

# A Level

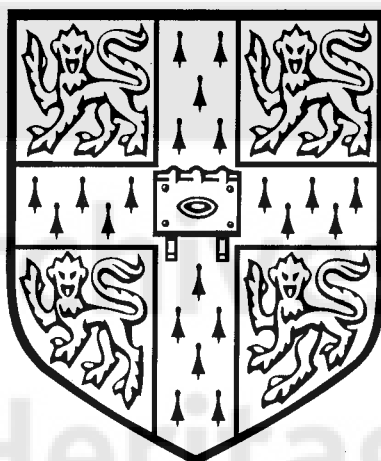
## English

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**ENGLISH SUBJECTS  
GENERAL STUDIES**

**Report on the June 1994 Examination**

**ENGLISH**  
**ADVANCED LEVEL**  
**Subject 9000**

*Paper 9000/1 Shakespeare*

*General Comments*

Once again Examiners report very few really weak responses to the paper. For whatever reason, it was clear that this year the vast majority of candidates knew sufficient about the plays and were sufficiently responsive and critical in their approaches to pass the examination, with a full range of pass marks from low E to the starry heights of the best A grades. Teachers do not necessarily see the outstanding candidates in a particular year, but in this report we are printing in full a candidate's answer to Q.1(d), partly in response to a request for an example of an answer to a 'staging' question, but partly also to share the pleasure we feel in such good work, work which we enjoyed in large measure this summer.

Particularly evident this year has been the profuse use of quotation, especially in Section A of the paper. We rightly regret an answer that loses contact with the fabric of the passage, but equally damaging is one that quotes at wasteful length from given material. What we are looking for are, ideally, rapid, darting allusions and key elements of quotations, incorporated into a well-planned, relevant survey that precisely addresses the question's terms. Some candidates seem not to understand that use of the text is for illustrative purposes; many candidates, reminded frequently by their teachers no doubt, 'use' the text, but too often it is not used for illustration, substantiation of their arguments, but rather to link together a summary of the passage, so that the final effect is a kind of paraphrase with chunks of text. Candidates must be warned that mere quotation does not ensure 'use' of the text. It is particularly important that in questions which ask for a tracing through of the given passage, critical commentary does not degenerate into paraphrase. Examiners are very alert for the tell-tale signs: *Then Caesar goes on to say...* or *She then tells Shylock...* and *in the next speech Hamlet says that...* these constructions are always followed by paraphrase and teachers and candidates need to be alerted again that this does not constitute a highly rewardable A level skill.

The most frequent general criticism of essay answers this summer has been their use of prepared material which ignores or evades the precise terms of the question. The detailed comments below draw attention to specific examples, but it is worth reiterating that questions are worded carefully and contain assertions which require discussion and argument, supported by close illustration from the play being studied. It is not adequate for candidates to spot the name of a character in the question and write a prepared character sketch, for example. Some of this material may be relevant, but the whole is bound to lack the sharp focus which is required for the better grades. Another common problem occurs when the candidate particularly wanted to write on a certain topic, but was unfortunately deprived of a suitable opportunity in the question paper! Under these circumstances the set question is often moulded or distorted into the desired shape, with inevitable loss of direction. It takes a good deal of cunning to convince the Examiner that an essay on Hamlet's soliloquies is really an answer to a question on Hamlet and Claudius; it can be done, of course, but not convincingly by all candidates. Many Centres seem particularly good at training their candidates to write relevant essays; naturally, some of their students will be more successful than others, being more sophisticated, more knowledgeable and more articulate, but the average of the candidates in the group will be good, simply because they know how to tackle an essay question.

Comments on individual plays follow, with questions grouped together for ease of reference.

*Antony and Cleopatra*

**Q.1** (a) The passage demands a clear sense of what Caesar and Antony are saying to each other, with an accompanying realisation of the kinds of political pressure each is exerting. Less able, less knowledgeable or more generalising candidates often missed the finer detail of the passage – dwelling on the first five lines at undue length, few seeing them as merely the preliminary sparring before the contest proper. Opinion was divided on which of the two is the more skilled in this respect, and better candidates provided sparkling analysis of the interchange. It was helpful to remember that this is not a private conversation between the two men, but conducted in front of a small audience, each therefore conscious of the impression he is creating. Some weaker candidates did not understand the dialogue fully – a disadvantage which could have been minimised by study of the play: this is not, after all, an unseen!

(b) Many moving and sensitive responses were offered to this rich and varied extract from the end of the play. There were, of course, some gushing commentaries with the central idea of Cleopatra being reunited with her 'one true love', but fortunately most candidates responded more broadly than this. Good candidates recognised the strong theatrical element in Cleopatra's final performance, the unashamed sexuality and the goddess of fire and air who becomes the 'lass unparallel'd'. The desire to outwit Caesar was usefully cited, some candidates suggesting that Cleopatra's ambiguity of motivation remains to the last. Close attention to textual detail characterised the better answers, particularly those which attempted to consider the varied tones of the scene: its grandeur and simple humanity, its comedy and poignancy mixed. Considering the unsympathetic circumstances under which they were written (the examination hall in most Centres bears little relation to the royal quarters in Alexandria) some answers were profoundly involved by the dramatic action here, and thrilling to read, illustrating once again the importance of imagination in successful answers on plays.

**Q.2** (a) This was the more popular of the essay questions on the play, but the majority offered a character sketch of Antony, with only a nod to his situation – his political and military affairs. Only the most discerning read the question with sufficient care to notice that it suggests a contrast between the 'portrayal' of Cleopatra and the 'situation' of Antony. Those who really tried to answer the question wrote very responsively on what 'most engages our interest', some offering a spirited defence of Cleopatra as the central focus of the play. A number of candidates introduced the character of Caesar without relating specifically enough to the terms of the question itself; candidates must think carefully about what can be acceptably relevant in a given question before they begin to write. Overall, sympathy for Antony and his situation was considerable. (One candidate evidently felt all that feasting must have been a terrible burden to him: *These strong Egyptian fritters I must break*).

(b) Fewer candidates tackled this question and those who did tried hard to consider each of the criticisms offered in the quotation. Such questions are not awarded marks by mathematical division and indeed a candidate who examines in detail part of the quotation and the rest in less detail can score highly. Those who took a broad view did well, claiming that the alleged weaknesses in the play were either essential elements in its total effect – complexity, scale, passion – or that within the play's rich texture these apparent defects were of little significance. Examiners are always delighted when candidates attempt to discuss language and in this, as in 2(a), candidates who engaged with the play's poetry as well as its structure gave the impression that they had experienced the play, not merely read it (or seen a performance of it). They were duly rewarded.

*The Merchant of Venice*

Q.1 (c) This was the more popular of the context questions on the play, with a full range of responses, from simplistic assertions of Portia's beauty, goodness and modesty and those more sophisticated answers which showed their awareness of discrepancies (Do not judge by appearances, warn the caskets, yet Bassanio goes on to do just that, was the theme of many answers). The stylised artificiality of Bassanio's description of her hair and eyes was discussed by some candidates, though more noticed the spider's web image as an ambiguous, even ironic, one. Those who recognised an inconsistency between the idealised Portia and the one who, in being claimed as a prize, accepts the notion of a *note* being *confirm'd*, *sign'd* and *ratified*, often wrote interestingly of the commercial diction of the passage, the language of the accountant dominating. Portia's own view of herself was taken to reveal her great modesty and submissiveness by some, the wholehearted subjugation of the generous and self-sacrificing wife, but others questioned this, pointing to her wit and cunning both earlier and later. This is the woman who goes on to make a fool of this same lord and master and outsmart a court full of men! There was much good writing here, with all but the least able responding to the language and imagery, and with a wide range of permissible interpretations in evidence.

(d) There follows an answer of particular clarity, relevance and detail which we are printing in full as illustration of how to answer this type of question. There were several from which to select, but this offers the finest balance of relevant insights in an accessible style.

'This is a moment of great tension for it is at this moment that Shylock seems on the verge of victory; he is ready to take his bond and cut a pound of flesh from Antonio. The court must be quite silent – nothing more than a backdrop against which the excitement of the final sentencing is played.

Portia in her guise as the judge is stern and calm. Her words to Antonio suggest none of the bias of the Duke or other Christian, she calls him *merchant* and her language is at all times strictly correct. When she speaks the sentence, she shows no emotion, as if she feels for neither party in the case. Portia is allowing Shylock to think he has won up until the final moment. Earlier in the scene he had already sharpened his knife and she had bid Antonio *prepare [his] breast*, so that Shylock must be almost about to cut when with equal calmness she speaks. The understatement of the words *Tarry a little* is almost deadly in the impartial coldness they suggest. Portia is about to sweep the ground from under Shylock's feet, but her demeanour is still that of the lawyer, just as she had no pity for Antonio, so she has none for Shylock.

Portia has become a figure of justice and as Shylock showed no mercy, neither will she. A presentiment of this must be clear to Shylock as he stands, knife in hand. Shylock had waited long for the time when he could revenge himself upon the Christian Antonio, and now the time is within his grasp, it seems. The excitement should show on Shylock's face at the end of the passage as it bursts out from under the control he has kept throughout the trial and he cries *Most rightful judge!* The glee is clear in his voice when he savagely bids Antonio *Come, prepare*. However, Shylock must be quite amazed when he hears Portia bidding him hold. His back would be to her as he walks towards Antonio, but he should freeze at the sound of her voice and turn slowly. Perhaps Shylock never really was certain that he would be able to take Antonio's life, the Christians would surely protect their own. His desire was to catch the Venetians in their own laws which had never helped him before. Perhaps he is not amazed when he hears Portia speak; he could almost give a mocking smile as he waits to hear what 'dodge' a Christian lawyer will produce to save the Christian merchant and cheat him.

Shakespeare reminds us of one of the major reasons for Shylock's revenge and also adds a new tone with the seeming by-play in which Bassanio and Gratiano unthinkingly declare Antonio means more than their wives. The comments of Portia and Nerissa may seem humorous to the audience, and certainly Portia steps outside the role of impassive judge to make her ironic comment. Of course the wives are present, and that this is unknown to Bassanio and Gratiano creates humour and lightens the tension as Portia and Nerissa exchange an ironic smile at such protestations. However, there are serious undertones, both men are to give away their rings, *stuck on with oaths* at the end of the scene and Shylock's comment emphasises the seriousness of what they are saying. He seems scornful of such easy words for it is not his nature and audience sympathy is directed to Shylock again by his words *I have a daughter*. Coming directly after the extravagance of the two men's protestations it reminds the audience that Shylock still loves Jessica and fears for how she fares with a *Christian husband*. The actor must show this for it is very important that in the middle of the most tense scene Shylock is shown in a sympathetic light – he is a father who has lost his only daughter and he (rightly or wrongly) blames the Christians, and Antonio as their representative. The result is to harden him still further and an actor must show this process when Shylock with even greater impatience hastens towards revenge asking *I pray thee, pursue sentence*.

Antonio is at the centre of this scene, being the sacrificial victim of Shylock's revenge. His speech has a flavour of martyrdom to it but nevertheless is spoken sincerely. Antonio loved Bassanio and if a tinge of jealousy can be heard when he speaks of Portia, Bassanio's *honourable wife*, yet he tries to make his friend feel better. He never blames Bassanio but bids him *Grieve not*. The love should show quite clearly in his face for this is a play in which the values of love as opposed to duty and wealth are frequently compared. Here we see how Antonio pays the *debt* with *all [his] heart*. Antonio's brave words about being happier to die young and so end the misery of the man who will *outlive his wealth* come out as being the words of a man trying to soften the idea of death both for himself and the friend he loves. Antonio is quite certain he is going to die; the tension must remain to the end, for he does not know that Portia can save him. He must be ready for the knife and he must be as amazed as Shylock when Portia bids him *Tarry*. Antonio will not quite believe himself yet safe as he waits still tense, for her words. Antonio should prepare himself facing Shylock bravely, but the fear of one about to die must show on his face to remind the audience of the real darkness in this play. Bassanio and Gratiano's two short outbursts show their pain and fear for Antonio. However with Gratiano there is more anger, for Bassanio pain and guilt must take the upper place. As he listens to Antonio's brave words, his emotions should overcome him. He could hold Antonio's hand as he waits for Shylock's stroke, this being the only service he could offer, but his head must be turned away because he cannot bear to look at his friend being murdered for his sake. Bassanio too must have the same look as Antonio when Portia speaks, half hoping for reprieve, half agony that the fear may simply be drawn out further.

Portia never falters in her control of this scene and this must be emphasised. Her position must be a commanding one at centre stage between Shylock and Antonio. The ideas do not 'come' to her, she has it planned well as to how she will stop Shylock and her control is indicative of this. Nerissa can be more nervous and emotional, being less sure of how her mistress means to save her husband's friend.

Portia and Shylock both stand separate and alone, but Antonio must be supported by Bassanio and Gratiano to show how the Christians protect their own and how Shylock the outsider is struggling against the more powerful group. Such stage positioning emphasises both Shylock's power and his solitary state when his revenge is taken away from him.'

This candidate went on to write just as thoughtfully and fully on *Hamlet*, with two excellent essays on the plays in the second section. It would not, of course, have been possible to write at such length unless she had known this scene very well indeed, and her command of characterisation and interpretation generally are most impressive. It must be stressed that she did not receive high marks because her interpretation was the 'right' one, but because her arguments were well-sustained and well-substantiated from a thorough appreciation of the text. Her awareness of dramatic qualities is constant throughout the answer.

- Q.3 (a) This was a popular question and one which engaged the attention of a large number of candidates. The main problem which arose was that of discriminating between examples of *hazard* which were important and those which were less so; while there was no lack of useful material, too many candidates were content to list their examples without distinguishing between, for instance, the risk taken by Antonio and the risk of discovery allegedly taken by Portia and Nerissa in the court room. (This raised the broader question of a candidate's ability to distinguish between the elements in the play governed by convention and those in which realism is dominant.) Some candidates concentrated on the casket scenes and forgot entirely the hazards of both Antonio and Shylock, but others not only took account of all these, but discussed the background of the play too, elaborated in the first scene with its descriptions of a mercantile society at the mercy of winds and tides. It is one of the themes which binds the casket, bond and rings plots together, if one is arguing for the unity of the play rather than a deconstruction.
- (b) This proved of equal popularity though the great majority of candidates answered the question "Are you sympathetic to any of the characters in the play, and if so how much?" Very few considered whether this matter of sympathy was indeed the audience's greatest difficulty: judging from some answers on 3(a) the greatest difficulty might well have been responding to a play whose admixture of comic convention and disturbing realism is complex and even distasteful. Predictably, many candidates focused their attention on Shylock and once again strong reactions dominated the discussion. Once again this was the best answer on the paper for many less able candidates, as it was in both last summer's and winter's examinations. However, there were also explorations of the ambiguity of both Antonio and Portia to match the focus on Shylock, with, additionally, many critical attacks on Bassanio. Candidates, it would seem, have little sympathy for the conventional romantic hero who moves from one wealthy patron to another, spending lavishly as he goes, as one candidate expressed it.

### *Hamlet*

- Q.1 (e) Both context questions on the play proved popular, though answers to Q.1(f) had the advantage of being largely relevant to the question. The problem with Q.1(e) was that some candidates merely wrote a commentary on the passage without directing their answers to Hamlet's domestic situation. It must, after all, be one with which in outline they are all familiar: mother's new husband appears to be friendly and loving, mother tries to smooth over the problems, but son and step-father don't get on. Many good answers took this as a basis before exploring the greater complexities of Hamlet's situation: his father is dead, the new man is his uncle, his father's brother. Of course Hamlet does not yet know that Claudius is a murderer (some candidates were worryingly insecure about the precise order of events at this point in the play) but the audience already knows that the dead father is not *in the dust*, but marching around the battlements at dead of night. Attention to textual detail characterised the better answers, but all managed to say something of Hamlet's bitterness, his resentment, even though only the very best candidates were prepared to explore his use of language, the ironic

puns which suggest a mind incompatible with either his mother's or Claudius's (one who can refer to *the first corse* without apparently being aware of its savage irony). Many candidates wrote well of Hamlet's isolation, though the temptation to indulge in some story-telling hovered at the edges of weaker answers.

- (f) Few candidates omitted to mention one of the four characters referred to in the question and the range of marks reflected the greater or lesser insight and illustrative detail shown on each. On Hamlet there was general agreement that his anger was directed as much towards his mother and women in general as Ophelia; the latter was generally accepted to be distressed at Hamlet's condition, though few noted the formal, choric quality of her longer speech, with its idealised description of the Prince as he was formerly. Claudius was generally commended for his cunning, quick-thinking decisiveness, whilst Polonius's lack of sympathy, stubbornness in maintaining his now discredited theory and continued interference in the royal family's affairs were noted by many. These two were better handled than Hamlet and Ophelia. Too many candidates are using the word 'confused' as a catch-all for states of mind: it has been particularly noticeable in the work of weaker candidates this year (perhaps to describe their own state of mind?). Ophelia may trust appearances too readily, but she is not confused; she is quite definite in her interpretation and in her distress. The bitter utterances of Hamlet are (intentionally) ambiguous at times and at others savagely aggressive, but not confused. Like 'simple', a word best avoided altogether.

