



# A Level

## English Literature

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Session: 2000 June  
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**AS/A LEVEL**

(former Cambridge modular and linear syllabus)

**ENGLISH LITERATURE  
AND LANGUAGE**

A	9000
A	9001
A	9004
A	9505
AS	8440
AS	8448
AS	8570



**REPORT ON COMPONENTS/MODULES  
TAKEN IN JUNE 2000**



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**9000/1 and 4481 – Shakespeare and other authors**

**General Comments**

Examiners report a healthy entry for both modular and linear versions of the syllabus this summer, with a full range of work covering almost all texts and questions. Candidates' enthusiastic response to both their texts and the paper was noted by many Examiners, and could be summed up in the following comment from an Assistant Examiner's report: 'Understanding, appreciation and enjoyment permeated the work of most candidates and made the marking session a generally pleasurable experience'. Few candidates failed to gain a pass grade, although there were some taking the modular syllabus for whom further experience of examination work will prove advantageous. The best work on both linear and modular syllabuses was, as always, sharply perceptive and individual, with a sophisticated grasp of the whole text and an articulate, fluent style. Such work is not merely enjoyable to mark: it gives one hope for the future of literary appreciation and confidence in the skill and dedication of the staff in Centres who enable it for their candidates. Any criticisms contained in the following paragraphs should be read within this affirmative context.

Years of Principal Examiner's reports stressing the need for relevance have clearly made their mark: most candidates attempt to answer the question, even though some in the lower bands soon lose the thread of relevance under the overwhelming impulse to recount the story, summarise the action, or, in the case of poetry, paraphrase stanza by stanza. Generally there is a relevant first paragraph and a final drawing together of relevant ideas in the conclusion of the essay, but the central section can still be a more or less obvious retelling of the story, with some implicit relationship with the demands of the essay title. In the middle ranges, candidates are trying hard to concentrate on what the questions ask for, with perceptibly improved focus and direction. The exception to this is work on poetry, where too many candidates are still clearly dependent on ill-understood or ill-remembered marginal notes in their editions of the text. This dependence becomes very clear to an Examiner marking a whole Centre where a stanza by stanza approach yields the same disconnected points in each candidate's work – typified here in work on Marvell's The Garden, for example. The best candidates' work is characterised by sharp focus on both text and question, including, incidentally, some excellent work on The Garden showing appreciation of the whole as well as its parts.

Many Examiners have reported shorter work in the final answer this year: most noticeable in the linear entries, where the first two answers are substantial and the final one much shorter and at least one grade lower in attainment. This is true to a lesser extent in the modular entry where the second answer is less substantial than the first. Although on the face of it this seems to be the result of mis-timing, many Examiners have commented that they feel the Shakespeares to be better prepared than the Section B texts, with the result that candidates spend too long on Section A (most linear Centres opting for two Shakespeares out of the three texts required). Centres should perhaps reflect upon this observation when preparing their candidates for the next examination. In this session, a large number of candidates wrote on the Iago option in Othello and the Caliban option in The Tempest, often

with such enthusiasm that it is not surprising that they were carried away and left too little time to do justice to their final piece.

Although it is evident that some Centres have worked hard on the (c) options, Examiners report once again that too many candidates lack the necessary skills to do justice to passage-based questions, where close critical reading is essential. In some cases, a scant summary of the passage at hand is given (in one paragraph) and a general essay on the text follows. In others, candidates offer general assertions of the 'Shakespeare uses strong language here' variety, without analysis or substantiation. These will inevitably lead to lower marks than are gained by candidates who scrutinise the language carefully and discuss the relevant issues.

Quotation and understanding of the protocols which govern its use in literary essays prove problematic for many candidates. Essentially, a reader should be able to understand the flow of the argument, with the quotation dovetailing intelligibly into the syntactical structure of the sentence; or, if a number of words or lines are quoted and set apart from the sentence with a colon introducing them, the quoted words should be a complete clause which makes sense. Many candidates seem to think that a line in a Shakespeare play must by definition make complete sense, for example *'As dreams are made on; and our little life'* cannot stand on its own, nor can *'My echoing song: then worms shall try'* though each is a complete line.

Finally, in this age of the word processor, it is timely to remind Centres that candidates who are now quite unable to write legibly in their own handwriting disadvantage themselves fatally. Examiners are, from practice, very adept at reading the most 'difficult' handwriting, but in this examination session, for the first time ever, a candidate's work is being sent back to a Centre to request a transcription because deciphering it has been beyond the capabilities of the Examiner, the Team Leader, the Principal Examiner and the Chief Examiner! Fortunately, the candidate is a modular entrant who is not yet trying to aggregate his module marks, but his is by no means the only work this session to have tried to the limit the eyesight and ingenuity of markers.

### **Comments on Individual Questions**

#### ***As You Like It***

The play is now the least widely taken of the Shakespeares on the syllabus, but a full range of work was seen. The (a) option was predictably popular, though candidates who did not pay attention to the wording of the question may have veered rather too closely to character sketch treatment of Rosalind when the question highlights her alter ego Ganymede, even using inverted commas to draw attention to this. Long introductions about Rosalind in the court did in many cases prove irrelevant to the main thrust of the question. However, there were some sophisticated answers which drew attention to the testing of Orlando, Silvius and Phebe and the androgynous nature of the criticisms of love and lovers provided in Ganymede, even if these are mitigated somewhat by the regular returns to Rosalind's own passion. Candidates had a good grasp of gender issues and their complex treatment in the play. Less popular and less convincing in general were the

(b) option answers. Weaker answers relied heavily on narrative treatment leading up to the denouement, and often failed to take Jaques into account at all. More thoughtful responses discussed the nature of the comedic ending and its inadequacy for resolution of, for example, the gender issues. A number of candidates pointed to the character of Celia, who says not a word in Act 5 and becomes all submission. The passage was done well – indeed one of the best sets of (c) answers on the paper, but by only a few candidates. Those who scored here knew the passage well and were able to discuss *'the way in which language develops'* .... Some of these responses were exemplary.

### ***Othello***

Examiners are delighted by initial responses to the new play on the syllabus, which Centres have tackled with insight and enthusiasm. The overwhelmingly favoured question was (b) but there were also a good range of answers on the (a) option – honour and reputation. Essay structures here tended to deal with individual characters in turn, which ensured good coverage, and all the major characters received attention. Not many candidates made a distinction between the two terms, but those who did were helped by so doing. One candidate argued that honour is about what you think of yourself and reputation is what others think of you, at least if you are a man; the difference between the genders was understandably widely discussed. For a woman, honour is only chastity, many candidates argued. Although there were many very good essays in answer to (a), most candidates were attracted to discussing Iago and his motives (b). There was a full range of responses, from the obvious to the extremely subtle. Most candidates argued from a 'psychological' basis: his feelings of inadequacy, his racism, sexism, class consciousness, envy, fear of cuckoldry and so on, but there were a few who made strong cases for the character as dramatic construction rather than a psychologically convincing character, as much a test for Othello as Ganymede is for Orlando, though with a metaphysical dimension. These essays were all thoroughly enjoyable and rewarding. The passage option (c) was the least popular, but it evoked some shrewd comments on the play's exploration of relationships between men and women, though insufficient analysis of the passage itself.

### ***Richard III***

Fewer Candidates have studied the play latterly and those candidates who did chose the (a) and (b) options. There were only one or two answers on the passage (c). Option (a) – on Richard as the conscious actor who delights in his own wit – was, perhaps surprisingly, not as popular as the (b) option on the female characters of the play. Candidates tended to write their general Richard essays without due concern for either the wit or the conscious theatrical qualities until the essay was well under way and the title was remembered. A common failing here was to use only the first part of the play as evidence. Option (b) was well handled, with the essays well structured in a character by character mode. Many argued that only Anne was weak and the others were neither weak nor victims, but helpless in their circumstances to do anything but curse. For some reason, reminiscent of Act 1 Scene 1 of *King Lear* days, candidates are fatally attracted to the scene of the

wooing of Anne, at the expense of the rest of the text. Many a weaker answer offers 2-3 sides on this scene and a paragraph on the remainder of the play!

### ***The Tempest***

Much excellent work on this play was seen and greatly appreciated this summer, notably in answer to (a) where the great majority of candidates flocked to write on Caliban. However, candidates were careful to answer the question, and did discuss the developments of his *character in the context of the different relationships he has in the play*. There were some outstandingly good answers, showing awareness of ambiguity and of different critical approaches to the character. Above all, candidates were very responsive, arguing their own views convincingly, though those who had attempted 2(b) on Iago as well as this sometimes left too little time for their third answer. Good use of the text was particularly notable here. Option (b) had its takers, though in smaller numbers and there were one or two excellent analyses of the macro and micro aspects of the island in the play. On the other hand, this was also the resort of some weaker efforts attempting to relate modern social problems (such as drunkenness) to the world of the play, usually with little support from the text itself. The passage (c) was often used as a launching pad for every theme that the play can support, as well as some others, with little reference to the language of the passage itself. Those candidates who pointed to the *dark backward and abysm of time* and *rapt in secret studies* and *neglecting worldly ends* were able to make perceptive comments upon Prospero and the play's main concerns, but success in this answer did depend upon using the passage closely to develop more general points about the play as a whole.

### ***The Rover***

Although the text remains a minority choice, the Centres which have studied it perform well, responding with enthusiasm and, often, sophistication to the issues raised in it. Here, most candidates answered on option (a), largely seeing Angellica Bianca as a victim whose broken aspirations provoke sympathy and whose characterisation challenges the idea of the play as comedy. The passage (c) provoked some lively and discerning commentaries, with many candidates showing keen theatrical imagination, unpicking dramatic and thematic qualities with ease. Option (b) was taken by one or two candidates only, and with less confidence.

