) comeing (coming) x 2 coming (coming) x 2 comfatable (comfortable) docters (doctors) exept (except) exusing (excusing) faces (face) haded (had) handon (handsome) he (here) heard (heard) here (hear) imagin (imagine) impaitiently (impatiently) lade (lady) new (knew) x 2 nieghbor (neighbour) no (know) otheir (other) overwelming (overwhelming) paitients (patients) penciled (pencilled) poedem (podium) quitly (quietly) recieve (receive) relised (realised) site (sit) smocking (smoking) stoped (stopped) suffercated (suffocated) thanx (thanks) their (there) x 2 though (thought) to (too) to-wards (towards) tried (tried) wach (watch) weather (whether) women (woman) x 4 wrinkeld (wrinkled)

**Table 8 : Incorrect spellings observed – continued**

	1993	1994	2004	
<b>F</b>	<p>allways (always) x 2                      alright (all right) x 2                      are (our)                      arive (arrive)                      arived (arrived)                      atitudes (attitudes)                      bahamars (Bahamas)                      boreing (boring)                      bouring (boring)                      brain (?)                      brillant (brilliant)                      brock (broke)                      bucher (butcher)                      cain (cane)                      caining (caning)                      calise (Calais)                      clowths (clothes)                      countyside (countryside)                      failer (failure)                      freinds (friends)                      full (fall)                      gran (ground)                      hotle (hotel) x 3                      injoy (enjoy)                      modey (moody)                      neaily (nearly)                      nervous (nervous)                      noting (nothing) x 3                      optionon (optional)                      pearters (parents)                      plimsoles (plimsolls)                      quater (quarter)                      realy (really)                      sayed (stayed)                      serius (serious)                      Shake Sherpe (Shakespeare)                      shoping (shopping)                      strikt (strict)                      stumble (?)                      there (their) x 2                      total (total) x 2                      weil (vile)                      were (we're) x 2                      where (were) x 2                      woodern (wooden)                      writting (writing)</p>	<p>a (and)                      on (own)                      aboct (about)                      all so (also)                      allways (always)                      amogst (amongst)                      any/where (anywhere)                      appaled (appalled)                      aproached (approached)                      are (all)                      avoding (avoiding)                      bagger (bugger)                      bease (because)                      becouse (because)                      becus (because)                      beggers (beggars) x 2                      beggars (beggars)                      beleve (believe)                      beter (better)                      bomb (bomber)                      bue (but)                      burnied (buried)                      by ('bye)                      citys (cities)                      clats (?)                      closes (clothes)                      clutterd (cluttered)                      comeing (coming)                      cone (come)                      coneing (coming)                      copy (cope)                      coud (could)                      coudent (couldn't)                      countrys (countries)                      cuddeld (cuddled)                      deseese (disease)                      dicision (decision)                      dieing (dying)                      dock (knock)                      doest (don't)                      dose (does)                      dou (do)                      eny theing (anything)                      equippment (equipment)                      everbody (everybody)                      every wear (everywhere)                      evreything (everything)                      exsalt (exist)                      fill (feel)                      frend (friend)                      frieds (friends)                      gands (?)                      ged (get)                      gett (get)                      gout (got)                      gowing (going)                      grownd (ground)                      had (have)                      had'ent (hadn't)                      hapaly (happily)                      hear (here)                      hear (here)                      Hellow (Hello)                      here (her) x 2                      his (she)                      hous (house)                      hungar (hunger)                      hungary (hungry)                      inposibale (impossible)                      inspected (expected)                      is (his)</p>	<p>know one (no one)                      ladie (lady)                      laguh (laugh)                      liveing (living)                      lives (leaves)                      locck (look)                      lody (lady)                      mal nurishment                      (malnourishment)                      mang (?)                      manged (managed)                      mastaike (mistake)                      mater (matter)                      may (many)                      medlcn (medicine)                      morthr (mother)                      ner(?)                      new (knew)                      nocked (knocked)                      now (how)                      now body (nobody)                      ofer (offer)                      off (of) x 3                      on (own)                      our (how)                      pate (?)                      payed (paid)                      pegens (pigeons)                      pluking (plucking)                      possibal (possible)                      radiow (radio)                      rase (raise)                      replay (reply)                      riunes (ruins)                      rosies (roses)                      round (road)                      seam (seem)                      she (see)                      shey (she)                      slowley (slowly)                      so one (someone)                      so times (sometimes)                      som (some)                      sood (stood)                      stud (stood)                      sute (?)                      their (there) x 2                      then (than) x 2                      then (there)                      there (they)                      they (there)                      theyed (they'd)                      through (throw)                      touk (took)                      tut (?)                      ve (we)                      vis (visit)                      vests (visits)                      wats (wants)                      weeke (week)                      well (will)                      wen (when)                      werat (where)                      were (where)                      wey (we)                      whell (well)                      women (woman)                      worrie (worry)                      yer (your)                      yous (used)</p>	<p>allways (always)                      ang (and)                      angery (angry)                      angshuse (anxious)                      anxiously (anxiously)                      answerd (answered)                      babys (babies)                      belive (believe)                      briar (brain)                      corried door (corridor) x 2                      crowed (crowded) x 2                      diesese (disease)                      drumsicks (drumsticks)                      emty (empty)                      everone (everyone)                      extreamly (extremely)                      frale (frail)                      glanze (glance)                      glome (gloomy)                      has (as)                      hear (here)                      I (it)                      immeiadtley (immediately)                      lent (leant)                      new (knew) x 2                      nufse (nervous)                      oader (odour)                      or wright (all right)                      pass (past)                      ponny (pony)                      prest (pressed)                      quit (quite)                      remmeberd (remembered)                      retruned (returned)                      ruff (rough)                      scarey (scary)                      scrunced (scrunched)                      slowley (slowly)                      somethink (something)                      sopose (suppose)                      spliting (splitting)                      stared (started)                      stareing (staring)                      stat (sat)                      stir (stare)                      stroger (stronger)                      sumbleing (stumbling)                      suprise (surprise)                      surport (support)                      the (there) x 2                      thier (their)                      their (there)                      there (their)                      thire (their)                      to (too) x 2                      tomarto (tomato)                      untill (until)                      use (used)                      waching (watching)                      wat (what)                      were (where)                      wittnes (witness)                      women (woman)                      woneman (woman)</p>

**Table 8 : Incorrect spellings observed – continued**

	1993	1994		2004	
<b>G</b>	alright (all right) x 2 anythink (anything) arnt (aren't) aways (always) believe (believe) bout (about) brough (brought) carried (carried) cellor (cellar) comeing (coming) completly (completely) creak (creak) decied (decided) desided (decided) exceped (excepted) friegen (threaten) groned (grounded) i (in) lookety (luckily) membrs (members) minets (minutes) misterest (mysterious) murmuring (murmuring) neighter(?) new (knew) x 2 niose (noise) no (know) now (know) of (off) pieceful (peaceful) praving (paving) quite (quiet) resturant (restaurant) rooting (rotting) shouter (?) sneck (sneak) somthink (something) specail (special) streigh (straight) strickked (strict) tall (at all) there (their) x 4 they (then) though (through) tryed (tried) waking (walking) wear (where) were (where) where (were) x 2 wonder (wander) woodern (wooden) woud (would)	a lesat (at least) adout (about) allover (all over) allways (always) alot (a lot) are (all) at (that) atfien(?) B abalbe (be able) bean (been) becaus (because) bechorse (because) becouse (because) x 2 beggards (beggars) beleave (believe) beyind (behind) bout (?) brun (burned) but (put) buy, buy (bye bye) can (come) cares (cases) cauld (could) cherio (cheerio) condishons (conditions) conel (canal) coid (cold) cut (cup) descusting (disgusting) do cated (vacated) dose (does) drinken (drinking) enemys (enemies) eneting (anything) famley (family) fand (find) far (for) foind (found) frends (friends) frie (fire) fuhw (few) gaver (gave) game (game) giting (getting) gorn (gone) grand children (grandchildren) has (as) hat (had) x 2 hay (they) he (her) hear (here) her (here) herar (here) homles (homeless) how (who) if (it) is (it) is (this) just (used) know (now) x 2 letes (let's) leve (leave) life (live) lik (like) lost (lot) me slaf (myself) mest (messed) mid night (midnight)	mothe (mother) muise (mice) munney (many) mym (mum) neibours (neighbours) niall(?) no (know) no where (nowhere) nocked (knocked) Novembe (November) now (know) of (have) of (off) off (of) opend (opened) other (over) over (other) ow (oh) peopal (people) pepal (people) pleas (please) pratishon (petition) quite (quiet) rede (ready) rest (rest) rite (right) rudy (rugby) rugdy (rugby) saist (first) sawe (so) scrabbing (?) seaing (seeing) seat (sit) see (seen) seep (sleep) setee (settee) Seyer (Sir) somthing (something) sorrey (sorry) spen (spent) splshley (specially) standed (standard) stay (stair) sugger (sugar) take (talk) thay (they) the (then) the (there) the (they) ther (there) x 3 there (their) x 2 there (they) x 2 there (they) they (there) thim (them) thown (thrown) throwow (through) to (too) x 2 to (two) town (thrown) uou (you) want (what) weekened (weekend) were (where) wey (way) whach (watch) what (want) whet (what) through (thought) womden (women) writen (writing) your (you)	a nother (another) abound (about) acident (accident) across (across) agen (again) ageses (ages) alla (all of) an (on) angrey (angry) anouther (another) ant shaght (?) apoched (approached) appment (apartment) asct (asked) be for (before) befor (before) x 2 belive (believe) caled (called) clame (claim) complant (complaint) coner (corner) contined (continued) cud (could) denist (dentist) diside (decide) doupe (dope) ect (etc) empte (empty) enbarrased (embarrassed) faunt (found) finily (finally) finally (finally) x 2 frist (first) fustrating (frustrating) gona (gonna) gonn (ganna) hand (and) hast (asked) hes (here's) hire (here) hoppe (hope) hourse (horse) hurd (heard) is (his) loock (looked) looket (looked) luckly (lucky) manegd (managed) markers (makers) minde (mind) nam (name) nely (nearly) x 2 no (know) normall (normal) nothink (nothing) nuber (number) ofering (offering) off (of) offerd (offered) pankakes (pancakes) plance (place) prespetion (prescription) proppable (probable) pud (pub) pup (pub)	pust (pushed) reapted (repeated) replied (replied) reseption (reception) riding (riding) road (rode) saed (said) x 2 screaming (screaming) sead (said) set (seat) siting (sitting) solisters (solicitors) sopted (spotted) stairing (staring) startet (started) stoped (stopped) sume (some) tak (talk) tepted (tempted) thay (they) x 6 the (they) their (there) their (there) x 2 themsefs (themselves) ther (there) thi (these) through (throat) to (two) to words (towards) x 2 toke (took) tong (tongue) torck (talk) tort (thought) tould (told) trould (trouble) u (you) verey (very) waching (watching) x 2 warking (walking) waticing (watching) weerdos (weirdo's) whant (want) whas (was) when (went) x 2 whent (went) x 2 where (were) women (woman) wonted (wanted) yo (you) your (you're) yoy (you)

## Punctuation

Analysis of the punctuation of the 2004 writing sample to code errors etc. according to the authors' specifications was carried out by the same retired teacher of English who had undertaken the analysis of the 1980, 1993 and 1994 samples a decade ago. The specifications for this analysis were themselves unchanged and explored the use and abuse of the various stops, apostrophes and abbreviations. In general the approach adopted was to give the candidates the benefit of any doubt. Inevitably this analysis depended upon professional judgement and another judge might not necessarily agree with the decisions made. But every effort was made to be consistent and there is no obvious reason why any subjectivity involved should bias the comparisons we might wish to make between grades or the groups awarded the same grades in different years.

### *Stops*

The selection of writing was governed by the use of full stops. The writing taken from each candidate's script was that found between the third and fourth full stops used in his or her answer to the question providing the source for the writing samples for each year.

### *Run-on*

Writing samples were judged to contain run-on errors if a full stop was needed but had been omitted; so that within a candidate's writing sample one 'sentence' ran on into another. For example: 'I looked around there was a woman with long black hair she was very tanned and had the biggest brown eyes I had ever seen'. (2004 grade D girl).

Table 9 shows the number of such missing full stops for boys and girls at each grade in each year. Massey and Elliott (1996) speculated that boys might have been more likely to make this mistake than girls, since in 1980 and 1994 there were notable discrepancies between the sexes. However, this was not true of the 1993 writing sample and was not in evidence in 2004, so this speculation may be unsafe. This issue does not affect comparisons between years.

**Table 9 : Run-on – missing full stops**

	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	A–E	A–G
<b>Boys</b>										
1980		4	3	4	7	7			25	
1993		2	4	6	13	17	18	18	42	78
1994	0	3	1	7	14	12	14	14	37	65
2004	0	0	2	0	4	10	5	9	16	30
<b>Girls</b>										
1980		1	5	3	4	5			18	
1993		2	8	8	12	15	11	15	45	71
1994	1	1	4	2	8	12	14	9	27	50
2004	0	0	1	4	5	9	6	6	19	31
<b>All</b>										
1980		5	8	7	11	12			43	
1993		4	12	14	25	32	29	33	87	149
1994	1	4	5	9	22	24	28	23	64	115
2004	0	0	3	4	9	19	11	15	35	61

Figure 5 Run on errors

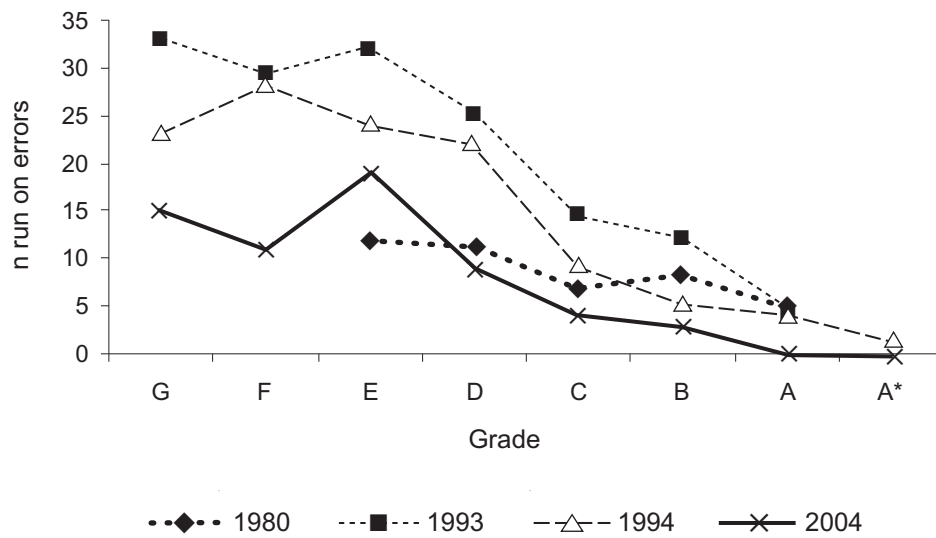


Figure 5 displays these data graphically and shows how the more able amongst the candidates awarded GCE grades A to E in 1980 were less likely to omit full stops where they were required, and also – via the relative lack of incline in the plot for 1980 – that variations across the groups awarded the different GCE grades were less than those observed for the GCSE 1993 and 1994 writing samples. The plots for these reveal that whilst the abler (A\* to C) of the 1994 candidates were comparable with those awarded equivalent grades in 1980 in this respect, the same could not be said of candidates with lower grades in 1994 or of candidates at any grade in 1993. The plot representing the 2004 writing sample however drives home the evidence of good news here.

The 2004 data indicate a dramatically lower incidence of run-on errors – even fewer than in 1980. It would seem that today’s candidates are making more effective use of the full stop than any of their previous counterparts.

### Comma

Judgements about the use of commas are inevitably subjective but the teacher judge attempted to record all instances where the comma was used correctly and those where it was used wrongly, giving the benefit of the doubt wherever possible. Also, every attempt was made to identify cases where commas were definitely needed to convey meaning effectively but were absent.

It proved so difficult to identify absences or incorrect use of the comma from some F and G candidates in 1993/4 that efforts were abandoned. Note too that the relatively low numbers of errors in grade E writing samples reported in 1993/4 may also be an artefact of the difficulty encountered in identifying such mistakes in poorly structured sentences. However, in the 2004 writing sample the F and G sentences were sufficiently well formed to enable these counts to be made.

Table 10 reports the analyses for boys and girls awarded each grade in each year and shows their total numbers of incorrect and correct uses, and the number of ‘absent’ commas. Figures 6a, 6b and 6c respectively summarise the information regarding correct use, abuse and absence of the comma, by plotting the numbers of accurate or wrong uses or omissions by candidates awarded a given grade in each year.