- Q.4 (a) This was the less popular essay question, but still a full range of answers was produced, from discussion of those who act parts, through the application of these to the 'theme of deception', to subtle and thoughtful involvement with acting as a defence in the face of corruption or as disguise for personal corruption (as in the case of Claudius). What was missing was the full use of the word *images*, to include language, especially metaphor, rather than just situations, and an awareness of playing, of performance and of the play as pre-eminently a vehicle for actors and for action or inaction. Even the first gravedigger comments on acting, doing and performing; this is a play which opens with *actions that a man might play, with show and trappings* and ends with *You that look pale... that are but mutes or audience to this act*. Nonetheless, some thoughtful responses here: perhaps the choice of candidates who were particularly interested by the subject and had something to say about it.
- (b) By far the more popular alternative, this question suffered from the fact that too few candidates knew the meaning and context of the quotation used. Because the idea of duellists was not appreciated, the *opposites* were taken to be differing characters, in which case there followed a comparison of the two, centred often on the idea that Claudius is a man of action and Hamlet a man of words. Where this was the emphasis, the second sentence of the question appeared to be a quite separate subject and essays in two parts resulted. Where the sense *opponents* was dominant, answers had greater unity. The majority argued well for the pervasive nature of the conflict between Hamlet and Claudius. Many incorporated the notion of Hamlet's conflict with himself intelligently into the discussion, though a minority pushed the question aside with very little consideration and concentrated only on Hamlet's inner conflict, sometimes using only the soliloquies in a thinly disguised attempt to rewrite the question altogether. Very few considered the protagonists' entitlement to the description *mighty* – a pity. The temptation to tell the story proved too great for some candidates, who became involved in a long narrative tracing the attempts of Hamlet to take revenge against Claudius, culminating in the final moments of the play. These were, inevitably, only of intermittent relevance.



*Richard II*

The play was the least popular choice, but more attractive to Centres than *King John* had been. Therefore, the commentaries which follow are based upon a good deal less evidence than those above.

- Q.1 (g) was the less popular choice. Candidates wrote on the characterisations expressed here, rather than trying to consider the play's *central concerns*. It may be argued that a central concern in any play is the characterisation, but it is not the only issue involved. *The breath of kings* – the absolute power to lessen the sentence which Richard here wields just because he sees the sadness in Gaunt's eyes – is obviously a central concern, and those candidates who noted it often went on to show its irony in the mouth of Bolingbroke. But the king's inability to control life even if he can order death is also evident in this scene, and there are also the issues of duty and family loyalty to discuss, depicted in detail here, but clearly a main focus of the play as a whole.
- (h) This was the more popular question, and the better done. Richard's emotional fluctuations and their triggers, were usually quite well appreciated, with some sensitive use of the text in evidence. His character, on the other hand, was sometimes neglected, with only the best candidates exploring the personal, self-regarding quality of his responses. Where the play is done, it is often well done, and whole Centres appear to have benefited from committed, enthusiastic teaching, with work on this better on average than on the other play chosen. More than the usual number of Centres had taken this as a third play, too.
- Q.5 (a) Lack of range of reference was the disappointment here. Gaunt's speech on England naturally made a large number of appearances, as did the gardener scene, but too many essays were constructed from these two illustrations alone. The play contains a wealth of material on England, its people, its geography, roads, paths, by-ways and even flora and fauna. (The *caterpillars of the commonwealth* had scant mention, let alone the *lurking adder*!) The result was a number of essays which presented sound arguments, but offered too little textual detail to support them. The *idea of England* informs all the Histories, but it is expressed in very specific terms, particularly in this seminal work.
- (b) Many candidates preferred to write on Bolingbroke, though the precise implications of the question evaded them. How far is he an expedient opportunist? How far has he planned and schemed? Was he always ambitious? These are some of the questions addressed by the best answers here, and there were several to enjoy. The final consensus appeared to be that he remains an ambiguous figure, who may be portrayed with different emphasis by each actor who takes part, though some took the view that he is a consummate politician from first to last, ambitious in general terms, but opportunist on specific occasions, ironically aided by Richard himself. If there was one over-riding fault, it was that narrative dominated some answers. Where it seems apposite to trace a character's actions through the play chronologically, then story-telling is a real danger and must be guarded against.

*Paper 9000/2 Open Texts**General Comments*

This year's Open Text Paper elicited a very wide range of response from candidates. The best scripts revealed evidence of a fresh and personal engagement with the terms of reference of the questions.

It is always a pleasure to read work where candidates have clearly made the texts their own and have written with confidence drawing on illustrative material to support and sustain arguments.

As in previous years, however, a large proportion of candidates produced work that was workmanlike at best but often mundane. There was a general tendency to rely heavily on the narrative sequence of texts as a framework for answers and this limited the potential for responding to questions in a relevant way. Indeed, many candidates found themselves on the borderline because they appeared to believe that each question required them to offer a summary of plot or an extended background history of the author.

A significant number of candidates were clearly hampered by poor essay writing technique and this is an area that Centres may wish to address as the structure of the formal essay clearly provides candidates with a framework which supports the construction of coherent and sequential arguments. Too many answers offered no introduction and it was often hard to follow the direction of any line of discussion. In many cases the main priority seemed to be to list points without full commentary or consideration to relevance.

The Open Text Paper offers candidates a choice of questions on each text, one of which always involves using a passage or part of a text as a starting point for discussion of the work as a whole. Good answers offer close commentary on the relationship between the chosen extract and other parts of the text, whilst the best candidates' response to the instructions in the question focus not only on the thematic links but on stylistic and linguistic considerations. All too often, however, candidates ignored the terms 'in what way' which are central to the extract questions. There were many good answers written in response to the more discursive questions and it was particularly pleasing to note how many candidates were prepared to acknowledge the complexity of texts and did not seek to reduce them to simplified formulae. Whilst there was less evidence of prepared answers than in previous years, a considerable number were clearly determined to present a particular party line irrespective of the question. Obviously little credit can be given to such answers or indeed to those which offer a general synopsis of a text without specific reference to the requirements of the question.

There is still a tendency amongst weaker candidates to use lengthy quotations as the basis for essays. Such answers are characterised by the inclusion of minimal commentary and in an Open Text Paper are obviously of little merit. By contrast, the best candidates demonstrated the ability to draw widely from the texts in support of points and in these instances the illustrations were embedded in the argument.

Candidates from a number of Centres evidently were unclear about what is meant by the word 'theme' and rather than discussing the recurring preoccupations of the text tended to focus on plot or narrative. Indeed, this is just one obvious example of a general weakness in the handling and understanding of literary vocabulary.

### *Comments on Individual Questions*

It was quite clear that candidates who answered a question on *The Rape of the Lock* had been taught by enthusiasts and there were many lively and informed answers. The question based on the extract from Canto III was done particularly well and it was pleasing to see not only how many candidates were capable of discussing the nature of Pope's mock-heroic but were also able to offer a detailed analysis of the way in which the section concerned with the game of ombre relates to other parts of the poem. Q.1(b) was tackled with less confidence and the majority of candidates tended to endorse the idea that Pope is faithful to his stated intention in the dedication without exploring the more serious social and moral dimensions of the poem. There was also a reluctance to take heed of the words 'how far' which clearly require candidates to offer some form of evaluation.

Only a small number of candidates answered Q.2(a) which required them to consider the relationship of the last four Stanzas of 'The Wreck of the Deutschland' to the poem as a whole. Most answers offered an intelligent discussion of the fact that the final section brings together the philosophical issues raised in the poem but none addressed the issue of 'the ways' in which this conclusion works.

This failure to address the question of style or literary device was equally evident in answers on *Q.2(b)* which invited candidates to 'Illustrate *the means* by which Hopkins... conveys a sense of terror...'. Most essays in response to this listed instances where terror, fear or some form of inner struggle are evident in Hopkins' work, but there was little or no attempt to consider how imagery or contrast, rhythm or tone might contribute to the development of these feelings.

In the answer to *Q.3(a)* on W H Auden, the best candidates dealt intelligently with the ways in which 'In Memory of W B Yeats' is representative of the other poems in the selection. Several answers offered perceptive comments on how Auden is concerned with the relationship between art and life throughout his work. Such essays also noted the way in which Auden draws on classical and modern forms to create a tension in his verse. Less assured candidates tended to offer a practical criticism of the poem in question without widening the discussion or seeking points of comparison or contrast.

*Q.3(b)* was done well by the small number of candidates which tackled it and there was much fruitful discussion about how Auden uses images of pain or ugliness to reflect the 20th-Century condition and a wide variety of poems were used as illustrations. There were in addition some very thoughtful comments on how 'the painful, the disorderly, the ugly' are not wholly Auden's concerns. These answers tended to focus on how in the midst of pain Auden points to the existence of love and tenderness, however frail or transient.

Answers on Fanthorpe's poem were very mixed. The general tendency in both *Q.4(a)* and *Q.4(b)* was to list the references to women and religion respectively without any organising principle. In response to *Q.4(a)* candidates tended to take a clear-cut line and suggested that Fanthorpe's women are repressed or peripheral – such answers clearly missed the complex nature of Fanthorpe's presentation of women and utterly failed to consider the use that she makes of the different perspectives in the poems.

Candidates who answered *Q.4(b)* generally took the view that Fanthorpe is attacking Christianity in an unambiguous way and some accused her of outrageous blasphemy. The main problem seemed to be a too literal reading of the poetry and a weakness in identifying the ironic tone of voice.

Very few Centres had taught Defoe's *Roxana* but it was clear that where it had been covered it had been dealt with enthusiastically. Answers on the extract which introduces Roxana in the novel were well done and most candidates offered intelligent observations about the pace of the narrative and how important this is to creating a sense of the energy of the central character. There was also much fertile discussion about the episodic structure of the novel and the way in which the passage of time is dealt with.

There were a number of glittering answers on *Q.5(b)* some of which focused on how the central character is continually faced with responding to immediate problems and how this is an essential feature of the novel's narrative structure – some went on to observe that whilst economic survival demonstrates Roxana's experience, Defoe reveals how the pressures of life create guilt and inner tension. Weaker answers tended to document points in the novel where Roxana suffers some form of deprivation or hardship.

*Wuthering Heights* proved to be the most popular text on the paper and both questions elicited very varied answers. On the whole, better answers were evident in response to *Q.6(a)*. Here there was much intelligent discussion about the ways in which Heathcliff's death can be related to the novel's major concerns – and serves as a fitting conclusion through the reunion of Catherine and Heathcliff. Opportunities were taken to consider the ways in which the more tranquil tone of the end of the novel contrasts with the tempestuous nature of earlier parts of the novel. There was also much perceptive comment about the development of the imagery throughout the novel particularly in terms of light and vision.

*Q.6(b)* brought a lot of character sketches of either Nelly or Linton, although some candidates misread the question and clearly felt compelled to do both. The best answers took Charlotte Brontë's description as a starting point only and went on to offer modifications and revisions of the way in which we might

view either Nelly or Linton – such answers suggested that Emily Bronte's characterisations are more complex than her sister realised and considered instances of Linton's petulance and Nelly's inconsistency; only a few candidates were prepared to enter into the kind of evaluation that the question clearly demanded.

Only very few candidates answered on *Q.7(a)* and all who did fell into the trap of writing a narrative account of chapter 23 without considering how it 'exemplifies concerns and techniques of the novel as a whole'. Much could have been said about Thackeray's authorial position here and about the significance of Captain Dobbin as a part of the novelist's satirical purpose throughout *Vanity Fair*.

Those who answered *Q.7(b)* tended to think that the question required them to support either the case for Becky or Amelia. Only the very best candidates explored the ways in which Thackeray presents them as both complement and contrast at different points in the novel and thereby uses them as a means of developing his moral and social enquiry. Those who adopted this line also questioned whether the novel has a heroine in the traditional sense and opened a discussion about the nature of the text itself.

*The Handmaid's Tale* by Atwood proved to be another very popular text. *Q.8(a)* was addressed well by most candidates who saw that the 'ways' in which Atwood develops issues includes the use of colour symbolism, memory and contrasting images of oppression and fertility. Many answers demonstrated a clear awareness of the feminist perspective of the novel and were able to relate this to the ways in which Atwood develops Ofred's consciousness as the filter through which the reader experiences the events of the novel. *Q.8(b)* proved to be a challenging question and was tackled on the whole by the most able candidates who saw that 'the tension' that the question refers to is due in part to the structure of the novel which depends upon the continual juxtaposition of Ofred's private feelings and memories with the descriptions of the objective and oppressive society in which she is a functionary. Weaker responses tended to ignore the terms of the question and offer an analysis of the ills of the society Atwood depicts.

*Q.9(a)* on *Edward II* was a popular question and those who avoided recounting the events of the scene found a lot of fertile material – most saw the 'climax' in Edward II's death and the 'conclusion' as a quieter resolution of conflicts and an end to treachery. The best answers commented on how the scene fulfils the idea of the 'wheel of fortune' and this approach opened up intelligent discussion about whether the final scene offers a satisfactory conclusion to the debate about lawful authority and kingship.

*Q.9(b)* was done by a very few candidates and those who tackled it tended to offer a shopping list of characters lined up against one another. None tackled the idea of 'uncertainty' which was central to the question and so missed the opportunity to explore how far the play offers any clear moral distinctions or ethical positions.

There were very few answers on *The Man of Mode* but most who tackled the text did so with considerable insight. Answers on *Q.10(a)* demonstrated real awareness of Etherege's dramatic 'means' in Act III Scene i. Most observed the way in which the short and abrasive exchanges between Harriet and Busy create tension and reflect the underlying battle of wit between the sexes in the play. There were also insights into the recurring references to 'pretending', 'affection' and 'nature' which underline the debate about modish versus natural behaviour. A small number of glittering answers noted how the scene is structured such that the older and younger generations appear to be separate and distinct.

*Q.10(b)* elicited equally penetrating answers and there was considerable discussion about the economic nature of relationships and the Hobbesian sense in which alliances are formed for reasons of self preservation. In addition, the best responses examined the ways in which the world of fashion depends upon the predatory instinct. Only a few, however, attempted to suggest that whilst the overall picture in *The Man of Mode* is of a morally corrupt society, there are glimmers of hope in the country as opposed to town values.

Both questions on *Hedda Gabler* were popular and many candidates were able to see deeply and widely into the way in which the given extract relates to the whole play. Such answers offered insight into the

details and nuances in the exchange between Hedda and Brack and linked them to the dramatic development of the whole play. More plodding responses tended to avoid close scrutiny of the text and offered instead a rather generalised account of the triangular relationship at the heart of the play.

In the answer to *Q.11(b)* too many candidates examined Hedda's personal psychology in isolation of the text and as such became highly speculative. Such answers tended to see her as a socially conditioned culprit, a victim of a repressed and narrow past. The best responses related the tension between her socially determined position and her individual character to the structure of the play and thereby identified the nature of the drama. Such answers were all too rare, but were richly rewarded.

There was a wide range of answers on both questions on Brian Friel's *Translations* and most candidates appeared aware of the issue of cultural conflict central to the play. The best answers on *Q.12(a)* demonstrated awareness of the complexity involved in the whole question of how a conquered and divided nation establishes its own cultural identity and there was much perceptive comment on the way in which the exchange between Owen and Hugh develops a debate which is evident elsewhere in the play. Less able candidates tended to attempt to pin issues down in too simplified a way.

Good answers to *Q.12(b)* addressed the whole question of how culture and power are embodied in language and some noted the irony of *Translations* being written in English – the best answers offered real engagement with the text whilst weaker candidates tended to write more prepared and generalised accounts of linguistic theory without locating particular instances in the play itself.

In conclusion it was evident that the candidates who responded best to this year's paper had clearly enjoyed reading the texts. Their scripts provided evidence that they had been encouraged to consider how language works as well as exploring themes and issues emerging from the texts. They also appeared to have learned how to write coherent literary essays and of the importance of relevant discussion.

#### *Paper 9000/3 Chaucer and other Major Authors*

##### *General Comments*

The trend in recent years has been towards a steady decline in the number of candidates taking Paper 3 in the summer. This year saw a striking reversal of that trend with the client group increasing by around 40% on last year's figure.

Overall the increase involved no loss of quality. The general standard of work on the paper remained satisfactory, while there were more scripts in the excellent category than for some years. The number of candidates failing to achieve a basic A Level pass was small, and there were very few ungraded scripts.