### ***The Tenant of Wildfell Hall***

This new text is already proving popular and Examiners have reported on a full range of attainment in questions (b) and (c) though (a) was less widely chosen. As yet, its popularity does not challenge its predecessor *Jane Eyre*, although there is already evidence that candidates are not so tempted to tell the story! With one or two shining exceptions, candidates did not respond to (a), possibly because the 'village people' had not been studied in depth, whereas the material for (b) and (c) was more widely known. Option (b) produced many outstanding answers on a central issue for this text and they were both well-prepared and thoughtful. The passage question (c) focused upon the text printed in the examination paper and did not require cross-referencing into the text as a whole: in general this was attempted

only by those candidates who thought they could provide a close critical appreciation, so standards were high. Centres that have chosen this text appear to be approaching it with enthusiasm and thoroughness – we look forward to more of the same!

### ***The Nun's Priest's Tale***

Option (a) was the most popular and found by Examiners to be delightfully answered at all levels. Many candidates saw all their elders in the *married state* with glee. They saw Chauntecleer as the typical pompous male who can't be wrong, thinks he can get away with anything by flattery, has 'one thing' on his mind, but is quite loveable really; Pertelote the down-to-earth Mum who knows her man and his foibles but shows her love for him when the crunch comes. No one reading these could doubt that candidates find Chaucer highly relevant to the world as they see it; answers were fresh, illuminating and well-illustrated, clearly appreciating the comedy. Less popular, but sometimes the choice of the scholarly, was (b), on the mock heroic. Those who had prepared mock heroic techniques in the Tale wrote knowledgeably about them, and with good detailed illustration, but there were a regrettable minority who had little idea what this meant and merely reiterated the general story of the Tale. Few attempted (c) though one or two recognised it as part of the more serious strand of the Tale in its theme and atmosphere.

### ***The Pardoner's Prologue and Tale***

Examiners report that this text is clearly much more enjoyable to candidates than its predecessor, *The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale*: the range of work seen was lively and engaged, with particularly good use of the text in all options. Option (a) was fairly popular with most establishing a for/against view from the start. The weaker answers offered the Pardoner's story then told his tale, but there were many competent answers using the text for illustration, with more accomplished essays analysing the wit and irony. Some candidates could not make a distinction between enjoying a glass of corny ale and being an alcoholic, with at least two Centres claiming that it was the Pardoner's complete drunkenness which accounted for the disjointedness, disorder and digressions of the Prologue and Tale! Option (b) was the most popular, with many very good answers ranging through the text to support their clearly articulated views. The Pardoner's attractiveness was disputed, unsurprisingly. Perhaps because there had been necessary attention to language in a new Chaucer text, the passage option (c) was felt by Examiners to be the most proficiently done of the passage questions on the paper, though the weaker tended to translate or paraphrase, as usual.

### ***Great Expectations***

Examiners have come to anticipate some excellent work on Dickens and this session was no exception. Although (a) was the sort of question which could prove a trap for the unwary, leading them into excessive narrative, most candidates tried hard to show the distinctive plot and character linkages in the novel, with considerable success. Generally speaking, the more successful answers used the detail of the text and its intricate relationships to better effect than the more modest narrative-



based accounts, but this was answered with gratifying appreciation of Dickens's methods. Option (b) was predictably popular, though those who offered a character sketch of Pocket often failed to do justice to the requirement to discuss *role and significance*. Candidates who considered the character as a device by the novelist to present theme or offer structural contrast/parallel to the main character were immediately working from a higher base line, but there was a full range of enjoyable responses at all levels here. The passage question (c) offered so much scope that no candidate could fail to find something worthwhile to say: there were many outstanding analyses, drawing attention to the characteristically Dickensian combination of the comic, the grotesque and the sinister. This was a popular question with Examiners too. Even here, however, faced with such an engaging passage, some candidates were tempted away from it and into general comments on the novel as a whole, even though they had not been required to do so in this case.

### ***Marvell's Poems***

Answers here ranged from the well-prepared, even polished, to the frankly uncomprehending. A small number of Centres continue to offer the text in the face of their candidates', or their own, lack of confidence in dealing with it: in no other set of answers is the mechanical copying of unhelpful marginal notes such a widespread feature. At the other end of the scale, however, are the many Centres in which the teaching has been exemplary: not only do the candidates understand the complexities of the poems, they also appreciate and respond to them with real sensitivity. Of the options here, (a) and (c) were the most popular. Candidates argued for the most part in (a) that Marvell's love poetry has a conceptual quality and that his lovers as individuals seem distant, but there were a handful of spirited oppositions to this view. One Centre thought everything was a love poem; for example the Horatian Ode showed love for his country, the dialogue poems showed love for the soul and so on. This made for a somewhat indiscriminating response. Option (b) was not popular, with most listing the 'argument' poems; textual support was good here, however. The passage question was the whole text of *The Garden*, and Marvell enthusiasts made the most of what they clearly deemed the 'gift' question. The weakest attempted a stanza by stanza paraphrase, omitting those they did not understand, but there were also many competent and polished appreciations. The best answers were a delight to read, being subtle, appreciative and deeply responsive.

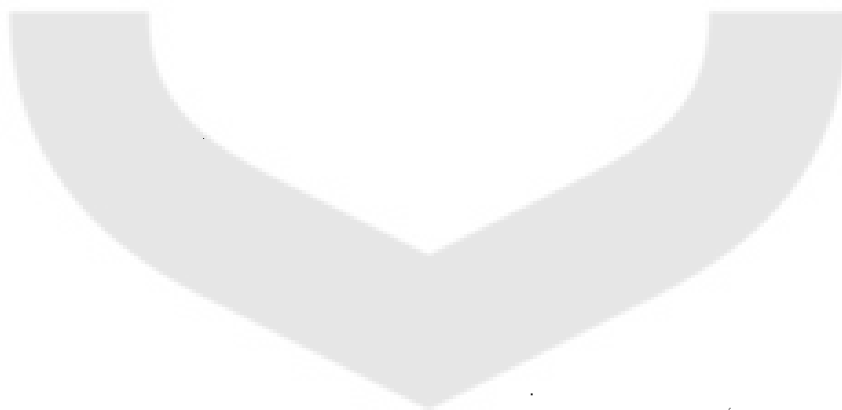
### ***Comus and Lycidas***

It is pleasing to report some answers on Milton, though the number of Centres studying the text remains very small. It is a select band, however, with candidates being extremely well-prepared and mostly responsive. All answers were on *Comus*. Question 11(b) answers showed a good understanding of spatial relationships on stage, with the Attendant Spirit reminding us of the artificiality of the stage and the descent recalling the Fall of Man. Question 11(c) evinced some fine answers, with good understanding of *Comus*'s intentions and his techniques of persuasion.

***The Duchess of Malfi***

The play is firmly established as favourite text and candidates show themselves to be deeply engaged with it. Option (a) was hardly ever chosen, but (b) and (c) were both popular. Many candidates plunged into what they consider to be tragedy in their introductions to (b) and this helped them to set the parameters of the answer. Examiners do not expect a mechanical rehearsal of the Aristotelian rules for tragedy, but some sort of preliminary definition helps the candidate to get her/his thoughts in order. Some focused exclusively on the Duchess as a tragic figure, but the best answers ranged across the whole sweep of the play, coming, inevitably, to the potentially tragic stature of Bosola. The passage question (c) was one of the most successful in terms of using the text closely, with most answers tying what they had to say firmly to the given text. Here too Bosola tended to dominate answers. Most candidates found the conclusion of the play satisfactory, for a number of sensible reasons; the best found a considerable measure of ambiguity, much attention being paid to the son's horoscope.

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9000/2

### **General Comments**

There is considerable overlap between this report and that for 4482/1. This session, for the first time since the launch of the paper in 1994, the entry for the modular version was larger than that for the linear version. At the same time there was a marked improvement in the overall standard of work on the modular version bringing it closer to that traditionally associated with the linear version.

Approximately 1350 candidates were entered for the linear version of the paper. A majority of Examiners marked a substantial number of these scripts, their reports reflecting the range and variety of work seen.

**Standard of performance.** This continues to be highly satisfactory. As in recent sessions only a very small percentage of candidates failed to achieve the basic Advanced Level standard, while there was a significant and pleasing increase in the number of scripts in the top two mark bands. There were no reports of work so weak as to be graded in the lowest mark band.

**Characteristics of performance.** The strengths and limitations of candidates taking the linear version of the paper have been considered in detail in previous reports and reference to these is recommended. However, it should be noted that the increase in upper mark band scripts was attributable to a greater readiness on the part of able candidates to sustain critical argument, to explore their ideas in depth and to challenge the critical propositions offered in the questions. Some Examiners drew attention to a noticeable improvement in the overall standard of written English in these scripts, with greater clarity of expression and fewer errors of spelling, punctuation, grammar and syntax.

**Choice of texts and questions.** The Austen and Hardy texts remain the most popular choices. Blake lost some ground this session but is still very widely subscribed. Hawthorne's novel grows in appeal with each session, a welcome development since it appears to bring out the very best in candidates of differing abilities. Among the minority texts, those of Shaw, Eliot and Pope always show strongly. The Farquhar and Swift texts were pretty thinly subscribed this time, while Fielding attracted few takers. Finally, the Keats selection, though not among the most popular texts, fared appreciably better than the Byron text it replaced. The two question options were about equally chosen. The substantial body of candidates in the 'competent' mark range or better appears to make positive choices and to perform confidently on both types of question. However, candidates in the lower mark bands sometimes seem to favour passage-based questions in the mistaken belief that the printed extracts offer a greater degree of security than the general essay questions. In fact, the literary critical skills demanded by the former – those of practical criticism and ability to relate textual part and whole – are all too frequently the ones in which less secure and confident candidates are most deficient. This area of concern remains more in evidence on 4482/01 than 9000/02, but all candidates should be aware of the dangers attaching to negative choice.