	A		B		C		D		E		F		G		A-E											
	✓	✗	abs	✓	✗	abs	✓	✗	abs	✓	✗	abs	✓	✗	abs	✓	✗	abs								
<b>Boys</b>																										
1980			26	9	1	23	4	2	21	9	2	22	8	1	17	4	2			109	34	8				
1993			14	5	2	20	6	4	10	3	3	10	15	4	13	12	1	13		67	41	14				
1994			31	1	1	29	3	1	22	4	0	8	14	0	5	6	7	4		82	32	8				
2004			29	3	1	24	4	3	36	5	6	16	15	11	9	15	9	13	8	17	4	6	32	140	47	37
<b>Girls</b>																										
1980			24	2	1	27	9	3	17	3	1	19	15	0	16	9	1			103	38	6				
1993			15	2	0	22	4	6	7	8	4	14	8	3	7	8	0	9		65	30	13				
1994			24	1	0	22	3	1	15	5	2	25	10	1	9	3	0	6		91	26	7				
2004			25	2	3	18	7	1	18	10	6	16	8	8	18	14	9	15	4	7	8	4	6	122	50	38
<b>All</b>																										
1980			50	11	2	50	13	5	38	12	3	41	23	1	33	13	3			212	72	14				
1993			29	7	2	42	10	10	17	11	7	24	23	7	20	20	1	22		132	71	27				
1994			55	2	1	51	6	2	37	9	2	33	24	1	14	9	7	10		173	58	15				
2004			54	5	4	42	11	4	54	15	12	32	23	19	27	29	18	28	12	24	12	10	38	262	97	75



Figure 6a Correct use of comma

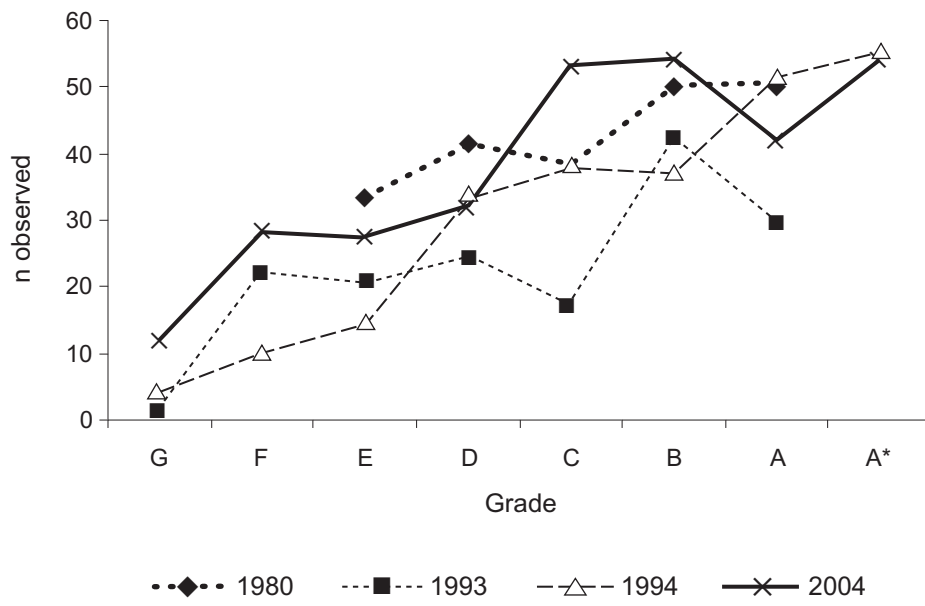
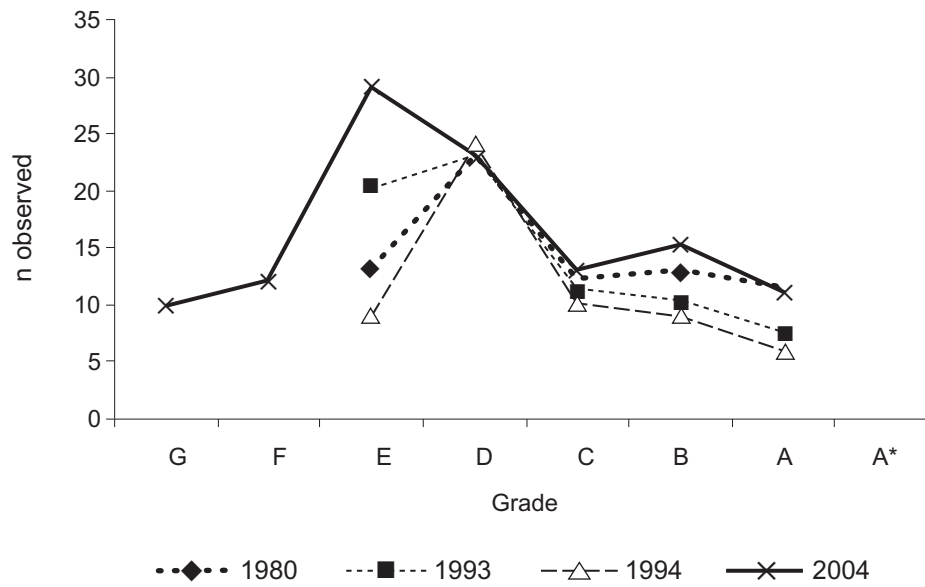
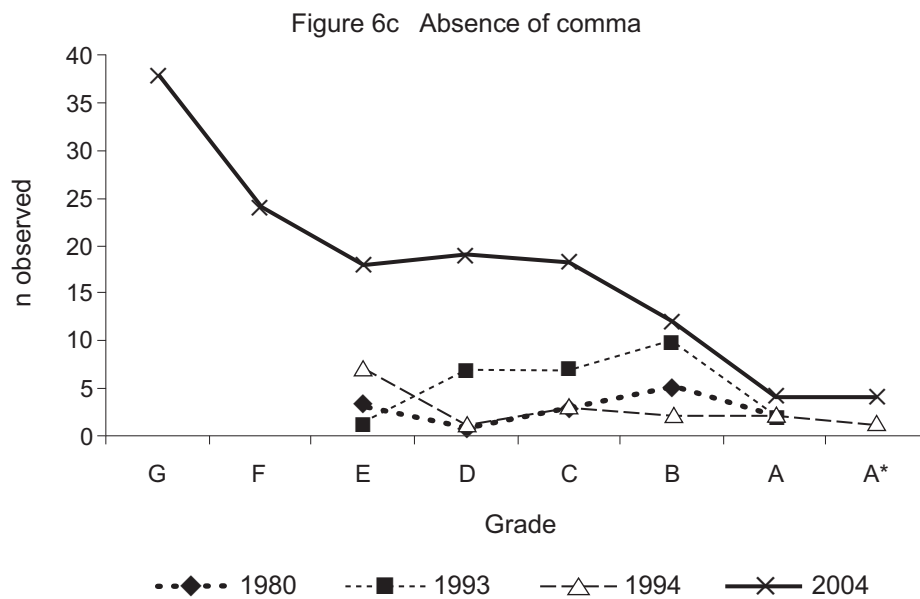


Figure 6b Incorrect use of comma





Although the previous analysis detected no consistent gender variations in this respect, the addition of the 2004 data introduces one gender variation which may be worth noting. In both 1994 and 2004 there is a tendency for very able boys (grades A\*–B) to outperform their female equivalents in terms of correct use of the comma, although there was little variation in the number of incorrect uses.

The 2004 writing samples compare very favourably with those from all three previous years in the correct use of the comma, with more correct usages observed at grades B and C than even the 1980 sample which itself displayed notably more correct usage than was evident in the 1993 and 1994 GCSE writing samples.

Figures 6b and 6c, illustrating the comparisons between years of the incidence of incorrect use together with failure to use the comma, provide the other side of the coin.

Levels of incorrect usage are fairly similar across the four years investigated. The grade by grade pattern for the 2004 writing sample suggests that it included marginally more incorrect usage of the comma than the others and that, again, it was most like 1980 in this respect. Overall, 1994's candidates made fewest mistakes in this respect. Thus 2004 (and to a lesser extent 1980) show both greater correct usage and greater incorrect usage than was found in the 1993 and 1994 samples. Incorrect usage also has an interesting pattern in relation to ability in all four of the years investigated, being higher in 'middle' grades than either high or low ones.

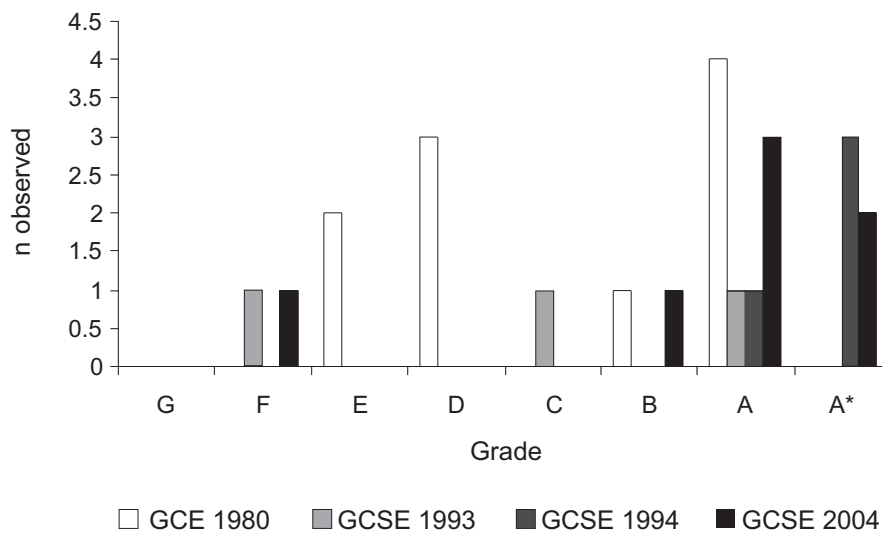
Before considering this further we should also note the evidence relating to the absence of the comma where one was required to clarify communication. 1980 and 1994 recorded fewest errors of this type (though it should be acknowledged that at grade A/A\* so few were observed that all four years were broadly similar), whilst below grade B, 2004 was far and away the worst in this respect.

Several factors may lie behind these patterns. At the simplest level we should consider variations in 'opportunity' – the differences in sentence length and run-on errors already observed between these writing samples. Abler 1993 and 1994 candidates may well have made fewer errors in the use of the comma to some extent simply because they wrote shorter sentences than abler candidates in 1980 and 2004 and thus had less need of punctuation devices. Conversely, abler candidates from 1980 and 2004 (remember the low incidence of run-on error in the latter) not only created more opportunities to use the comma correctly but proved themselves capable of doing so. In the lower range of grades, the average sentence length for the 2004 writing sample was similar to those from 1993 and 1994 but 2004 displayed fewer run-on errors. Weaker candidates in 2004 had thus in effect succeeded in setting themselves the challenge of 'handling' the punctuation of relatively longer sentences. It is thus perhaps unsurprising to see them using more commas, both correctly and incorrectly, as well as being more likely to omit them.

*Semi-colon*

Correct and incorrect uses of the semi-colon were also identified and these are reported in table 11 and figure 7. The semi-colon was used appropriately only eight times in the 1980 writing sample – four of these being by grade A candidates. In both 1993 and 1994 only three correct uses were recorded. In 2004 the semi-colon was used correctly five times, once at A\* three times at A and once at B.

Figure 7 Correct uses of colon and semi-colon



The semi-colon was only once used in error in 1980. There were no incorrect uses made in 1993 and only one in 1994, whilst in 2004 two incorrect uses were noted (by girls at A\* and A).

**Table 11 : Use and misuse of semi-colon/colon**

A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	A-E
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
<b>Boys</b>								
1980	2/0	0/0	0/0	2/0	1/0	0/0	0/0	5/0
1993	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0
1994	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	1/0
2004	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/1	0/0	3/0
<b>Girls</b>								
1980	2/0	0/0	0/0	0/1	0/0	0/1	0/0	3/2
1993	1/0	0/0	1/0	0/0	0/0	1/0	0/0	2/0
1994	2/1	1/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0
2004	1/1	1/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	1/0
<b>All</b>								
1980	4/0	0/0	0/0	2/1	1/0	1/1	0/0	8/2
1993	1/0	0/0	1/0	0/0	0/0	1/0	0/0	2/0
1994	2/1	1/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	1/0
2004	1/1	1/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/1	0/0	4/0

### *Colon*

Correct and incorrect uses of the colon are also featured in table 11. In 2004 the colon was used only twice, both times correctly. One use was by an A\* girl, the other by an F boy. Again this low level of usage is very much in keeping with previous writing samples – there were only three uses in 1980 (two correct) and one (correct) in 1994, whilst in 1993 the colon was conspicuous only by its absence.

In general it seems that 16+ examination candidates avoided the use of these less familiar stops, especially in the 1993 and 1994 writing samples.

### *Other stops*

Occasional incidence of the use of the '-' to create suspense or provide a break for the reader was observed. It did not occur at all in 1980; was observed three times in 1993; three times (by the same candidate) in 1994; and twice in 2004. This was a feature almost entirely confined to A and A\* candidates and was used successfully in all cases.

### *Apostrophe*

The teacher judge also noted the use made of the apostrophe in the writing samples and recorded all cases where it was used correctly and incorrectly and those when an apostrophe was missing when needed. Separate counts were made when apostrophes were used to denote plurals (mind your p's and q's); to denote possessives (The workers' uniform); or to indicate abbreviation (I wasn't sure). These are shown in tables 12a–c, whilst table 12d provides the overall totals for effective and incorrect use and absence of the apostrophe. Figure 8a illustrates the total number of correctly used apostrophes observed in the writing samples from each grade in each year and figure 8b shows the combined numbers of incorrectly used and missing apostrophes.

**Table 12a : Use and misuse of apostrophe – plural form**

	A*		B		C		D		E		F		G		A-E								
	✓	✗	abs	✓	✗	abs	✓	✗	abs	✓	✗	abs	✓	✗	abs	✓	✗						
<b>Boys</b>																							
1980	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0					
1993	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0				
1994	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	0			
2004	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	2	0	0	0			
<b>Girls</b>																							
1980	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0			
1993	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0		
1994	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	8	0	1	0	
2004	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
<b>All</b>																							
1980	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	
1993	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	0
1994	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	1	0	0	3	0
2004	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	2	0	0	0

**Table 12b : Use and misuse of apostrophe – possessive form**

	A*		B		C		D		E		F		G		A-E													
	✓	✗	abs	✓	✗	abs	✓	✗	abs	✓	✗	abs	✓	✗	abs	✓	✗	abs										
<b>Boys</b>																												
1980	1	0	0	0	0	2	2	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	1	4									
1993	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	2	0	0	1	0	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	4	1	5			
1994	2	0	0	2	0	0	1	2	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	4	1	4		
2004	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	2	1	5		
<b>Girls</b>																												
1980	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	1	4		
1993	0	0	1	2	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	1	5	0	6
1994	2	0	1	1	0	0	2	0	2	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	6	1	3
2004	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	2	1	0	4	1	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	2	4	0	8	
<b>All</b>																												
1980	2	1	1	1	0	3	2	1	3	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	2	8		
1993	0	1	1	2	0	2	4	0	1	2	0	0	1	0	7	0	0	5	0	0	1	0	0	1	9	1	11	
1994	4	0	1	3	1	2	2	0	3	1	0	2	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	1	10	2	7
2004	1	0	1	2	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	5	1	0	5	1	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	1	6	1	13	

Table 12c: Use and misuse of apostrophe – abbreviations

	A*		B		C		D		E		F		G		A-E		
	✓	✗	abs	✗	abs	✓	✗	abs	✓	✗	abs	✓	✗	abs	✓	✗	
<b>Boys</b>																	
1980	1	0	0	4	0	4	0	1	3	0	0	1	0	0	13	0	1
1993	5	0	0	7	1	0	6	0	8	0	1	12	0	6	14	1	4
1994	9	0	0	14	1	2	13	1	5	2	3	2	2	2	3	1	6
2004	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	8	0	2	2	0	2	3	0	1
<b>Girls</b>																	
1980	0	0	0	5	0	2	0	0	1	0	2	1	0	0	7	0	5
1993	5	0	0	3	0	0	4	0	15	0	0	6	0	1	4	0	2
1994	11	0	1	6	0	2	8	0	9	0	2	4	1	4	5	4	2
2004	3	0	0	1	0	0	7	1	5	0	4	8	0	1	2	0	1
<b>All</b>																	
1980	1	0	0	9	0	2	4	0	4	0	2	2	0	1	20	0	6
1993	10	0	0	10	1	0	10	0	23	0	1	18	0	7	18	0	8
1994	20	0	1	24	1	3	18	1	14	2	5	6	3	6	8	5	8
2004	3	0	0	2	0	0	10	1	13	0	6	10	0	3	5	0	2



**Table 12d : Use and misuse of apostrophe – all forms**

	A*		A		B		C		D		E		F		G		A-E								
	✓	✗	abs	✓	✗	abs	✓	✗	abs	✓	✗	abs	✓	✗	abs	✓	✗	abs							
<b>Boys</b>																									
1980		2	0	0	4	1	2	6	1	3	4	0	0	1	0	0		17	2	5					
1993		5	1	0	7	1	1	7	0	2	10	0	1	13	1	9	14	0	7	14	1	4	42	3	13
1994	11	0	0	2	14	2	3	10	1	3	5	3	4	3	3	2	3	1	7	5	3	6	48	10	14
2004	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	4	0	0	8	0	5	2	0	3	3	4	1	8	2	5	16	1	9
<b>Girls</b>																									
1980		1	1	1	6	0	3	0	0	1	2	0	3	3	1	1							12	2	9
1993		5	0	1	5	1	1	7	0	1	15	0	0	6	0	5	4	1	6	3	1	2	38	1	8
1994	13	0	2	1	8	0	2	10	0	3	10	1	3	4	1	4	6	7	4	3	8	1	43	3	13
2004	3	0	0	2	0	1	2	7	1	3	6	0	6	9	0	5	3	0	1	5	1	3	26	1	5
<b>All</b>																									
1980		3	1	1	10	1	5	6	1	4	6	0	3	4	1	1							29	4	14
1993		10	1	1	12	2	2	14	0	3	25	0	1	19	1	14	18	1	13	17	2	6	80	4	21
1994	24	0	2	27	2	3	22	2	5	20	1	6	15	7	4	6	9	8	11	8	11	7	91	13	27
2004	4	0	0	3	0	1	3	1	1	11	1	3	14	0	8	6	4	1	13	3	8	42	2	24	

Figure 8a Effective use of apostrophe

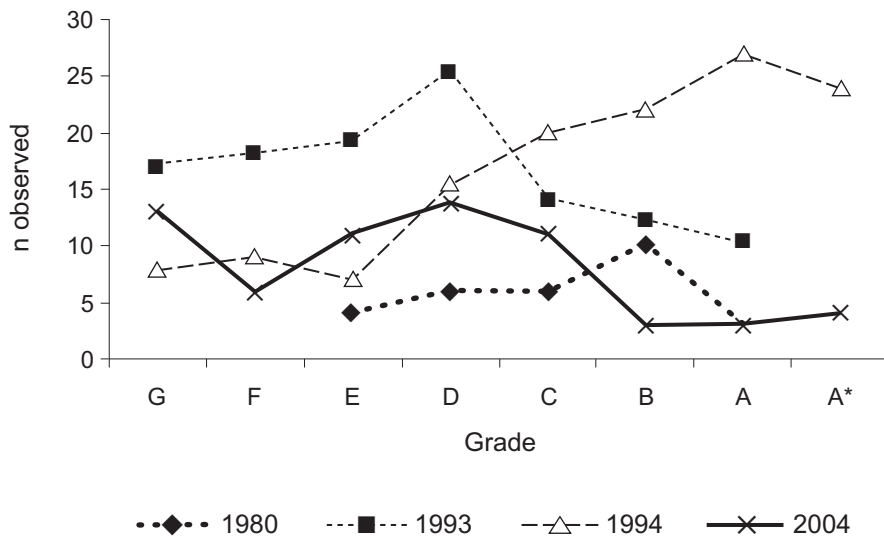
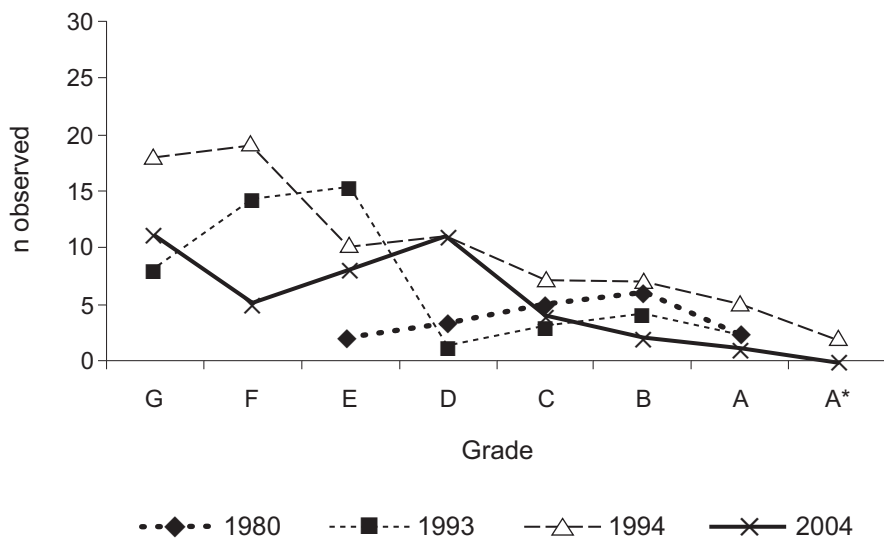