Some failings persist, however, and as Examiners recognise, it is easier to list them than to devise foolproof strategies for eliminating them. The one most commonly cited this year was failure to read and respond to the *full* question. There were also rather too many unbalanced scripts, with overlong answers followed by brief and sketchy notes. This is particularly frustrating where it is the Part I answers that over elaborate and the more highly rewarded Part II answers that are hastily scribbled down. In a traditional two-part, closed book examination of the Paper 3 kind, timing and balance are crucially important if candidates are to gain *full* rewards for their knowledge and understanding of texts. Finally this year saw a minor but nonetheless worrying re-emergence of rubric infringement, a disease Examiners, perhaps too fondly, imagined had been eradicated years ago. There were UK scripts that ignored the Chaucer context question and some that in four answers failed to cover *three* different texts. As a result quite able candidates forfeited 20% of their marks. Centres – and especially those for whom Paper 3 is a new venture – are urged to alert their students to the *Instructions to Candidates* section on the front page of the examination paper.

*Comments on Individual Questions*

CHAUCER: *The Miller's Prologue and Tale*

- Q.1 (a) This passage worked well in that virtually all candidates found something in it to write about, while the good candidates were able to exercise their skills of analysis and argument.

There was much reference to the Miller's drunken assertiveness and contempt for order and formality; the Reeve's defensive anger; the pervasively cynical view of marital fidelity, this last seen as a particularly apt preparation for the Tale the Miller is determined to tell. Better answers picked up the disingenuousness of the Miller's opening apology, the provokingly sarcastic tone of his reply to the Reeve, and argued that the ensuing tale is far more polished and subtle than this coarse exchange might suggest.

However, while the general standard of answers was pleasingly competent, all Examiners commented on the high incidence of error in reading the passage. Far too many candidates, ignoring the comma after 'Osewold', assumed that the Reeve had no wife, despite the fact that six lines later she is specifically referred to.

Such answers missed the force of the Miller's cynical apothegm. Some took 'Brother Osewold' to be a pious monk addressed in confidence by the Miller as a snub to the Reeve; while some, translating Reeve as 'Reverend', saw him as a priest trying in vain to move the Miller's thoughts on to a higher plane. Such answers had understandable difficulties with 'Stynt thy clappe!' hardly a priest-like persuasion to elevate the mind. A number of Examiners concluded that, with the removal from 1(a) of the requirement to translate part of the passage, candidates were reading the text with less focused precision than heretofore; or that, hard-pressed, they had skipped over the *Prologue* and concentrated on the *Tale*.

- Q.2 (a) This was a popular question, prompting some impressively full and detailed answers, with many in the highly competent and excellent range. Candidates across the ability spectrum saw Alison as the embodiment of nature, vital, untameable and amoral. There were some very good analyses of the language and imagery by means of which she is constructed in the narrative. Her actions were generally seen as self-justifying and her freedom from 'punishment' taken as a celebration of the triumph of life over repression and artifice. The three male characters, on the other hand, were seen as in varying degrees 'unnatural', trying to constrain nature or improve on it or outsmart it. The different punishments meted out in the *Tale* were their come-uppance, a comic version of the price of *hubris*.

The best answers went beyond the portrayal of Alison, offering a richness of detail from the text to bring out the 'common life' element in the tale and using contrast with the preceding *Knight's Tale* most effectively.

On the place of moral criticism in the *Tale*, answers were interestingly diverse with equally persuasive arguments along different lines. Some took the view that behind the narrator's apparently uncritical acceptance of amoral common life is the subtle moral intelligence of the 'author', controlling the narrative to enforce a moral evaluation of presumption, folly, affectation, infidelity *et al.* Such accounts tended to falter over Alison, though some argued ingeniously – if not wholly convincingly – that she is a representative female figure in such narratives, acted upon rather than acting, and therefore outside the moral equation.

In the main, the weaker answers tended to illustrate the point made earlier about partial responses to questions. Some wrote in detail about the portrayal of Alison, ignoring the wider aspects of common life and going on to detail the various punishments meted out in the *Tale*. The most common unbalanced answers, however, were those that virtually ignored the first half of the question and wrote in detail on the moral issue, some clearly drawing on in-depth discussion during their study of the text. It is vital that candidates realise that such material is seldom useable in precisely the form in which it has been prepared, and that to gain maximum benefit it has to be modified and shaped to meet the demands of the question.

- (b) This was an equally popular question. While the overall standard was satisfactory, answers were less varied than was the case with 2(a) and there were noticeably fewer in the very good/excellent range. Too often candidates settled for the easy option of straightforward character contrasts. Within even this rather simplistic approach, there was a failure adequately to discriminate the given categories, a common choice being clever and stupid (Nicholas v. the Carpenter and/or Absalon), followed by old and young (Nicholas and Alison v. the Carpenter). Inevitably there was some weakening repetition of material here. Better answers used Absalon as an example of affectation arising from presumptuous folly and self-deception, and there were highly effective comparisons of his and Nicholas' seduction techniques. Here, as in 2(a), reference to *The Knight's Tale* was, on occasion, tellingly deployed.

The best answers to 2(b) were those that considered contrast as a structural device within the narrative and went on to explore characterisation in the *Tale*, uncovering subtleties that called into question the adequacy of the offered quotation. Sadly, there were fewer of these answers than Examiners hoped, suggesting that the question was rather *too* user-friendly tempting candidates to stay well within their capabilities rather than challenging and extending them.

#### JONSON: *Volpone*

- Q.1 (b) This was one of the two overwhelmingly popular elective texts on the paper and the context question was very widely subscribed. As with 1(a) the general standard of answers was satisfactory, the majority showing secure knowledge of the themes and characters of the play. Responses tended to concentrate on Volpone with detailed analyses of his speech, linking his sensuality to the pervasive theme of acquisitiveness. There was reference to the exotic imagery as an alternative form of material wealth and to Volpone's obsession with play-acting and masquerade. Fewer candidates picked up the directly sexual connotations of 'Then will I have thee...' and consequently the element of sexual fantasising was underplayed.

Celia's riposte was rather less effectively engaged. Clearly many candidates had already written her off as a 'wimp' and felt that a general gloss on her speech was enough to confirm that rating. Even those who took a more independent line, arguing that Celia is an articulate and courageous match for Volpone in terms of moral disputation, showed a marked reluctance to examine the terms with any particularity. As a result only the very good answers noted Celia's moral equivocation – that violent anger is more 'manly' than sexual desire – or teased out the disturbing masochism of her conclusion, with its savouring of disease and physical disfigurement. The best answers detected here a metaphor for the profounder sickness of mind and spirit that is the central concern of the play.

Again there was a tendency for the second part of the question to get short shrift. Candidates assumed that their character studies covered the virtue/vice issue satisfactorily. Only the most accomplished explored the notion of 'imaginative energy' and problematised the polarity of the quotation.

- Q.3 (a) This was a very popular question. In the generality of answers, limitations of critical approach were compensated by textual knowledge relevantly deployed. In the weaker answers there was, inevitably, much narrative summary, listing the greedy characters and their fates. Nevertheless, few candidates failed to achieve a basic pass here, and there was a substantial body of competent work, which attempted to discriminate penalties externally imposed from the essentially self-destructive nature of untrammelled greed. There was some impressive negotiation at the interface of legal and poetic justice. Several Examiners commented that this question brought out the best in candidates, with the most accomplished threading their way through Jonson's moral maze with literary tact and insight.
- (b) This was a much less popular question and in general elicited a disappointingly lower level of response. The word 'dull' occurred in a number of Examiners' reports. There was too much mere description and listing, too little engaged critical comment relating the themes to the overall effects of the play. Some candidates wrote exclusively about 'disguise' ignoring 'mimicry' (which a number seemed not to understand), while others lumped the terms together and wrote on 'deception in *Volpone*'. Given the centrality of these themes within the overall pattern of the play, it was frustrating to see so many candidates locked up rather than released by the question.

JOHN DONNE: *Metaphysical Poetry* (ed. GARDNER)

- Q.1 (c) This was a surprisingly widely answered question, largely because, of the substantial minority who had studied Donne, many preferred the context to the essay options. Examiners reported that answers were at least adequate, while some wrote of very good/excellent readings scoring highly on understanding and strong personal responses. This strengthening of context answers on metaphysical poetry has been a gratifying recent development on *Paper 3*.

Predictably many candidates took a positive view of the sonnet, seeing Donne in confident mood defying and belittling Death with an impressive show of rhetorical bravado. Such accounts were notable for their willingness to relate development of thought and feeling to a close examination of the language and imagery of the poem, with some nice discrimination of changes in tone and attitude. There was also a pleasing readiness (and ability) to relate this poem to others, bringing out what was seen as a departure from Donne's habitual attitude to death and the prospect of dying.

Above this highly competent level were those who saw behind (and through!) the bravado and hyperbole a persisting underlying fear, the snake of doubt and insecurity scotched not killed. The very best explored the complexities and paradoxes of the poem, relating it to others in which unresolved (and unresolvable) contradictions are more openly evident. Work of this quality is a joy to mark.

- Q.4 (a) Of the two essay options – neither very widely subscribed – this was much the more popular. Examiners' reports were more diverse here. One or two wrote of excellent answers showing mature grasp of the question and relating 'speaking voices' to a wide range of appropriately discriminated poems. Others referred to a tendency of candidates to substitute 'themes' for 'speaking voices' and to offer little more than a trot through a limited sample of undifferentiated poems. Again some had grasped the notion of poetic persona, but others saw the poems as outpourings of a single 'Romantic' sensibility and concentrated their attention on Donne as an unstable, irresponsible and 'insincere' lover.

The overall view of Examiners was that, while work on 4(a) was adequate, there was something of a perplexing gap between the standard of answers on this text in the two



parts of the Paper.

- (b) There were relatively few answers to this question and Examiners' reports were widely divergent. One wrote glowingly of excellent essays from candidates fully engaging the concept of faith and exploring a range of poems with sensitive insight and textual possession – 'It was as if they had learnt the relevant poems by heart'.

Others who saw answers were somewhat less enthusiastic. Their candidates had tended to offer discrete paraphrases of a few poems largely unrelated to the issues raised by the question. Some candidates ignored *Hymne to God the Father*, while others offered detailed examination only of the poem printed in Part I.

However, it is not possible to draw helpful conclusions from such a small set of answers.

WYCHERLEY: *The Country Wife*

Despite the anticipated appeal of this text in an age of putative sexual liberation and enlightenment, it has proved to be amongst the least popular on the paper. The reasons for this neglect may, however, be economic rather than aesthetic/moral.

- Q.1 (d) As seems so often the case with ultra-minority texts, candidates substantially preferred the context question. The general standard of answers was highly satisfactory, with most falling in the competent to very good range. Candidates showed intelligent awareness of dramatic irony and teased out the thematic undercurrents of the passage with perception and relish. Most had Wycherley's target – sexual self-indulgence promiscuously active behind a facade of propriety and refinement – well in their sights and there was some excellent comment on coded language and innuendo, with relevant reference to other episodes in the play. More limited answers betrayed some uncertainty about the ambiguous role of Horner within the thematic pattern of the play, and there was a curiously persisting misapprehension that Sir Jasper is a city businessman. However, overall the level of understanding and enjoyment in these answers prompted regret that more had not tackled this text.

- Q.5 (a) & (b) The few Examiners who saw any answers to these questions reported that they were of (at least) competent standard, but there were insufficient to justify detailed comment.

FIELDING: *Jonathan Wild*

This was the least popular text on the paper, the majority of Examiners reporting no answers at all.

- Q.1 (e) The few who answered this question wrote well on (i), showing sound understanding of Wild as he is portrayed throughout the text and using the passage as a basis for analysing his changed persona in this very late episode. Better answers noted that, for the first time in the novel, Fielding's irony slightly misfires here since Wild, on the edge of extinction, *does* achieve a kind of perverse greatness. There was equally sound appreciation of Laetitia and some sharp anatomising of their relationship both here and in the novel as a whole.

Answers to (ii) were rather less secure. Candidates who had savoured the grim 'dance without music' image and noted the grotesque marital antics of the concluding paragraph seemed unable to relate this humour to its context – a prison cell in the shadow of the gallows. Most found the superlatives of the question unsettling and, sensing a genuine difficulty, Examiners appropriately adjusted the mark weighting.

Q.6 (a) & (b) There were scarcely any answers to either of these questions.

JANE AUSTEN: *Emma*

This, of course, was the other overwhelmingly popular elective text. All Examiners saw a wide range of answers on it, the large majority reporting that it had been studied with understanding and pleasure.

Q.1 (f) This was the most widely subscribed optional question and it is gratifying to report that the general standard of answers was highly satisfactory with a generous topping of really distinguished work.

All candidates found something of relevance to say about the two protagonists, the context of the passage and the nature of their relationship at this point in the novel. Treatment of Mr Knightley was particularly detailed, but most offered something on Emma, while the better answers achieved stunning balance, analysing the situation both as the characters consciously see it and as the responding reader understands it. There were some face-value accounts that put the stress on Mr Knightley's rational, objective view of the world as a control on Emma's more fanciful, impulsive reading of reality. Most saw that in this passage his reactions are less transparent, stemming from a jealousy of Emma's interest in Frank Churchill that he himself is unaware of. As a consequence an unaccustomed note of testy defensiveness is struck, well picked up by more able candidates in their comments on the 'Me! not at all' paragraph in the middle of the passage. The best answers brought out the full flavour of the irony here: namely, that while Mr Knightley's appraisal of Frank Churchill has a darker motivation than he is able to acknowledge, his views are shown to be substantially correct.

As indicated above, candidates found rather less to say about Emma. There was much reference to her fancifulness, her proneness to disagree with Mr Knightley while at the same time valuing his opinion. Better answers examined her compulsive need for external distractions to occupy her mind and channel thwarted energies, and at the same time her dangerous tendency to construct such distractions according to her required model. Some very perceptive accounts related her fantasies about Frank Churchill in this passage with those she cultivates about Harriet, Mr Elton and Jane Fairfax.

Finally, in the best answers there was an awareness that the relationship between Emma and Mr Knightley is already, in an important sense, that of a settled couple, familiar and at ease with each other, talking intimately of other people, able to disagree without rancour and with their own defined areas of interest and authority.

Q.7 (a) This was another widely subscribed question which worked well in that it offered appropriate opportunities to candidates across the range of ability. As with 1(f), scarcely any of those who wrote on it failed to achieve at least a basic pass mark, while there was much highly competent work and some that was quite outstanding. The more limited answers stayed within the bounds of stock character study and wrote about Emma as if she were a 'real person'. At the other end of the scale were those who saw the question as focusing a literary issue and offered very sophisticated analyses of Emma Woodhouse as a 'figure in the carpet'.

The majority of answers challenged Jane Austen's statement and took an appropriately balanced view. The novel was seen as one of education and development, the protagonist reaching towards a morally more sensitive and responsible understanding of herself and others and of the obligations of her role and status in a strictly hierarchical society. There was, of course, much reference to Emma's snobbery, her manipulation of others, her assumption of superiority of insight, her failure to subdue impulse to the demands of tact and propriety – all these 'faults' balanced by filial dutifulness, concern

for others and capacity for remorse and self-recrimination. Inevitably some of the treatment was schematic and some was over-simplified, but none disablingly so. Clearly this was a text that had been studied with commendable insight as well as enjoyment.

- Q.7 (b) The (a) option proved so user-friendly that it effectively eclipsed (b), a pity since this question has much to challenge those who have engaged the novel with interest and enjoyment. The relatively few answers were of a generally competent standard with some impressively detailed accounts and some that went on to explore the literary issues with subtle intelligence. Most responses canvassed some – or indeed all – of the following: the Churchills, the Campbells, the Dixons, the Sucklings, the Woodhouse and Knightley physicians. A few exhaustive accounts added to these – the Braggess, Harriet's parents, Highbury's poor and even the dashing widow through whose vulgar mediation Emma was to savour the attractions of Bath!

Given such riches Examiners *just* tolerated references to Robert Martin and the Coles – who do appear if only marginally – but gave short shrift to mention of Frank Churchill, who merely appears late. Inevitably there were some accounts that did little more than list, but overall candidates attempted to explore the contribution of these 'absent' characters to the plot of the novel, to the development of its characterisation and themes, and, crucially, to the maintenance of suspense and mystification.

CONRAD: *Victory*

While this was, as expected, a distinctly minority text, the quality of work it provoked left Examiners to regret that, like *The Country Wife*, it had not been more widely subscribed.

- Q.1 (g) The overall standard of answers was competent or better. There was much informed and perceptive writing in (i), with detailed accounts of Heyst, relating the given passage effectively to the novel as a whole. Most referred, with varying degrees of insight, to the ultimately tragic conflict in Heyst between detachment from and engagement with the demands of human life and relationships. There was telling reference to the complexities of hypersensitivity and fastidious delicacy at war with inability to stand back from the difficulties and sufferings of others. Schomberg, though understandably seen in simpler terms, was well understood and explained – with the better answers drawing attention to a tell-tale vagueness in the text with regard to his motivation.