### **Comments on Individual Questions**

#### **1) JANE AUSTEN: *Pride and Prejudice***

Both options were widely popular and both prompted ample work of competent standard or better. (a) answers tended to focus on Elizabeth and there were some excellent analyses of her character and function within the pattern of the novel. Candidates were prepared to challenge the confident assertion of the question, identifying a number of key areas in which protagonist and author can be heard to speak with one voice. At the same time these answers recognised that our heroine is not exempt from the pervasive irony of the text and that the key to her character is not perfection but the ability to know herself and to learn from her errors and misjudgements. Most of these answers comprehended consideration of Darcy – how could they not? – while (wisely) very few chose to concentrate exclusively on him. The more limited answers relied heavily on biographical speculation and lacked balance of treatment, ignoring important textual evidence in their determination to refute the question's proposition.

There was also much highly commendable work on (b). Knowledge of context was frequently impressively detailed and sensitive, while treatment of the feelings and actions of both characters in the extract was balanced and sympathetic. A wide range of answers was prepared to engage with issues of narrative technique here, to explore not only Austen's characteristic effects but also the means by which they are achieved. The better answers noted that, despite the apparently detached, third person narration of much of the passage, it is still Elizabeth's perceptions that we have access to and that these have already been shown to be unreliable. The more pedestrian work here tended to dwell unduly on minor aspects of the passage – Elizabeth's feelings towards Colonel Fitzwilliam were strikingly overstated in some cases – and to accept uncritically the heroine's version of events. Nevertheless, answers on both these options seldom fell below stolid level, while there was much for Examiners to enjoy and reward.

#### **2) WILLIAM BLAKE: *Songs of Innocence and Experience***

(a) was the preferred option here and there were some very good answers, challenging the question by constructing a reading of Blake's poetry that brought out its complexities, ambiguities and paradoxes. In the process much of a darker nature than is superficially apparent was discerned in the *Innocence* poems, while the reading of the *Experience* poems was widely seen as more heartening and uplifting than the question seemed prepared to admit. Anger was found in plenty but not, for these candidates at least, despair. Below this level answers tended to be a shade more submissive to the question but were strongly marked by detailed knowledge and personal responsiveness to the text. There are still some answers that polarise 'paired' poems too starkly and offer simplistic readings, particularly of the *Innocence* poems. However, the overall standard here was very pleasing with few candidates falling below the 'stolid' mark band.

There were some very good answers here too; but, in general, critical approach to and treatment of this question were noticeably less assured. There was evidence of the 'negative choice' referred to earlier in this report, since some candidates were clearly ill at ease with the poem, escaping with undue haste into general essays, in some cases only loosely based on the second part of the question. Readings of the poem were too often notable for omissions – very little on the final two stanzas – and for confused treatment of guardian angels and predators. Also, in exploring the significance of guardianship, too many responses stopped short at *Innocence*, apparently seeing little of relevance in the companion volume. Despite these self-imposed limitations, all but a very few answers did at least enough to reach the required standard, though most Examiners reported the work on this option as rather below their expectations.

3) GEORGE ELIOT: *The Mill on the Floss*

This text appeared to have declined somewhat in popularity this session, though not as much as on the modular version of the paper. Examiners seeing a range of answers reported a very satisfactory overall standard on both options. Some very good work on (a) concentrated primarily on Maggie and the internal tensions created by her conflicting roles, needs and aspirations, going on to examine a number of other characters. There was some penetrating comment on Tom, Mr Tulliver, Philip, Stephen among others. The more pedestrian work tended to be narrow in scope and a shade simplistic in its treatment of the issues, but few answers failed to reach at least 'stolid' standard here.

There were also some quite excellent (b) option answers, bringing out the mingled pathos and humour of the passage as a basis for a close consideration of Dodson values which was encouragingly balanced and responsive to Eliot's construction of them throughout the novel. Much work of sound standard tended to emphasise the negative aspects of the Dodson's provincial narrow-mindedness and to miss the element of affectionate irony in Eliot's presentation. Nevertheless, very few answers fell below the securely stolid range.

4) GEORGE FARQUHAR: *The Beaux' Stratagem*

This was a distinctly minority text. The few Examiners who saw sufficient answers to justify comment reported a generally good standard of work. Answers to (a) ranged widely but the liveliest writing was reserved for the women characters, with some strongly feminist responses to the situations of Mrs Sullen, Cherry and, to a lesser extent, Dorinda.

Fewer attempted the (b) option. Proficient answers noted both the similarities and crucial differences between Archer and Aimwell and also the redemptive power of love. The less effective work gave the passage pretty short shrift in favour of general essays on the theme of ambition in the play as a whole.

5) HENRY FIELDING: *Joseph Andrews*

This text only narrowly escaped the fate of its predecessor, *Evelina*, which was entirely ignored throughout its run on the paper. There were a few answers on Fielding's novel but no Examiner felt her/himself in a position to offer extended comment. Reports, albeit brief, were in general favourable, noting in particular the perceptive sympathy with which the characterisation of Parson Adams was critically explored.

The passage in (b) was much relished for the hilarity of its sexual role reversal, though one or two Examiners expressed some disappointment at candidates' limited efforts to relate the passage to the novel as a whole.

6) THOMAS HARDY: *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*

This was the overwhelmingly popular text on the paper and all Examiners saw a substantial body of answers to both (equally widely subscribed) options. Inevitably, given the sheer weight of work on the text, the standard was more variable than elsewhere on the paper. However, it was by and large highly competent. Candidates appear to enjoy this text, which provokes very strong reactions and much partisan writing. Tess tends to be taken very much at Hardy's valuation, though the upper mark band answers showed perceptive awareness of the battery of literary devices by which Hardy constructs her as an exploited, persecuted and ultimately doomed victim. Responses to (a) tended to see Tess as representative of a beleaguered tradition in the process of being destroyed by a combination of mechanised agriculture and modern morality, deceptively embodied in males in whom the old Adam was imperfectly suppressed. On the other hand, an interesting minority of answers, taking a tip perhaps from Hardy's reference to 'the ache of modernism', saw Tess as an essentially modern consciousness, ground in the very mill of convention and haunted throughout by the hobgoblins of an outworn creed. Much reference here to what candidates saw as Hardy's hostile presentation of Christian beliefs and practices. A variety of viewpoints and interpretations was, in large part, argued persuasively and with the impressively detailed textual knowledge which has always been a feature of work on this text. The more limited answers tended towards the listing of opposed symbols and offered a simplistic treatment of Hardy's own standpoint in the tradition versus modernity debate. However, pleasingly few answers failed to achieve at least somewhat more than basic adequacy here. Answers to the (b) option were equally extensive and detailed. Again the treatment of Tess was deeply sympathetic and there was a good deal of barely concealed hostility to Angel, whose blindness in this early episode was seen as foreshadowing his more serious blindnesses later in the novel. Where accounts of the passage were restricted was in the tendency of some to see the incident in rather simplistic terms. If only Angel had danced with Tess he would, it was quite frequently claimed, have fallen in love with and married her, thus preventing all her subsequent misfortunes. The problem with this romanticised reading of the passage is not merely that, given the respective conditions of the two characters, it is highly improbable, but that it misses the typical Hardy-esque irony, both in the passage itself and the wider contextual

situation. Virtually all answers made some attempt to engage the broader textual issue here, with some detailed treatment of, among other aspects, Tess's vacillations and Angel's misjudgements. Predictably there was much reference to fate and its workings but most candidates at least attempted to adapt the material to the demands of the question.

7) NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE: *The Scarlet Letter*

As indicated above, this text both appeals strongly to candidates and brings out the best of their literary knowledge and understanding. The two options appeared to offer ample opportunities for self-display and they were gratefully and, by and large, effectively seized, with much work in the middle to upper mark bands. In (a) answers explored in sympathetic depth and detail Hester's relationships with husband and covert lover, the emphasis falling on her essentially female integrity and strengths in contrast with their male weaknesses and inadequacies. As with several other texts, there was some feisty feminist writing here, the best of which was persuasively coherent. As usual with this text, answers were closely supported with reference and quotation.

In the equally subscribed (b) option answers candidates showed more than normal readiness to address specifically literary aspects of the passage as well as the more obvious issues of character and theme. There was some telling comment on the four principals, in particular Pearl. Examiners were impressed by the ability of many candidates to temper their emotional reactions to the characters and their actions with sensitive consideration of the world of the novel and the social context within which it was written.

8) JOHN KEATS: *Lyric Poems*

While not a popular text, this was at least more widely subscribed than the one it replaced, Byron's *Don Juan*, with a number of Examiners seeing sufficient answers to justify comment. (a) was on the whole well handled. Candidates understood the terms of the question and explored them with sensitive perception, not infrequently concluding that the former were less than wholly adequate. There was much informed and well documented reference to the odes and a selection of the sonnets. In particular effective use was made of *Nightingale*, *Grecian Urn*, *Psyche* and *Melancholy*, while some made justified reference to the given poem in (b). The more pedestrian work looked for certainties and closure, either those of the question or their own alternative ones. The better work saw the poetry as more complex, ambivalent, shifting than any confident formula could comprehend.

There were fewer answers to (b) and in general they were of more variable standard. The more limited work tended to take the poem at face value and to see it as a one-off piece, difficult to relate to the wider context of the poetry. On the other hand, some highly stimulating accounts constructed the poem as imagination and understanding in progress, shot through with ambiguities and uncertainties (particularly on the sexual level) and thus characteristic of Keats's best work,

9) ALEXANDER POPE: *The Rape of the Lock*

This text has generally worked well on the linear version of the paper and this session was no exception. By the end of their course candidates appear to have achieved a detailed understanding of the mock-heroic genre as Pope constructed it and an appreciation of the battery of poetic techniques by which he inflates and deflates his targets. The best work showed awareness of Pope's characteristic ambivalence in his treatment of the world he creates in this poem. The (a) option gave ample opportunity to explore these issues and it was gratefully taken. Examiners reported on the readiness of some candidates to probe and problematise the terms of the question in ways not anticipated by the setter. Below this level of literary critical sophistication, there was much writing of a detailed and pertinent kind well supported by textual reference and quotation. Only a very few seriously limited responses failed to make some connection between poetic technique and moral vision. There were markedly fewer responses to the (b) option. Most differentiated the characters effectively, seeing Thalestris as embodying the shallowness, envy and spite of a world in which appearance is all and friendship a function of fashion; Clarissa, by contrast, as a spokesperson for a more rational and life-enhancing system of values. The more limited answers struggled with the content and tone of the first speech, while the very occasional response confused the speakers, but most had no difficulty in achieving more than basic adequacy here.