Figure 8b Misuse/omission of the apostrophe

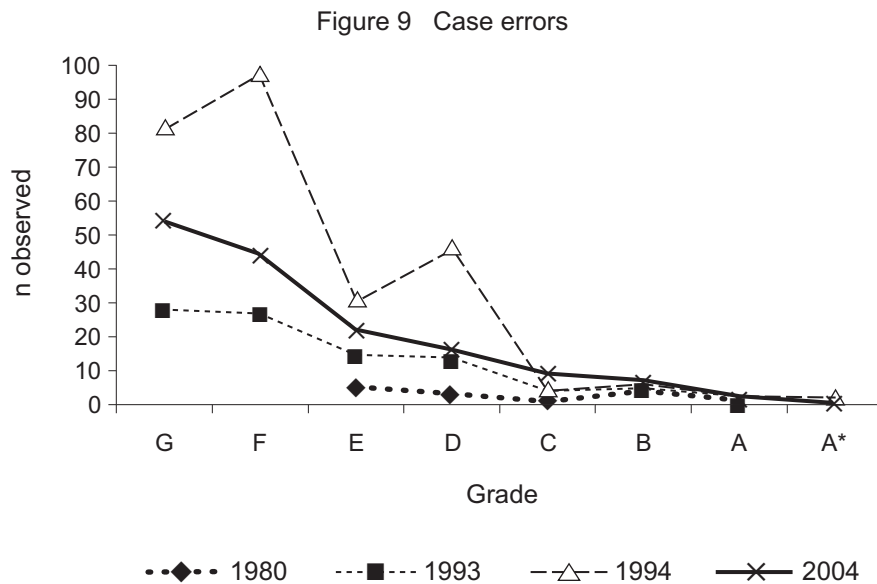


Figures 8a and 8b show how 2004's ablest candidates (especially grades A\* to B) are (the most) restrained in their use of this device and, partly in consequence, make relatively few mistakes with it – fewer in fact than those from any other year. Thus in this zone 2004's writing sample seems more like that from 1980 GCE than those from the 1993 and 1994 GCSE samples. When candidates awarded grade D or below are considered, there were higher levels of apostrophe use – both correct and incorrect – in 2004 than in the 1980 sample. In comparison to the earlier GCSE samples, 2004 candidates were less likely to use the apostrophe and hence it is not surprising to see that they tend to make fewer errors/omissions than candidates from 1993 and 1994 and also (because of self-restrained opportunity) record relatively few correct uses.

So in 2004 the most able candidates are avoiding the apostrophe with even more success than their predecessors. Since most apostrophe use is for abbreviation, it may be that they are writing more formally, and if so reduced use of the apostrophe might arise more from this than conscious avoidance of this form of punctuation per se. At lower grades today's candidates may be less inhibited, but even here there appears to have been less use of abbreviation in 2004 than in 1993 and 1994.

#### Case errors

The teacher judge's analysis of case errors is presented in table 13. This details the numbers of missing initial capital letters at the beginning of sentences, those where capitals required for proper nouns were omitted, the incidence of unnecessary capitals and the total number of case errors made by candidates of each sex in each year. Figure 9 compares the total numbers of case errors made by pupils from each grade.



Candidates in grades A to C in all four years investigated made relatively few case errors. Notably, all 2004 candidates above grade E used a capital letter to start their sampled sentence, although they were more likely to fail to capitalise proper nouns than some of those from earlier years.

When all case errors are considered together, 2004's candidates perform very similarly to the previous cohorts at grades A\* to C, where case errors are comparatively rare. Below this level the incidence of case errors of all kinds rises dramatically, except for GCE candidates awarded grades D and E in 1980, who make fewer case errors than those awarded equivalent grades since then.

Case errors by 2004's GCSE candidates in grades D to G fall within the envelope defined by the 1993 and 1994 plots, showing fewer mistakes of this sort than were seen in 1994 but more than were observed in 1993.

**Table 13 : Case errors**

		1980			1993			1994			2004		
		<i>m</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>all</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>all</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>all</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>all</i>
<b>A*</b>	<i>Initial capital</i>							0	1	1	0	0	0
	<i>Proper nouns</i>							0	1	1	0	0	0
	<i>Not required</i>							0	0	0	0	0	0
	<b>Total</b>							<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>A</b>	<i>Initial capital</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	<i>Proper nouns</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	2
	<i>Not required</i>	1	2	3	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>B</b>	<i>Initial capital</i>	0	0	3	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
	<i>Proper nouns</i>	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	2	3
	<i>Not required</i>	5	0	5	0	1	1	2	3	5	2	2	4
	<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>C</b>	<i>Initial capital</i>	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
	<i>Proper nouns</i>	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	2	0	5	5
	<i>Not required</i>	1	1	2	0	0	0	1	1	2	2	2	4
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>D</b>	<i>Initial capital</i>	0	0	0	1	1	2	1	1	2	0	0	0
	<i>Proper nouns</i>	0	0	0	1	5	6	2	7	9	2	7	9
	<i>Not required</i>	2	1	3	1	4	5	19	16	35	6	1	7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>E</b>	<i>Initial capital</i>	0	0	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	2
	<i>Proper nouns</i>	1	0	1	6	1	7	4	4	8	5	5	10
	<i>Not required</i>	2	1	3	5	0	5	19	3	22	2	8	10
	<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>F</b>	<i>Initial capital</i>				2	1	3	3	3	6	0	6	6
	<i>Proper nouns</i>				11	1	12	14	4	18	2	12	14
	<i>Not required</i>				6	5	11	39	34	73	13	11	24
	<b>Total</b>				<b>19</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>G</b>	<i>Initial capital</i>				8	4	12	1	2	3	6	6	12
	<i>Proper nouns</i>				3	3	6	12	2	14	7	5	12
	<i>Not required</i>				7	2	9	25	40	65	21	9	30
	<b>Total</b>				<b>18</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>A-E</b>	<i>Initial capital</i>	0	0	0	5	1	6	1	1	2	0	2	2
	<i>Proper nouns</i>	2	0	2	9	6	15	8	12	20	9	20	29
	<i>Not required</i>	11	5	16	6	5	11	42	23	65	12	13	25
	<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>56</b>

## Sentence type and construction

### *Type*

The structure of the sentence from each pupil was analysed by the teacher judge according to the classification below:

- **Simple:** One principal clause and no subsidiary clauses.
- **Compound:** Two or more principal clauses and no subsidiaries.
- **Complex:** One principal clause with one or more subsidiary clauses.
- **Multiple<sup>1</sup>:** Two or more principal clauses with one or more subsidiaries.
- **Other:** Often sentences lacking a verb, or in some other way not classifiable.

<sup>1</sup> or compound/complex

The results of this analysis are summarised in table 14, by sex and overall. Figures 10a to 10d show the numbers of sentences of different types (in each year) in graphical form, to aid comparison.

In the 1980, 1993 and 2004 writing samples the better candidates produced a higher proportion of complex sentences than their equivalents in 1994, when abler candidates were rather more likely to produce simple or compound sentences. In 1993 and 1994 (especially the latter) weaker candidates were the most likely to produce multiple sentences, reflecting their propensity for run-on errors.

When the numbers of sentences classified as complex or compound are considered together (across the A to E grade range to enable fair comparisons between all four years investigated) the 1994 writing sample contains fewest of these relatively sophisticated structures, whilst the 2004 sample contains most.

Another notable feature of the analysis of the 2004 writing sample is the substantial incidence of sentences which for one reason or another were not classifiable, especially (but far from exclusively) in the lower grade range.

**Table 14 : Sentence type**

		1980			1993			1994			2004		
		<i>m</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>all</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>all</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>all</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>all</i>
<b>A*</b>	<i>Simple</i>							9	8	17	4	7	11
	<i>Compound</i>							7	10	17	9	3	12
	<i>Complex</i>							9	4	13	10	13	23
	<i>Multiple</i>							5	7	12	7	5	12
	<i>Other</i>								1	1		2	2
<b>A</b>	<i>Simple</i>	7	8	15	11	6	17	10	5	15	5	9	14
	<i>Compound</i>	3	7	10	4	11	15	9	13	22	7	9	16
	<i>Complex</i>	1	6	18	8	4	12	4	4	8	11	8	19
	<i>Multiple</i>	8	8	16	4	8	12	7	8	15	5	3	8
	<i>Other</i>		1	1	3	1	4				2	1	3
<b>B</b>	<i>Simple</i>	6	11	17	6	2	8	10	9	19	3	7	10
	<i>Compound</i>	5	6	11	6	4	10	7	10	17	14	8	22
	<i>Complex</i>	14	4	18	11	10	21	6	1	7	7	4	11
	<i>Multiple</i>	5	9	14	6	12	18	7	9	16	2	11	13
	<i>Other</i>				1	2	3		1	1	4		4
<b>C</b>	<i>Simple</i>	4	5	9	5	9	14	8	7	15	4	6	10
	<i>Compound</i>	6	9	15	3	7	10	4	8	12	8	7	15
	<i>Complex</i>	15	10	25	6	6	22	7	7	14	11	4	15
	<i>Multiple</i>	4	5	9	5	8	13	10	8	18	7	8	15
	<i>Other</i>	1	1	2	1		1	1		1		5	5
<b>D</b>	<i>Simple</i>	9	8	17	3	4	7	3	7	10	5	3	8
	<i>Compound</i>	9	4	13	6	6	12	7	3	10	6	7	13
	<i>Complex</i>	5	9	14	10	11	21	6	4	10	7	7	14
	<i>Multiple</i>	7	9	16	11	9	20	14	16	30	9	10	19
	<i>Other</i>										3	3	6
<b>E</b>	<i>Simple</i>	8	5	13	4	3	7	3	4	7	1	2	3
	<i>Compound</i>	5	6	11	10	11	21	6	8	14	9	5	14
	<i>Complex</i>	11	10	21	4	8	12	7	6	13	6	5	11
	<i>Multiple</i>	6	8	14	12	8	20	13	12	25	4	9	13
	<i>Other</i>		1	1				1		1	9	10	19
<b>F</b>	<i>Simple</i>				2	6	8	5	6	11	0	6	6
	<i>Compound</i>				12	6	18	9	6	15	11	7	18
	<i>Complex</i>				2	8	10	3	2	5	7	3	10
	<i>Multiple</i>				14	10	24	1	16	29	7	8	15
	<i>Other</i>										5	6	11
<b>G</b>	<i>Simple</i>				5	4	9	5	10	15	4	6	10
	<i>Compound</i>				8	11	19	10	2	12	2	3	5
	<i>Complex</i>				2	8	10	5	9	14	2	5	7
	<i>Multiple</i>				13	6	19	9	9	18	12	10	22
	<i>Other</i>				2	1	3	1		1	9	6	15
<b>A-E</b>	<i>Simple</i>	34	37	71	29	24	53	34	32	66	22	34	56
	<i>Compound</i>	28	32	60	29	39	68	33	42	75	53	39	92
	<i>Complex</i>	57	39	96	49	39	88	30	22	52	52	41	93
	<i>Multiple</i>	30	39	69	38	45	83	51	53	104	34	46	80
	<i>Other</i>	1	3	4	5	3	8	2	1	3	17	21	38

Figure 10a: Type of sentence - 1980

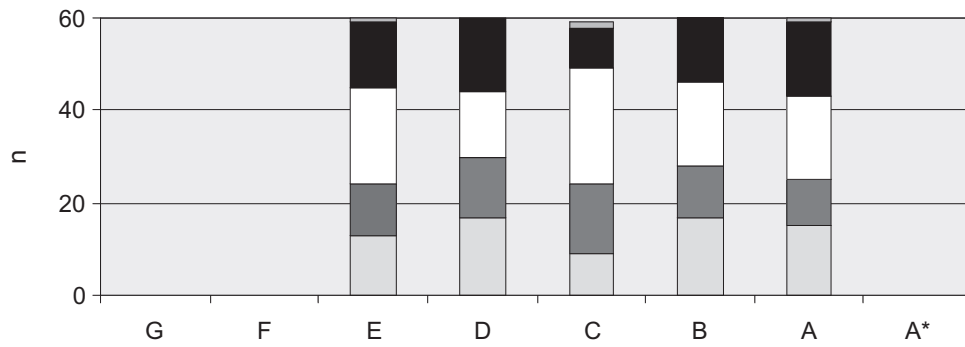


Figure 10b: Type of sentence - 1993

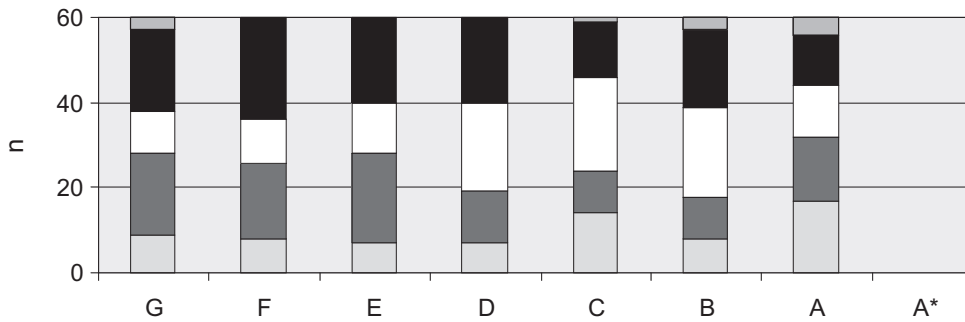


Figure 10c: Type of sentence - 1994

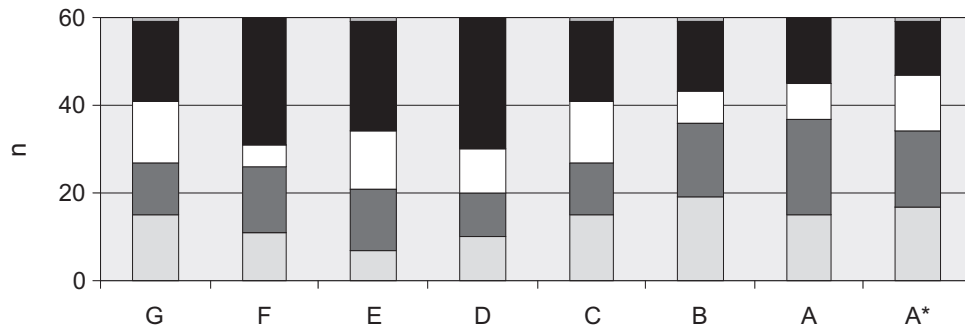
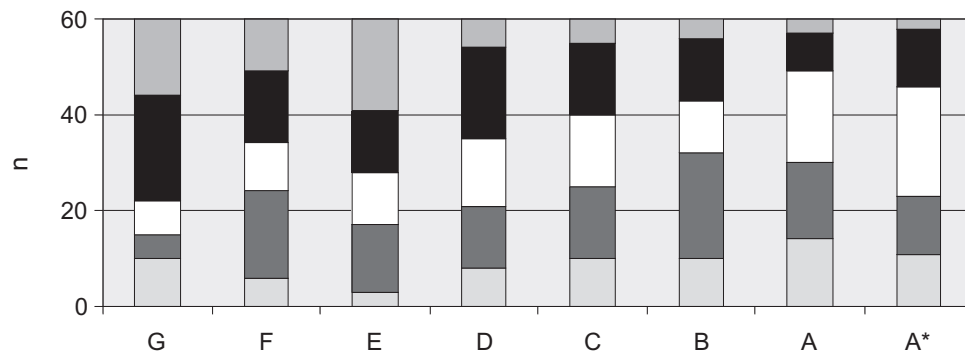


Figure 10d: Type of sentence - 2004



Simple
  Compound
  Complex
  Multiple
  Other

### Sentence construction

To provide an overall indication of the candidates' capacity to construct grammatically acceptable sentences, the teacher judged if each candidate's sentence could be regarded as adequately constructed or not. Sentences were classed as badly constructed if they contained substantial errors of punctuation or syntax; for instance lack of agreement between subject and verb, or use of different tenses, or an incorrect relative pronoun etc. A positive judgement in this context means only 'not badly constructed' or adequate in this respect. The judgements again gave the benefit of the doubt to the writers, and in no sense was grammatical elegance a pre-requisite for a 'well constructed' verdict.

If we consider candidates graded A to E (the widest range which can be compared across all four years investigated) 1980 (at 71%) has the highest overall rate of adequately constructed sentences, followed by 1994 (69%), 2004 (61%) and 1993 (53%). Girls were marginally more likely to produce adequately constructed sentences than boys in the first three years investigated but no such gender difference was apparent in 2004.

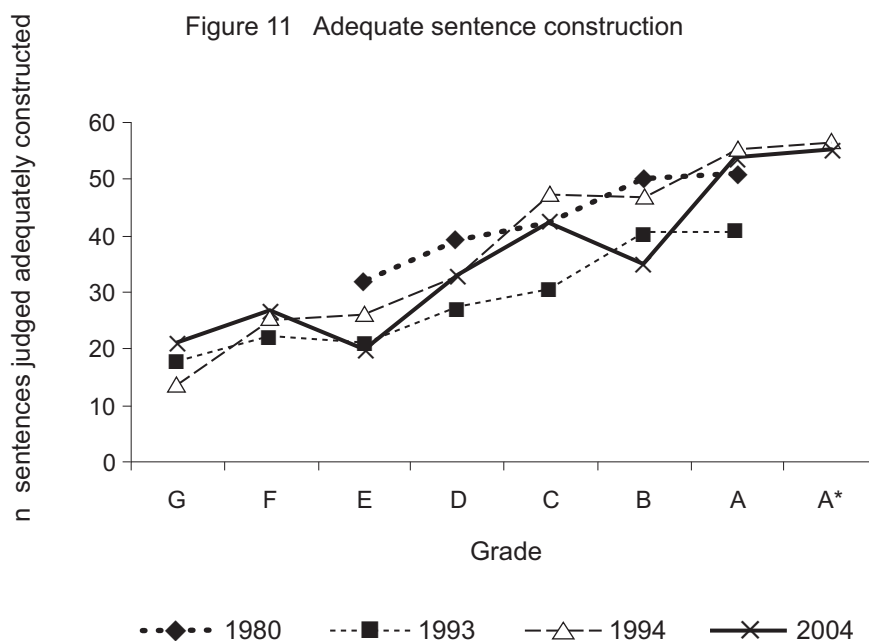


Figure 11 displays the judgements for each year, grade by grade. It suggests that in grades A to C candidates from 1980 and 1994 in general produced more 'adequately constructed' sentences than those from other years – although 2004's A & A\* candidates matched them. However 1994's grade D and E candidates did less well than 1980's, producing greater numbers of poorly constructed multiple sentences. Sentences from 1993 have been judged consistently worse constructed than others, whilst 2004's fall within the envelope of the 1993 and 1994 plots except at the extremes; 2004 grade F and G sentences being judged relatively favourably in this respect too.