All but the most accomplished candidates experienced some degree of difficulty with Morrison. There was a curious and widespread impression that he was an old man – the diminished head and eye-glass perhaps – while his particular combination of pride, gratitude, generous heartedness and entrepreneurial fecklessness eluded definition in many answers.

However, the difficulties that some candidates had with Morrison were as nothing compared to those that virtually all encountered with the narrator. As a result (ii) caused no end of problems, and Examiners, recognising a general bafflement, appropriately adjusted the balance of marks. Some candidates seemed unaware that there *was* a narrator, others took him to be simply Conrad. Of the minority who recognised an independent (and distinctive) voice, scarcely any questioned the morality of tacitly encouraging rumour-mongering of a kind one affects to despise and ignore. A few very good answers noted the narrator's assumption of amused superiority to characters immensely beyond him, but only the best linked it to his similar attitude to Davidson, a Conradian model of stiff integrity and concern. Consequently, what had seemed a legitimate and interesting question misfired rather badly.

- Q.8 (a) Several Examiners saw answers to this question and all but one reported enthusiastically. Responses were varied, thoughtfully argued and well supported by textual reference. Some concentrated on Heyst's victory, albeit belated, over his father's beliefs and values; others put more stress on Lena's triumph over the death-dealers and over her own previously depressed sense of self-worth. Many more prepared to range more widely to comprehend Mrs Schomberg and even her benighted husband. One Examiner reported some outstanding answers, in which the notion of 'victory' was explored both as an ideality and as a complex actuality for a range of characters.

The few limited/weak answers came from candidates who, seemingly taken by surprise by the question, concluded that there was no victory of any kind to discuss. While there is a tenable case to be made here by persuasive argument, mere dismissal of the issue seemed wilful given the title of the novel.

- (b) There were very few answers to this question and the standard was distinctly variable. Some wrote on the unholy trinity with point and relish, but rather more offered only cautious character studies, the most limited of which, apparently non-plussed by 'ghoulish charm', ignored the terms of the question.

#### VIRGINIA WOOLF: *The Waves*

This was another very minority text, but, as last year, Examiners enthused over the high quality of work it prompted ('wonderful', 'super' recurred in one report).

- Q.1 (h) Scarcely any candidates attempting this question did less than satisfactorily and there were some quite outstanding answers. Candidates seemed inspired by the density and richness of the passage to offer, in varying degrees detailed, attentive and sensitively discriminated analyses of the two characters. Many saw Susan as clenched tight shut, compelled as much by negatives of hate and rejection as by positives of aspiration and celebration, still living with childhood desolation, obsessively protective of the narrow space she had colonised for herself. Jinny, by contrast, was seen as more open, but vulnerable to a sensuality uninformed by intellectual and emotional fineness. Given the emphasis in contemporary culture on fully realised sexuality for all as a natural right, it was curious how morally reproving some of the comment on Jinny was. In a few accounts she was bluntly dismissed as a whore – not quite Virginia Woolf's point, surely?

As with several other questions on the paper, the second part of (h) was less fully and convincingly engaged. In the main Susan's was seen as the more fulfilled life, though within the tight self-imposed parameters referred to earlier; while Jinny struck candidates as pathetic (even tragic) in later life, a woman living wholly within the body and diminishing as that centre inevitably lost its magnetism.

- Q.9 (a) & (b) Neither essay option attracted many takers, but there was strong, committed and informed writing on both, with the notion of 'living' in (a) prompting vibrant responses. A number of candidates had some difficulties with structure and organisation of material here, but Examiners attributed these to an insufficiently precise focus in the question and made appropriate allowance. The weaker (b) answers were from candidates who had inadequate knowledge of the prologues and were vague as to their relationship with the rest of the text. Examiners could do little here beyond wonder why the question had been chosen.

#### T.S. ELIOT: *Selected Poems*

This text was first set on *Paper 3* some years ago. Such were the enthusiasm and quality

of response from candidates that when the text had run its course it was replaced by *Four Quartets*. This was markedly less popular and less successful, candidates tending to find in Eliot's sonorous abstractions an element denser than air. After a gap of some years, the reintroduction to the Paper of the successful early Eliot text was greeted by Examiners with pleasurable anticipation.

In the event it has proved something of a disappointment. It was among the least popular, and, while there was some very good work on all three questions, the general levels of textual knowledge, critical understanding – and, crucially, enthusiasm – were below those of a decade ago.

- Q.1 (i) A surprising number of candidates failed to recognise – or was at best vague about – the context of the passage, with the result that answers were over-reliant on 'safe' generalities about communication failures, sterility of human relationships, urban squalor *et al.* Some who recognised the context seemed uncertain as to the relationship of the protagonists, a favoured version being that the 'Lady' was very old, a sort of meddling aunt attempting to keep her nephew up to the cultural mark.

Other too often recurring failings were: inability to discriminate the 'voice' of the lady from the interior monologue of the male persona; confusion as to who was hearing whom and why; reluctance to explore language and imagery as a way into the textual situation, its feelings and mood.

- Q.10 (a) A question designed to enable candidates to display their knowledge of the text proved rather less successful than was expected. There were *some* excellent responses, but in the main candidates seemed reluctant to range very widely – answers restricted to *Prufrock*, *Preludes* and *Rhapsody* were not uncommon – or to venture beyond sterility, monotony and squalor (see above) as recurrent motifs in the poetry.
- (b) There were very few subscribers here. A handful of quite stunning answers explored different constructions of 'journey' as a way into a range of poems finely discriminated. The more limited answers tended to take the question as a repeat of the open invitation in (a) and included whatever they could remember. While this was generally enough, some exciting possibilities were ignored.

Finally, it is by no means immediately apparent why the Woolf and Eliot texts should prompt such contrasting responses from candidates. Both are challenging and 'difficult' modernist texts, still *avant garde* seventy years on. Neither offers a comfortable or readily accessible construction of human reality, neither is prepared to compromise for an instant its exclusivity and elitism. On this year's evidence the first still speaks in the accents of the time, the second has been reduced to a distant and muffled echo of ancestral voices.

#### *Paper 9000/4 The Period c.1720–1832*

##### *General Comments*

This paper as a whole attracted some very good work. In particular Byron and Clare released good and enthusiastic critical response. The best candidates were not frightened of language and were prepared to stop and think and analyse, sacrificing quantity for pointed quality. Most candidates knew the books, but did not always turn their knowledge to best advantage, often stopping short at paraphrase or commentary. Difficulty was observed in the articulation of genuine responses to the writing of the period, particularly poetry, partly through a lack of critical vocabulary, but partly from an inattention to the writing in the texts themselves. Candidates often managed to put contextual knowledge of the writers, and the life of the times, to good use.

There was a tendency to ignore two-part questions; to discuss 'in what ways' but to omit consideration of 'how far'. Time spent on reading the questions carefully is well spent.

Quotation was often full and accurate, but could be haphazard and unrelated to the argument of the answer.

Candidates were sometimes slow to *use* the passages given, and by referring to other relevant texts (as asked) to push out from them into general critical discussion.

### *Comments on Individual Questions*

- Q.1* Both Austen questions were answered with enthusiasm, with *Q.1(a)* and *Q.1(b)* fairly evenly divided.
- Q.1 (a)* Answers were knowledgeable, and the straightforward division between the Crawfords on the one side and Fanny/Edmund on the other provided a good framework for discussing the book. The best answers pushed outside 'events' in the novel towards Austen's morality, socio-economic context (not always well done), views of marriage and rational and emotional divide (Mary's wit was often missed as well as Henry's helpfulness to William).
- (b)* Everybody was comfortable with Mrs Norris and Fanny in the passage, but the degree of perception in discussing Sir Thomas's role distinguished better candidates. There was some lack of careful reading: eg, 'Mrs Norris fetched breath...' and Sir Thomas 'coming further into the room': in other words, Austen as dramatist.
- Q.2* Most candidates answered on Keats, often with enthusiasm.
- Q.2 (a)* Candidates most often did not note that the wish for a 'life of sensations' was in a letter, and was a wish; not a statement of intent. 'Sensations' was often vaguely understood: 'thoughts' were often not mentioned at all. 'How far', therefore, was often ignored. Good candidates gave attention to Keats as a thinker, balanced by careful attention to 'sensations'. Good knowledge of Keats' poems and letters was shown by many candidates, not always focused on the question.
- (b)* Too many candidates did not notice that the poem is a sonnet and the theme appropriately, death and immortality. This was the most popular question, and produced some excellent responses. An 'appreciation' of the poem seemed to cause difficulty. Attention to language was rarer than it should have been.
- Q.3* Wordsworth was very popular; Coleridge less so.
- (a)* This question proved harder than it seemed. Candidates who wanted to write *only* on 'Tintern Abbey' were in difficulty, though 'to what extent' accommodated discussion of the poem in relation to others. Candidates often, commendably, tried to link Wordsworth's concerns with modern life; the social history of his own day *could* prove useful if related to critical reading of the poems.
- (b)* Although few tried 'The Ancient Mariner' question it was well done, largely because 'symbolism' was often caught well. The voyage itself was rarely discussed, or the sun, moon, etc. Other strengths of the poem, narrative, language were ignored.

Q.4 James Hogg: *Memoirs of a Justified Sinner*. The few candidates who tried Hogg did well, and showed good personal response.

- (a) Most opposed the comment, and in doing so gave critical readings of the text.
- (b) Also drew good readings, though in some cases it was not a good choice.

Q.5 More tackled Scott: *Heart of Midlothian* than last year.

- (a) Some good work in response to this question, showing knowledge of the text. The best answers took account of wider issues in the novel, and went beyond a simple narrative of Jeannie Deans's life.
- (b) Very few answered this question: a pity, since it is one of the most interesting problems faced by Scott as novelist.

Q.6 Byron: Both questions attracted good answers, showing wide reading.

- (a) Byron was seen to 'scorn' everything and everyone. The word 'vital' was often ignored. The best answers were more discriminating and demonstrated good knowledge of Byron's life and works.
- (b) The passage was not so well handled. Most identified it in 'Childe Harold'. Language and tone gave difficulty, and few wrote a 'commentary' on the stanzas. The best identified a Byron who had dropped his mask, and was writing 'straight'. Only a few linked France and America, talked of the French Revolution, or identified 'a Pallas'.

Q.7 Clare

Some of the best imaginative work for this paper was produced in the Clare answers, which released excellent and discriminatory personal response. Both questions were equally well done, and did show (at the best) enthusiasm for the writing.

Q.8 Goldsmith: *She Stoops to Conquer* was also read with some enthusiasm.

- (a) This could draw some fairly humdrum 'character' answers; but there were good feminist essays in the batch. 'Presentation' and Goldsmith's art were often ignored.
- (b) This question was widely mis-read, or mis-understood. Most candidates simply ignored Hazlitt's remarks, and relatively few gave consideration to a 'genuine comedy'.

*Paper 9000/5 Literature of the Victorian Age*

#### *General Comments*

In general the Examiners were struck by the diligence with which most candidates undertook their studies of the texts on this paper. The best showed an over-arching understanding of themes and concepts and approached the real import of the question with authority and confidence. Then there were those who, whilst having sound knowledge of the plot and narrative structure, listed or categorised ideas. The remainder, with varying degrees of success, produced routine and uninspiring rather than personally felt or imaginative responses that often exhibited little evidence of the enjoyment of the texts.

### Comments on Individual Questions

*Q.1(a)* produced some of the best answers. Candidates tackled the question efficiently and, in most cases, showed a very high degree of knowledge, together with a good understanding of the novel's imagery and how it both reflects and enhances the character of Edna. Generally, candidates surveyed the book in a broadly chronological manner, demonstrating a good and sympathetic understanding of Edna herself, but also a frequently balanced view of her dilemma and in a few cases that of her husband too. *Q.1(b)* was less well answered and candidates found it hard to show an adequate grasp of what Chopin's narrative methods might be. It might be that as this was a new text Centres concentrated largely on content in their preparation for the examination.

There were comparatively few answers on Trollope. Those who answered *Q.2(a)* found it quite straightforward and were able to show how the reader's sympathies are sometimes engaged by the character of Melmotte. *Q.2(b)* raised more problems as comparatively few answers showed awareness of the sub-text of the passage, assuming that all that was required was an essay on the character of the persons mentioned in the passage. The fact that the extract contained an important statement about Trollope's attitudes towards the subject of his novel appeared to be beyond most candidates.

Although *Q.3(a)* was a very popular question, only relatively few candidates saw the idea of 'common involvement' as having anything to do with the thesis that we 'are members one of another'. The majority seemed to regard 'involvement' and 'responsibility' as synonymous, and wrote about the various degrees to which characters showed a sense of duty and care towards their fellows. A number assumed that the question related to the plot of *Bleak House* only and missed the point by and large. There were some very good analyses of the passage in *Q.3(b)* but rarely did candidates demonstrate more than sketchily how Dickens used similar techniques elsewhere. Where this was done, it was done very shrewdly, though, using Chesney Wold, Krooks' shop, Bleak House, and the Jellybys' house as particular examples. Candidates need to be aware of the disadvantage of going no further than a practical criticism exercise in questions of this type, though.

Again, as a new text, *Shirley* may have been a minority choice. There were few answers and of those many answers showed little awareness of narrative methods as opposed to character or plot content in *Q.4(a)*. In the passage question, *Q.4(b)*, there was frequent awareness of the breadth to which deprivation and alienation is perceived across a range of characters, although weaker candidates did not see beyond Caroline herself.

Shaw was clearly the most popular author on the paper and the majority of candidates answered on *Qs 5(a)* and *(b)*. In *Q.5(a)* most candidates seemed to find it easier to answer on *The Man of Destiny* although the word 'virtuosity' was sometimes understood to mean simply 'virtuousness'. *Q.5(b)* produced a very wide range of answers with some very wide-ranging knowledge and understanding.

Answers to the questions on Elizabeth Barrett Browning showed a variety of responses ranging from the outright feminist through Freudian approaches to the simple and plain response to lyrical poetry. Most of the few Centres who had done it were able to perform quite well. *Q.6(b)* was, perhaps, less well done than the alternative.

*Q.7(a)* was popular and done with great thoroughness, though 'irony' was not always properly understood and often equated with 'fate' in the recital of prepared answers. *Q.7(b)* was equally popular and produced a wide spectrum of 'attention-grabbing' ideas. As the question was relatively open, it encouraged – and rightly so – a number of Hardy's devices which were attractive to a reader; candidates showed a confident knowledge, and a pleasing level of enjoyment too.

Answers to *Q.8* included a very broad range of poems in both aspects of the question. What was a 'private' and what was a 'public' poem proved a difficult distinction for some candidates, though. Definitions of heroism in *Q.8(b)* were rather broadly interpreted by many of the answers and Examiners had to be tolerant of 'St Simon Stylites' and of 'In Memoriam'; 'Break, break, break' and 'The Dying Swan' were, however, largely irrelevant to this question.



*General Comments*

Examiners have reported a generally high standard of expression and technical accuracy in candidates' writing this year, with, however, frequent lapses in dealing with the apostrophe, their/there, and the spelling of characters' names; there were occasional failures to sustain an appropriate critical register ('Joyce's most in-depth, mind-boggling work, *Ulysses*,' was this year's most spectacular instance). Most scripts showed evidence that the candidates had been well prepared, knew the texts well, and had enjoyed reading them. The texts new to Advanced Level – *The House of Mirth*, the Rattigan plays and *In the Castle of My Skin* – seem to have worked particularly well, and the return of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* has evidently been greeted by enthusiastic teaching and some energetic responses from the candidates.

Many of the usual problems have been identified this year also. Examiners have invariably observed that most candidates would do better if they thought more carefully about the range of opportunities offered by the questions before beginning to write their answers. There seems to have been rather more than the usual proportion of scripts with short (or non-existent) final answers this year, and some Examiners have noted an over-dependence on narrative at the expense of critical comment. There is a general feeling that answers on poetry are less well handled than those on fiction, that answers based on set passages tend to neglect close analysis of the writing, and that candidates' repertoire of technical/critical terms is usually slender.

Finally, three particular issues are worth noting. First: since almost all Centres prepare only four texts, candidates' choice is limited to the (a) and (b) options on the selected books; this restriction is understandable, considering various pressures within the sector, but it may also explain why so many fourth answers are undeveloped. Secondly: where a candidate answers on a poetry text, this is usually the weakest answer on the script; this factor is closely related to the candidates' general lack of critical terminology and analytical skills. Thirdly: in their answers candidates almost never refer to any text other than the one on which the question has been set, to note either the radical differences between them in terms of concerns and formal characteristics (say, *The Death of the Heart* and *In the Castle of My Skin*) or the ways in which similar concerns are variously expressed (eg Lamming and Ngugi on the experience of colonialism); again this is understandable given the pressure of other examination papers and subjects, but it is slightly regrettable that the benefits of comparative, intertextual study and discussion are not more widely enjoyed.