10) GEORGE BERNARD SHAW: *Mrs Warren's Profession*

Shaw's play has always been among the most popular of the minority texts on the paper, provoking more committed responses from candidates than Examiners had originally anticipated. There were plenty of good answers to both options since their focus was primarily on themes and characters, areas where Advanced Level candidates are particularly strong. In (a) answers tended to emphasise 'scramble for money', exploring the construction and roles of all the principal characters in relation to this issue. Most linear candidates show at least some degree of awareness of the dangers of taking Shaw's characters at face value and essays were notable for their rejection of simplistic moral judgements. Answers in the middle to upper mark bands also probed the idea of equality, teasing out some at least of its social, economic and sexual aspects.

The same qualities of discrimination and balance were evident in the best (b) answers. Candidates were responsive to the sub-text, saw clearly the follies and self-deceptions underlying Mrs Warren's construction of reality without being tempted into simplistic contrasts and judgements. It was by no means only the committed feminists (and these were again in evidence here) who exposed the inadequacies of Vivie's alternative world and its dubious intellectual and moral basis. The more stolid responses here relied a shade too heavily on mere recapitulation of what follows the given passage, polarising the characters too starkly. However, taken overall text and questions worked well.



11) JONATHAN SWIFT: *Gulliver's Travels*

This has not been a popular text with home Centres and only a few Examiners saw answers on it. In general candidates coped effectively with both options, using plentiful material in a sensible and selective way. In (a) those who focused on the first two voyages provided the most confident answers. All but the most limited discriminated between author and protagonist, seeing Gulliver's 'empty pride and grandeur' at certain points in the book as Swift's principal concern.

There were very few takers for (b). Answers showed a lively sense of Gulliver's revulsion at human physicality blown up to gross proportions, the best relating it to his more profound horror at the spectacle of the degraded Yahoos in the final *Part* of the text. Others mired themselves in the detail of the passage and struggled to relate textual part and whole, one of the perennial problems with this text.

Archives &  
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### **9000/3 and 4483 – Twentieth Century Writing**

#### **General Comments**

First, a selection of general comments from Examiners:

- Some scripts were excellent – indeed it is difficult to imagine how a few answers could have been bettered in the time and conditions. Others were weaker but nevertheless showed good understanding.
- Scripts were generally informed and relevant. Expression was generally acceptable. The apostrophe continues to be absent. Candidates would be advised to avoid conclusions that simply repeat what has already been said.
- I was, on the whole, impressed by candidates' broader contextual understanding and knowledge and breadth of reference. Less impressive were the attempts at close analysis of textual detail required by the passage-based questions.
- Many candidates answered the questions in very general terms, skimming the surface and attempting to include a whole range of points rather than delving deeper. Better answers considered methods used by writers rather than themes alone.
- I saw fewer very short answers, suggesting a better use of time than last year, and some candidates made good use of plans.
- My general impression is that virtually all candidates had gained something from their course. ... The standard of written English varied widely, with some candidates writing fluently and elegantly, while some showed a shaky grasp of spelling and punctuation.
- On the whole candidates seemed well prepared, but only the best produced truly personal responses. Many answers were confident and seemed to reflect genuine enjoyment of what they had studied.
- ... nearly all wrote three full answers, mostly in legible hand-writing!
- Some of the spelling from home Centres was appalling. ... The Assessment Objective I found worst covered was A03, with A02 probably the next weakest. I was surprised at the poor effort over A03 as one would suppose that the easiest area to cover, and expect some hesitation over tackling A02.
- There was a marked tendency for candidates attempting the (b) question to neglect the actual passage in their anxiety to air their knowledge of how the extract reflected wider issues in the text.
- ... still much reluctance to answer on 'methods and concerns' – puzzling since teachers and candidates must be used to this kind of question.

### *Report on the Modules taken in June 2000*

- Some candidates home in on only one aspect of the question asked ... Candidates cannot be reminded too often to examine the questions and work out the opportunities to provide a full answer.
- Titles of books are often not distinguished from the rest of the writing. No inverted commas are used, and often not even capitals for the main words. Slang words seem to be creeping in more than previously (e.g. 'a tad' for 'little', 'kick in' for 'begin'). Presentation is often very poor ...
- I would like to suggest that A level candidates should know how to use the apostrophe, but this is clearly a lost cause.

#### **Comments on Individual Questions**

##### **1) Pat Barker: *Regeneration***

This text worked very well on its first appearance on this paper. Candidates seemed to have enjoyed reading it, and there was some really thoughtful, illuminating discussion on both options. Some candidates had read other novels in the trilogy, as well as poems by Sassoon and Owen. There was also evidence of some wider knowledge of the experience of the First World War. On 1(a) most candidates found plenty to say, ranging from descriptive accounts of the 'regeneration' (= 'healing') of selected characters (e.g. Sassoon, Prior, Burns; fuller answers included Rivers) to penetrating analyses of the *ironic* implications of the title (recognition of irony was often a distinguishing feature of the fuller answer). Many candidates explored parallels between Rivers' and Head's experiment with nerve regeneration and the experience of Rivers' patients; many noted the contrasts between Rivers' theories and clinical methods and Yealland's; many also considered the irony that in the circumstances of war 'recovery meant the resumption of activities that were not merely self-destructive but positively suicidal'. Some candidates noted the novel's intimations that transformations may be taking place in British society, in respect of gender and class relations. On 1(b) the more thoughtful answers explored the effects of details in the passage which highlighted features of Sassoon's character, as constructed in the text (e.g. characteristic language, concern not to offend Rivers, 'poring over menu') and of Rivers' (sensitivity of his perception, persistently reflecting on his patient's nature and condition, contrast with Yealland, acknowledgement of Sassoon's radical effect on *him*, extrapolation from the particular case to the general). Some candidates noted that we learn about each character from the development of the relationship between them, and that much of the passage – and the novel as a whole – is concerned with Rivers' consciousness and the disturbing, even *disabling* effects (as some candidates saw them) of his relationship with Sassoon, which at time Rivers 'resented'.

2) Caryl Churchill: *Top Girls*

As in previous years, candidates seem to have enjoyed and to have been stimulated by working on this text. On 2(a) most candidates noted the categories of meaning in the term 'sisterhood', exploring *both* the sibling relationship between Marlene and Joyce as this is revealed in the course of the text, *and* the wider sense of gender solidarity, with reference to the different contexts of the restaurant in Act 1 and the Top Girls office in Act 2. Some candidates, however, limited their answers to one of these areas of discussion. There was a fair amount of A03-related discussion of the play's relation to the context of the 1980s (is it 'a feminist play' or not?) and the mythic/iconic use of the 'tough lady, Maggie'. Some saw Angie's relationship with Kit as embodying a special kind of sisterhood; others saw in it the same pattern of competitiveness evident elsewhere. On 2(b) there was some thoughtful discussion of the particular dramatic effects generated by the interaction between sibling/domestic relations ('Angie's us/and Mum and Dad's us') and social/political tensions ('I hate the working class ...'), and between different views of the future (see II 14-15) – both, as some candidates pointed out appropriately as the play comes to an end, equally 'frightening'. Angie's family position and dramatic functions were sometimes skilfully addressed. When (rarely) the effect of the time shift on reader/audience response to this scene was considered, there was some interesting discussion.

3) T.S.Eliot: *Selected Poems*

On 3(a) candidates were more secure on Eliot's view of life than on the 'vitality and variety' of his writing. Though there was a general agreement on 'gloominess' (exploitative relationships, fallen women, yellow fog and rat's alley), some candidates noted at least the possibilities of redemption intimated by *The Waste Land*. Where candidates were able to consider the poetic features of the writing, there was some lively discussion of the range and variety of Eliot's imagery and – an issue that candidates are more and more willing to address – the effects of his characteristic allusions to/quotations from other writers. There is still a tendency among some candidates to object to this technique as obscure or elitist, but many candidates enthusiastically explored the effects of particular instances, acknowledging the thematic issues but also the wit – even humour – in Eliot's adaptations. Most candidates ignored the force of 'contrast' in the question. On 3(b) literary echoes were often readily identified and their effects discussed. Many candidates noted the effects of the contrast between the social setting in this part of 'A Game of Chess' and the pub scene that follows it. There was rather more attention to the effects of the language than has been the case in previous years, and the ambivalence of the implied contrast/parallel between past and present (experience of the past as more glorious? or equally violent and treacherous?) was well noted in some answers.

4) Athol Fugard: *The Township Plays*

On its first appearance on the paper, this text was addressed by only a handful of candidates, and most answers were speculative rather than substantial. On 4(a), most pointed out the ways in which Fugard deals with political issues in the framework of the experience of *apartheid* (e.g. the passbook as a concentrated symbol of inequality and exploitation in *Sizwe Banse is Dead*, and the more violent methods of discrimination and oppression in *The Island*, the two plays most frequently referred to). There was some promising discussion of Fugard's concern with and subversions of improvisational/collaborative methods of play construction (as enacted in e.g. *The Coat*) and the use of *Antigone* in *The Island* to comment on both political and theatrical issues in the contemporary context. The few responses on 4(b) tended to offer general discussion of the play rather than any analysis of the effects of the passage, though there was some recognition of the value of John's improvised performance in the passage as both temporary imaginative escape from and eventual reminder of the conditions of the characters' painful incarceration; in this dual effect the passage functions as a model of Fugard's view of relations between his theatre and the social/political context.