We would expect some interaction between variations in sentence construction (their relative length and complexity) and candidates' success against this adequacy criterion and this proved to be the case. Massey and Elliott (1996) pointed out that part of the explanation for 1994's relative success in adequate construction lies here. 1994's sentences included a higher proportion of simple and compound sentences, which were often adequately constructed. But not only did 1994's candidates produce fewer complex or multiple sentences, they were less capable of constructing them adequately too; so 1994's relatively high success rate in constructing sentences adequately may be unduly flattering. The obverse is likely to have been true to some extent for the 1993 sample, which included fewest simple sentences. It must have been true to an even greater extent for the 2004 sentences, which included a higher proportion of relatively sophisticated sentences types than any other year investigated.

### **Effective communication**

The teacher judge was also asked to reach an overall judgement about the effectiveness of each sentence in communicating its meaning. Did the intended meaning come across in spite of any errors in punctuation, spelling or grammar?

These verdicts are summarised in table 15 below, which gives the numbers of male and female candidates awarded each grade in each year judged to have failed to communicate their meaning effectively.

Overall, despite the errors in punctuation, spelling and grammar described above, nearly all the sentences at grade E or above in all years successfully communicated what we presumed they intended to communicate.

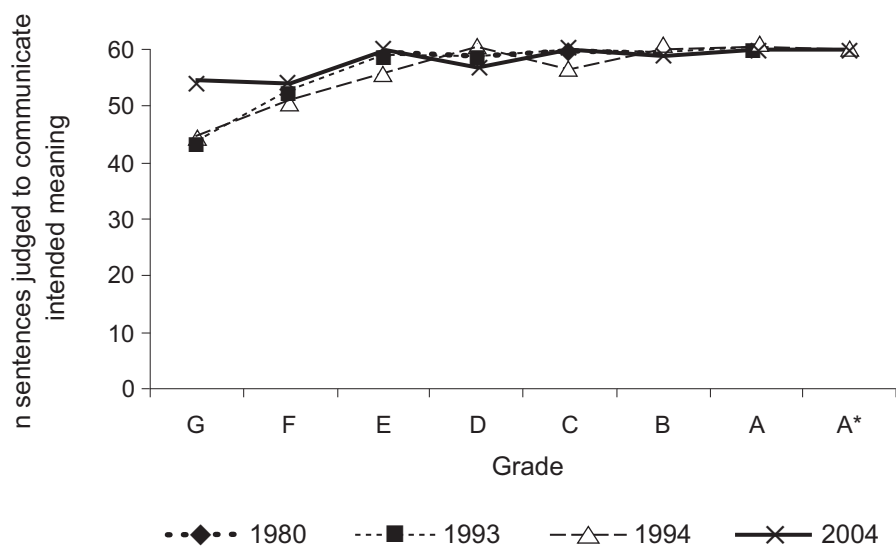
Figure 12 presents the same information in a positive light, showing that nearly all sentences in this range of grades proved comprehensible. Thus at grade E and above the four years investigated proved similar when judged against this most basic criterion.

Only in GCSE grades F and G are significant numbers of sentences found which are judged to have failed to convey their meaning. The numbers of such sentences in the 1993 and 1994 writing samples were very similar but at grade G in 2004 many fewer sentences were judged incomprehensible than in the equivalent grade a decade earlier.

**Table 15 : Number of sentences failing to communicate meaning effectively.**

	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
<b>Boys</b>								
1980		0	0	1	1	0		
1993		0	0	1	0	1	3	9
1994	0	0	0	2	0	3	5	4
2004	0	0	1	0	2	1	2	2
<b>Girls</b>								
1980		0	0	0	1	4		
1993		0	1	2	1	0	5	8
1994	0	0	0	1	0	1	4	12
2004	0	0	0	0	1	0	4	4
<b>All</b>								
1980		0	0	1	2	4		
1993		0	1	3	1	1	8	17
1994	0	0	0	3	0	4	9	16
2004	0	0	1	0	3	1	6	6

**Figure 12 Effective communication**



## Non-Standard English

Children's use of spoken Standard English was investigated by Hudson and Holmes (1995), who expressed the view that whilst some judgements concerning the boundary between Standard Spoken English (SSE) and Non-Standard English (NSE) were inevitably subjective, most could be made with some confidence. Hudson and Holmes employed three general principles to govern decisions. The first – dismissing accent – is of no relevance in the context of this study of pupils' writing. The second – that SSE need not be formal – seems to apply equally to evaluation of writing as varied as that encountered in 16+ examinations. Their third principle – that SSE is constantly being redefined, especially by young people – is also important when judging writing, if spontaneity and the use of contemporary language is not to be penalised. Hudson and Holmes listed a total of 29 NSE forms encountered in speech samples from four regions in England. The analysis of NSE in our writing samples reported below employed the same categories of NSE forms as reported by Hudson and Holmes, supplemented by some found in our writing samples but not encountered by Hudson and Holmes. Like them we have listed all the categories of NSE used in our analysis and provided an example of each form to serve as its label (see table 16). Our analysis encountered 15 of the 29 NSE forms identified by Hudson and Holmes, together with an additional 16 forms.

All instances of the use of NSE in the writing samples (except for any which appeared to be reported speech, where the use of NSE forms might well be intentional) were noted. This is not to say that the use of NSE was inappropriate in all (or indeed in any) such cases. Such decisions are necessarily subjective and the lack of context for these writing samples makes it impossible to reach soundly based judgements of this nature. It must be understood that this analysis was not an attempt to identify all colloquial or other informal language of which there were many, many examples (for instance 'big flash houses' (1994 D boy); 'in towns and such like' (1980 C girl)) not categorised as NSE.

How often might we expect to see NSE forms used in 16+ examination scripts? It seems reasonable to expect them to be less common in this written corpus than in the speech samples analysed by Hudson and Holmes – where 77% of 15 year olds used some NSE forms during a few minutes of speech. NSE is less likely to be appropriate in writing; perhaps especially for a written examination. In the event NSE forms proved quite scarce. Examples were found in only 107 of our 1679 sentences (6.3%) across the four years investigated.

Overall, it is clear to see that NSE was very rare indeed in 1980 (only 0.013 instances per sentence on average) but has since become relatively common in writing for 16+ examinations. In 1993 there were 0.048 instances per sentences; in 1994 0.05; whilst by 2004 on average 0.128 instances of NSE forms per sentence were found in the writing sample.

**Table 16 : Non-Standard English forms (number of instances encountered)**

<i>NSE forms cited by Hudson and Holmes (1995)*</i>	1980	1993	1994	2004	total
have <i>fell</i> (NSE past participles, typically SSE past tense forms)		1	3	1	4
she <i>come</i> (reverses above – NSE past tense = SSE past participle)		3		20	23
there <i>is two</i> ( <i>is</i> with <i>there</i> & a following plural)	2		2	1	5
things <i>what</i> (for SEE <i>that</i> )	1	1	2		4
<i>not .... no</i> (double negatives)		2	2		4
they <i>was</i> ( <i>was</i> with a plural subject)		2	1		3
<i>me</i> and <i>him</i> went ( <i>me, him, her, us, them</i> in compound subjects)		3	1		4
<i>dead good</i> (for SSE <i>very</i> )		1			1
<i>this guy</i> ( <i>this/these</i> with a person/thing not mentioned before)				5	5
come <i>quick</i> (use of an adjective as an adverb)				2	2
<i>out the window</i> (common before window, door etc.)				2	2
they <i>was</i> ( <i>was</i> with a plural subject)				5	5
<i>was sat</i> ( <i>sat/stood</i> instead of SSE sitting etc.)				2	2
<i>that fast</i> ( <i>that</i> for SSE <i>so</i> )				1	1
he <i>were</i> (reverse of they <i>was</i> above)				1	1
<i>Additional NSE forms encountered in these writing samples</i>	1980	1993	1994	2004	total
<i>real keen</i> (for SSE <i>really</i> )	1				1
<i>may of disliked</i> (for SSE <i>have</i> )		3	3	1	7
a <i>load of</i> (for SSE <i>lot</i> )		3	2	1	6
<i>funny enough</i> (for SSE <i>funnily</i> )		1			1
<i>that had</i> (for SSE <i>who</i> or <i>which</i> )			4	4	8
<i>like usual</i> (for SSE <i>as</i> )			3		3
<i>make through</i> (for SSE <i>go</i> )			1		1
in <i>someways</i> (for SSE <i>some way</i> )			1		1
she <i>goes</i> (for SSE <i>says</i> or <i>said</i> )			1		1
<i>pointy</i> (for SSE <i>pointed</i> etc)				5	5
<i>seeing</i> (for SSE <i>since</i> )				1	1
<i>get seen</i> (for SSE <i>be</i> )				1	1
<i>me</i> (for SSE <i>my</i> )				3	3
<i>gona</i> (for SSE <i>going to</i> )				1	1
<i>like</i> (for SSE <i>about/approximately</i> )				1	1
<i>kind of</i> (for SSE <i>rather</i> )				1	1
<b>All</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>107</b>

\*Note that the remaining 14 NSE forms listed by Hudson and Holmes (1995) were not encountered.

Table 17 compares the overall incidence of NSE by grade and sex across years and figure 13 provides a graphical summary of the variations between the four years investigated.

In 1980 NSE was rarely encountered at any of the grades awarded then (A to E). Interestingly this remained largely true of the 1993 writing sample, although rather more instances of NSE were observed at grade E. In 1994 too, abler candidates (by now restricted to those at grade C or above) used them sparingly, although candidates awarded lower grades used them more frequently. But whilst the incidence of NSE forms was observed to step up in lower grades in both 1993 and 1994, those awarded G and F were not significantly more likely to use such forms than those awarded E (and D in the case of 1994). This was no longer the case in 2004, when there was a notably greater tendency for the incidence of NSE forms to continue to increase as grade declines. By 2004 NSE forms are also found in significant quantity in the sentences from candidates awarded grade C (and also A\*), in contrast to the tendency observed in earlier years for candidates in this range to stick to SSE.

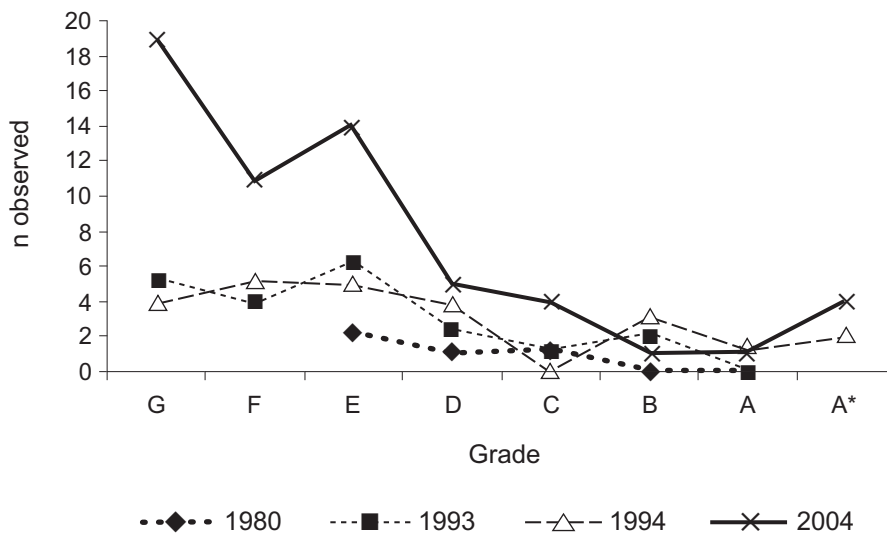
Whilst the data available are limited, they do suggest that boys were more likely than girls to use NSE forms in this written context (as Hudson and Holmes found in speech); this was notably the case at grade G in 2004.

Our subjective impression was that the use of NSE in different grades/years roughly matched the tendency to use colloquial or other informal language. It was also our impression that 2004's candidates were noticeably more likely to use numbers or symbols directly rather than as words (e.g. '8' rather than 'eight'; '&' for 'and'). 2004's sentences also made more use of reported speech.

**Table 17 : Incidence of Non-Standard English forms**

	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
<b>Boys</b>								
1980		0	0	0	1	1		
1993		0	2	1	1	3	3	2
1994	2	1	1	0	3	3	3	2
2004	4	1	0	1	4	6	6	16
<b>Girls</b>								
1980	0	0	1	0	1			
1993	0	0	0	1	3	1	3	
1994	0	0	2	0	1	2	2	2
2004	0	0	1	3	1	8	5	3
<b>All</b>								
1980		0	0	1	1	2		
1993		0	2	1	2	6	4	5
1994	2	1	3	0	4	5	5	4
2004	4	1	1	4	5	14	11	19

Figure 13 Non-Standard English forms



*Error free sentences*

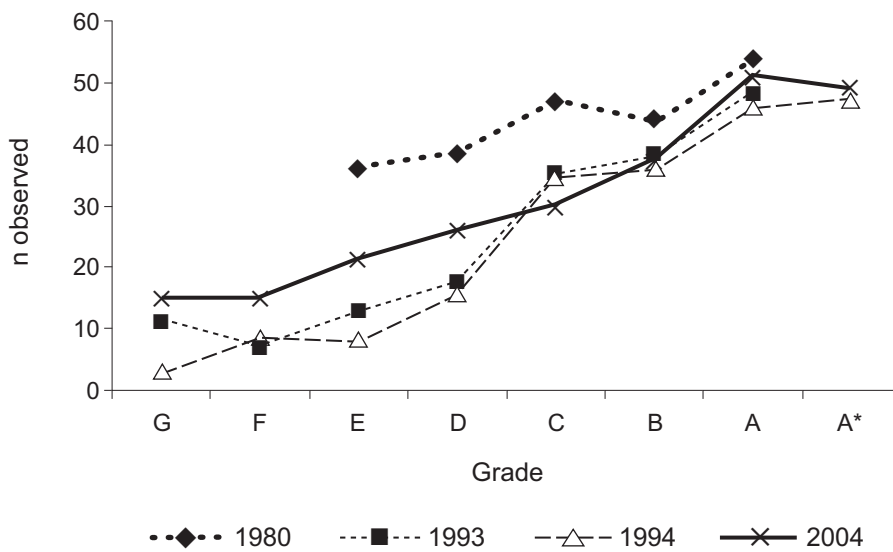
To provide an overall indicator of accurate writing the research team identified those sentences which appeared completely error free. This provides a basis for comparisons between the years investigated. Although it cannot take account of the multiple errors often found in the work of candidates in the lower grades, it might be the kind of criterion which would appeal to the 'man in the street'.

Table 18 shows the number of error free sentences from boys and girls awarded each grade in each year. Figure 14 provides a graphical illustration of the differences between years.

**Table 18 : Number of error free sentences by year grade and gender**

	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
<b>Boys</b>								
1980		24	22	22	19	16		
1993		23	19	17	5	7	2	5
1994	21	23	21	16	6	4	3	1
2004	24	23	19	16	13	11	11	3
<b>Girls</b>								
1980		29	22	25	19	20		
1993		25	18	18	12	5	5	6
1994	26	23	15	19	10	4	5	2
2004	25	28	18	14	13	10	4	12
<b>All</b>								
1980		53	44	47	38	36		
1993		48	37	35	17	12	7	11
1994	47	46	36	35	16	8	8	3
2004	49	51	37	30	26	21	15	15

Figure 14 Error free sentences



As might be expected, in all four years investigated girls produced more error free sentences than boys and the trend for the proportion of error free sentences to rise with the grades awarded was observed.

In all grades the writing samples from 1980 included more error free sentences than were evident in any other year. The plot for 1980 also slopes less than those for other years – showing how weaker 1980 candidates looked more like those awarded higher grades in writing accurately. The 1993 and 1994 writing samples look remarkably alike in this respect and in both the proportion of error free sentences in the lower grades is depressingly low.

However, the data for 2004 relating to grades D to G provide better news for those concerned for standards of literacy amongst weaker pupils reaching the end of compulsory schooling. Noticeably higher proportions of error free sentences are observed across the lower ability range than were seen a decade earlier. In the higher grades, 2004's sample broadly matches the other two GCSE samples (from 1993 and 1994) and produces almost as many error free sentences as the 1980 GCE sample in the A/A\* ability range.

### Are these comparisons fair?

We cannot responsibly report these data and consider their relevance to comparisons of examination standards over time – or educational standards in the broader sense – without revisiting many of the conceptual issues and caveats discussed in Massey and Elliott (1996). Evidence like that reported here entices us all to jump to conclusions which may seem obvious until one considers a variety of factors which might make these comparisons between writing samples unfair.

Analytical comparisons of the performance of candidates who have taken different examinations like ours are rare, but such comparisons are in many ways not dissimilar to indirect comparisons made using 'reference test' methodology. This uses performance on some common measure to estimate the calibre of candidates taking different examinations and then employs statistical techniques to establish if candidates of equivalent ability (as measured on the common yardstick) get equivalent results in each. For instance, amongst other methodologies, Massey et al (2003) used performance on standardised tests in Reading Comprehension and Mathematics administered each year by some Local Education Authorities to provide a control variable for longitudinal comparisons of standards in national tests; over time intervals of three to five years. Newbould and Massey (1979) reported a variety of studies using the reference test approach via data from common elements within examinations – e.g. papers or questions common to different examinations or compulsory elements where choice was allowed. They point out that before it is safe to draw conclusions from such evidence it remains necessary to establish that the common elements are not more or less relevant to, or biased against, one or other of the measures being compared. This holds true however crucial the achievements tested via the common yardstick and irrespective of the fact that as common elements they might be integral parts of the examinations being compared. Our use of writing samples is in many ways analogous to this and, although the common element is but a fragment and inference alone replaces the role of sophisticated statistical techniques, the need to establish that these are fair comparisons remains an imperative. Are there reasons why candidates may have been likely to write in different ways in the writing samples from different years or to have been more or less prone to make mistakes of various kinds? Might there even be reasons why it might be unfair to expect pupils awarded similar grades in different years to achieve the same levels of skill in writing?

### **Varying tasks**

How far the differences in the tasks set might have affected the writing samples from the different years in ways which could affect our comparisons remains a moot point. For instance, two of the five questions set in 1980 largely precluded dialogue and may have discouraged informality – but each candidate had a free choice between them. The choice of questions set in 1993 and 1994 offered candidates a platform of stimulus materials as the basis from which to develop their own writing – but allowed a wide range of responses, in keeping with candidates' own preferences. The 2004 question determined the writing genre ('to explore, imagine, entertain') and provided a common lead in, but again left candidates free to apply their own stylistic preferences when deciding how to continue.