*Comments on Individual Questions*RUDYARD KIPLING: *Selected Stories*

Though this text was not one of the most popular in terms of the number of Centres selecting it, candidates seem to have enjoyed reading and working on the stories. On *Q.1(a)* most answers concentrated on narrative unpredictability, illustrated from a narrow selection of stories of which 'Mary Postgate' and 'The Friendly Brook' came up most frequently. Fuller answers explored other kinds of unpredictability, usually carefully illustrated from a wider range of tales: supernatural intervention ('The Wish House'/'The Bridge Builders'); surprising/illuminating glimpses of other cultures or forms of consciousness ('Without Benefit of Clergy'/'The Bull That Thought'); sudden enlargements of scale and revisions of relationships or personalities ('The Gardener'/'Mary Postgate'). On *Q.1(b)* there were some very sensitive analyses of the effects of the writing in the given passage (particularly the function of the description of the cemetery as objective correlative for Helen's state of mind), some perceptive discussion of Mrs Scarsworth's role in the story, and (in the most interesting answers) a good deal of speculation about the possible meanings of the story's concluding exchange: though few candidates specifically referred to the echo of the Gospel, most were alert to the spiritual implications of the encounter and its redemptive relation with Helen's experience in the social world of the earlier part of the story.

EDITH WHARTON: *The House of Mirth*

Again, not many Centres had selected this text, but, again, those candidates who answered on it found plenty to say on both options, and had clearly responded to the writing. On *Q.2(a)* most candidates were able to offer thoughtful and accurate accounts of the characters of Lily and Selden, usually supported by apposite quotation and reference to revealing incident. The differing extents to which, and ways in which, they might be regarded as 'victims of their environment' were explored in the fuller answers (the *tableau vivant* scene was often fruitfully central in these discussions); though some candidates were reluctant to see any flaws in Lily's character, most noted her contributions to her own misfortunes, and most were alert to the crippling tentativeness of Selden; many recognised the determining effects of gender on social experience. On *Q.2(b)* there were many good general accounts of the social world constructed by the text, most arguing that 'human dignity and integrity' are qualities largely missing from this world; Lily was often presented as the standard against which her society is measured (often in the context of Wharton's observation in *A Backward Glance* that we judge a society by the value of what it destroys), and many answers noted that in this world to be virtuous is to be disabled from social participation.

JAMES JOYCE: *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*

This was one of the most frequently selected texts this year, with rather more candidates attempting *Q.3(b)* than *Q.3(a)*. On both options, candidates tended to follow the 'centre line', with usually the same incidents deployed to illustrate the same general argument. On *Q.3(a)* weaker answers simply listed episodes in which Stephen's perceptions could be said to conflict with external reality; fuller answers explored the nature of that conflict in relation to Stephen's development. On *Q.3(b)* three kinds of response could be discerned: most candidates described Stephen's development of major characteristics that they felt could be regarded, unproblematically, as 'artistic' (sensory awareness, individuality, isolation, literary discrimination and enjoyment, emotional vulnerability, sensitivity to language); fuller answers measured this development against the definition of artistic sensibility and practice that the text itself offers through Stephen's theoretical meditations, and that the text itself eventually embodies as the narrator becomes 'invisible' in the writing; the most interesting answers of all were those that noted the ironies of Joyce's presentation of Stephen and problematised the model of the artist that the text ostensibly offers the reader.

ARNOLD WESKER: *The Wesker Trilogy*

*Q.4(a)* was by far the most frequently attempted option. Here there were many good answers which showed a knowledge of the characters' various ideals, and an ability to see how human shortcomings and/or social structures prevent their realisation; the quality of the answer often turned upon the degree to which the candidate had grasped how 'socialism' varies in meaning for the characters in the plays. Understandably, most candidates concentrated on accounts of characters, rather than political debate, and most managed to integrate discussion of all three plays into their answers. The fewer candidates who attempted *Q.4(b)* tended to concentrate on the language of the plays, though some structured their answers around notions of theatrical naturalism: there were some useful discussions of *Roots* and of Dave's and Ada's project in *I'm Talking about Jerusalem*. Some candidates took issue with the question, wondering whether there was any disjunction between apparent simplicity and covert complexity at all.

THOM GUNN: *Selected Poems* andTED HUGHES: *The Hawk in the Rain*

On the whole, responses to both options were disappointing: candidates generally summarised the content of a narrow range of poems, often giving the impression that these would have been the ones discussed whatever the question set. *Q.5(a)* was the more popular option, usually discussed in relation to Hughes: 'inner drama' was variously taken to mean the poet's own pre-occupations, anxieties common to human beings, or, in the most interesting answers, tensions released by the strategies and devices of the poetry itself (some penetrating discussions of 'The Thought Fox' in this connection). The fewer answers on *Q.5(b)* again drew largely on Hughes.

ELIZABETH BOWEN: *The Death of the Heart*

Elizabeth Bowen's debut at Advanced Level has evidently been appreciated by the fairly substantial number of Centres selecting this novel: the presentation of adult/teenage relationships conflict seems to have resonated sympathetically with the experience of many of these contemporary readers. *Q.6(a)* was the more popular option. Many good answers concentrated on relevant incidents (Portia's first encounter with Eddie, the hand-holding episode, Portia's encounters with Anna and her discussions with Matchett) and made some perceptive comments about the stages by which Portia moves from childhood into the adult world; and most tackled the implications of 'innocent' and 'knowing'. On *Q.6(b)* there were some thoughtful analyses of the passage in relation to the character of Thomas, the role of Major Brutt, and places elsewhere in the novel where its concerns are reflected: some answers astutely followed up the applicability of the perception: 'Society was self-interest given a pretty gloss' to the novel's exploration of social and personal relationships.

ROBIN SKELTON (Ed): *Poetry of the Thirties*

*Q.7(a)* produced thoughtful surveys of the material of the collection, tracing connections between insecurities of personal identity, love and family relationships; many candidates were able to bring substantial knowledge of the social and historical contexts of the period to bear on the poems themselves; other responses to this question were disappointingly lacking in detail and awareness of poetic effect. On *Q.7(b)* relatively few answers engaged closely with the poem set for comment, of those most were able to relate its concerns to other poems in the collection; Examiners have noted particularly in relation to this question candidates' uneasiness with the analysis of poetry and their lack of acquaintance with technical procedures and terminology.

TERENCE RATTIGAN: *The Winslow Boy* and *The Browning Version*

*Q.8(a)* was the more popular option. Here there was some sensitive comment on *The Browning Version* in particular. Candidates were generally able to show how each of the three major characters achieves a degree of self knowledge, with a good deal of sympathy being shown for Crocker-Harris. On *Q.7(b)* candidates explored the irony of the notion of the 'happy ending' in relation to each of these plays, shrewdly assessing losses and gains in the experience of the characters and the processes by which the endings are achieved; questions of 'fate' and the deeper implications of 'resolution' of action were explored by the more thoughtful candidates.

GEORGE LAMMING: *In the Castle of My Skin*

Examiners have been impressed by the energy and detail of candidates' responses, in both options: in many scripts this text produced the best answer. On *Q.9(a)* most candidates displayed a thorough knowledge of the text and ability to explore the most appropriate incidents in relation to clearly identified dimensions of change – historical, political, economic and social: the better answers related these external contexts of change to the psychological/intellectual development of the narrator and its expression in a variety of linguistic and stylistic strategies. On *Q.9(b)*, similarly, most candidates explored the ways in which the given passage functions as a compendium of the novel's narratives and concerns: the emblematic roles of Pa and Mr Slime were considered perceptively, and most candidates also responded sensitively to the elegiac tone of the writing.

NGUGI WA THIONG'O: *A Grain of Wheat*

On *Q.10(a)* candidates tended to write more on the cost of independence than the necessity, though a small proportion were drawn into historical accounts of the uprising that led them away from the text. Most answers surveyed the effects of colonialism, resistance and independence on a selection of characters, notably Kihika, Karanja, Mugo, Gikonyo and Mumbi (often the quality of an answer was indicated most clearly by the discussion of Mumbi's experience and symbolic function in the novel); many answers also explored the experience of the European figures in the text. On *Q.10(b)* there were some excellent answers that offered both close analysis of the passage and wider consideration of the

novel's major concerns as these are enacted in the writing of the extract; the effects of the novel's characteristic intertwining of past and present were thoughtfully explored, and the force of Mugo's apprehension of relations between them – the moment when he perceives and *enters* history as a process – was sensitively registered as centrally important in the novel as a whole. As with the Lamming, there was a general recognition of the interpenetration in the text of thematic concerns and modes of expression.

#### *Paper 9000/7 Comment and Appreciation (Unseen passages only)*

##### *General Comments*

Candidates approached this paper with enthusiasm, and there was evidence that this year fewer Centres were entering candidates without preparing them properly: scripts at all levels of ability showed that the basic principles of practical criticism were understood. It is certainly a mistake to assume that less time needs to be spent in preparing candidates for a Comment and Appreciation paper than for a set-text paper.

It was particularly pleasing that *Q.1* (comparing and contrasting a poem and a passage of prose) proved to be so popular, and that *Q.2* (a poem by the West Indian poet Lucinda Roy) so clearly moved and excited candidates – even within the context of an examination. The drama extract question (*Q.3*) attracted fewer candidates than last year – as always when a pre-20th-century passage is set – and the recreative response question *Q.4(b)* was still very much a minority choice. The passage on which it was based, however (from Virginia Woolf's *To The Lighthouse*), was a popular choice, and it was encouraging to find even weak candidates willing to explore the complexities of the passage and the features of the writer's style.

It seemed that candidates were able to make good use of their time: there were few incomplete scripts, and most essays were of an adequate, but not excessive length. There were no rubric infringements. It was noticeable, however, that some of the weaker candidates appeared to struggle more this year than in the past to express and organise their arguments clearly and cogently: failure to spell basic necessary words such as 'simile', 'alliteration', 'rhythm', etc was a frequent irritant. The word 'persona' was, as in some previous years, much abused.

##### *Comments on Individual Questions*

*Q.1* (Compare and contrast 'The Echoing Green' by William Blake and an extract from *Under the Early Stars* by Alice Meynell.) On the whole this was dealt with very well; candidates paid careful attention to the requirements of the question and found plenty to say about the similarities and differences between poem and passage. The word 'simplistic' was too frequently applied to the poem, but candidates of all abilities were able to see that the replacing of 'Echoing' by 'darkening' hinted at disturbing possibilities. Not all, however, paid sufficient attention to the differing perspectives of the speakers in the two passages. This led to uncertainty about the tone of each, and some were too ready to describe Alice Meynell's attitude as 'negative' and 'aggressive'. Part of the problem here was that very few candidates felt able to identify (or even to discuss) the style and character of passage (b): there was no reason why candidates should have heard the Shakespearean echo behind "There is a tide in the affairs of children", but none seemed to notice the essential *literary* quality of much of the writing, or to be aware of the possibility that the passage could have come from a literary essay. Several candidates assumed that the writer was a child psychologist; a few tried hard to interpret the passage as an extract from a novel, with the 'characters' being introduced in the last paragraph. Many candidates paid proper attention to the second part of the question ("Does your reading of the one help to illuminate the other?"), and an interesting variety of well-supported conclusions was reached. On the whole candidates tended to say that they preferred the Blake

poem, but were not always sure why.

- Q.2 (A critical appreciation of 'Carousel' by Lucinda Roy.) There were some candidates who did not know what a carousel was and who thought that it was a type of juke box; others thought that the 'you' in the poem had been killed in a riding accident. Those, however, who did not take the poem at an entirely literal level often wrote with considerable insight about the relationship between the speaker and Namba Roy, to whom the poem was dedicated. It was surprising how many nevertheless identified Namba as husband/lover/brother rather than as the father he clearly is. The imagery of the poem fascinated many candidates, but there was a tendency to list images rather than to explore their significance or the ways in which they echoed each other. Good candidates often wrote perceptively about the way that the poem's form was related to the 'fragile music of a carousel'. Others struggled to find regular metrical or other formal patterns in the poem – indeed, Examiners commented on how difficult many candidates found it to write about structure and technical features: there was much reference, for example, to enjambement, but little awareness of how this feature helped to authenticate the conversational tone of the poem. There were some excellent answers which analysed the effect created by the reader's acting almost as eavesdropper, and those candidates (of whatever ability) who really focused on the second part of the question ("How effectively and by what means does the poet express feelings of loss and affection through her writing?") tended to score well on this essay, often producing strong and moving personal responses which were genuinely grounded in their reading of the poem.
- Q.3 (A commentary on a passage from *Pericles*, discussing in particular the way Shakespeare handles the dramatic presentation of character and incident.) This question attracted a very wide variety of responses: some floundered badly because they struggled to understand what was actually happening in the passage but others wrote perceptively about the dramatic presentation of character and incident. Misunderstandings tended to arise when candidates confused Lychorida the nurse with the goddess Lucina (even though *Pericles* refers to the latter as 'divinest patroness'); 'our dancing boat' was taken as evidence that *Pericles* could not be serious about what was going on. A number felt that Lychorida was harsh and unfeeling in her attitude to the new-born child: they reacted strongly to her words, 'Take in your arms this piece/Of your dead queen' and ignored her moving speeches either side of this command to the Prince. Good candidates concentrated on the shape of the scene as a whole, rather than producing a line-by-line summary: this enabled them to identify the way that *Pericles*' speeches move from fear to acceptance, since at each stage of the scene he debates with the gods their involvement and interest in the affairs of men. Only by being aware of the movement of the scene as a whole can a reader identify the way the violence of the storm is replaced by *Pericles*' prayer for his daughter's life to be a calm one. Comment on Shakespeare's diction and verse was generally rather perfunctory, and there were many candidates who seemed thoroughly confused by blank verse, although one asserted that the poetry must be magnificent since it had been written 'by a great ballad like Shakespeare'.
- Q.4 Candidates who attempted Q.4(a) (an appreciation of a passage from *To the Lighthouse* by Virginia Woolf) again fell into two categories: those who simply went through the passage line by line, and those who were able to form an overview of the whole piece, and to review the earlier paragraphs in the light of the final paragraph announcing – in passing, as it were – the death of Mrs Ramsay. Some candidates ignored this vital part of the passage altogether. Several candidates seemed very much at home discussing stream-of-consciousness writing, although there was a tendency to assume that the author exercised very little control over what she was writing. Good answers paid due attention to the tone established by the opening rhetorical question and other authorial comments.

These were also valuable guidelines for those who attempted Q.4(b). It is important to emphasise once again that marks for this question are awarded to both parts taken together. Thus candidates may produce relatively unsuccessful recreative responses, but still score highly because of a perceptive

analysis of the reasons for their failure and of the insights they have gained into the original passage. Alternatively, a candidate can gain a high total mark for an excellent recreative response, even if the commentary that follows is only sketchy. As in previous years, most of those candidates who attempted this question scored more highly than on their other essay. Some had difficulty in identifying enough stylistic features to make their own continuations of the passage effective; but there were, as always, a number of candidates who wrote remarkably well and were unduly critical of their efforts when it came to commenting on what they had written.

*Paper 9000/8 Comment and Appreciation (Unseen and set texts)*

*General Comments*

Examiners saw many careful, well organised papers this year, bearing witness to enjoyment and thorough knowledge. The paper offered a wide range of opportunities to candidates, and once again the relatively small number of outstanding scripts came from candidates who were prepared to treat the examination as a challenge to creative thought. Such answers were often incisive, made full use of extracts, and deftly related part to whole. Sensitivity to tone, and an ability to demonstrate an appreciation of the resources of language made such scripts a pleasure to read.

Further down the rank order came careful, detailed responses alert to the demands of the question and painstaking in the assembly of evidence. Such care offered rewards both in Sections A and B, since the unseen has much to offer the thorough and honest candidate.

At the less confident level, Examiners saw even more instances of dogged working through lists than were evident last year: little shopping lists of reminders at the top of practical criticism answers, including items such as enjambement, alliteration, onomatopoeia and rhyme schemes. These lists rarely took any account of the actual question, producing an agenda which tempted candidates into extensive irrelevance. Blunderbuss 'all I know about the text' responses gain little reward in a paper such as this, given the presence of the set text in the examination room. A particularly telling indicator of such an approach is the answer which could equally well have been offered as (a) or (b) – an answer tailored so little to the specifics of the question is unlikely to do well. Once again, we would encourage schools to give their candidates the widest possible experience of work under timed conditions. It is also important to look closely at past papers to 'size up' the challenge of this paper.