5) James Joyce: *Dubliners*

Returning to the paper after some time, *Dubliners* was a popular choice this year. 5(a) clearly played to a strong hand, as candidate knew the issues and could relate them to stories generally quite readily. Stories most frequently cited were 'Eveline', 'An Encounter', 'Two Gallants', 'A Little Cloud' and 'The Dead', the discriminating factor being the candidate's ability to distinguish between sources and qualities of 'entrapment' (e.g. cultural, national, religious, domestic) and *kinds* of 'rebellion'. In weaker answers the key words tended to be repeated in the course of narrative summaries, as if all the stories contained the same sets of relationships; in many answers the capacity to deal with the ironies of 'The Dead' was also a useful discriminator. Many candidates managed to work into their answers evidence of understanding the symbolic frameworks constructed by relationships between the stories. There were some impressive answers to this question, though too many relied on narrative rehearsal to make their points for them. On 5(b) again there were some excellent answers, responsive to the details of the writing and to the effectiveness of the passage as conclusion to 'Araby', and identifying motifs which echo throughout the collection. Many candidates used the term 'epiphany', though not all had a secure grasp on its meaning or its value as a critical concept. Some abandoned the passage quickly to write about childhood. Candidates' invariable failure to distinguish titles of texts by underlining or single inverted commas often caused confusion on this text since *Dubliners* could refer to either the text or the city's inhabitants.

6) Philip Larkin: *The Whitsun Weddings*

Like *Dubliners* returning after some time, this was also a popular choice this year, and one which candidates seem to have enjoyed working on: their acquaintance with the poems was generally close and reliable. Some answers on both options were illuminated by knowledge of Larkin's biography. On 6(a) most candidates could cite plenty of examples of Larkin's rendering of 'the commonplace' (though some took the term to refer to the working class – 'common people' – rather than experience more widely, and some wrote about the common places described by Larkin in his poems. The question's other key term, 'significant' caused more of a problem, which some candidates simply disregarded. Those who addressed the issue argued that Larkin – often by what a candidate called 'the sting in the final line' – located commonplace detail in the context of a (generally gloomy) view of human experience, or that his use of telling detail caused the reader to see features of the familiar world in an unfamiliar light, or that (often using the arrows at the end of 'The Whitsun Weddings' as illustration) the mundane can suddenly be made beautiful and full of meaning. Many candidates wanted to talk about advertising, and adapted their material more or less appropriately to the demands of the question. Responses to 6(b) turned on whether the candidate recognised the meaning of the title or not. Those who did often wrote impressively on both the special kind of nostalgia expressed by the writing (which some found characteristic of Larkin, others not) and the poem's relations with others where Larkin's concern with time, loss, endings and exclusions are evident. Some picked up 'advertisements' from line 14 and concentrated on their prepared agenda. In better answers candidates explored the ambiguities of the poem's attitude to the past – particularly intimated by e.g. the third and the final stanza; one or two wondered whether the loss of this kind of 'innocence' was altogether regrettable, in the light of the war's experience and subsequent social changes.

7) D.H.Lawrence: *Women in Love*

On 7(a) most candidates could cite episodes where the qualities of characters were dramatised powerfully by their interactions with animals: the scenes involving Gerald and the mare and/or the rabbit, Gudrun and the cattle, Birkin and Mino, were often very thoughtfully analysed, in relation to their presentation and thematic meaning as well as character revelation. Birkin's recourse to nature after Hermione's assault, and the association of the Birkin/Ursula relationship with the natural world, were also frequently noted, and so was Lawrence's use of landscape – particularly in the closing chapters. The fuller answers saw these and other features as signalling more than the qualities of individual characters, noting Lawrence's polemical anger at the devastation of the landscape by mining, the construction of 'unnatural' urban conditions and cultures, the damage done to the human psyche and personal relationships at large by divorce from natural procedures and rhythms. Some answers simply listed instances; others were impressively detailed, well informed and critically astute. On 7(b) many candidates offered (often very

good) discussions of Gerald as a figure and of his role in the novel without paying much attention at all to the passage provided. Others explored the rich critical opportunities of this typically Lawrentian set-piece with relish, but did not refer to context of 'the novel as a whole'. Some managed to do both, considering rhetorical devices (rhythmic repetition, patterns of imagery, intrusive narrative voice) as means of constructing character traits and referring these to a discussion of Gerald's relationships with e.g. his father, the miners, Minette, Gudrun, Birkin.

8) Graham Swift: *Last Orders*

On its first appearance on the paper, there were very few answers on this text. Among effects noted in response to 8(a) were: progressive revelation of characters through the sequences of narrative segments ('we learn about each of them from the inside,' a candidate wrote); interactions between the segments to construct complementary/competing interpretations of events and characters ('nothing and nobody in the novel has only one meaning'), so that the reader's memory and understanding are perpetually being revised; emphasis on *active* reading ('the reader has to be on her toes all the time'). The fewer answers on 8(b) noted the way this segment related to others narrated by the characters that Mandy refers to, from a new perspective and in a new voice (the second paragraph particularly vivid in these respects). Some candidates also noted that familiar themes developed throughout the novel are dramatised strongly here: the problematic tensions of family relationships (e.g. final paragraph); the notion of personal identity as a kind of performance ('everyone is different with everyone else,' wrote another candidate); the anchorage in historical actuality ('The year of Sergeant Pepper'). We wait with interest to see what candidates make of this text in future.

9) Tennessee Williams: *A Streetcar Named Desire*

As in previous years, responses on this text have been particularly enthusiastic. On 9(a) there was a fairly sharp division between candidates who set off to explain *why* things happen as they do in the play rather than how it is *inevitable* that they should, and those who addressed directly the issues raised by the word 'inevitable' in the question. The former generally explained the play's outcome in terms of character conflict: Stanley (e.g. territorial/aggressively masculine/street-wise/determined) in irreconcilable conflict with Blanche (e.g. sensitive/poetic/vulnerable/tactless/flirtatious) for possession of Stella. Other candidates noted the radical contradictions between Stanley and Blanche in terms of cultural background, symbolic value (e.g. Old v New South/agrarian v urban/racially stratified v cosmopolitan), and explored the dramatic means by which Williams prepares for the 'outcome' from the beginning (e.g. symbolism of clothing/music and other sound effects/language/ Blanche's drinking, mental instability and sexual duality – being both flirtatious and prim). Some suggested that at this level of meaning the play's outcome has been determined by the shape of American history: the symbol (ambivalent) of Southern agrarian culture defeated (raped) by the

representative figure (also ambivalent) of the modern South, and resorting to the region of myth. Some argued that the play has some of the technical characteristics of tragedy (though the central figure never becomes *conscious* of tragic meaning). On 9(b) most candidates noted the significance of this moment as one of the turning points of the action, and the powerful dramatic effect of Stanley's eavesdropping on the sisters ('What's he going to do next?') under cover of the noise of the train, which is used throughout the play to signal the power of the modern world and of Stanley as its representative. Blanche's long speech received a good deal of attention, outlining the model of Stanley as an evolutionary throwback (contrasting ironically with the other – 'survival of the fittest' – reading of Stanley as having evolved into perfect adaptation to the modern environment). The contrast between Blanche's language and Stanley's was often well noted, as was the premonitory significance of Stella's embrace and his grinning at Blanche at the end of the passage.

10) Virginia Woolf: *To the Lighthouse*

There were some impressive responses to 10(a), mostly turning on Mrs Ramsay's efforts to create/sustain harmony among the community of family and friends, culminating in the scene of the dinner party ('common cause against the fluidity out there ... a scene which was vanishing even as she looked'). Lily's parallel attempts to create unity/order through her painting were also considered, as was Mr Ramsay's philosophical project to manipulate experience into the order of the alphabet. Surprisingly few candidates discussed the effects of the middle section, 'Time Passes', where order dissolves in the face of death, the violence of history ('A shell exploded') and the 'natural' processes of transformation and decay ('What power could now prevent the fertility, the insensibility of nature?'). Some candidates, in extremely thoughtful answers, considered the novel itself as *both* an attempt at ordering and an acknowledgement of the fluidity of consciousness, experience and language. On 10(b) there was some useful discussion of the passage's movement between third person narrative and internalised representation of personal consciousness, the symbolism of the bees and hives, multiple views of Mrs Ramsay, the significance of Lily's painting for herself and also its function in the novel as a whole.

11) Derek Walcott: *Selected Poems*

There were some thoughtful responses to the (a) question, exploring Walcott's awareness of ways in which the past remains present in historical legacy/effects (e.g. 'Ruins of a Great House'/'Hawk'), in cultural practices (e.g. 'Mass Man'), in personal consciousness (e.g. 'Homecoming, Anse la Raye') in political relations (e.g. 'Parades, Parades'), in myth (e.g. 'The Almond Trees') and in language (*passim*). Most candidates could find three appropriate poems to consider, though in some answers the treatment of each was cursory, with little attention to poetic qualities and effects. On (b) some candidates were comfortably acquainted with 'The Bright Field' and recognised both the contrasts between London and Caribbean settings and the



integrating vision towards which the poem gradually moves. Others seemed at sea, and settled for noting images and rhythmic patterns that were said to be characteristic of Walcott's work.

**NB** Centres are advised that Derek Walcott: *Selected Poems* will be a prescribed text on both papers 9000/3 and 4483 for the remaining life of the current syllabuses.



## **9000/4 and 4484 – Topic Paper**

### **General Comments**

This paper produced a wide range of response in terms both of standards and of variety of texts chosen. Examiners reported some excellent scripts, the best candidates impressing with their depth of theoretical knowledge and understanding of the topics, their sharp focus on issues raised by questions, and the range and aptness of textual references used to clinch arguments. At the other end of the scale, but apparent only at Centres opting for the 4484 modular paper, there was an increase in the number of candidates who were quite inadequately prepared.