Given only the single sentences available in the writing samples it was not always possible to discern the purpose behind candidates' writing. But one could often gain an impression and, overall it seemed likely that candidates from 1980 were less likely than those in any of the later years to be using narrative or dialogue forms. Conversely they were more likely to be concerned to discuss issues or present an argument, possibly due to the emphases of the selection of tasks available then. The later years were more alike in such respects; all the questions explicitly required the candidates to 'imagine', leading to a narrative focus. Might this have affected our analyses?



## Varying curricular contexts

Changes in syllabus content and the structure of examinations – what they seek to test and how they do it – are central to any discussion about whether we might reasonably expect students learning in different years to write equally well – in any sense. We have suggested how these examinations reflect changing curricular fashions in the way in which English has been taught. For instance the 1980 syllabus made no reference to literature or speech but in 1993, 30% of the marks were allocated to responses to literary texts and a (separate) assessment of oral skills had been introduced. By 1994 speaking and listening were examined alongside response to literature and contributed towards the overall grade in English, as continued to be the case in 2004. Would such changes have broadened the curriculum and so made greater demands on the teaching time available? If so, would it then be fair to expect candidates to be as capable as their forbears in every respect?

But has so much really changed? Even structural changes like the introduction of literature and speaking and listening may be red herrings. English teachers have always taught literature alongside language and most students being prepared for GCE English Language in 1980 would also have taken an examination in English Literature. So preparation for set texts would have bitten deeply into classroom time in 1980 too. And whilst the 1980 examinations may not have included it, are we sure that teachers then neglected the development of speech? Or did teachers, like Robson (1989), always regard it as a skill to be encouraged and acquired naturally alongside others?

Caperon (1989) argued that English is

*'what happens when teachers and pupils meet for whatever the school timetable calls English; and what goes on ... is determined more by the outlook of the teacher, the resources... and the response of the pupils' than by any single influence external to the encounter'.*

His view was that GCSE

*'encouraged the view that our best work... will be enhanced and some of our more idiosyncratic weaknesses will be curbed'.*

English classrooms may have changed less than variations in syllabuses might suggest.

In defining just what candidates must do, the question papers etc. operationalise each syllabus/specification. They determine what is really being assessed. Assessment instruments have themselves changed dramatically. In 1980 the stimulus materials were brief, dry, historical and rather lacking in human interest and relevance to the personal experience of students aged 16+. The papers from all three later years include more extensive stimulus materials designed to relate more closely to candidates' perspectives and to make the curriculum and the tasks assessed accessible to the widest possible range of students. The quantity and level of reading demanded is itself an issue. Is it possible to provide so much stimulus material that it detracts from the candidates' capacity to write? But whilst it might conceivably use up examination time and hence inhibit the opportunity to write and/or reduce the freedom to imagine, it is hard to see how it might make candidates write less accurately or restrict their vocabulary or capacity to employ more complex structures. Pre-release is also an issue. Whilst including voluminous stimulus materials, the 1994 examination had offered candidates the opportunity to digest some of these well in advance of the examination. It is not easy to see why question papers designed to be more accessible should

inhibit the quality of writing we might expect to observe. Instead the case might be made for hoping they would succeed in their intended purpose and help candidates show what they can do, leading us to look for improvements in the quality of candidates' responses.

The range of writing and the genres which must be handled could be an important issue. Teachers in the 1990s might have argued that their syllabuses placed greater stress than was common in 1980 on writing for a range of purposes, contexts and audiences and that teaching and learning reflected this. They might further claim that they have spent valuable classroom time discussing and writing about important and even contentious issues. But a representative from 1980 might argue that 'twas ever thus' and that English classrooms had long provided opportunities for such practices. Syllabuses then were less detailed and explicit and it was understood that the question papers provided the clearest signpost to what candidates might be expected to do. The 1980 examination questions themselves provided opportunities to write in a variety of genres. They asked candidates to tackle material and communication styles beyond their personal experience – perhaps invoking a wider range than is actually seen in the later examinations, which emphasise accessibility and relevance. It is possible that in later years coursework extended the range of writing required beyond that required by the written papers; but since 1994 coursework writing has counted for such a small proportion of total marks that it has ceased to provide a powerful incentive.

The rise and fall of coursework across this period could well have been associated with shifts in what was taught and learned. Unless this was the case it is difficult to imagine why most teachers of English rushed to shoulder the assessment burden involved in 100% coursework assessment between 1986 and 1993 – or why the regulatory body should have outlawed the practice in 1994! Did teachers in schools where coursework was the dominant form emphasise different aspects of writing from those where external examiners would have the last word?

Latterly we have seen government policy extend deep into the innards of educational practice. The advent of the GCSE in 1986 and the regulation of the curriculum and examinations which accompanied it were but the beginning of this trend. The national curriculum introduced soon afterwards determined in some detail the learning objectives of children throughout compulsory schooling. The generation which reached the age of 16+ in 1994 had been subject to this since their entry to secondary schools, necessitating the revisions to syllabuses and examinations which took effect at that time. We have already alluded to the restrictions on coursework introduced then and the motivation for imposing this probably included a desire to police the re-emphasis of curricular features officially considered neglected. Other policy changes since 1994 echoed this note of official dissatisfaction and increased the level of curricular direction. National tests in the basic subjects within the national curriculum – English, mathematics and science – at ages 7, 11 and 14 were introduced (from 1995) and league tables published; publicising and comparing schools' achievements on these tests in order to spur schools on to greater achievements. Moreover an industry has been spawned using data on pupils' achievements to investigate the 'value added' at each stage in education; a managerial tool now often employed at the level of individual teaching groups. More recently the national strategies in mathematics and English gave voice to the official view that the national curriculum alone had proved inadequate to re-direct teachers to focus sufficiently on the fundamentals the strategies specified. The cultural climate in education has undoubtedly been changed by these developments and whilst the cohort reaching 16+ in 2004 were too old to have been exposed to all the features of these policies, they were educated in schools strongly conscious of them. Has all this changed what teachers ask of their pupils and thus

how they write?

### **Varying perceptions of what constitutes appropriate writing**

The discussion above implies that examination questions and the formal curriculum are not the only factors affecting what and how candidates write in examinations – and elsewhere. Learning takes place in an ever shifting cultural climate. We should see English at 16+ in a wider social context. GCSE comes at the end of eleven years of schooling, throughout which the quality of writing should have been a central focus. English teachers responsible for a few hours weekly preparation in a two year GCSE course can only make a minor contribution to the development of their pupils' capacity to write well – although they may carry the can if things go badly! More important still is that in contrast to most other academic subjects, language learning begins at birth and takes place throughout children's lives both in and out of formal schooling – the entirety of which occupies but a small portion of their time. GCSE syllabus change looms less large on this broader canvas.

The influence of the general cultural climate outside schools is powerful. Some of the changing patterns in writing we observed across the years provide clues to this. For instance the explosion in the use of the apostrophe may reflect a remarkable shift towards a less formal writing style in recent years. Less formal writing is more likely to need the apostrophe, particularly for abbreviation, and perhaps today's pupils (and also their teachers and examiners) feel that contractions have become more acceptable in written communication. Unfortunately candidates are not always successful in their (increasingly frequent) use of this device and the least able seem the least likely to realise their limitations. Abler candidates were more circumspect in their use of the apostrophe in all the years investigated! The increased use of Non-Standard English forms provides additional emphatic confirmation of this trend towards informality, with many candidates from later years writing in registers previously thought more appropriate for speech. Language classified as NSE, though clearly growing, may remain a small proportion of the total of these written samples, but a wide range of phrases the examiners of 1980 would probably have frowned upon have become much more common. This may sometimes have been unwanted, as the Examiner's report on candidates' work in 1994 had noted.

Teachers' perceptions of what is expected in writing will change as social conventions alter and, arguably, teenagers' perceptions of the boundaries of appropriate behaviour and language are more volatile still. So it is likely that over the past quarter of a century pressures of one sort or another have wrought changes in the kinds of writing schools were willing to value and would reward by high marks. How might the emphases have shifted on such matters as the importance of personal expression, the fitness of language for purpose, clear and concise writing and the importance of demonstrating an extended vocabulary and/or complex prose? For instance, our analyses show how the abler of 1994's candidates tended to use shorter sentences with simpler grammatical structures and to be the least likely to use vocabulary beyond the commonplace. But on a more positive note it was our impression that although some sentences from each year's sample seemed stilted or forced, with words where the meaning or tone did not quite fit, the 1994 sample probably suffered least from this because of the simpler language used. Were they the least inclined to view the examination as a showcase for their vocabulary and grammatical range? Interestingly, it was our impression that 2004's candidates seemed as likely as those from 1980 to have ventured just beyond the edge of their capacity to deploy sophisticated language. Might a pendulum have swung

both back and forth?

So it is at least possible that the prevailing view of what good writing might comprise could have contributed to the variations in structure and vocabulary observed. But whilst there are many virtues in keeping writing simple and natural, there are many features of writing to be taken into the balance when comparing writing quality. For instance, it is difficult to see why candidates who used simpler forms should not be expected to display at least the same levels of accuracy as those who were more ambitious.

### **So is it fair to make comparisons across the years?**

All this takes us back to the question from whence we started. Should we be making comparisons across time involving features like those we were able to investigate?

Our view is that such comparisons are not entirely unfair – provided we keep the historical context in mind and allow for 'reasonable' change in language usage. But we do not see why the changes in curriculum and assessment regimes should lead us to expect pupils to write less accurately. All were trumpeted as curricular advances – almost guaranteed to improve learning – and the advocates of these curricular revisions have never suggested that writing accurately requires less emphasis than hitherto. So we will try to draw what conclusions we can from these data regarding this and other issues.

Yet we acknowledge that others might disagree; perhaps arguing that one or other era's students may have spent more time developing other aspects of their writing or other aspects of English, which may both cause and compensate for reduced accuracy. Such conflicts of opinion are difficult to resolve, often reflecting differences in value systems rather than different perceptions of facts or logical argument.

## CONCLUSIONS

### **Methodology**

The initial study on which this builds was the first of its kind and went some way towards establishing the feasibility of quantitative analysis of atomistic writing samples and the place of such analytic comparisons in the family of comparability methodologies. Subsequent research has confirmed this and, by taking advantage of opportunities to design the selection of writing samples specifically for their purpose, extended the range of the comparisons which might be made. This extension to our series of data to encompass 2004 adds yet more weight to the view that an analytic approach to comparability has merit. The aspects of writing investigated here do discriminate between candidates awarded different examination grades. Analysis continues to reveal variations which are sufficiently consistent and interpretable to inform comparisons of achievement and grading standards applied in different years. It seems likely that similar approaches could also be applied in other subjects and to other aspects of comparability, including comparisons across different syllabuses or awarding bodies.

However, analyses like these have their limitations. Deconstructing writing leads to comparisons very different from those examiners or other readers of the candidates' (whole) writing might make. The whole can sometimes be much more than the sum of its parts. Our comparisons focus primarily on features relating to accuracy and can only hint at quality in the broader sense. They provide very limited insights into structure and other aspects of style and range. Other important features of writing – content and sense of audience for instance – are wholly beyond our reach. But the examiner's fully rounded judgement must encompass all of these features of writing, as well as all the many other elements of achievement assessed under the banner of English.

For analytic methods to bear upon longitudinal comparisons, the availability of suitable samples of candidates' work is a crucial pre-requisite. Few archives of scripts from past years are available and, like our writing samples, they will have been designed for specific purposes and may prove less than ideal for the comparisons one might most wish to make. Advance planning to overcome this is not easy, because it is difficult to predict the shape of future curricular and assessment changes or to guess what changes in societal values might affect the value education will place on particular topics or skills. Developments in how English is taught and learned illustrate this well, showing how curricular fashions retreat as well as advance. If such changes bedevil comparisons in English, they will prove even more of a challenge to long term comparisons in other subjects, where the nature of subjects themselves may change fundamentally. Geography and history today bear little resemblance to what was taught under those labels in 1980; whilst other subjects have disappeared or been re-invented. Consider for instance how woodwork, dressmaking and home economics have metamorphosed into design and technology subjects, incorporating design, evaluation, marketing and commercial elements appropriate to the 21st century alongside practical skills.

### **Gender differences**

Exploring variations between the writing of boys and girls was not our prime aim but the evidence does prove interesting. With boys and girls matched for grade in our samples one might expect comparisons to prove even. But this would be a mistake as there are many ways to achieve a grade.

Ability in writing as a whole, let alone the specific aspects investigated, may well vary systematically for boys and girls awarded the same overall grade in English.

- In the 1980, 1993 and 1994 writing samples, boys tended to use a richer vocabulary than girls, but this did not hold true in 2004 when abler girls made more use of words from higher lexical categories than boys and no consistent gender pattern was evident in the middle and lower parts of the ability range.
- In 2004, boys' spelling was no more prone to error than girls'; again in contrast to all three earlier years, when girls made fewer spelling mistakes than boys.
- In 1980, 1993 and 1994 boys were also marginally more ambitious in their use of grammatical structures, being more likely to use complex or multiple forms rather than simple or compound sentences. Again this did not hold for 2004, when girls in six of the eight grades displayed greater use of the relatively sophisticated structures.
- The sexes were equally likely to be able to produce grammatically acceptable sentence structures.
- Previous years had seemed to hint that girls were less likely than boys to make 'run-on' errors (failing to use a full stop when one was required) or to make case errors, but in both instances this was reversed in the 2004 sample. This perhaps makes it unsafe to speculate that a gender trend exists in these punctuation devices. Moreover no obvious consistent differences between boys and girls were noted for most other forms of punctuation.
- The apostrophe, perhaps, proved an exception to this – though also inconsistently across the years. Boys were more likely than girls to use the apostrophe (and to omit it), especially for abbreviation, in 1980, 1993 and 1994. But yet again 2004 proved an exception, with girls then proving more likely to use (and abuse) this punctuation device.
- Boys were more likely to use Non-Standard English than girls.

### **Comparisons between different years**

We have followed the reporting style established in Massey and Elliott (1996) of dealing with year on year comparisons sequentially, in order to focus more clearly on any chronological patterns.

#### *Comparing 1980 with 1993/1994*

Grade for grade....

- Candidates from 1980 tended to use more adventurous vocabulary and sentence structures.
- Despite this they were just as likely to be judged grammatically adequate as those of 1994 and made fewer than half the number of spelling mistakes.
- Abler candidates (A–C) in 1980 were at least as good at punctuation as their counterparts in 1994 and those graded D–E in 1980 were much better.
- Using the number of error-free sentences as an overall criterion for accuracy confirmed that in 1980, abler candidates were consistently more accurate than those with the same grades in 1993 or 1994 and that the superiority of those in grades D and E was greater still. In some respects 1980's grade D and E candidates seemed not unlike those reaching C and above in the 1990s. The choice between GCE and CSE which existed then may have given rise to selection

effects exaggerating differences between years in these grades. In 1980 many pupils not entering GCE examinations would instead have achieved CSE grades 2 or 3 in English, which were ostensibly equivalent to grade D and E. Pupils might have been selected for GCE entry because they could write accurately. But without equivalent data we have no means of knowing how CSE candidates in this grade range would have compared. In any event this in no way invalidates our comparisons with GCE standards, which are probably of more interest because of their longer-standing pedigree.

- Non-Standard English forms were found in only a small proportion of the writing in 1980 but were much more common in 1993 and 1994, especially in the lower grades.
- Additional objective indicators point to a substantial change in writing style. The explosion in the use of the apostrophe in 1993 and 1994, especially for abbreviation, suggests that many pupils were using a less formal style than was conventional in 1980. Our subjective impressions of the writing samples strongly support this. Informality may also contribute to the differences in vocabulary and sentence construction noted above, explaining why 1994's candidates were particularly likely to write shorter sentences which used simpler words and structures.

#### *Comparing 1993 with 1994*

Comparisons between 1993 and 1994 are more mixed.

- In some analyses the data for 1993 occupy an intermediate position between those of 1980 and 1994 – for instance, those concerning the quality of vocabulary and spelling, grammatical structures, and the incidence of Non-Standard English. 1993's abler candidates were perhaps more like those from 1980 than those from 1994 in such respects, although this was not true of candidates graded D and E.
- However some aspects of punctuation by 1993's candidates appeared relatively weak, including all stops, which might explain why their grammar was less likely to be judged adequate than that of their counterparts from 1994. The picture here was not wholly consistent. Weaker 1993 candidates were much less likely to make case errors than those from 1994 and whilst they used the apostrophe almost as often (signalling the same shift towards informality), they were more likely to use it correctly. Abler candidates avoided the apostrophe in 1993, much as they did in 1980.
- Some variations between 1993 and 1994 are especially noteworthy. Spelling and case errors were markedly worse in 1994 than 1993. But we have already drawn attention to the fact that the schools examined in 1993 were from the minority not taking up the dominant 100% coursework options available and suggested that the latter might value different aspects of writing. Candidates from former 100% coursework schools would have been in a majority in 1994, their schools having been dragooned into entering for an external examination. Note too that because of simple weight of numbers, the teaching experience of many new examiners recruited to cope with 1994's increase in external examining may also have been grounded in the coursework approach. Could any differences in their value systems have persisted into the new era?
- But even though some important aspects of writing in 1994 compared unfavourably with the 1993 writing sample, other features compared well and the number of wholly correct sentences were much the same in both years.

### *Comparing 2004 with previous eras*

Taken together, in most respects the writing samples from the 1990s do not compare well with the 1980 sample. How does the sample from 2004 stand up against them?