Increasingly common this year was the practice of leaving the unseen question to the end of the paper, either by leaving a gap at the beginning of the answer booklet, or by placing the unseen answer at the end. The order in which questions are tackled makes no difference to the Examiners, but the relative weakness of the unseen answers from many candidates gives the impression that candidates are being encouraged to marginalise the unseen portion of the paper. **The skills used in Section A are fundamental to the paper's concept, and should underpin and shape the answers in Section B, as last summer's report made clear.**

Teachers have our wholehearted support in their continuing battle to convey to candidates the appropriate register for Advanced Level English work. Weaker answers this year often manifested this problem. It may take the form of naive vocabulary: poets use verse to 'put across' feelings, which 'come across' to the reader, while characters 'put each other down', have 'lifestyles', and if under attack become 'paranoid'. Crudity of critical comment can also be very revealing: candidates who are insensitive to irony find Jane Austen full of 'sarcasm', and Milton 'a typical misogynist'. Authors are referred to, patronisingly, by their Christian names: this year we met 'Jane' 'Seamus' and 'Norman', and, as last year, a character called 'Liz' in Jane Austen. Furthermore, a startling number had studied the work of 'Jane Austin'. Such errors should not be made by candidates at Advanced Level. They do not help to prove a sensitivity to tone or text, but certainly *do* have a bearing on the overall effect of an essay on a reader.

*Comments on Individual Questions*

- Q.1** This question, inviting a comparison of 'The Poplar-Field' by William Cowper and 'The Trees are Down' by Charlotte Mew, attracted a wide range of answers. Many saw the contrast between Cowper's reflective response and Mew's more dynamic, declamatory style, but far too many essays began with a tiresome list of verbal or metrical details – all the instances of alliteration or enjambement which could be found, for example, or unproductive lists of end rhymes. A surprisingly large number of candidates, having offered such a list, then failed to offer any coherent reading of the *meaning* of the poems themselves. Though answers were in general more specific and precise on Cowper, most who expressed a preference opted for the Mew, despite the almost complete absence of any attention to the way in which this poem was broken into episodes, or of real examination of her use of rhythm. Many candidates failed to see the implications of line 15 of the Cowper, or to discuss the rat and its significance in the second poem.
- Q.2** The passage from Sebastian Faulks' *A Fool's Alphabet* proved challenging, but elicited some thoughtful and often sensitive answers. Candidates were asked to discuss the main features of narrative technique. Those who responded to tone, and who noted the episodic changes as the passage progressed did better than the weaker answers which tried to manufacture a narrative explanation of events. Credit was given to answers which seriously addressed mood and technique. Those who addressed the problems presented by the passage – (does the narrator already know that Mary is injured, for example?) – were doing well. Some of those who failed to see the slip in the narrator's French at the end of the passage tried to construct fanciful theories as to why Mary was not, in fact, his daughter – misguided, given that in line 25 the narrator clearly states 'it was Mary'. There is no substitute for close and careful reading. Candidates who found the extract distressing may be cheered to know that in the novel it transpires that Mary is not, in fact, dead: just bruised and shaken.
- Q.3** Keith Douglas's powerful poem 'The Marvel' draws much of its strength from a central image: the eye of the dead swordfish. Candidates whose preoccupations with technicalities distracted them from identifying this image explicitly then had two options: to avoid exploring the poem's meaning altogether, or to construct an alternative reading. Thus the suggestion that the animal's sword was transformed into a mirror, or that the fish when cut open had a magnifying glass inside! Good answers discussed the vitality and variety of images and the growing sense of wonder created in the poem. As always, those candidates whose primary concerns were effect and meaning did much better than those who worked through a list of technical matters. Too many answers seemed to have been begun before the poem had been properly read through.
- Q.4** *The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale* was once again a very popular text. Weaker answers, as last year, tended to be interchangeably applicable to (a) or (b), and consisted of essays on the Wife's character slightly reconstructed to give attention to the question. Good answers used close reading of detail (particularly from apparently innocent words and phrases) to develop interesting points: the crucial distinction between a weak answer and a better response was whether (in the weaker essay) it was led by generalisation, or (for better candidates) rooted in the given extract. Good candidates found the (b) question on presentation and argument provided a better focus for excellence in their own response. The very best answers to (b) saw the Wife as subverting a male-dominated tradition of interpretation; weak candidates were often dismissive and patronising.
- Q.5** *Every Man in his Humour* was not a popular text. Studied by a small handful of Centres, it was written about with warmth by those who had studied it, clearly under the guidance of enthusiastic teachers.
- Q.6** *Samson Agonistes* was once again written about very well indeed, with a majority opting for (b). Those writing on (a) were often aware that the text was not intended for performance, but successfully identified the 'drama' of language, situation, imagery and construction. The best



answers responded to imagery – including the full implications of ‘poisonous bosom snake’. Other candidates were aware of Dalila’s speech rhythms and attempts to understate her betrayal. A few candidates were crudely dismissive of Milton on grounds of ‘misogyny’, as if this provided an adequate basis for discussion of the passage set.

- Q.7* Many answers on *Pride and Prejudice* used similar tactics to those adopted on *Q.4*: largely prepared answers were adapted to the specific question. The weakest answers plunged into the dialogue, thought Charlotte was quite right, and praised the understanding of the Bingley sisters. It is not adequate to represent Jane Austen as a goddess of common sense, and the book as a manual of behaviour or a puzzle which will lead to a balanced understanding of human affairs. Those who did best were alert to voice and tone, used the text, showed how it was possible to be right for the wrong motives, and saw irony in situation as well as dialogue.
- Q.8* Christina Rossetti was studied by few Centres. Less reliance was placed on biographical information this year, and answers were better as a result. Few, nevertheless, really came to terms with the self-dramatising, or with the full implications of the situations the poems presented. Candidates who read ‘Child’ in ‘After Death’ literally became confused and found a coherent reading hard to sustain. Responses to (b) tended to argue that Rossetti is not morbid, but few candidates seemed comfortable with the word. Rossetti is another author frequently, and inappropriately, referred to by candidates by her Christian name – this may be linked to a tendency to treat her as an object of pity. All candidates would have done well to have paid more attention to the language of the poems.
- Q.9* *The Man Who Loved Children* proved to be a highly stimulating text – though studied by a disappointingly small number of Centres. Many wrote with great insight and sensitivity about Louie, though Sam taxed the tolerance of many candidates. On this text it was pleasing to see personal involvement expressed in controlled and appropriate critical language. It is to be hoped that more Centres may offer their candidates the chance to work on this novel.
- Q.10* *The Jewel in the Crown* was another surprisingly little-studied text. Answers were in general of good quality, well-informed and often sharply focused. Those who had most sensitivity to the precise social nuances of language did best: (a) was the more successfully tackled of the options. Those who saw that Kumar’s humiliation is both racial and sexual were doing well: some answers to (b) made telling reference to Kumar’s background and isolation as displayed elsewhere in the novel.
- Q.11* Norman Nicholson’s verse, though not widely studied, is clearly popular with candidates. Most answers were to (a), and showed an appreciative warmth: many candidates wrote appreciatively of Nicholson’s use of language, and his own sense of self-worth.
- Q.12* Seamus Heaney’s verse was exceedingly popular, though the general standard of essays on ‘Act of Union’ was disappointing. In general, those who looked at the poem carefully, who used the text to support their arguments, and who allowed their wider knowledge of Heaney’s work to inform, but not dominate their answers, did best. (b) was too often used as an excuse for a general essay listing all the references the candidate could find to sexuality, politics and landscape. All too often, ‘Act of Union’ was only sketchily touched on in a preamble.



*Paper 10* remains a very popular option, taken this year by well over 5000 candidates from more than 200 Centres, and reading the folders submitted it is easy to see why this is the case. The strongest candidates are enabled to produce work of the very highest academic level, often revealing an assured grasp of critical concepts and terminology, a depth of scholarly insight, and a very intelligent degree of engagement with the texts selected; reading these folders often gave Moderators a true sense of pleasure and delight, and not infrequently a sense of pride in being able to share some quite outstandingly penetrating thinking. Less confident candidates of course benefit equally; the extended work which is presented in a coursework folder written over a period of more than a year is often the results of many hours of reading, thought and planning, so that the end result is a thoroughly sound and comprehensive study of four or five texts, at a length and level which is less easy to demonstrate in a conventional three-hour paper. There are of course difficulties involved in working on this syllabus, difficulties which this report will highlight, but there is no doubt in the minds of all those concerned in the moderation process that the work submitted this year has been of a very gratifying standard, and that almost invariably it has shown candidates at their very best.

Obviously there will be few candidates who will submit anything but their very best work; having said this, it was clear that the general standard of folders read this year was at worst good, and at best quite outstanding. There was ample evidence that teaching in Centres is highly professional and sensitive, and that candidates are given a huge amount of support in their reading and thinking; knowledge of the chosen texts was of a very high level indeed, and in general so was the ability to answer the specific questions that were used. The word is 'used', because very often it was evident that some of the most personal and perceptive work arose from essay titles which seemed to have been devised or negotiated by candidates themselves; where a whole Centre wrote on the same title or titles the work was often not so individual, or there were echoes of what had been said and discussed in lessons – this is not of course to suggest that lesson material is either poor or unhelpful, but that where candidates had been enabled to form their own responses, however simple these might occasionally have been, the essay came to life in a way that frequently made the folder just that little bit stronger.

The setting and wording of titles is one of the teacher's most important and difficult tasks; it is essential that a candidate is clearly and firmly directed towards what really matters in a text or a writer, and away from any task which can become a simple rehearsal of plot or character. There was undoubted evidence this year that a lot of thought had gone into this, and titles in general were well worded and appropriately focused, directing candidates to explore what is characteristic in a particular piece of literature. A good title will ask clear questions, and invite relevant argument, and it will insist that the candidate looks closely at the methods and the techniques by which a writer achieves his/her particular effects; it is this exploration and discussion which characterises the best essays, as opposed to those which simply show knowledge, however comprehensive this may be.

The UCLES Guidelines booklet remains as a full and very positive guide to the kind of essay titles which have in past years produced the best results. They have in common an encouragement to examine a text **as a whole**, and to explore what it is that makes the text unique and successful; where they ask about a part of the text, or a short extract from it, they expect candidates to relate this to the rest, not to use it as a form of practical criticism; where a character is studied, the essays invite analysis of how the writer has created him/her, not simply an outline of personality. There were many, many excellent titles this year, and it is impossible to print a full list, but a few random examples may be of interest: "How does Poe create suspense in *The Pit and the Pendulum*? Consider the means by which he encourages the reader to examine more of his work"; "Discuss the ways in which Hartley conveys the experience of adolescence in *The Go-Between*"; "What aspects of Emma's character are firmly established by the end of Chapter 20, and how has Austen achieved this presentation?"; "A theatre manager, in an attempt to cut costs, proposes doing away with the character of Charley in *Death of a Salesman*; on what grounds would you argue for his retention?" Interestingly, *Waiting for Godot* produced some of the most challenging questions, and indeed essays: "*Waiting for Godot* is about nothing; is it?"; "Estragon: Let's go. Vladimir: We can't. Estragon: Why not? Why not?"

Having said that there were this year a lot of helpful titles, it is nonetheless true that a good many still appeared which did not do enough to direct candidates sufficiently precisely, or to stimulate them to look closely at a text and at the author's techniques. For example, "Compare and contrast Orwell's experiences of poverty in Paris and London" is sociological or biographical rather than literary; "Clare gives us a memorable picture of the passing seasons" invites paraphrase and listing, not analysis; "The theme of Love in Betjeman's poetry" is too broad and unfocused; there were too many simple character studies which remained on the surface only; there were too many essays which looked at just one poem, without relating it and its stylistic features to others by the same poet. Many titles, too, are in effect labels for ready-made lists by the candidate: money in *The Great Gatsby*, for example, or settings in *Tess* – even if the essay does not simply reflect memories from classroom lessons, these tasks are too easy to do for an essay to achieve a grade above D at best. Even a simple and straightforwardly focused argument is better than none at all: "Who is portrayed as the more sympathetic character – Alec or Angel?" at least gave the weaker candidates a means by which to weigh up and discuss material from the novel, rather than just accumulating it.

Creative responses were relatively rare, perhaps reflecting the predominantly conservative nature of the folders overall. There were some quite excellent ones, which showed a sensitive and confident understanding of both the text itself and of the original writer's style; almost always the best ones were accompanied by a commentary by the candidate, in which s/he discussed the problems encountered, and what s/he had learned from the exercise. One candidate wrote a most interesting account of why her poem was not as good as Blake's original, and in so doing demonstrated a very clear awareness of the earlier poet's particular characteristics. It is also essential that such work is properly focused on the real heart of the matter: for example, a monologue by Mary, in the style of Graham Swift, as an extra chapter at the end of *Waterland*; a story written in the style of Joyce, and focusing on one or more of his *Dubliners* themes; an extra scene to *Waiting for Godot*. Less successful were radio discussions between two writers of different historical periods, which led to general and unfocused comments, without relating to specific poems.

A decreasing number of Centres take the opportunity to submit an extended essay in their folders, despite the opportunities that this gives for personal exploration, and fuller discussion. It may be that too many candidates, and perhaps teachers too, feel that the word 'extended' means either enormous length or huge scholarly research; in fact, neither is implied. What really matters is that the text(s) selected, and then the title, should be something which the candidate really *wants* to do; almost invariably this will produce better work than where it appears to be 'given' by the teacher. The task itself is important, too: it is perfectly possible, and almost certainly safer, to write a first-rate extended essay on just one text, or one poet, than on a whole literary movement or genre, or on a writer's whole output; its greater length will be a demonstration of a longer and more considered response; and it is the quality of its thought, not just the number of its words, which will count. Somewhere between 2000 and 3000 words should be regarded as ideal, which is, after all, no more than a quarter or a third of the total submission.

In general, Centres were very thorough and often meticulous in their marking of essays; the best examples showed very clear evidence that teachers had read and thought about the work, and the written comments showed a lively and supportive dialogue between teacher and candidate. Every piece presented must be annotated – this is an essential and integral aspect of this syllabus and it is expected that the annotation will be more than a succession of ticks and 'Good work'. This extreme was, happily, very rare, and far more often it was perfectly obvious that the Centre knew its candidates well, and treated their work with the greatest care and respect. It has been said many times, but must nonetheless be repeated here, that this annotation must be done on the piece of work that is marked by the teacher; earlier drafts should not be closely marked or annotated. If this happens then re-working or re-drafting is *not* permitted.

It is also essential that there is a final overall comment on each folder, written after the Centre's own moderation is complete. In the vast majority of cases, it was perfectly clear that Centres had carried out their internal moderation with a high degree of efficiency and professionalism; where this was done well

the candidates were of course better served. It is important that the final mark given to a candidate is not simply an arithmetically calculated one, but that it is a genuinely new mark, awarded at the end of the course for the **whole folder** and in the light of the Syndicate's published criteria – these, incidentally, must be specifically referred to in the Centre's post-moderation report on each folder.

The question of secondary sources, and the happily very rare question of plagiarism, must be repeated too. It is **essential** that candidates acknowledge in detail all use of secondary material, not simply with a broad bibliography, but with clear and precise footnotes every time a critic or other publication is quoted or referred to. There is no shame in using such material; indeed, any literature course is to some extent at least a course in learning how to think clearly, and part of this process is trying to identify when the reader differs from a previous critic of a text. What matters is that due and honest acknowledgement is given whenever such criticism is used. Where deliberate plagiarism is suspected – and a very clear discussion of plagiarism is given in the June 1992 report on this syllabus, as well as in the UCLES Coursework Guidelines – then it is the responsibility of the Centre to deal with it; a Centre must not simply pass the matter on to the moderator. The Centre may decide simply not to grade such a piece of work until the candidate has properly listed and footnoted all references, or it may ultimately decide not to submit the piece at all, and adjust the folder mark accordingly, but it is not the moderator's task to identify suspected plagiarism.

Other administrative matters were again managed with great efficiency overall, though a few reminders may perhaps be helpful: each piece of work must be dated, and the contents of the folder should be presented chronologically; a cover sheet is most helpful, giving not just the candidate's personal details but also titles, dates and marks of the essays in the folder, and brief details of other papers and texts studied for the examination; this cover sheet should also contain the Centre's mark and comments; the candidate must sign the Syndicate's 'sticky label' authentication sheet; if there is any wordprocessed work in the folder each piece must be **individually authenticated** by both candidate and teacher.