The most popular choice of topic by far was, once again, The Gothic Tradition. It was good to see, however, that candidates for all the other topics responded well to both the texts they had read and the passages set for them on the paper. This was true of candidates of all abilities, but there was a tendency for weaker candidates to lessen their chances of success through too little consideration of the choice of essay questions or a failure to read the questions carefully enough to understand fully what was required. Teachers do well who remind their candidates of the need to focus on keywords in questions to ensure that they answer all parts. It is also more important to offer a well developed argument than to include short, possibly unlinked comments on a wide range of texts.

In responses to the related passage, once again there were too many candidates who used the extract as a launchpad to write about their prepared texts at the expense of a careful close reading. Candidates should also be warned not to put their answers to the second question at risk by spending too long on Question 1. It was gratifying to find virtually no candidates whose essays revealed that they had relied on notes in their texts other than 'brief marginal annotation', but it remained apparent that some Centres had disadvantaged candidates by not submitting proposed titles of texts for approval before teaching began. As usual, this problem was particularly acute when a Centre had taken the 'anthology' approach without recourse to further texts of real value.

### **Biography and Autobiography**

- 1) The passage from *Errata* by George Steiner proved difficult for many candidates. Quality candidates focused on how an adult using experience and mature language can successfully encompass experience from the distant past; weaker candidates settled for extracting phrases which seemed childlike. Most candidates found other texts which incorporated scenes from childhood, but the complexities of Steiner's approach made it difficult for them to make meaningful comparisons.
- 2) Clearly Centres had encouraged the consideration of biography or autobiography as literature and some very good candidates were able to discuss figurative language, narrative technique and other elements of style in this context. Where problems were encountered it was because 'literature' was taken as the equivalent of 'entertainment' or confused with 'fiction'.

- 3) The suggestion that '(auto)biographies were most revealing about their subjects when they deal with the ordinary, not the extraordinary' found favour with most of those who answered on this question and they were able to find good examples in support. Candidates who struggled with the question did so because they found the statement confusing, or took 'extraordinary' simply to mean famous.

### **The Gothic Tradition**

- 1) Most candidates enjoyed this opening passage from *Rebecca* by Daphne du Maurier and were able to identify the conventions of Gothic writing with ease. Nevertheless, the passage proved an effective discriminator. There were some excellent answers which focused on the diction used in the description of the garden and which were astute in their analysis of psychological undertones. The least successful answers were those which highlighted a phrase suggesting a Gothic trait from another text. It was then all too easy for the commentary to drift into descriptions of features such as imprisonment or threatening forests in other texts. Particularly disappointing were the large number of readers who failed to put 'possessed' and 'supernatural powers' into the context of the dream.
- 2) This question ('explore the treatment of obsession as a theme in the gothic tradition') coincided well with the texts studied in Centres. There was a danger that less thoughtful candidates could simply list examples of obsession, of which there were many in texts by Austen, Bronte, Carter, Poe, Stoker and Shelley, and it took candidates of some ability to develop all the possibilities suggested by the instruction 'explore'.
- 3) Nearly all candidates, quite acceptably, chose to interpret 'the idea of heroes and heroism' to include female characters, though in some cases it was clear that this occurred because of a misreading of 'heroism' for 'heroines'. The question led to some interesting studies of Frankenstein and his creation, and of any number of the principal characters from *Dracula*. The discriminating factor was whether the candidate was able to develop a thesis on the status of heroism in the genre or whether the essay developed into a catalogue of heroic actions.

### **The Industrial Novel**

- 1) Many candidates were aware of the context of the passage from *Nice Work* by David Lodge, as they had studied the novel as a whole. This led to both good and poor responses. Better candidates used the passage well to consider the ironies, the descriptions of machinery, the respective positions of both modern and Victorian employers and workers, and the idea of needing, or even liking work. Weaker candidates were tempted to assert too much about the situation in the novel without committing time to detailed study of the language in the passage.

- 2) Although there was a tendency to discuss only the two contrasts suggested by this question ('wealth and poverty, city and country') candidates who chose it found plenty of material in Dickens, Lodge and Gaskell. Answers which did not succeed so well were those where the words 'How effectively...?' were ignored.
- 3) This was a challenging question (the presentation of the reality of working class lives by middle-class writers) which produced some very good answers from the limited number of candidates who attempted it. It revealed to what extent some conscientious candidates have researched the contexts of their texts and led to some cogent and disciplined arguments.

### **Satire**

- 1) The two poems by Sassoon and MacDiarmid provoked some passionate answers. As with all the questions on this topic, these texts tended to produce the very best and the very worst answers. Weaker candidates found difficulty in writing about such aspects as rhetorical irony when the attitude or the tone of the speaker is the opposite of what is expressed and candidates from some Centres clearly do not have the basic vocabulary (such as 'ridicule', 'parody', 'scorn', 'mock', 'censure', etc) required for this topic. There were also candidates who took the attitudes expressed by the 'voices' in the poems at face value, and many who assumed that the second poem must be an anti-war poem. At the opposite end of the spectrum were candidates who relished detailed analysis of both what the poets were conveying and how they manipulated it.
- 2) ('Compare and contrast different approaches to satire...') This was by far the more popular of the two questions and candidates found opportunities to compare irony, parody, incongruous juxtaposition, hyperbole, sarcasm, humour and bathos as different approaches. Teachers would be well advised to warn weaker candidates not to offer unadulterated prepared answers for questions such as these, but to make sure that they include responses to invitations to 'compare and contrast' or to answer specific probing such as 'have these .... been equally successful?'
- 3) Very few answered this question and those who did either failed to understand the requirement or became highly effectively engaged in their responses.

### **Travel Writing**

- 1) Fewer Centres had subscribed to this topic than in the past, but those whose candidates did answer had taught a refreshingly wide variety of texts. Most candidates coped very well with the blend of journalism and more expansive narrative in the passage from the travel diary of Graham Greene. Many were able to tackle the significance of the war context, Greene's perspective as a novelist, his use of metaphor, and his choice of detail. Those who felt there had to be techniques similar to those of other writers they had studied were

sometimes tempted to over-interpret parts of the passage, especially the inclusion of a female character.

- 2) ('Explore the distinctive approaches to narrative....') Weak candidates who attempted this question were hampered by their assumption that 'narrative' meant 'literature', which led to some rather general answers. As a whole, candidates were tempted to be descriptive rather than engaging with complex issues. The best answers were those which analysed either the use of humour or the revelation/development of character in some detail.
- 3) When asked to 'compare and contrast the ways in which writers...describe and reflect upon their own emotions', weaker candidates were only able to list passages that fitted the list of possibilities suggested. Nevertheless, it was not uncommon to find candidates who had been really excited by the travel literature that they had read and this question gave them scope to explore in depth some of the issues that lay behind their enjoyment.

### **Post-Colonial Literature**

- 1) This poem ('The Australian Dream' by David Campbell) stimulated some candidates to write with great perception but it also served to overwhelm others to the point where they could not understand the issues at all in some cases and did not even recognise the humour. Strong candidates showed a genuine enjoyment and were able to analyse the use of language for political purposes.
- 2) Candidates had a clear idea of what they understood by the term 'post-colonial' and were able to explain how the text they had studied were able to help them develop their definitions.
- 3) This question about the ways writers have presented key themes in post-colonial literature did expose less able candidates to the dangers of setting down an already prepared essay, and it would be wise for teachers to remind candidates to concentrate on the presentation of themes rather than on sociological, historical or political aspects.

**9000/5, 4485 – Open Texts**

**General Comments**

This summer's paper was felt by Examiners to have offered candidates a wide range of opportunities for productive engagement with the texts. Though a wide range of standards of response was seen, most of the work was sound and well informed with very few candidates seriously handicapped by lack of familiarity with the texts or by lack of understanding. Most scripts contained the correct number of substantial answers, but a small but significant group of candidates failed to offer a full final answer, perhaps due to a lack of timed writing practice.

Examiners saw some thoughtful and informed writing about poetry, but answers on this genre continued to give concern, as in previous examination sessions. All too many candidates still see biography and generalisation as an adequate response at Advanced level. In particular, writing on the poetry of Yeats has not generally improved, with candidates continuing to show an inability to discriminate between biographical material and relevant analysis.

**Comments on Individual Questions**

**1) Alan Ayckbourn: *The Norman Conquests***

The first option (1(a), on Tom) proved very popular. Candidates were given the opportunity to comment on characterisation and comic presentation. Weaker answers often listed characteristics and only glanced at comic presentation. Such answers often dwelt in generalised terms on Tom's lack of communication or social skills. Many candidates were able to show how the audience's responses to Tom were conditioned by what had happened before, and others were detailed in their comments on the ways in which the comedy of misunderstanding arose. Better answers made useful links across the plays, and showed awareness of the types of humour in this scene, from Tom's slowness, through dramatic irony, to visual humour.

Less secure answers dealt with question 1(b), on Norman's relationships with the women in the plays, as if the play was a tragedy, or claimed it was a comedy while dealing with it as if it were serious. Some wrote a general essay on Norman. Focus on the progress of the scenes was sometimes lacking. If the passage was not dealt with in order, it became difficult to comment on the way the comedy develops. Good answers showed how the feelings between Norman and the women developed, were confident in analysing the details of Norman's attempts at seduction, and were particularly good when they showed how he appealed to Sarah. Perceptive answers sometimes showed how both Annie and Ruth puncture Norman in this scene.

2) Charlotte Brontë: *Villette*

The first question, on Chapter 19 'The Cleopatra', was generally tackled well, with the pictures and their implications for women forming the focus. Some strong answers analysed the language, and associated the various representations of women with other women in the novel. The sexually repressive source of M. Paul's agitation was not often commented on. Answers to question (b), on Madame Beck, were often hampered by the unwillingness of candidates to clearly identify three episodes. Those who did use well-chosen extracts often wrote with confidence and understanding about Lucy's perspective of her employer.