- The analysis of vocabulary shows a sharp reversal to the downward trend. Writing by 2004's GCSE candidates at every grade displays a wider vocabulary than those from 1993 or 1994. Whilst not matching that of 1980 GCE candidates in grades D and E, vocabulary in 2004 does so at grade C and even exceeds the vocabulary levels for 1980 GCE candidates awarded grades B and above. Thus 2004's examination candidates either had a better vocabulary than those a decade ago, or they were more likely to make a conscious effort to display their best efforts in the examination. We feel we must sound a subjective note of caution here, having noted that a few well-graded candidates had pushed their vocabulary beyond their limits and used unfamiliar terms inappropriately. But any tendency for vocabulary to become less impressive has been reversed with a vengeance.
- Despite their having used more adventurous vocabulary, spelling by the abler (A\* to D) of 2004's candidates is in general about as good as that of their equivalents in 1994. More encouragingly, spelling by 2004 candidates awarded lower grades – where spelling quality had declined most noticeably in the 1994 sample – was appreciably better than that seen in 1994. The quality of spelling observed in 2004 matched the levels observed in the 1993 writing sample at grade E, approached this at grade F and moved substantially in the right direction at Grade G. This evidence suggests that a start has been made in reversing the rot in spelling evident in the 1990s. The progress shown probably owes much to improvements in spelling by boys. However the standards of spelling set in 1980 remain unchallenged.
- The evidence from 2004 relating to the use of a full stop to signal the end of a sentence is also most cheering. Right across the full range of ability, candidates from 2004 proved themselves more capable of managing this, the most essential of all stops, than those from any of the previous years studied – including GCE candidates in 1980. The improvement shown in this respect in comparison to the 1990s is huge, with 2004's sample including only about one third of the number of such errors evident in 1994. What then of candidates' ability to use other punctuation devices to make their writing comprehensible?
- The 2004 writing sample also compares favourably with all three previous samples in the correct use of the comma. Grade by grade there are in general more correct usages than were recorded in either 1993 or 1994 and, in grades B and C, the 2004 GCSE sample even produces more examples of correct use of the comma than 1980 GCE candidates awarded the same grades. The analyses of incorrect use of the comma and of instances of failure to use one where necessary also prove informative. We should flag up the point that the 1993 and 1994 writing samples for candidates awarded grades F and G were so badly constructed that we were forced to abandon our efforts to analyse these features, but we were able to complete the analyses for candidates in all grades from 2004. When the inclusion of unwarrantable commas is considered, variation across years is not extensive, but 2004 resembles 1980 in producing more cases of this than 1993 and 1994. Note too the tendency for this error to peak in the middle of the ability range. What can this mean? We would suggest that it signifies a greater willingness to try to use the comma (and other punctuation devices) in 2004 and 1980 than was evident in the 1990s, so that more mistaken uses are recorded alongside greater numbers of correct ones. The peak in the centre of the ability range is another aspect of this; with candidates in grades D and E more likely



to attempt to use stops than those in lower grades, but less deft in using them than the abler candidates. Absent commas were more evident in 2004 than in any other year and this negative attribute too might be turned to a positive light. Might it be fair to speculate that this arose because some of 2004's candidates were trying to use relatively ambitious structures (which demanded more use of the comma) but were not quite up to their self-imposed challenge?

- The less common stops (the colon and semi-colon) were by and large avoided by these 16+ examination candidates, but those from 2004 (rather like those from 1980) were more likely to try to use them than had been the case in 1993 and 1994. The occasional use of a dash to provide a break in the text was noted. It was not seen in 1980 but was used very sparingly in all three later years; almost always successfully by very able candidates.
- The greater level of awareness of punctuation evident in 2004 extends also to the apostrophe. 2004's ablest candidates are the most restrained in their use of this and consequently make fewest errors in so doing. In this they closely resemble the ablest of the 1980 GCE candidates. Candidates from 1980 awarded grades C to E were less likely to use the apostrophe than those from 2004 and consequently recorded both fewer mistakes and fewer successful uses. 1993's and 1994's writing samples had displayed an explosion in the use of the apostrophe, especially for abbreviation, but the 2004 sample was very noticeably more restrained in this, across the whole range of grades. Fewer successful uses of the apostrophe were noted in 2004 than in the 1990s, along with fewer concomitant errors and omissions. It seems likely that this may arise not only from greater awareness of this punctuation device and the need to use it correctly but also from a retreat from the informality in writing style so evident in the 1990s. Even in the lower grade range, where candidates tend to be less inhibited, those from 2004 made much less use of abbreviation and the apostrophe than similarly graded candidates from the 1990s.
- Evidence relating to the incidence of case errors in 2004 is just as encouraging as that for punctuation. These were uncommon amongst abler candidates in all four years investigated, but in 2004 not a single candidate in grades A\* to E failed to use a capital letter to start the sentence sampled. They were unfortunately not equally adept in the capitalisation of proper nouns: failing in this and/or using capitals incorrectly more frequently than the 1993 and (more emphatically still) 1980 writing samples. 2004 does however register as an improvement over the performance of the 1994 writing sample in this respect too, especially where candidates from lower (D to G) grades are concerned.
- Analysis of the types of sentence used suggests that, in this respect too, 2004 was more like 1980 and 1993 than 1994. The abler candidates from 1994's writing sample used more simple and compound sentences rather than complex sentences, whilst less able 1994 candidates used more multiple sentences (because of run-on errors) than were evident in other years. When compound and complex sentence structures are considered jointly, 2004 contains more of these than any other year (and 1994 fewest). This may reflect both more ambitious sentence construction than was evident in 1994 and/or a swing towards greater formality. However it should be noted that the 2004 sample did contain more sentences which defied classification than those from any other year.
- When the overall judgements relating adequate sentence construction, freedom from error and effective communication are considered, 2004 again compares well. At both extremes of the ability range (grades G and F and A\* and A) the 2004 writing sample contained more sentences judged grammatically adequate than equivalent grades in any other year (including 1980 for the

higher ability range). In the middle of the ability range 2004 was broadly equivalent to 1993 and 1994 in this respect. But such judgements of grammatical adequacy seem unlikely to provide a very sound overall criterion as they are probably influenced by the type of sentence written. Those who use relatively simple sentence structures should have a greater likelihood of success. If candidates try to show their paces and essay more sophisticated sentence structures, they run more risk of coming to grief. Whilst it could be argued that writers should recognise where they go wrong, it seems hard-hearted not to give some credit for ambition. As we might expect in light of the detailed analyses described above, the 2004 sample included noticeably more error free sentences from weaker candidates (grades D to G) than were evident in the 1990s. In grades B and C, 2004 broadly matches the other two GCSE samples, whilst at grade A, 2004 almost matches the number of error free sentences seen in 1980. At the most basic level of all, the 2004 writing sample yet again compares well. At grade E and above almost all sentences in all four years investigated were judged to have communicated their intended meaning – however imperfectly. But in the lower part of the GCSE grade range, significantly fewer sentences from 2004 were judged incomprehensible than had been the case for 1993 and 1994.

- In one respect the data for the 2004 sample does conform to an ongoing trend. The dramatic growth in use of Non-Standard English forms in writing in 16+ examinations in English has continued throughout the quarter of a century spanned by these examinations. NSE was rare in 1980; only 0.013 instances per sentence on average being detected. This grew to 0.048 in 1993, to 0.05 in 1994 and to a startling 0.128 in 2004. Whilst NSE is used much more frequently by candidates awarded lower grades, it is now also sometimes found in writing by candidates awarded the highest grades. Of course, it is quite possible for NSE forms to be used deliberately to excellent effect. But this is too often far from true. It is also our impression that the increasing tendency to use NSE forms is also matched by increasing use of colloquial or other informal language. Increasingly writing seems to follow forms which would have been confined to speech in 1980. Sometimes this seems appropriate, but often it looks more like poor judgement or simply failure to appreciate the distinction. Increasing use of symbols was also noted in 2004.

## **What should we make of these comparisons?**

### *Has the quality of writing improved?*

Focussing primarily on the changes evident in 2004, these data certainly invite the view that in most aspects investigated by us, writing by candidates awarded equivalent grades in examinations at 16+ has improved since the 1990s. Given that the proportion of the age cohort entering for GCSE English is broadly similar in both eras and that the examiners have certainly not become less generous in their grading decisions since the 1990s, it seems safe to accept the obvious conclusion – the quality of many features of writing by school leavers has improved over the last decade.

Such features include many of the basic skills of written language – vocabulary; spelling; punctuation (including the use of full stops and capitalisation, the comma, colon and semi-colon and the apostrophe); sentence structure and grammatical adequacy; overall freedom from error and communicative success. In some of these features the improvements are very substantial indeed, perhaps most notably in punctuation.

This evidence of improvement in skills which are fundamental to academic work in all subjects – not just English – should prove very welcome to all concerned with education, and should be greeted as evidence of the success and hard work of teachers and educational managers. It will without doubt be seen as evidence of the success of recent government policy initiatives which have sought to re-focus education's attention on such basic skills. It may not unreasonably be regarded as vindication of the efforts of the architects of these policies to change what teachers and pupils regard as important.

Improvements like those we have detected in the 2004 writing sample were heralded by the evaluation of the KS3 Literacy Strategy Pilot, (Ofsted, 2002a) which observed 'Improvements in word- and sentence-level work were clearest in spelling strategies, the use of vocabulary and the understanding of stylistic conventions. Improvements were least in sentence construction, punctuation and paragraphing.' It seems that whilst not formally subject to the Strategy's strictures, the preparation of this cohort for GCSE may still have been influenced by it. Official quarters are unlikely to be discomfited by our evidence that Ofsted may have been wrong in their pessimism regarding punctuation.

Some of the more detailed data will be equally welcome to all concerned. This will include the notable improvements recorded in some aspects of the writing of those awarded the lower GCSE grades. Poor performance by less able school leavers has rightly been a growing source of concern in recent years and evidence that it is possible to turn this corner is to be welcomed. Similarly the reversal of some trends in gender differences will be welcomed – including improved use of higher level vocabulary by abler girls and evidence of the reversal of former gender inequalities in spelling, punctuation and the use of more ambitious sentence structures. The focus on pupils' performance in recent years was designed to make schools more conscious of such inequalities, which may have sensitised teachers to the need to focus on particular issues in language development with particular categories of students. If so, the policy/tactic seems to have succeeded.

Another significant development in writing at 16+ is not driven by policy and instead reflects an endemic change in cultural climate, which permeates schools like other social organisations. This is the drift towards the use of less formal language – in this instance in writing. Our data contain two key indicators of this; the use of the apostrophe for abbreviation and the influx of Non-Standard English forms. Although the use and abuse of the apostrophe had spiralled in the writing samples from the 1990s, the 2004 data indicate some moderation of this trend, particularly amongst abler candidates. However, our data regarding the use of NSE suggest that this has gathered pace since 1994; although again the evidence suggests that abler candidates are more likely to exercise restraint in using such terms unless the context is appropriate. This notwithstanding, the use of NSE (and other less formal language) by candidates awarded lower grades increased enormously in the 2004 writing sample. The briefest inspection of the samples suffices to confirm that this is, in the main, in ignorance of the conventional distinctions rather than by design. The use of formal language is necessary for precision in thinking as well as expression and, as such, will remain important in many spheres of learning and life. The teachers of the candidates providing the 2004 writing sample seem to have succeeded in making them more conscious of ways to organise writing better through punctuation etc. Should policy making now orchestrate judicious efforts to roll back the tide of informality?

### *What are the implications for GCSE?*

At the outset of any discussion of grading standards we have to recognise the limits to these data. We have not been able to consider all the features which determine good writing from bad. The nature of the writing samples prevented our examining all the mechanistic features we might have liked – paragraphing for instance – and a very much wider brief would be required to investigate features like style, imaginative content, structure and sequencing or sense of audience. In 1996, Massey and Elliott were obliged to acknowledge that whilst there appeared to have been a decline in the accuracy of writing seen in the examinations in 1993 and 1994 as compared with 1980s, it was conceivable that these wider aspects of writing might have improved to compensate – perhaps even as a result of deliberate shifts in curricular emphasis. Examiners have always allowed excellence in one attribute to compensate for poorer quality in others for individual cases, and systematic variation between groups of pupils prepared under different curricular regimes is plausible. Given that we can detect improvements in various aspects of writing in 2004, we must ask if they could only have been gained at the expense of other equally important characteristics of writing.

We must also remember that writing is by no means the only area of achievement being examined in GCSE English. If writing skills in general now carry more curricular weight than they did in 1994, should we not expect to find an improvement? If we do, does it then merit better grades? Massey and Elliott (1996) discussed such issues at some length but could not resist the temptation to regard the features of writing investigated here as being to some extent relevant to discussion of GCSE grading standards. Given the curricular emphasis on literacy in recent years, it is our view that the new evidence regarding performance in 2004 suggests that it might be reasonable to expect to see pupils given credit for what they and their teachers have so publicly been asked to achieve.

However, not everyone would agree with this. We have only been able to monitor achievement in a small portion of the GCSE English curriculum and whether it is safe to draw conclusions from this to overall GCSE standards is disputable. Moreover, any sudden shift in the grading standards of GCSE English might not be desirable even if it were widely thought justifiable. Making grading standards more lenient would give advantage to those subject to the new regime and disadvantage those unfortunate enough to have been examined already. Any sudden dislocation in standards could thus have considerable economic and social repercussions at the individual level, especially for the immediately preceding generation. It might be best to make haste slowly. The question of where (or perhaps when) the 'right' standards might be located also remains unanswered. All in all, would it be wrong to take the view that if the learning experiences of 2004's pupils lead to rather better writing than was evident a decade ago, they should be glad of it – just as society (and the polity) should welcome these improvements – without demanding higher GCSE grades than were awarded to previous cohorts? Could we not just be satisfied that improved performance means that the 'standards' implicit in 2004's grades represent a more appropriate level of quality and achievement, which should help to satisfy employers' and further educators' (sometimes mistaken) complaints that today's school leavers cannot do this, or that, as well as their forbears?

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## Appendix: The 2004 papers

- **2431/1 Unit 1** Non-fiction, Media and Information. (Foundation Tier).
- **2432/1 Unit 2** Different Cultures, Analysis and Argument. (Foundation Tier).
- **2433/1 Unit 3** Literary Heritage and Imaginative Writing. (Foundation Tier).
  
- **2431/2 Unit 1** Non-fiction, Media and Information. (Higher Tier).
- **2432/2 Unit 2** Different Cultures, Analysis and Argument. (Higher Tier).
- **2433/2 Unit 3** Literary Heritage and Imaginative Writing. (Higher Tier).





**OXFORD CAMBRIDGE AND RSA EXAMINATIONS**  
**General Certificate of Secondary Education**

**ENGLISH (Specification 1900)**

**2431/1**

UNIT 1 Non-Fiction, Media and Information

PAPER 1 (Foundation Tier)

Thursday

**10 JUNE 2004**

Morning

1 hour 45 minutes

Additional materials:  
Answer booklet

**TIME** 1 hour 45 minutes. (No separate reading time is allowed.)

**INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES**

- Write your name, Centre number and candidate number in the spaces on the answer booklet.
- Answer **ALL** the questions.
- Write your answers, in blue or black ink, in the answer booklet provided.
- Read each question carefully and make sure you know what to do before starting your answer.

**INFORMATION FOR CANDIDATES**

- The number of marks is given in brackets [ ] at the end of each question or part question.
- The total number of marks for this paper is **60**.
- **Section A** is worth 40 marks. You are advised to spend **no more than 1 hour 10 minutes** on it.
- **Section B** is worth 20 marks. You are advised to spend **no more than 35 minutes** on it.

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**This question paper consists of 5 printed pages and 3 blank pages.**

## SECTION A

You are advised to spend **no more than 1 hour 10 minutes** on Section A.

**Reading: NON-FICTION**

Read this newspaper article carefully, and then **answer questions 1(a), 1(b) 1(c) and 1(d)**.

*These answers will be marked for reading. Plan your answers and write them carefully.*

**Fathers and Sons**

On May 29<sup>th</sup>, 1953, Edmund Hillary and Sherpa Tenzing Norgay reached the top of the world as part of the British Everest expedition. The news came on the Queen's coronation day. They went up the mountain as climbers and came down as heroes.

Last year another Norgay and Hillary came together for another attempt on Everest – Tenzing's son, Jamling, and Edmund's son, Peter, went back as a homage to their fathers' achievements. The family friendship has lasted a generation. 'I have known my father's friend Tenzing since he came to New Zealand to stay with us,' says Peter. 'I must have been about six,' Jamling says. 'When Peter was a young man he came out to visit us in Darjeeling. I have known him ever since then.' Says Peter, 'My father could have just sat back and settled down at home in the backwoods of New Zealand, content to be the man who had climbed Everest and be interviewed occasionally and otherwise be pretty much forgotten. But he kept doing things to give something back to the Sherpas who had been the backbone of the climb.' 5 10

Edmund set up the Himalayan Trust, which has transformed the life of the valleys round Everest. Beforehand, there were no schools – now there are 42. There are also clinics and two hospitals, and there are Sherpas who are working as doctors and helicopter pilots rather than carrying huge loads up the mountains. 15

For this climb, Jamling stayed below the icefall – not through fear, but because he is a man who keeps his promises. 'In 1996, even before I went, I promised my wife it would be the last time.' He has three young children who need a father.

So while Peter was battling high winds in the South Col, Jamling was at Base Camp, co-ordinating the climb by radio. He has his own memories of the time that he stood on the summit. 'My father died in 1986, so he never knew I got there. But all the time I was climbing I could almost see him, smiling his great big smile, saying to me, "I knew you would do it one of these days".' 20

That first time, news reached the world because someone ran down the mountain with a coded scrap of paper. When Peter reached the summit, he used a mobile phone to call his father in New Zealand. Then he phoned Jamling at Base Camp. The experience moved him to tears. 25

'What my dad and Tenzing did was amazing,' says Peter. 'My father was a very humble man, very simple,' says Jamling, 'and everyone knows the good things that Hillary has done. No two better people could have climbed that mountain first.'

(Julian Chapman, *Daily Mail*, April 26, 2003)

3

- 1 (a) Why did Jamling Norgay and Peter Hillary climb Everest in recent years? [1]
- (b) From paragraph three, give two examples of what the Himalayan Trust has done for the Sherpa people. [2]
- (c) How do we know that the writer approves of the things that Edmund Hillary did for the Sherpa people? [2]
- (d) What does the passage show about the feelings of Peter and Jamling for each other, for their families, and for their fathers?
- Use your own words** as far as possible. [15]

**Reading: MEDIA**

Read this magazine article by the world-famous mountaineer and journalist, Rebecca Stephens, and then **answer question 2**.

*This answer will be marked for reading. Plan your answer and write it carefully.*

**The Quiet Achiever**

Sir Edmund Hillary is world-famous. If Everest is the one mountain everyone knows, Sir Edmund, the first to climb it, is the one mountaineer. He is a living legend.

But what was it about the young Hillary that helped him win such a coveted prize? Was it, as he once said, simply that he was on the right mountain at the right time? I don't think so. Photographs reveal him as a man with an immense physical presence – that long, handsome face and rangy body, towering head and shoulders over Tenzing Norgay, the Sherpa who reached the top with him. He possessed the sort of brute strength that grabs hold of large rocks and hurls them out of the way.

He also had restlessness and ambition. 'I tended to create challenges for myself,' he says.

It was George Lowe, Hillary's lifelong friend, who first suggested Everest. But it was Hillary who wrote to the Everest veteran Eric Shipton, suggesting that two climbers from their New Zealand team – excellent snow- and ice-climbers – might join Shipton's expedition of 1951. They were then both back on John Hunt's expedition on Everest in 1953.

There was never any questioning of Lowe's mountaineering skills or teamwork, but it was Hillary whose eyes were on the summit. Sensing that Hunt would not want the two of them climbing as a pair, he set about proving to Hunt how fit a partnership he and Tenzing would be for the summit.

'Everest had an impact on everything I did afterwards,' Hillary explains. The achievement led to further expeditions, books, lectures, an advisor on camping equipment and a posting as New Zealand High Commissioner in India.