To sum up, this year's coursework was thoroughly encouraging, and Moderators' reports generally express a sense of real pleasure and satisfaction in what they read. Centres were most helpful in their administration and presentation, and very supportive towards their candidates. Folders generally showed a good range of tasks, over a wide range of texts, and the best had a nice balance of genre, style and period, as well as demonstrating a wish to complement what was being studied elsewhere in the examination. There were fewer 'unusual' texts or groups of texts, and more Centres than in previous years kept to the traditional canon of literature; there are doubtless many good explanations for this, and there are no over-riding reasons whatsoever why a Centre should not be traditional in its selection. One of the values of this syllabus, though, is that it does give both Centres and candidates the opportunity to do something different – to break away from the more restricted scope of the conventional three-hour exam syllabus, and as *Paper 10* enters its final year in this particular format it is perhaps sad that some of the best and most exciting innovations of earlier years seem to have gone into what we must hope is only a temporary suspension.

Finally, the sense of sheer pleasure which the very best folders can produce is well expressed in the comment written by a Centre on one of its candidates: "I hope that she has learned as much from us as we have learned from her; her folder is a pure delight to read, from her creative joy to the impressive scholarship of her extended essay." It is hoped that 1995 will produce at least as much excellent work as 1994; if it does, then it will indeed be a good year.

There was a very small entry for the 8445/3 component, so any general comment must be read in this light. Many Centres were also entering candidates for 9000/10, so many of the comments written on that syllabus apply equally here.

There was a similar range of quality in the folders, with some work of the highest possible academic standard from a handful of candidates, and a lot of very sound and steady work from the majority; sadly, there was also a quite significant number of candidates whose work was very far from the minimum standards expected. Unfortunately, it may be that some Centres are uncertain about exactly what is

expected, so it may be worth reminding prospective Centres that AS is not a watered-down version of A-level, nor indeed is it a half-way stage between GCSE and A-level; the quality of work required, as can be seen from the grade criteria published in the UCLES syllabus, is identical to that of A-level itself – the difference is only in the number of texts studied and the number of essays submitted.

Texts studied, and the essay titles set on them, tended to be more conservative than for 9000/10, with the traditional critical task being almost universally submitted. This presumably reflects – among other factors – the fact that so few candidates entered this syllabus, and that they necessarily had less time each week to do the work. Like 9000/10, though, this coursework option remains as a valuable means by which AS candidates at all levels of ability can demonstrate their talents to the full.

As in 9000/10, Centres' administration and teachers' marking varied, but was generally very professional and efficient. There was perhaps a little more uncertainty about the allocation of grades and marks to folders, but with often only one or two candidates in a Centre this is perhaps not surprising; as said above, though, standards should be identical to those in 9000/10, which should be used where appropriate as a benchmark.

### *Paper 9000/11 Contemporary Writing*

#### *General Comments*

This year saw a slightly smaller entry than for June '93, although the overall approach to the texts was markedly improved. Most Centres had encouraged candidates to read a range of genres offered by the paper and this often allowed for an energetic and varied response. Candidates increasingly speak to their individual sense of a text and this produced a welcome vitality and commitment generally missing from the more prepared and often passively written essays. Candidates need to be reminded that Examiners are aware how little published criticism there is on the majority of texts included in the paper and this should be put to good 'use' by the candidates in their approach. Comments on the answers to individual texts/authors are as follows:

#### *Comments on Individual Questions*

*Ackroyd – Hawksmoor.* There were some good, solid responses here to a text whose meaning and style is at once dense and complex. The better answers responded to the quality and nature of Ackroyd's style whilst the weaker answers limited themselves to thematic aspects. Candidates should be encouraged to seek an amalgam of the two – especially as this is a text in which the 'style' is basic to the subject matter.

*Barnes – A History of the World ....* There were a limited number of answers to this text and most concentrated on the painting by Gericault rather than the passage. In many ways these were very good. Candidates did not merely describe the painting or give an account of its themes but attempted to establish a context for the way in which the painting's depiction of human pain and suffering relates to the novel's concern with history and storytelling. The painting became a 'key' to the expansive, ambiguous, and eccentric nature of the text. Answers to *Q.2(b)* were competent and solid, but lacked the 'energy' of answers to *Q.2(a)*.

*Atwood – Surfacing.* This novel always attracts a committed and declared response from candidates and this year was no exception. Candidates continue to reveal an empathy both with the narrative voice and the issues raised by the novel. The individual nature of the answers adds a distinct 'edge' to the underlying literary concerns.

*Contemporary Women Poets.* There were very few answers to the anthology and of these very few on the Plath question. Answers tended to be disappointing in the way they seemed overly-prepared, resulting in rather 'flat' comment. Candidates limited themselves to subject matter and theme – a great

pity given the range of poetry on offer.

Carver – *Stories*. Q.5(a) was the popular choice here, with a distinctly positive response to Carver's ethos and subject. Candidates seem quite sincere in their defence of Carver's world and 'philosophy'. Q.5(b) received good answers. Like much of Carver this is a deceptively difficult passage, suggesting a deft sense of the subtle nuance, the ironic, and the 'invisible' implications of what is and is not spoken. Although Carver is often compared with Hemingway the more appropriate figures might be Austen and Chekhov. The strongest answers looked to this context.

African Poetry in English. Again, there were a limited number of answers to this text and most of these were Q.6(b). Although solid they tended to concentrate on the thematic aspects of the poem rather than the (often vital) questions implicit in the language. This was a lost opportunity, given the way in which emotional and political contexts merge in a diverse series of poetic and psychological strategies.

Kingston – *The Woman Warrior*. Answers to this text are generally very good and candidates this year once again revealed a distinct understanding of an empathy with the voice of the narrative. Answers, however, tended to conflate Q.7(a) and 7(b) in terms of the conflicts basic to the identity of the narrator. The act of articulation, as well as the attempt to construct (and reconstruct) a history of the self were paramount. Candidates should be encouraged to develop these aspects further.

Lovelace – *The Dragon Can't Dance*. This proved to be a popular choice and was answered appropriately. Candidates clearly enjoyed the text and responded to its verbal élan with energy and enthusiasm. Q.8(b) was especially well-answered – often drawing from candidates a vibrant sense of the local detail of Lovelace's style and approach. Theme and subject matter took second place to effect and style – a welcome change indeed.

Morrison – *Song of Solomon*. The majority of the answers were here on the passage. However, candidates tended to approach the passage in a general rather than particular context. The result was that often the extraordinary energy of Morrison's language was ignored in favour of its surface concerns. The better candidates, as usual, combined both aspects with appropriate results

Ngugi – *Devil on the Cross*. A relatively limited number of answers to this text although generally quite solid in response and comment. Candidates seemed more at ease with Q.10(b) rather than Q.10(a) which demanded a potentially quite sophisticated response to the language of the text. Q.10(b) offered a safe haven to place the novel in terms of its major issues.

Poliakoff – *Hitting Town* and *City Sugar*. There was a surprising number of solid answers to these two plays, especially in relation to their pervasive ethos and dramatic effect. Candidates clearly felt sympathetic to the writing and there were some especially potent answers on the urban ambience and setting.

Tomlinson – *Selected Poems*. There were very few answers to Tomlinson and these were generally disappointing in both approach and content. Although Tomlinson is a difficult poet, his writing has a wonderful openness to the natural world and candidates might be encouraged to concentrate on the vitality of the language in its concern to celebrate a world of wonder and change.

#### *Paper 9000/12 Shakespeare (Examination)*

#### *General Comments*

Examiners who have worked on the paper since its inception feel overwhelmingly that it has come of age. Schools are preparing their candidates much more specifically than they did at first for this component, with more direction, more focus and more relevance than before. There are of course candidates who remain generalising and narrative in approach, but now no more than are to be found

taking Paper 1. On the front of Paper 12 scripts Examiners were found to have written "I wish I could see this candidate's coursework" – a clear indication of the excellence which can be found in two text-based answers written in an hour and a half.

Once again Examiners report very few really weak responses to the paper; are the league tables responsible for schools weeding out their less able candidates before they enter for the examination, we wonder? For whatever reason, it was clear that this year the vast majority of candidates knew sufficient about the plays and were sufficiently responsive and critical in their approaches to pass the examination, with a full range of pass marks from low E to the starry heights of the best A grades. Teachers do not necessarily see the outstanding candidates in a particular year, but in this report we are printing in full a candidate's answer to *Q.1(d)*, partly in response to a request for an example of an answer to a 'staging' question, but partly also to share the pleasure we feel in such good work, work which we enjoyed in large measure this summer.

Particularly evident this year has been the matter of use of profuse quotation. We rightly regret an answer that loses contact with the fabric of the passage, but equally damaging is one that quotes at wasteful length from given material. What we are looking for are, ideally, rapid, darting allusions and key elements of quotations, incorporated into a well-planned, relevant survey that precisely addresses the question's terms. Some candidates seem not to understand that use of the text is for illustrative purposes; many candidates, reminded frequently by their teachers no doubt, 'use' the text, but it is not used for illustration, substantiation of their arguments, but rather to link together a summary of the passage, so that the final effect is a kind of paraphrase with chunks of text. Candidates must be warned that mere quotation does not ensure 'use' of the text. It is particularly important that in questions which ask for a tracing through of the given passage, critical commentary does not degenerate into paraphrase. Examiners are very alert for the tell-tale signs: *Then Caesar goes on to say...* or *She then tells Shylock...* and *in the next speech Hamlet says that...* These constructions are always followed by paraphrase and teachers and candidates need to be alerted again that this does not constitute a highly rewardable A level skill.

### *Antony and Cleopatra*

- Q.1* (a) The passage demands a clear sense of what Caesar and Antony are saying to each other, with an accompanying realisation of the kinds of political pressure each is exerting. Less able, less knowledgeable or more generalising candidates often missed the finer detail of the passage – dwelling on the first five lines at undue length, few seeing them as merely the preliminary sparring before the contest proper. Opinion was divided on which of the two is the more skilled in this respect, and better candidates provided sparkling analysis of the interchange. It was helpful to remember that this is not a private conversation between the two men, but conducted in front of a small audience, each therefore conscious of the impression he is creating. Some weaker candidates did not understand the dialogue fully – a disadvantage which could have been minimised by study of the play: this is not, after all, an unseen!
- (b) Many moving and sensitive responses were offered to this rich and varied extract from the end of the play. There were, of course, some gushing commentaries with the central idea of Cleopatra being reunited with her 'one true love', but fortunately most candidates responded more broadly than this. Good candidates recognised the strong theatrical element in Cleopatra's final performance, the unashamed sexuality and the goddess of fire and air who becomes the 'lass unparalleled'. The desire to outwit Caesar was usefully cited, some candidates suggesting that Cleopatra's ambiguity of motivation remains to the last. Close attention to textual detail characterised the better answers, particularly those which attempted to consider the varied tones of the scene: its grandeur and simple humanity, its comedy and poignancy mixed. Considering the unsympathetic circumstances under which they were written (the examination hall in most Centres bears little relation to the royal quarters in Alexandria) some answers were

profoundly involved by the dramatic action here, and thrilling to read, illustrating once again the importance of imagination in successful answers on plays.

*The Merchant of Venice*

- Q.1 (c) This was the more popular of the context questions on the play, with a full range of responses, from simplistic assertions of Portia's beauty, goodness and modesty and those more sophisticated answers which showed their awareness of discrepancies (do not judge by appearances, warn the caskets, yet Bassanio goes on to do just that, was the theme of many answers). The stylised artificiality of Bassanio's description of her hair and eyes was discussed by some candidates, though more noticed the spider's web image as an ambiguous, even ironic, one. Those who recognised an inconsistency between the idealised Portia and the one who, in being claimed as a prize, accepts the notion of a *note* being *confirm'd*, *sign'd* and *ratified*, often wrote interestingly of the commercial diction of the passage, the language of the accountant dominating. Portia's own view of herself was taken to reveal her great modesty and submissiveness by some, the wholehearted subjugation of the generous and self-sacrificing wife, but others questioned this, pointing to her wit and cunning both earlier and later. This is the woman who goes on to make a fool of this same lord and master and outsmart a court full of men! There was much good writing here, with all but the least able responding to the language and imagery, and with a wide range of permissible interpretations in evidence.
- (d) There follows an answer of particular clarity, relevance and detail which we are printing in full as illustration of how to answer this type of question. There were several from which to select, but this offers the finest balance of relevant insights in an accessible style.

'This is a moment of great tension for it is at this moment that Shylock seems on the verge of victory; he is ready to take his bond and cut a pound of flesh from Antonio. The court must be quite silent – nothing more than a backdrop against which the excitement of the final sentencing is played.

Portia in her guise as the judge is stern and calm. Her words to Antonio suggest none of the bias of the Duke or other Christian, she calls him *merchant* and her language is at all times strictly correct. When she speaks the sentence, she shows no emotion, as if she feels for neither party in the case. Portia is allowing Shylock to think he has won up until the final moment. Earlier in the scene he had already sharpened his knife and she had bid Antonio *prepare [his] breast*, so that Shylock must be almost about to cut when with equal calmness she speaks. The understatement of the words *Tarry a little* is almost deadly in the impartial coldness they suggest. Portia is about to sweep the ground from under Shylock's feet, but her demeanour is still that of the lawyer, just as she had no pity for Antonio, so she has none for Shylock.

Portia has become a figure of justice and as Shylock showed no mercy, neither will she. A presentiment of this must be clear to Shylock as he stands, knife in hand. Shylock had waited long for the time when he could revenge himself upon the Christian Antonio, and now the time is within his grasp, it seems. The excitement should show on Shylock's face at the end of the passage as it bursts out from under the control he has kept throughout the trial and he cries *Most rightful judge!* The glee is clear in his voice when he savagely bids Antonio *Come, prepare*. However, Shylock must be quite amazed when he hears Portia bidding him hold. His back would be to her as he walks towards Antonio, but he should freeze at the sound of her voice and turn slowly. Perhaps Shylock never really was certain that he would be able to take Antonio's life, the Christians would surely protect their own. His desire was to catch the Venetians in their own laws which had never helped him before. Perhaps he is not amazed when he hears Portia speak; he could almost give a mocking smile as he waits to hear what 'dodge' a Christian lawyer will produce to save the Christian merchant and cheat him. Shakespeare reminds us of one of the major reasons for Shylock's revenge and also adds a new tone with the seeming by-play in which Bassanio



and Gratiano unthinkingly declare Antonio means more than their wives. The comments of Portia and Nerissa may seem humorous to the audience, and certainly Portia steps outside the role of impassive judge to make her ironic comment. Of course the wives are present, and that this is unknown to Bassanio and Gratiano creates humour and lightens the tension as Portia and Nerissa exchange an ironic smile at such protestations. However, there are serious undertones, both men are to give away their rings, *stuck on with oaths* at the end of the scene and Shylock's comment emphasises the seriousness of what they are saying. He seems scornful of such easy words for it is not his nature and audience sympathy is directed to Shylock again by his words *I have a daughter*. Coming directly after the extravagance of the two men's protestations it reminds the audience that Shylock still loves Jessica and fears for how she fares with a *Christian husband*. The actor must show this for it is very important that in the middle of the most tense scene Shylock is shown in a sympathetic light – he is a father who has lost his only daughter and he (rightly or wrongly) blames the Christians, and Antonio as their representative. The result is to harden him still further and an actor must show this process when Shylock with even greater impatience hastens towards revenge asking *I pray thee, pursue sentence*.

Antonio is at the centre of this scene, being the sacrificial victim of Shylock's revenge. His speech has a flavour of martyrdom to it but nevertheless is spoken sincerely. Antonio loved Bassanio and if a tinge of jealousy can be heard when he speaks of Portia, Bassanio's *honourable wife*, yet he tries to make his friend feel better. He never blames Bassanio but bids him *Grieve not*. The love should show quite clearly in his face for this is a play in which the values of love as opposed to duty and wealth are frequently compared. Here we see how Antonio pays the *debt* with *all [his] heart*. Antonio's brave words about being happier to die young and so end the misery of the man who will *outlive his wealth* come out as being the words of a man trying to soften the idea of death both for himself and the friend he loves. Antonio is quite certain he is going to die; the tension must remain to the end, for he does not know that Portia can save him. He must be ready for the knife and he must be as amazed as Shylock when Portia bids him *Tarry*. Antonio will not quite believe himself yet safe as he waits still tense, for her words. Antonio should prepare himself facing Shylock bravely, but the fear of one about to die must show on his face to remind the audience of the real darkness in this play. Bassanio and Gratiano's two short outbursts show their pain and fear for Antonio. However with Gratiano there is more anger, for Bassanio pain and guilt must take the upper place. As he listens to Antonio's brave words, his emotions should overcome him. He could hold Antonio's hand as he waits for Shylock's stroke, this being the only service he could offer, but his head must be turned away because he cannot bear to look at his friend being murdered for his sake. Bassanio too must have the same look as Antonio when Portia speaks, half hoping for reprieve, half agony that the fear may simply be drawn out further.