3) Samuel Taylor Coleridge: *Selected Poems*

Answers on Coleridge were often enthusiastic, but the application of preconceived ideas formed a barrier to close and sensitive reading of the poems themselves. As in the past in answers on Shelley, candidates were reluctant to offer sound and thoughtful readings of entire poems, instead offering general essays, loosely illustrated with quotations from three poems, or short and inadequate summaries of the chosen poems, with no attempt to frame a finished argument. The feelings of anxiety or indeed terror, which lie behind many poems, attracted no comment. (b), on *Kubla Khan*, only rarely gave any sense of the poem as a whole, or as a fragment, with preconceived lists of image interpretations dominating. Loosely summary approaches were common, with very few candidates developing a reading or interpretation of the poem. Links made were in general tentative or undeveloped.

4) Emily Dickinson: *Selected Poems*

Examiners saw a very wide range of qualities of response to the two questions on Emily Dickinson's verse. At best there were some outstanding responses from well-informed, lively candidates. Candidates tended to stick to poems where meaning is more immediately accessible, but many answers were alert to the subtlety and ambiguity of the verse. The great majority of candidates chose question (a) on nature: unfortunately many of the less confident answers were blandly illustrative, not seeking to develop any overall argument from the observations made. A few candidates chose poems which were very different, and gained much from writing appreciatively about the range of different techniques employed by the poet. There were fewer answers to (b), but again sensitivity and a willingness to explore contrasts were the hallmarks of the best answers.

5) Thomas Hardy: *The Mayor of Casterbridge*

(a) Better essays were able to show how the details of the Arena related to the incident and its place in the novel. Those who developed their answer through analysis in detail picked up the stylistic as well as the thematic structures of the novel evident in the chapter. Many answers were able to show what was going on beneath the dialogue between Henchard and Susan, focussing on Henchard's delusions and Susan's needs. Some answers moralised about true love and honesty, and did not seem to have appreciated the destructive force of public opinion: others were sidetracked into a 'heritage' or 'guide-book' approach. Some answers did not appreciate the importance of the setting, or produced general essays on Henchard, vaguely attached to the passage. In answering (b), better essays focussed on the detail of Chapter 44 and produced an account which dealt with the passage's significance. Though Examiners were aware that the publication in the Penguin edition of an earlier text may have created a problem, no evidence of difficulties caused by textual variations came to light.

6) David Hare: *Racing Demon*

Many candidates found the Church of England background to this play difficult to understand, and offered half-understood information as a substitute for interpretation, particularly in response to (a).

(a) Weaker answers gave a loose summary of the content of the last two scenes, with equally loose connections to the rest of the text. Better answers were able to see how the characters interacted in these two scenes and how the closing speeches reflected their outlooks and provided a successful conclusion. Many candidates did not address the 'successful' aspect of the question, or misunderstood it to mean the success of individual characters. These candidates tended to imply that they thought that Tony was really the hero of the play, that Lionel was a loser who neglected his wife, and that Frances had let Tony down. Some answers were not focussed on the scenes. No-one commented on the dramatic device of the shift to three voices, but confident candidates were able to demonstrate how the three characters reiterate their perspectives, Frances emerging as the strongest voice. In 6(b), cautious answers had a lot to say about the significance of the scene, little about dramatic presentation. There were, however, many good answers, noting Frances' position as an insider and outsider with relation to the church and the parish team, which allows her a particular perspective. Perceptive candidates observed how she is used to draw out other characters as they respond to her – illustrated here by Heather and Lionel.



7 Kazuo Ishiguro: *The Remains of the Day*

(a) Examiners were disappointed by the failure of many candidates to identify specific episodes, allowing the answer to become a vague general character study. Too many in answering this question tended to produce essays on Stevens, poorly adapted to mention Farraday. Those who did identify clear extracts were able to show contrasts with Lord Darlington, to look at Farraday's language and Stevens' response to it, and to discuss American pride at acquiring parts of British history. Some successful answers were able to comment not only on his language but on the way he represented, in however genial a way, forces of American cultural imperialism. The most successful answers often showed how Farraday's role acts as a catalyst for Stevens' self-discovery. (b) This question tended to be done well, and the passage is indeed central to the novel and its concerns. Good candidates adopted an analytical approach, pointing out the metaphorical nature of the landscape, Stevens' search for the security of a large house, Stevens' observations about the butler's language and dress, his probing of Stevens' employment, and Stevens' interest in the state of the house. They were able to indicate the reader's response at this stage in the novel, when Darlington's role is not yet fully revealed. Less confident candidates produced a general Stevens essay, tacked on to the passage, which was sometimes scarcely dealt with, or jumped over in a very disorganised way. Some candidates still think that the novel is about being a good butler, and blamed Stevens for having problems with the car, or simply for snobbery. This did not help them to see the complexities of passage and character.

8) Harold Pinter: *The Homecoming*

(a) Examiners were surprised by the prevalence of a crudely framed view of the play, which put briefly is 'women are either mothers or whores, and Pinter has no respect for them. Sometimes they are both, which is worse and shocking. But this is an illustration of what London working class life was like in the 1950's, when women had no chance to be anything else'. Such answers, which mixed up the attitudes of Max and Lenny with assumed attitudes of Pinter, and called the play 'disrespectful to women' were depressingly common. Some candidates did not even see how this play involved the representation of women, and commented on the male language, focussing the answer on Max and Lenny, so passages were not clearly identified. Others moralised, and failed to see the power which Ruth has gained by the end of the play. Better answers focussed clearly on two passages, and showed by close analysis of what is said and not said how Ruth and Jessie emerge. They showed how the men spoke of women disrespectfully, insulting Ruth and swapping violent anecdotes about sexual and physical abuse of women, while attempting to intimidate her into providing for their needs. They then noted the surprise as Ruth employs the same weapon of intimidation, sexuality, to take control by the end of the play. In answering (b) uncertain candidates, and a few more confident ones, could not resist the temptation to explain away the action – Max is schizophrenic. Some merely classified dramatic effects, jumped all over the passage and

missed out the violence in the stage directions. Better answers were explicit about the audience's response as the scene progressed, and were able to analyse and accept the fact that there may be no explanation for what is happening, and that dramatic impact is the source of meaning here. Some had the confidence to show the audience's reactions as being between disturbance and laughter.

9) William Butler Yeats: *Selected Poems*

(a) One or two candidates were able to offer interesting and sustained analyses of *September 1916* and other poems, considering poetic effects, and discussing poetic treatment. Others wrote illustrated history lessons, or general accounts of what were assumed to be Yeats's opinions about politics, illustrated with a few quotations. Some candidates were clearly much better informed about Irish politics than about Irish poetry. One tactic was to tag on allegorical interpretations to poems – *Leda and the Swan* for example – and produce reductive interpretations – the poem was about Ireland being raped by England. Such approaches need to be handled with care, and argued with sensitivity. Candidates who were able to answer the question with subtlety, demonstrating Yeats's poetic treatment of politics, did indeed exist – but they were very rare. (b) was a less popular option, and here again few developed readings of the verse were offered. The poem was more generally used as a springboard for catalogues of links with other poems, at the expense of a proper discussion of the set poem itself. Technique was rarely dealt with.

### 9000/6 – Coursework

As in 1999, it is a real pleasure to report that the work seen by Moderators in this syllabus was overwhelmingly good; the vast majority of Centres were entirely efficient in their administration, professional and meticulous in their assessments, and candidates demonstrated a confidence and skill in their writing which made the moderation exercise almost invariably a delight rather than a task. My first comment must therefore be to offer sincere and warm thanks, and indeed congratulations, to all those teachers and candidates who worked so well and so hard to produce so many excellent and enjoyable folders. There is a great wealth of talent in Centres, and Moderators have more than once expressed their feeling of privilege at being able to share so much of this; at perhaps the lowest level was this comment: *'All the work I have seen this year was, at the least, competent, usually very proficient and often excellent'*, and at the highest: *'The best work was, as ever, enviably impressive'* and *'As usual, I was astonished at some of the fresh personal response which I read.'* There were quibbles and grumbles from all Moderators, but these were usually on relatively trivial matters, or directed at no more than one or two weaker folders or groups of folders; this Report will touch on such comments, but I do want to emphasise above all else the huge sense of success that this syllabus has produced once again; there can be no doubt at all that, whatever approach is taken by Centres when preparing for Coursework, it shows candidates almost without exception at their very best and that that best is often quite startlingly good.

Centres do of course vary in how they use the syllabus. Virtually all expect candidates to submit simply the minimum of two essays on two texts, and in general this is probably the wisest course; to write much less than 2500 words in each essay (the maximum permitted for a complete folder is 5000) is likely to lead to some degree of sketchiness, and to deal satisfactorily with often quite demanding material in less than this length can be hard, if not impossible. To use more than two texts is of course entirely legitimate, and in many cases this is done with great competence, but it is often wiser to focus upon just one in each essay, even if a second or third are used as comparative material. A few candidates will use the same two texts in both essays, but while this is again perfectly acceptable it can run the risk of becoming repetitive – if the two essays are written some time apart, candidates may quite unintentionally use the same quotations and even ideas in both, inevitably reducing their combined effect. It is not the job of this Report to be prescriptive, but it is perhaps right that it should simply note the feeling of Moderators that *in general* the best folders use just two main texts.