Nevertheless, he regards his subsequent work with the Sherpas as the most important part of his



life. 'I've built up a very warm relationship with the Sherpas and spent a lot of time in their homes, with their families,' he says. From this sprang Sir Edmund Hillary's Himalayan Trust which, over a period of more than 40 years, has established many schools, two hospitals and 12 clinics. If Hillary is something of an icon around the world, he is close to a saviour to the Sherpa people.

What about being thought of as a legend? He says, 'I know that I'm really a very ordinary person.' As if to verify his ordinariness, Hillary lives in the same house that he built and moved into as a newlywed in September 1953. He tells how, on a recent walk by the harbour, a big Maori passed him by. 'He said, "Good morning, Ed," and treated me with respect and warmth, as one of the gang. I rather liked that.'

5

- 2 The author, Rebecca Stephens, wants to present Sir Edmund Hillary as one of her heroes. Show how her article does this.

In your answer refer to:

- the choice and position of the photograph
- what she admires about him
- her use of language.

[20]

**SECTION B**

You are advised to spend **no more than 35 minutes** on Section B.

**Writing to INFORM, EXPLAIN, DESCRIBE.**

*This answer will be marked for writing. Plan your answer and write it carefully. Leave enough time to check through and correct what you have written.*

- 3 A magazine is publishing a series of articles on 'Heroes' and readers have been asked to write a contribution about someone they admire.

**Write the words of your article.** Describe what the person you admire has achieved and explain why you have chosen him or her. Your choice may be someone you know or someone famous.

[20]

**OXFORD CAMBRIDGE AND RSA EXAMINATIONS**  
**General Certificate of Secondary Education**

**ENGLISH (Specification 1900)**  
UNIT 2 Different Cultures, Analysis and Argument  
PAPER 1 (Foundation Tier)

**2432/1**

Monday **14 JUNE 2004** Afternoon 1 hour 45 minutes

Additional materials:  
(ALL texts permitted in examination room)  
Answer booklet

**TIME** 1 hour 45 minutes. (No separate reading time is allowed.)

**INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES**

- Write your name, Centre number and candidate number in the spaces on the answer booklet.
- You must answer **THREE** questions.  
In **Section A**, answer **ONE** question on the text you have studied.  
In **Section B** answer **BOTH** questions.
- Write your answers, in blue or black ink, in the answer booklet provided.
- Read each question carefully and make sure you know what to do before starting your answer.

**INFORMATION FOR CANDIDATES**

- The total mark for this paper is **60**. All questions carry equal marks.
- The maximum mark for each question is given in brackets [ ].
- **Section A** is worth 20 marks. You are advised to spend **no more than 35 minutes** on it.
- **Section B** is worth 40 marks. You are advised to spend **no more than 1 hour 10 minutes** on it.

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**This question paper consists of 7 printed pages and 1 blank page.**

**SECTION A**

You are advised to spend **no more than 35 minutes** on this Section.

**READING: TEXTS FROM DIFFERENT CULTURES AND TRADITIONS**

Answer **ONE** question, on the text you have studied.

Text	Pages	Questions
OCR: <i>Opening Worlds</i>	3	1–2
STEINBECK: <i>Of Mice and Men</i>	4	3–4
TAYLOR: <i>Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry</i>	5	5–6

*Opening Worlds (OCR)*

*Dead Men's Path; Snapshots of a Wedding; The Train from Rhodesia; The Gold-Legged Frog; Two Kinds; The Tall Woman and Her Short Husband.*

**Either** 1 Remind yourself of the following passage from *Snapshots of a Wedding*, then answer the question which follows.

'That girl has no manners!' the relatives would remark. 'What's the good of education if it goes to someone's head so badly they have no respect for the people? Oh, she is not a person.'

Then they would nod their heads in that fatal way, with predictions that one day life would bring her down. Actually, life had treated Neo rather nicely. Two months after completing her 'O' levels she became pregnant by Kegoletile with their first child. It soon became known that another girl, Mathata, was also pregnant by Kegoletile. The difference between the two girls was that Mathata was completely uneducated; the only work she would ever do was that of a housemaid, while Neo had endless opportunities before her – typist, book-keeper, or secretary.

- (1) How do the writers show the importance of making the right choice of marriage partner in this story, and in ONE OTHER story from the list above?

*Support your answer by referring to and quoting from the stories.*

*Remember to put quotation marks round any words and phrases you use from the stories.*

[20]

- Or** 2 Some of the characters in the stories experience failure. Choose TWO characters, each one from a different story, and explain their feelings of failure, showing how their living conditions contribute to their sense of failure.

*Support your answer by referring to and quoting from the stories.*

*Remember to put quotation marks round any words and phrases you use from the stories.*

[20]



*Of Mice and Men* (Steinbeck)

**Either** 3 Remind yourself of the passage below, then answer the question which follows.

The silence fell on the room again. A minute passed, and another minute. Candy lay still, staring at the ceiling. Slim gazed at him for a moment and then looked down at his hands; he subdued one hand with the other, and held it down. There came a little gnawing sound from under the floor and all the men looked down toward it gratefully. Only Candy continued to stare at the ceiling. 5

'Sounds like there was a rat under there,' said George. 'We ought to get a trap down there.'

Whit broke out, 'What the hell's takin' him so long? Lay out some cards, why don't you? We ain't going to get no euchre played this way.' 10

George brought the cards together tightly and studied the backs of them. The silence was in the room again.

A shot sounded in the distance. The men looked quickly at the old man. Every head turned toward him. 15

For a moment he continued to stare at the ceiling. Then he rolled slowly over and faced the wall and lay silent.

- (3) Show how the writer makes this a moving and important scene. Use your knowledge of Candy's life before and after this episode.

*Support your answer by referring to and quoting from the novel.*

*Remember to put quotation marks round any words and phrases you use from the novel.*

[20]

**Or** 4 Show how Curley's aggressive attitude threatens to destroy the dreams of ONE or TWO characters in the novel.

In your answer write about:

- what Curley says and does
- the effects of his actions.

*Support your answer by referring to and quoting from the novel.*

*Remember to put quotation marks round any words and phrases you use from the novel.*

[20]

*Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* (Taylor)

**Either** 5 Remind yourself of the passage below, then answer the question which follows.

A few minutes later both Mama and Papa came to tuck me in, talking softly in fragile, gentle words that seemed about to break. Their presence softened the hurt and I did not cry. But after they had left and I saw Papa through the open window disappear into the forest after Stacey, the tears began to run fast and heavy down my cheeks. 5

In the afternoon when I awakened, or tomorrow or the next day, the boys and I would still be free to run the red road, to wander through the old forest and sprawl lazily on the banks of the pond. Come October, we would trudge to school as always, barefooted and grumbling, fighting the dust and the mud and the Jefferson Davis school bus. But T.J. never would again. 10

I had never liked T.J., but he had always been there, a part of me, a part of my life, just like the mud and the rain, and I had thought he always would be. Yet the mud and the rain and the dust would all pass. I knew and understood that. What had happened to T.J. in the night I did not understand, but I knew that it would not pass. And I cried for those things which had happened in the night and would not pass. 20

I cried for T.J. For T.J. and the land.

**(5)** How do Cassie's thoughts in this extract make this a powerful ending to the novel?

In your answer write about:

- Cassie's feelings about T.J. as shown here
- her feelings about him elsewhere in the novel.

*Support your answer by referring to and quoting from the novel.*

*Remember to put quotation marks round any words and phrases you use from the novel.*

[20]

**Or** 6 How does the writer show the feelings of children growing up in Mississippi in the 1930s?

In your answer write about:

- life at school
- family life.

*Support your answer by referring to and quoting from the novel.*

*Remember to put quotation marks round any words and phrases you use from the novel.*

[20]

**SECTION B: WRITING**

*The material on this page will help you to think about the writing tasks in this Section.*

**LEARNING FROM THE PAST****'PEOPLE NEVER LEARN'**

Most people continue making the same mistakes all their lives.

**'ADAPT OR DIE!'**

Dinosaurs died out because they failed to adapt to changes. Humans have survived because they have been able to learn how to change when necessary.

**'STUDENT COUNCILS TEACH THE TEACHERS'**

Uniforms are better; dinners are better; lessons are better: all because teachers are listening to the ideas of their students.

**'OLDER DOESN'T MEAN WISER!'**

Teachers and parents think they know best because they are older. It just isn't true.

**'CONSUMERS KNOW WHAT'S WHAT'**

If you want to improve, ask the customer. Improve a hospital? Ask the patient. Improve a school? Ask a student. Improve a hotel? Ask a guest.

**SECTION B: WRITING**

You are advised to spend **no more than 1 hour 10 minutes** on Section B.

Answer **Question 7** and **Question 8**.

In your writing you can:

- use ideas from the material on the opposite page
- or**
- use ideas of your own
- or**
- use a mixture of both.

*These answers will be marked for writing. Plan your answers and write them carefully. Leave enough time to check through and correct what you have written.*

**Writing to ANALYSE, REVIEW, COMMENT**

- 7** Write about the lessons you have learnt from one or two mistakes you have made.

[20]

**Writing to ARGUE, PERSUADE, ADVISE**

- 8** On behalf of your year group, **write a letter** to your headteacher or principal persuading him/her to agree to some suggestions that you believe will improve school or college life.

Begin your letter 'Dear Headteacher' or 'Dear Principal'.

[20]

Jun04/erratum36

**OXFORD CAMBRIDGE AND RSA EXAMINATIONS**

**General Certificate of Secondary Education**

**English (Specification 1900)**

**2433/1**

UNIT 3 Literary Heritage and Imaginative Writing

PAPER 1 (Foundation Tier)

Friday

**25 June 2004**

Afternoon

1 hour 45 minutes

**ERRATUM NOTICE**

**For the attention of the Examinations Officer**

Please read the following correction to candidates at the start of the examination.

Turn to **page 6**.

**Question 6** reads:

What impressions are you given of babies in TWO of the following poems?  
Show how the language used by the poets help to make these impressions clear.

**Should read:**

What impressions are you given of babies in TWO of the following poems?  
Show how the language used by the poets helps to make these impressions clear.

**Question 7**

The page reference given for the Owen poem *Mental Cases* is incorrect.

It should be: **(Page 84)**

OXFORD CAMBRIDGE AND RSA EXAMINATIONS  
General Certificate of Secondary Education

ENGLISH (Specification 1900)  
UNIT 3 Literary Heritage and Imaginative Writing  
PAPER 1 (Foundation Tier)

**2433/1**

Friday **25 JUNE 2004** Afternoon 1 hour 45 minutes

Additional materials:  
(ALL texts permitted in examination room)  
Answer booklet

**TIME** 1 hour 45 minutes. (No separate reading time is allowed.)

**INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES**

- Write your name, Centre number and candidate number in the spaces on the answer booklet.
- You must answer **THREE** questions.  
In **Section A**, answer **question 1**.  
In **Section B** answer **TWO** questions: **ONE** on **Shakespeare** and **ONE** on **poetry**.
- Write your answers, in blue or black ink, in the answer booklet provided.
- Read each question carefully and make sure you know what to do before starting your answer.

**INFORMATION FOR CANDIDATES**

- The total mark for this paper is **40**.
- The maximum mark for each question is given in brackets [ ].
- **Section A** is worth 20 marks. You are advised to spend **no more than 45 minutes** on it.
- **Section B** is worth 20 marks. You are advised to spend **no more than 1 hour** on it.

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**This question paper consists of 6 printed pages and 2 blank pages.**

**SECTION A: WRITING**

You are advised to spend **no more than 45 minutes** on this Section.

**Writing to EXPLORE, IMAGINE, ENTERTAIN**

Answer **Question 1**. *This task will be marked for writing.*

- 1 Copy out the sentences below, then **CONTINUE THE STORY**, giving the storyteller's impressions of **TWO** different characters in the room.

**'Before I even reached the door, I could hear the waiting room was crowded.  
Reluctantly I eased my way in, looking anxiously around for a seat.'**

- *Spend some time thinking and making notes before writing out your answer.*
- *You may choose to end at any appropriate point. You do not have to write a complete story.*
- *Leave yourself time to check your writing.*

[20]

**SECTION B: READING**

You are advised to spend **no more than 1 hour** on this Section.

**TEXTS FROM THE ENGLISH LITERARY HERITAGE****SHAKESPEARE**

Answer **ONE question**, on the play you have studied.

**2** *Much Ado About Nothing*

**EITHER** **2 (a)** Choose **ONE** or **TWO** occasions which, you believe, show Beatrice's character most clearly.

In your answer write about:

- what she does and why
- the way she expresses her feelings.

*Support your answer by referring to and quoting from the play.  
Remember to put quotation marks round any words and phrases you use from the play.*

[10]

**OR** **2 (b)** Write about the reactions of **TWO** different characters to the accusation against Hero.

Explain:

- how they feel about the accusation
- what they do and the results of their actions.

*Support your answer by referring to and quoting from the play.  
Remember to put quotation marks round any words and phrases you use from the play.*

[10]



**3** *Romeo and Juliet*

**EITHER** 3 (a) Write about ONE or TWO occasions in *Romeo and Juliet* when people act because of love, not hate.

In your answer write about how they show love:

- in what they do
- in what they say.

*Support your answer by referring to and quoting from the play.*

*Remember to put quotation marks round any words and phrases you use from the play.*

[10]

**OR** 3 (b) How and why does the Nurse's attitude towards Romeo change during the play?

In your answer write about:

- her attitude to Romeo up to his wedding
- her different attitudes later in the play.

*Support your answer by referring to and quoting from the play.*

*Remember to put quotation marks round any words and phrases you use from the play.*

[10]

**POETRY pre-1914 or post-1914: *Opening Lines* (OCR)**

Answer **ONE** question, on the Section you have studied.

**Either 4 SECTION A: Men and Women**

Explain how the poets use words and images to show different aspects of love in TWO of the following poems:

(Page 8)	Donne	<i>The Sun Rising</i>
(Page 11)	Browning	<i>Sonnet ('How do I love thee')</i>
(Page 11)	Shakespeare	<i>Sonnet 138.</i>

*Support your answer by referring to and quoting from the poems.*

*Remember to put quotation marks round any words and phrases you use from the poems.*  
[10]

**Or 5 SECTION B: Time and Change**

Explain how the poets use words and images to suggest a sense of the unusual and/or the unexpected in TWO of the following poems:

(Page 23)	de la Mare	<i>The Listeners</i>
(Page 24)	Shelley	<i>Ozymandias</i>
(Page 26)	Barnes	<i>Woak Hill.</i>

*Support your answer by referring to and quoting from the poems.*

*Remember to put quotation marks round any words and phrases you use from the poems.*  
[10]

**Or 6 SECTION E: Generations**

What impressions are you given of babies in TWO of the following poems? Show how the language used by the poets help to make these impressions clear.

(Page 60)	Plath	<i>You're</i>
(Page 60)	Clarke	<i>Baby-sitting</i>
(Page 61)	Ellis	<i>To Edwin, at Eight Months</i>

*Support your answer by referring to and quoting from the poems.  
Remember to put quotation marks round any words and phrases you use from the poems.*

[10]

**Or 7 SECTION F: Poetry of the 1914–18 War (i)**

How does war affect people in TWO of the following poems? Show how the language helps to make this clear.

(Page 77)	Mastin	<i>At the Movies</i>
(Page 80)	Owen	<i>Disabled</i>
(Page 85)	Owen	<i>Mental Cases</i>

*Support your answer by referring to and quoting from the poems.  
Remember to put quotation marks round any words and phrases you use from the poems.*

[10]

**OXFORD CAMBRIDGE AND RSA EXAMINATIONS**  
**General Certificate of Secondary Education**

**ENGLISH (Specification 1900)**

**2431/2**

UNIT 1 Non-Fiction, Media and Information

PAPER 2 (Higher Tier)

Thursday **10 JUNE 2004** Morning 1 hour 45 minutes

Additional materials:  
Insert  
Answer booklet

**TIME** 1 hour 45 minutes. (No separate reading time is allowed.)

**INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES**

- Write your name, Centre number and candidate number in the spaces on the answer booklet.
- Answer **ALL** the questions.
- Find the **INSERT** inside this paper. This contains the **reading materials for Section A**.
- Write your answers, in blue or black ink, in the answer booklet provided.
- Read each question carefully and make sure you know what to do before starting your answer.

**INFORMATION FOR CANDIDATES**

- The maximum mark for each question is given in brackets [ ] at the end of each question.
- The total mark for this paper is **90**.
- **Section A** is worth 60 marks. You are advised to spend **no more than 1 hour 10 minutes** on it.
- **Section B** is worth 30 marks. You are advised to spend **no more than 35 minutes** on it.

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**This question paper consists of 4 printed pages and an insert.**

## SECTION A

You are advised to spend **no more than 1 hour 10 minutes** on Section A.

**Reading: NON-FICTION and MEDIA**

Read both passages carefully. **Question 1** refers to *Summerhill* and **question 2** to *Wise Words*.

*These answers will be marked for reading. Plan your answers and write them carefully.*

**1** *Summerhill.*

After reading closely A. S. Neill's account of Summerhill, outline the information he gives about how the school is run, and briefly explain his views about education.

**Use your own words** as far as possible. [30]

**2** *Wise Words.*

How does Ted Wragg attempt to persuade his readers to share his views about education?

In your answer, consider closely the way he presents his argument, and his use of language. [30]

3

**SECTION B**

You are advised to spend **no more than 35 minutes** on Section B.

**Writing to INFORM, EXPLAIN, DESCRIBE.**

*This answer will be marked for writing. Plan your answer and write it carefully. Leave enough time to check through and correct what you have written.*

- 3 Write the words of an article** for a school or college publication in which you describe an ideal school and explain the way you would like such a school to be run. [30]

2431/2 Jun04

**OXFORD CAMBRIDGE AND RSA EXAMINATIONS**

**General Certificate of Secondary Education**

**ENGLISH (Specification 1900)      2431/2/INSERT**

**UNIT 1 Non-Fiction, Media and Information**

**PAPER 2 (Higher Tier)**

Thursday      **10 JUNE 2004**      Morning      1 hour 45 minutes

Additional materials:  
Answer booklet

**INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES**

- The reading material in this INSERT is for use with the questions in Section A of the question paper.

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**This insert consists of 3 printed pages and 1 blank page.**

### **NON-FICTION TEXT: *Summerhill***

*Summerhill School was founded as an experimental type of school in the 1920s. In this passage A. S. Neill, the founder of Summerhill, sets out his ideas of what an ideal school should be like and contrasts these with more conventional education which he refers to as 'the other way'.*

When my first wife and I began the school, we had one main idea: *to make the school fit the child* – instead of making the child fit the school.

I had taught in ordinary schools for many years. I knew the other way well. I knew it was all wrong. It was wrong because it was based on an adult conception of what a child should be and how a child should learn. The other way dated from the days when psychology was still an unknown science.