Portia never falters in her control of this scene and this must be emphasised. Her position must be a commanding one at centre stage between Shylock and Antonio. The ideas do not 'come' to her, she has it planned well as to how she will stop Shylock and her control is indicative of this. Nerissa can be more nervous and emotional, being less sure of how her mistress means to save her husband's friend.

Portia and Shylock both stand separate and alone, but Antonio must be supported by Bassanio and Gratiano to show how the Christians protect their own and how Shylock the outsider is struggling against the more powerful group. Such stage positioning emphasises both Shylock's power and his solitary state when his revenge is taken away from him.'

This candidate went on to write just as thoughtfully and fully on *Hamlet*. It would not, of course, have been possible to write at such length unless she had known this scene very well indeed, and her command of characterisation and interpretation generally are most impressive. It must be stressed that she did not receive high marks because her interpretation was the 'right' one, but because her arguments were well-sustained and well-substantiated from a thorough appreciation of the text. Her awareness of dramatic qualities is constant throughout the answer.



*Hamlet*

- Q.1* (e) Both context questions on the play proved popular, though answers to *Q.1(f)* had the advantage of being largely relevant to the question. The problem with *Q.1(e)* was that some candidates merely wrote a commentary on the passage without directing their answers to Hamlet's domestic situation. It must, after all, be one with which in outline they are all familiar: mother's new husband appears to be friendly and loving, mother tries to smooth over the problems, but son and step-father don't get on. Many good answers took this as a basis before exploring the greater complexities of Hamlet's situation: his father is dead, the new man is his uncle, his father's brother. Of course Hamlet does not yet know that Claudius is a murderer (some candidates were worryingly insecure about the precise order of events at this point in the play) but the audience already knows that the dead father is not *in the dust*, but marching around the battlements at dead of night. Attention to textual detail characterised the better answers, but all managed to say something of Hamlet's bitterness, his resentment, even though only the very best candidates were prepared to explore his use of language, the ironic puns which suggest a mind incompatible with either his mother's or Claudius's (one who can refer to *the first corse* without apparently being aware of its savage irony). Many candidates wrote well of Hamlet's isolation, though the temptation to indulge in some story-telling hovered at the edges of weaker answers.
- (f) Few candidates omitted to mention one of the four characters referred to in the question and the range of marks reflected the greater or lesser insight and illustrative detail shown on each. On Hamlet there was general agreement that his anger was directed as much towards his mother and women in general as Ophelia; the latter was generally accepted to be distressed at Hamlet's condition, though few noted the formal, choric quality of her longer speech, with its idealised description of the Prince as he was formerly. Claudius was generally commended for his cunning, quick-thinking decisiveness, whilst Polonius's lack of sympathy, stubbornness in maintaining his now discredited theory and continued interference in the royal family's affairs were noted by many. These two were better handled than Hamlet and Ophelia. Too many candidates are using the word 'confused' as a catch-all for states of mind: it has been particularly noticeable in the work of weaker candidates this year (perhaps to describe their own state of mind?). Ophelia may trust appearances too readily, but she is not confused; she is quite definite in her interpretation and in her distress. The bitter utterances of Hamlet are (intentionally) ambiguous at times and at others savagely aggressive, but not confused. Like 'simple', a word best avoided altogether.

*Richard II*

The play was obviously the least popular choice, but more attractive to Centres than *King John* had been. Nonetheless, the commentaries which follow are based upon a good deal less evidence than those above.

- Q.1* (g) was the less popular choice. Candidates wrote on the characterisations expressed here, rather than trying to consider the play's *central concerns*. It may be argued that a central concern in any play is the characterisation, but it is not the only issue involved. *The breath of kings* – the absolute power to lessen the sentence which Richard here wields just because he sees the sadness in Gaunt's eyes – is obviously a central concern, and those candidates who noted it often went on to show its irony in the mouth of Bolingbroke. But the king's inability to control life even if he can order death is also evident in this scene, and there are also the issues of duty and family loyalty to discuss, depicted in detail here, but clearly a main focus of the play as a whole.
- (h) This was the more popular question, and the better done. Richard's emotional

fluctuations and their triggers, were usually quite well appreciated, with some sensitive use of the text in evidence. His character, on the other hand, was sometimes neglected, with only the best candidates exploring the personal, self-regarding quality of his responses.

Where the play is done, it is often well done, and whole Centres appear to have benefited from committed, enthusiastic teaching, with work on this better on average than on the other play chosen. More than the usual number of Centres had taken this as a third play, too.

#### *Paper 9000/13 Shakespeare (Coursework)*

Moderators have once again expressed their pleasure at the enormous volume of good work produced by the majority of candidates: work which is knowledgeable, fluent, sympathetic and responsive to a high degree. The plays of Shakespeare which have been studied have been understood and appreciated in Centres across the land; many, many candidates have presented coursework folders to be proud of; in some cases one can only respect and feel envious of the depth and maturity of understanding evinced. Any criticisms must be seen in the context of unanimous praise from the team of Moderators for the commitment and responsiveness of candidates.

All the plays had been studied, although there were fewer responses to *Richard II*. Those who had tackled it often wrote with verve and sensitivity – perhaps inspired by an enthusiastic teacher! *Antony and Cleopatra*, not surprisingly, remained very popular, evoking detailed studies of structure and language in some cases, which were most welcome in a submission notable this year for its preponderance of character essays. A very wide and unpredictable range of response to the two protagonists and Caesar enlivened Moderators' reading. Candidates remain alert to the possibilities in *The Merchant of Venice* and the most passionate writing we have seen has frequently been in response to this play, which has also inspired good director's notes on Act 4 Scene 1, evidently appreciated by many candidates. Whilst *Hamlet* was predictably the most popular choice for Centres, work on it was sometimes disappointing, with a sociological/psychological bias which lost sharpness of focus in some cases and the very common practice of using part only of the text rather than the whole for the essay work. Of course it is a long and complex play, but one of the purposes of a coursework syllabus is the possibility of exploration of a text at leisure. A distinct impression was created in some folders that only Hamlet's soliloquies had been studied, or only the relationships of the Polonius family, or Hamlet and his mother. These are vital, of course, but their vitality is part of a considerable network of interactions of language and structure which were not always sufficiently acknowledged in the apparent haste to complete the work on the play. Interestingly, some of the most original and engaged work was on Claudius rather than Hamlet himself.

Unsatisfactory work can arise from a number of different causes, but there are two which Moderators commented on particularly this summer: the use of Study Aids and some of the attempts at imaginative response. It seems that since the inception of the Shakespeare coursework option reports have drawn attention to the over or mis-use of various publishers' 'notes' on the plays, works whose rationale is conventional received opinion, simplistic analysis and avoidance of ambiguity. None of these is conducive to exploratory personal response. Close consideration of language is minimal, so that the works cited narrow the possibilities rather than broadening them. No amount of argument here will convince weaker candidates not to lean so heavily on such poor stuff, because it is so easy and so cheap for them to indulge in. But Moderators know these borrowed attitudes and conventions very well, because they are so commonly trotted out; it is perhaps worth reminding candidates that the particular borrowed phrases and approaches are the common currency of the D and E grade candidate, and many a hopeful B or A aspirant has been brought down by too close a reliance on the Study Aid rather than the play itself.

The problems with imaginative response have been of a different nature. In some Centres such responses are avoided altogether, which is a pity, since an imaginative task, given a critical context in

which it is discussed, can produce original and perceptive work. In Centres where imaginative response work is done as a matter of course, the best results come from a good task and a final critical comment on the work which has been done. What makes a good task? Perhaps it is easier to say what is *not* productive. Anything which invites a kind of paraphrase is to be avoided – rewriting a scene in a particular style is almost certain to slip into summary or paraphrase. Directors' notes – common this year – need very careful handling if they are not to degenerate into descriptions of what characters are wearing or where they are moving to, with no account of motivation or interpretation to give depth and substance to the piece. Such work, instead of allowing candidates to explore characterisation or language, remains on the surface of the plays, generating lower marks than critical essays. As always, there was sufficient of the really exciting work to alert Moderators once again to the possibilities in this kind of approach. It must be firmly rooted in the text, yet move imaginatively beyond it. An example might be a dialogue written between the different messengers in *Antony and Cleopatra*, discussing their situations and what happened to them in each case. This piece of work showed considerable insight into the characterisation, language and structure of the play, whilst creating very effectively a sense of the messengers and their particular concerns. The candidate obviously enjoyed the work as well as displaying clear appreciation of the text.

Administratively, Centres are becoming very efficient in their handling of the great work of marking and cross-moderating their candidates' work. Folders are assessed, both piecemeal and in total, useful summative comments are appended in almost all cases and rank orders are seen to be sharply accurate. Almost every candidate adhered to the parameters of the word limit and marking of essays was satisfactory in its grading. Where Centres' assessments have been adjudged too generous by national standards, it is usually not because individual essays have been overmarked, but rather that the folder as a whole has been 'marked up' in a hopeful manner at the end of the process. A candidate whose four essays have all received an accurately assessed C minus should not suddenly be elevated to a B grade in the final analysis: the Moderator will certainly reduce this to the C grade where it belongs. There is no substitute for a thorough cross-moderation where teaching staff participate fully and we are always heartened by clear signs of this process taking place. In such Centres, final judgements are more likely to be accurate.

In all the manifestations of a Centre's workings, the one which an interested reader finds most disturbing is the presence of an essay which has not been marked. How can a candidate learn and improve if work is not assessed and annotated? More worrying is the possibility that this unmarked piece is actually draft 3, marked, worked over and aided by the teacher in a way which has deliberately been hidden from the Moderator, who has no idea of what the candidate's original was like. In either of these cases, Moderators are right to feel concerned and to express that concern in their reports to Centres.

But these cases are fortunately few. By contrast, one of the most exciting and satisfying aspects of the moderation procedure is the privileged glimpse it affords into the vital interaction between student and teacher, where everything written by one is read and eagerly annotated by the other, engaging with ideas, expression and approach in a constructive but critical fashion. Such work reveals teaching at its best and these particular insights will be sorely missed by those of us who have shared them over the past few years.

#### *Paper 9000/0 Special Paper*

#### *General Comments*

The percentage of candidates achieving Distinctions and Merit grades did not differ noticeably from previous years but there seemed to be fewer really outstanding scripts this year. Although the general standard was reasonably high there were a number of candidates who were not sufficiently prepared for the demands of S-level work, either in their ability to write good English or in their knowledge of and response to literary texts. There was evidence of a slightly more adventurous choice of material this year

including foreign literature and a number of students showed themselves able to bring together disparate works in striking juxtaposition. On the other hand, those who were obviously confined to their set texts were sometimes in difficulty in finding suitable texts to answer particular questions and in some cases wrenched the question to fit the prepared material to hand; others solved the problem of inadequate preparation by resorting to their light reading, not objectionable in itself, but in many cases this led to very superficial observations. It should be stressed that S-level is designed for candidates with an enthusiasm of wide reading and an ambition to reach independent judgements.

In the essay answers many candidates saw no need for a preliminary clearing of the ground, defining the terms of the question or considering its possible implications. As a consequence, many embarked on their detailed consideration of particular texts with no particular rationale for their selection of examples. There was, too, a marked tendency to parade a large number of examples simply to demonstrate width of reading which simply led to superficiality and often, too, the lack of any awareness of the differences between the texts cited. Candidates are advised to pause for breath at frequent intervals and to ask themselves what exactly their argument is and how it relates to the question that they are attempting.

### *Comments on Individual Questions*

#### *Part I*

It was encouraging in Part I to observe some commentaries on the poems which demonstrated keen powers of observation and analysis. Some however forgot the instruction to *compare* the two poems and simply divided their answers into two sections; others were over-anxious to demonstrate similarities producing readings that strained credibility. Weaker candidates tended to confuse the 'citizen sparrow' and the 'vulture' in Wilbur's poem and to miss the important link between the vulture's activities and those of Noah in the second part of the poem. Many found Jeffers's *Rock and Hawk* a highly effective and moving piece, but too frequently the falcon was unthinkingly attributed with both 'fierce consciousness' and 'final disinterestedness'. Most candidates tackling this question remembered to comment on the particular verse forms used and a pleasing number were able to relate matters of rhyme, rhythm and enjambement with some skill to matters of tone, idea and structure. The prose passage inspired many appreciative accounts of the narrator's naive enthusiasm for patriotic spectacle, but few recognised the potential for deflation in the description of the King or the change of mood attendant on mention of the Queen's intervention in the final paragraph. Because the extract was from an autobiography and presented in diary form there seemed to be a desire to identify with the assumed artlessness of the narrative persona and a reluctance to consider the importance of style, tone and structure in the presentation of this account of a Coronation.

#### *Part II*

- Q.3* Essays on Chaucer were usually well informed and appreciative but in (a) few had a grasp of the subtleties of his narrative technique, particularly as regards the cunning strategy with his own persona in *The Canterbury Tales*.
- Q.4* Almost everyone wrote on Shakespeare and many did so a second time (responding to *Qs 8 and 13*) with some consequent overlapping of material, particularly in the case of *Hamlet*. Those who tackled *Q.4(a)* often had a very loose sense of 'justice' and many forgot to deal with 'divine' as well as 'human' justice. Some, discussing *Hamlet* assumed that 'revenge' and 'justice' were synonymous. Answers to *Q.4(b)* were generally disappointing with few students able to apply gender perceptions with any precision; commonly Hamlet was blamed for ruining Ophelia's life with little sense of the dramatic context in which the two lovers actually meet.
- Q.5* Those who had read extensively and had an obvious enjoyment of the short story were at a great advantage here: perceptive answers discussing the work of writers such as Hardy, D.H.

Lawrence, Chekhov, Joyce and Raymond Carver were seen. However, some who tackled this question found little to say except that novels have much more time to build their effects.

- Q.6 'Religious or spiritual experience' allowed candidates some latitude and several telling comparisons were offered between the work of Emily Brontë and Gerard Manly Hopkins.
- Q.7 The tendency here was to forget the '*lost unity*' of the question and to write instead about authors' obvious interest in nature. Hardy, and Hopkins again, figured prominently.
- Q.8 The main failing with answers was the lack of definition of the hero and the anti-hero; some assumed that anti-hero simply meant 'villain' and most showed little sense that the terms might refer to *roles* and *conventional expectations* rather than solely to individual traits of character.
- Q.9 Of the surprising number who attempted this question, very few were able to demonstrate the submerged element in a poem; some took this as an opportunity to mount an attack on the notion of analysing the meaning of poems.
- Q.10 Very few answered this question and those that did tended to interpret 'journalism' in a very restricted sense; although it was clear from other answers that many had studied Orwell's work none thought to use him here, though a good answer was found using Crane as illustration.
- Q.11 Many who attempted this question flattened it by taking the word 'wonder' to mean only 'something about which one has a mild curiosity'; however, Examiners were refreshed by a few quite remarkable demonstrations of a love and feel for poetic effects.
- Q.12 Generally answers here were able to indicate the targets of satirical attack with some confidence, but 'a vision of a world transformed' was somewhat dimly hinted at or ignored altogether.
- Q.13 A very popular question. It was encouraging to see the variety of dramatic works referred to; however, the range of examples offered was not always matched by an awareness that they might be a variety of conflicts within a play. Only a few answers suggested that one of the functions of theatre is to stimulate conflict and debate within an audience.

## ENGLISH 9000

### *Component Threshold Marks*

Component	Maximum Weighted Mark	A(1,2)	B(3)	C(4)	D(5)	E(6)	N(7)	U(8)
1	100	69	60	49	39	29	19	0
2	75	52	44	36	29	22	15	0
3	100	69	59	49	39	29	19	0
4	100	68	63	53	43	34	25	0
5	100	69	60	49	38	28	18	0
6	100	66	60	49	39	29	19	0
7	50	33	28	23	18	14	10	0
8	75	50	44	36	29	22	15	0
10	100	70	60	53	46	40	34	0
11	100	60	53	46	40	34	28	0
12	40	29	26	21	17	13	09	0
13	60	51	45	36	28	20	12	0

### *Special Paper*

1	60
2	51

### *Standardisation of Marks*

The component marks were mapped on to uniform marks scales as follows:

Components	A (1,2)	B (3)	C (4)	D (5)	E (6)	N (7)	U (8)
1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 11	70	60	52	44	36	28	0
2, 8	52	45	39	33	27	21	0
7	35	30	26	22	18	14	0
12	28	24	21	18	14	11	0
13	42	36	31	26	22	17	0

Components 2, 7 and 8 were then weighted to give totals out of 100.

*Overall Threshold Marks*

Combination	Maximum Mark	A	B	C	D	E	N	U
All	300	198	175	155	136	117	98	00

The percentage of candidates awarded each grade was as follows:

GRADE	A	B	C	D	E	N	U
Cumulative %	13.4	31.0	55.5	78.2	93.4	98.5	100

The total candidature was 8209.

These statistics are correct at the time of publication.

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