Well, we set out to make a school in which we should allow children freedom to be themselves. In order to do this, we had to renounce all discipline, all direction, all suggestion, all moral training, all religious instruction. We have been called brave, but it did not require courage. All it required was what we had – a complete belief in the child as a good, not an evil, being. For over forty years, this belief in the goodness of the child has never wavered; it rather has become a final faith.

My view is that a child is innately wise and realistic. If left to himself without any adult suggestion of any kind, he will develop as far as he is capable of developing. Logically, Summerhill is a place in which people who have the innate ability and wish to be scholars will be scholars; while those who are only fit to sweep the streets will sweep the streets. But we have not produced a street cleaner so far. Nor do I write this snobbishly, for I would rather see a school produce a happy street cleaner than a neurotic scholar.

What is Summerhill like? Well, for one thing, lessons are optional. Children can go to them or stay away from them – for years if they want to. There *is* a timetable – but only for the teachers.

The children have classes usually according to their age, but sometimes according to their interests. We have no new methods of teaching, because we do not consider that teaching in itself matters very much. Whether a school has or has not a special method for teaching long division is of no significance, for long division is of no importance except to those who *want* to learn it. And the child who *wants* to learn long division *will* learn it no matter how it is taught.

Children who come to Summerhill as kindergarteners attend lessons from the beginning of their stay; but pupils from other schools vow that they will never attend any beastly lessons again at any time. They play and cycle and get in people's way, but they fight shy of lessons. This sometimes goes on for months. The recovery time is proportionate to the hatred their last school gave them.

*(Summerhill by A. S. Neill)*



### **MEDIA TEXT: Wise Words**

*In this newspaper article, Ted Wragg, professor of education and journalist, defends today's young people against those who unthinkingly assume that 'the good old days' were better.*

#### **Wise Words**

Why do adults hate young people? We may protest that we love our own children dearly, but the sad truth is that society in general appears to dislike adolescents in particular. Every summer there is widespread deriding of school leavers' public examination results. Youth culture is beyond the pale.

Why can't the spotty creeps be as clever and sober as we were in our youth? Back in my day, harrumph harrumph, we dressed sensibly (in winkle-picker shoes that ruined feet for ever), learned everything at school (the army had to teach millions of recruits to read), and behaved decently (like the mods and rockers who fought running battles at the seaside, and cinema-goers who rioted in several cities after watching rock'n'roll films).

The hatred of adolescents was apparent in the glee that accompanied the Channel 4 series *That'll Teach 'Em*, which showed a group of 16-year-olds being taught in what purported to be a 1950s school environment. The message seemed to be that these young softies could never have coped with the demands of that time and only managed to achieve anything because teachers bawled into their faces from a distance of six inches. It was pure wish fulfilment for anyone longing to run a boot camp for the acne brigade.

As someone who went to school in the '50s, and has spent the last 30 years carrying out research into teaching and learning in more modern classrooms, I was fascinated by such historic scenes. Some of the events were faithful reproductions of the time, but there was a degree of exaggeration. There were also missing elements.

Foremost among these was the absence of physical punishment. Caning was rife in the '50s. Some teachers hurled blackboard dusters, chalk, books, around their classrooms like confetti. There were skilled table-tennis players, deftly clipping the backs of heads, backhand and forehand, as they patrolled the aisles. Others gripped the short hairs at the back of your head until your eyes watered.

Many teachers were benign and good humoured, however, despite the fearsome powers they might have exercised. There was also poor teaching and

considerable misbehaviour in certain classrooms. Teachers known to be a soft touch were sent up, and many a boring lesson was mitigated by elaborate plots to disrupt them.

I have both taught and observed lessons in schools from the 1960s to the present decade and I much prefer the post-'50s climate, apart from two elements. The first is that it has become extremely difficult to deal with disruptive pupils, who would have been incarcerated in the equivalent of junior jails in former times. The answer is not a return to the sadistic caning and ritual public humiliations of yesteryear, but better support for teachers working in difficult circumstances.

The second loss is that teachers were more able to innovate in the days before the government started prescribing what they should do every minute and introducing legislation to determine the exact size of the ballcock in the staff toilet. The 1960s and 1970s were times when teachers felt they could use their imagination. This produced a fair amount of fraudulent rubbish masquerading as creativity, but it also begat some exciting ideas.

Today only one in 20 leavers acquires no formal qualification. About half of all pupils leave with five high-grade GCSEs and over a third go on to higher education. Not bad for people derided as stupid and indolent.

We hate youth because of our anxieties, not their defects. Will they be smart enough to pay for our false teeth, lung-cancer treatment and liver transplants? Why couldn't the Channel 4 kids do those 11-plus questions? (Because they were about pounds, shillings and pence, stupid. How many groats did your facelift cost and how many rods, poles and perches can you throw a tennis ball?)

We can never get our own youth back so we fantasise about how amazingly clever we all were, criticising those about to misspend their adolescence getting bags of qualifications, enjoying themselves, texting their mates and clubbing the night away. The jammy beggars.

(Ted Wragg, *Guardian Education*,  
September 2003)

**OXFORD CAMBRIDGE AND RSA EXAMINATIONS**  
**General Certificate of Secondary Education**

**ENGLISH (Specification 1900)**

**2432/2**

UNIT 2 Different Cultures, Analysis and Argument

PAPER 2 (Higher Tier)

Monday **14 JUNE 2004** Afternoon 1 hour 45 minutes

Additional materials:  
(ALL texts permitted in examination room)  
Answer booklet

**TIME** 1 hour 45 minutes. (No separate reading time is allowed.)

**INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES**

- Write your name, Centre number and candidate number in the spaces on the answer booklet.
- You must answer **THREE** questions.  
In **Section A**, answer **ONE** question on the text you have studied.  
In **Section B** answer **BOTH** questions.
- Write your answers, in blue or black ink, in the answer booklet provided.
- Read each question carefully and make sure you know what to do before starting your answer.

**INFORMATION FOR CANDIDATES**

- The number of marks is given in brackets [ ].
- The total number of marks for this paper is **90**. All questions carry equal marks.
- **Section A** is worth 30 marks. You are advised to spend **no more than 35 minutes** on it.
- **Section B** is worth 60 marks. You are advised to spend **no more than 1 hour 10 minutes** on it.

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**This question paper consists of 7 printed pages and 1 blank page.**

**SECTION A**

You are advised to spend **no more than 35 minutes** on this Section.

**READING: TEXTS FROM DIFFERENT CULTURES AND TRADITIONS**

Answer **ONE** question on the text you have studied.

Text	Pages	Questions
OCR: <i>Opening Worlds</i>	3	1–2
STEINBECK: <i>Of Mice and Men</i>	4	3–4
TAYLOR: <i>Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry</i>	5	5–6

*Opening Worlds (OCR)*

*Dead Men's Path; Snapshots of a Wedding; The Train from Rhodesia; The Gold-Legged Frog; Two Kinds; The Tall Woman and Her Short Husband.*

**Either 1** Remind yourself of the passage below from *Two Kinds*, then answer the question which follows.

She yanked me by the arm, pulled me off the floor, snapped off the TV. She was frighteningly strong, half pulling, half carrying me toward the piano as I kicked the throw rugs under my feet. She lifted me up and onto the hard bench. I was sobbing by now, looking at her bitterly. Her chest was heaving even more and her mouth was open, smiling crazily as if she were pleased I was crying. 5

'You want me to be someone that I'm not!' I sobbed. 'I'll never be the kind of daughter you want me to be!'

'Only two kinds of daughters,' she shouted in Chinese. 10  
'Those who are obedient and those who follow their own mind! Only one kind of daughter can live in this house. Obedient daughter!'

'Then I wish I wasn't your daughter. I wish you weren't my mother,' I shouted. As I said these things I got scared. It felt like worms and toads and slimy things crawling out of my chest, but it also felt good, as if this awful side of me had surfaced, at last. 15

'Too late change this,' said my mother shrilly.

And I could sense her anger rising to its breaking point. I wanted to see it spill over. And that's when I remembered the babies she had lost in China, the ones we never talked about. 'Then I wish I'd never been born!' I shouted. 'I wish I were dead! Like them.' 20

It was as if I had said the magic words. Alakazam! – and her face went blank, her mouth closed, her arms went slack, and she backed out of the room, stunned, as if she were blowing away like a small brown leaf, thin, brittle, lifeless. 25

- (1) How do cultural influences affect family relationships in this story, and in ONE OTHER story from the list above?

*Support your answer by referring to and quoting from the stories.*

*Remember to put quotation marks round any words and phrases you use from the stories.*

[30]

**Or 2** How do the writers show a clash of cultures in *The Train from Rhodesia* and in *Dead Men's Path*?

*Support your answer by referring to and quoting from the stories.*

*Remember to put quotation marks round any words and phrases you use from the stories.*

[30]

*Of Mice and Men* (Steinbeck)

**Either** 3 Remind yourself of the passage below, then answer the question which follows.

The bunk-house was a long, rectangular building. Inside, the walls were whitewashed and the floor unpainted. In three walls there were small, square windows, and, in the fourth, a solid door with a wooden latch. Against the walls were eight bunks, five of them made up with blankets and the other three showing their burlap ticking. Over each bunk there was nailed an apple-box with the opening forward so that it made two shelves for the personal belongings of the occupant of the bunk. And these shelves were loaded with little articles, soap and talcum-powder, razors and those Western magazines ranch-men love to read and scoff at and secretly believe. And there were medicines on the shelves, and little vials, combs; and from nails on the box-sides, a few neckties. Near one wall there was a black cast-iron stove, its stove-pipe going straight up through the ceiling. In the middle of the room stood a big square table littered with playing-cards, and around it were grouped boxes for the players to sit on.

At about ten o'clock in the morning the sun threw a bright dust-laden bar through one of the side windows, and in and out of the beam flies shot like rushing stars.

(3) How does the writer capture ranch life here and in the rest of the novel?

*Support your answer by referring to and quoting from the novel.*

*Remember to put quotation marks round any words and phrases you use from the novel.*

[30]

**Or** 4 Explore some of the ways in which Steinbeck prepares the reader for Lennie's death.

*Support your answer by referring to and quoting from the novel.*

*Remember to put quotation marks round any words and phrases you use from the novel.*

[30]

*Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* (Taylor)

**Either** 5 Remind yourself of the passage below, then answer the question which follows.

After waiting several minutes for his return, Stacey said, 'Come on, Cassie, let's get out of here.' He started toward the door and I followed. But as we passed one of the counters, I spied Mr Barnett wrapping an order of pork chops for a white girl. Adults were one thing; I could almost understand that. They ruled things and there was nothing that could be done about them. But some kid who was no bigger than me was something else again. Certainly Mr Barnett had simply forgotten about T.J.'s order. I decided to remind him and, without saying anything to Stacey, I turned around and marched over to Mr Barnett. 5

'Uh ... 'scuse me, Mr Barnett,' I said as politely as I could, waiting a moment for him to look up from his wrapping. 'I think you forgot, but you was waiting on us 'fore you was waiting on this girl here, and we been waiting a good while now for you to get back.' 10

The girl gazed at me strangely, but Mr Barnett did not look up. I assumed that he had not heard me. I was near the end of the counter so I merely went to the other side of it and tugged on his shirt sleeve to get his attention. 20

He recoiled as if I had struck him.

'Y-you was helping us,' I said, backing to the front of the counter again.

'Well, you just get your little black self back over there and wait some more,' he said in a low, tight voice. 25

I was hot. I had been as nice as I could be to him and here he was talking like this. 'We been waiting on you for near an hour,' I hissed, 'while you 'round here waiting on everybody else. And it ain't fair. You got no right -'

'Whose little nigger is this!' bellowed Mr Barnett. 30

Everyone in the store turned and stared at me. 'I ain't nobody's little nigger!' I screamed, angry and humiliated. 'And you ought not be waiting on everybody 'fore you wait on us.'

- (5) How does the writer show Cassie's feelings of frustration here and elsewhere in the novel?

*Support your answer by referring to and quoting from the novel.*

*Remember to put quotation marks round any words and phrases you use from the novel.*

[30]

**Or** 6 How does Taylor reveal Mama's strength of character?

*Support your answer by referring to and quoting from the novel.*

*Remember to put quotation marks round any words and phrases you use from the novel.*

[30]

**SECTION B: WRITING**

*The material on this page will help you to think about the writing tasks in this Section.*

**LEARNING FROM THE PAST****'ONCE BITTEN, TWICE SHY'**

'There is only one thing more painful than learning from experience and that is not learning from experience.' (American philosopher and poet Archibald McLeish, 1915.)

**'FAILING TO LEARN OUR LESSONS'**

'The lessons of the BSE and foot-and-mouth crises have not been learned. We still cut corners to produce cheap food!'

**'MAN'S PAINFUL HISTORY'**

'I tell you, we have nothing to learn from the past. The past is a bucket of ashes,' said writer Carl Sandberg.

**'DISCOVER THE ELSECAR HERITAGE CENTRE AND FIND YOURSELF'**

'Britain's modern museums and heritage sites help us to understand how the past has influenced who we are and how we might best prepare for the future.' (*Title and first line from a leaflet advertising an industrial heritage site in South Yorkshire.*)

7

**SECTION B: WRITING**

Spend **no more than 1 hour 10 minutes** on Section B.

Answer **Question 7** and **Question 8**.

In your writing you can:

- use ideas from material on the opposite page
- or**
- use ideas of your own
- or**
- use a mixture of both.

*These answers will be marked for writing. Plan your answers and write them carefully. Leave enough time to check through and correct what you have written.*

**Writing to ANALYSE, REVIEW, COMMENT**

7 Do you think that the lessons we learn from the past make our present lives happier?

[30]

**Writing to ARGUE, PERSUADE, ADVISE**

8 **Write the words of an article** for your school or college magazine in which you argue about the value of visiting places such as museums, castles and heritage sites.

[30]

2432/2 Jun04



OXFORD CAMBRIDGE AND RSA EXAMINATIONS  
General Certificate of Secondary Education

ENGLISH (Specification 1900)  
UNIT 3 Literary Heritage and Imaginative Writing  
PAPER 2 (Higher Tier)

2433/2

Friday 25 JUNE 2004 Afternoon 1 hour 45 minutes

Additional materials:  
(ALL texts permitted in examination room)  
Answer booklet

**TIME** 1 hour 45 minutes. (No separate reading time is allowed.)

**INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES**

- Write your name, Centre number and candidate number in the spaces on the answer booklet.
- You must answer **THREE** questions.  
In **Section A**, answer **question 1**.  
In **Section B** answer **TWO** questions: **ONE** on **Shakespeare** and **ONE** on **poetry**.
- Write your answers, in blue or black ink, in the answer booklet provided.
- Read each question carefully and make sure you know what to do before starting your answer.

**INFORMATION FOR CANDIDATES**

- The total mark for this paper is **40**.
- The maximum mark for each question is given in brackets [ ].
- **Section A** is worth 20 marks. You are advised to spend **no more than 45 minutes** on it.
- **Section B** is worth 20 marks. You are advised to spend **no more than 1 hour** on it.

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**This question paper consists of 6 printed pages and 2 blank pages.**

**SECTION A: WRITING**

You are advised to spend **no more than 45 minutes** on this Section.

**Writing to EXPLORE, IMAGINE, ENTERTAIN**

*This answer will be marked for writing.*

- 1 Copy out the sentence below, and then continue the story. In your writing, give the storyteller's impressions of TWO different characters in the room.

**Before I even reached the door, I could hear that the waiting room was crowded.  
Reluctantly I eased my way in, looking anxiously around for a seat.**

- *Spend some time thinking and making notes before writing out your answer.*
- *You may choose to end at any appropriate point. You do not have to write a complete story.*
- *Leave yourself time to check your writing.*

[20]

**SECTION B: READING**

You are advised to spend **no more than 1 hour** on this Section.

**TEXTS FROM THE ENGLISH LITERARY HERITAGE****SHAKESPEARE**

Answer **ONE question**, on the play you have studied.

**2** *Much Ado About Nothing*

**EITHER 2 (a)** How does Shakespeare present Beatrice in the play?

You may choose to focus your answer on the whole play or just **ONE** or **TWO** scenes.

*Support your answer by referring to and quoting from the play.  
Remember to put quotation marks round any words and phrases you use from the play.*

[10]

**OR 2 (b)** Explore the different ways in which **TWO** characters react to the accusation against Hero.

*Support your answer by referring to and quoting from the play.  
Remember to put quotation marks round any words and phrases you use from the play.*

[10]

**3** *Romeo and Juliet***EITHER** 3 (a) 'My only love sprung from my only hate' (Juliet: Act 1 Scene 5).

Show how Shakespeare presents the conflict between love and hate in ONE or TWO scenes from *Romeo and Juliet*.

*Support your answer by referring to and quoting from the play.  
Remember to put quotation marks round any words and phrases you use from the play.*

[10]

**OR** 3 (b) How does Shakespeare present the Nurse in *Romeo and Juliet*?

You may choose to focus your answer on the whole play or just ONE or TWO scenes.

*Support your answer by referring to and quoting from the play.  
Remember to put quotation marks round any words and phrases you use from the play.*

[10]

**POETRY pre-1914 or post-1914: *Opening Lines* (OCR)**

Answer **ONE** question, on the Section you have studied.

**Either 4 SECTION A: Men and Women**

Explore the different ways the poets present the experience of love in TWO of the following poems:

(Page 8)	Donne	<i>The Sun Rising</i>
(Page 11)	Browning	<i>Sonnet ('How do I love thee')</i>
(Page 11)	Shakespeare	<i>Sonnet 138.</i>

*Support your answer by referring to and quoting from the poems.*

*Remember to put quotation marks round any words and phrases you use from the poems.*

[10]

**Or 5 SECTION B: Time and Change**

Explore how the poets capture a sense of the unusual and/or the unexpected in TWO of the following poems:

(Page 23)	de la Mare	<i>The Listeners</i>
(Page 24)	Shelley	<i>Ozymandias</i>
(Page 26)	Barnes	<i>Woak Hill.</i>

*Support your answer by referring to and quoting from the poems.*

*Remember to put quotation marks round any words and phrases you use from the poems.*

[10]

**Or 6 SECTION E: Generations**

Explore some of the ways in which babies are portrayed in TWO of the following poems:

(Page 60)	Plath	<i>You're</i>
(Page 60)	Clarke	<i>Baby-sitting</i>
(Page 61)	Ellis	<i>To Edwin, at Eight Months.</i>

*Support your answer by referring to and quoting from the poems.  
Remember to put quotation marks round any words and phrases you use from the poems.*  
[10]

**Or 7 SECTION F: The 1914–18 War (i)**

Explore the presentation of the consequences of war in TWO of the following poems:

(Page 77)	Mastin	<i>At the Movies</i>
(Page 80)	Owen	<i>Disabled</i>
(Page 84)	Owen	<i>Mental Cases.</i>

*Support your answer by referring to and quoting from the poems.  
Remember to put quotation marks round any words and phrases you use from the poems.*  
[10]

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