Similarly, there are great differences in the selection of texts, with some candidates using one or sometimes two which they are studying for other Papers, while others will use two or more which are, as it were, free-standing. Neither approach is necessarily 'better' than the other, and a great deal will depend upon the kind of task which candidates tackle on their chosen texts; what is, however, worth bearing in mind is that Coursework, by its very nature, must allow and should encourage an approach different from that required by a timed examination question, and that candidates who are not given this freedom can be disadvantaged – teachers will of course be in the very best position to know how each candidate

will react to a particular text and task, and it is certainly none of the Moderators' business to interfere or influence this judgement, but it is, I think, important that it is borne in mind when preparing for the course. Where a candidate has the confidence, combined with the academic ability, to work independently on a text – with of course the appropriate support from his/her teachers – the work which results is very likely to be among the best; where every candidate in a Centre works on the same texts, and sometimes on exactly the same titles, then there will inevitably be a sameness about each essay and folder, marks will very probably be bunched, and differentiation will only be possible by assessing how well each has dealt with the shared material and ideas. One Moderator puts this view very strongly: *'Some Centres seem to straitjacket candidates by providing a too-evident and mechanical structure, often involving contextual and biographical material; with such Centres differentiation becomes difficult as all candidates perform similarly, distinguished only by the quality of their expression.'*

Brief reference has been made above to the kind of task that is set, and as ever this is worth a comment, although generally speaking Centres are well aware now of the sort of approach and wording which are likely to encourage the most fruitful response. As ever, the most helpful essay titles are those which require candidates to look beyond the 'What?' of a text, and to explore at least something of the 'How?' – how, and with what effects upon a reader/audience, the writer has produced his/her effects. At its most straightforward, rather than a title which says simply 'Write a character study of Gatsby', one which says something like 'How does Fitzgerald portray the character of Gatsby?' is more likely to lead to an exploration of language, imagery and indeed the writer's use of other characters and of narrative structure, and thus to a more complex and rewarding study of the novel. Centres should, of course, submit sample texts and titles to OCR well in advance of starting the course – to do so is in fact a compulsory part of the syllabus; many do so, and thus have the opportunity of discussing and perhaps even changing their ideas – those who do not will not necessarily set poor titles, but they do perhaps increase the risk of doing so, or at least of having a Moderator comment unfavourably about what they have set! One Moderator's report contains an interesting paragraph on this matter, with a thought-provoking final sentence; it is worth quoting in full:

*'It has been stressed before, but bears repeating, that essay titles are of crucial importance. For candidates to be able to choose which aspect of a text to treat is clearly beneficial, but guidance in framing the question is vital for them. In many essays, the writers were deeply engaged with the subject matter of the books they had read, but they wrote what were, in effect, summaries of the highlights of the story. Questions which begin 'Compare the roles of A and B....' are a virtual invitation to narrative, whilst 'Explore the theme of ...' leads to candidates giving a series of loosely related impressions of the book. They do not know how to explore or what line of argument to pursue. As in previous years, there were also questions which expressed an incontrovertible and self-evident truth about a book and invited the candidate to comment. Logical argument in response to this is impossible; illustration is*

*all that can be offered. 'Responding to the challenge of the question' depends upon there being some challenge in the question.*

The best essays are generally those where a candidate's responses are genuinely personal and individual; this is not a reference to plagiarism, which was again almost non-existent, but to the fact that where a Centre has taught a whole group together in preparation for a particular essay title there is likely to be a set of formulaic and often over-simplified thoughts, which are often very clearly not those of the individual candidate. The Grade Criteria for Grades A, B, C and D all require that a candidate shows a **personal response** to a text, and even for N there must be **'a view of the work studied'**; this is inevitably difficult, or often entirely impossible, where the essay is the outcome of a group discussion, or the result of a given framework or template.

Mention of the Grade Criteria leads to the subject of folder assessment: Centres generally show a considerable and well-justified confidence in this, and Moderators all report this year that they have made relatively few significant scaling recommendations. Most marks are based upon close and detailed reading of candidates' work, and amply supported for the Moderator by full and often very helpful annotation. As in previous years there were exceptions – which will be noted later – but increasing numbers of Centres have written helpfully and supportively alongside their candidates' work, often engaging in what is clearly a very valuable dialogue with them; such annotation is important and useful for at least two reasons – it suggests strongly that the work being seen is indeed the first marked product, rather than a 'fair copy' (this is entirely forbidden by the syllabus, of course), and equally importantly it acts as a most helpful guide to the Moderator as to exactly how and why a mark has been awarded. Annotation should **not** be addressed to the Moderator; the place for this is the front cover-sheet, which does need to show how and where the folder has addressed the Grade Criteria – though merely listing these is not in fact particularly useful unless more exact reference is made to where they can be seen within the candidate's work. It would be far too simplistic to say that a well-annotated folder is more likely to be fairly marked than one which is merely ticked, but Moderators do all suggest that there is some kind of correlation.

The question of 'fair copies' should be perhaps mentioned again, particularly as it was apparent that some Centres allow and perhaps even encourage candidates to submit these. The syllabus is quite clear and emphatic about this: **'Once an essay has been marked it may *not* be rewritten'** (page 11) and **'.... once an essay is written on by the teacher it may not be rewritten by the candidate'** (page 13). It is an essential part of the Coursework process that candidates will want – and need – to discuss work with a teacher, and to show him/her what is being drafted; this is wholly acceptable, and indeed to be encouraged, but once the point is reached where an essay is complete, and the candidate wants the teacher to make an assessment, or to make final written comments on it, then the process must stop and the essay must not be amended any further. Similarly, the syllabus says that **'anything which savours of marking, correcting or editing of draft material by the teacher moves into the realm of improper practice'** (page 11). It is of course entirely

legitimate at this stage for a candidate to decide to abandon the essay and to write another one, on a different title of course; this is not re-drafting.

Plagiarism was thankfully not a concern this year; Centres have clearly been alert to possible breaches of this syllabus ruling, and have made candidates very aware of the need to acknowledge all secondary material. To do this is very simple – a footnote or end-of-essay note, with details of the text and author, with page number(s), is all that is required – but still too few candidates do so properly, even where they have used quotation marks; Centres should, please, be more rigorous in this demand. Conversely, there is no need for a laborious acknowledgement of every single quotation from the actual text being studied; some candidates do this, and while it shows an admirable honesty and even scholarship, it is not necessary. A bibliography is a syllabus requirement, but unless there is proper reference and acknowledgement in the body of the essay a list of books consulted or used is of little value.

Where Centres have suspicions about authenticity – or worse still where they are certain that some part(s) of a candidate's work is not authentic – there is only one solution; **this is, emphatically, the Centre's responsibility, not the Moderator's.** If the Moderator receives a folder with a comment on it to the effect that there is dubious material in it, or if the Centre asks for the Moderator's advice, there can be only one reaction (unless of course the candidate is to be reported to OCR as having indulged in improper practice, a situation whose seriousness cannot be over-emphasised) – the Moderator will return the folder to the Centre; the Centre will be asked either to remove the doubtful essay, and thus immediately halve the candidate's mark, or to replace it within a matter of days with an essay which can be confidently authenticated. No other action is admissible; the Moderator will not be in any position to decide whether the work is, or is not, authentic. The Moderator does not know the candidate, nor the conditions under which the work has been produced; the Centre alone has that knowledge and must accept that responsibility. When the candidate's teacher/teachers sign the cover-sheet, and when they sign the OCR mark-sheet, they are in effect saying that to the best of their knowledge the work is that of the candidate, and they cannot both sign it and question it. It should of course be made clear at this point that the kind of non-authenticity which is in question here is the deliberate and conscious copying (or near-copying) of somebody else's work, **with the clear intention of cheating**; the 'innocent' misuse of secondary material, whether it be of study-guides or of class/teacher notes, is at a different level, probably indicative of a candidate's inability to find personal response, or an inability to frame such ideas as s/he may have – while always to be 'penalised' by the Centre in its assessment it is not the same as wholly improper and malicious plagiarism.

Cover-sheets have been mentioned more than once, and deserve a fuller discussion here. Most Centres use copies of the sheet printed at the back of the syllabus booklet (page 26), but many use their own designs. provided that at least the same information is presented, the format does not matter; what is important, though, is that there is a cover-sheet, clearly labelling the candidate's name, Centre name, Centre number, a grade and a percentage mark, and the signature of at least two

teachers, as evidence of internal moderation (where the Centre is very small, one signature may be all that is possible, but even here a second Assessor is always most helpful to everybody involved). There is no longer a requirement for candidates to sign – teachers' signatures, as explained above, will cover authenticity; in submitting work to the Centre the candidate is accepting an understanding of the syllabus regulations, and of the need for all work to be written in compliance with them – though many Centres do still ask candidates to sign, and there is nothing lost in this.

Similarly, there is no longer a requirement for the word-length of a folder to be stated, but the rulings still apply, and must be accepted; a folder which exceeds the maximum limit (5000 words plus quotations) **must not be submitted** – if it is, the Moderator may return it to the Centre for editing, again with a few days only. Where a candidate's work does fall outside the 3000-5000 limit, it will be assumed that the mark awarded has taken into account its inevitable thinness or prolixity, and the Moderator may have to recommend appropriate scaling if this does not seem to have been the case. For example, a folder of less than 1500 words can surely never be expected to achieve a pass-grade, unless it is quite exceptionally concise and focused, and it is probably very unlikely that any folder below 3000 words (inclusive of quotations) should be awarded more than a very low mark; it is, after all, relatively easy for a candidate to add to a thin folder before it is submitted for assessment. Similarly, although admittedly less easy, a folder which exceeds 5000 words should be edited by the candidate before it is marked – not, it must be emphasised, after it has been marked, as this will infringe the regulation discussed above about fair copies; essays which contain paragraphs that are lightly crossed out or annotated with the words 'Not to be read by the Moderator' will, I fear, be read as a whole and as first written.

A curious perennial puzzle is the candidate who does include a word-count, but one which is visibly and sometimes absurdly inaccurate; one can (just) understand a candidate who says that s/he has written 5000 words when the folder actually contains 5800, but what is a Moderator (or more pertinently a teacher!) to make of the one who claims on the cover-sheet to have written 5400, but whose separate essays have word-counts written on them which in reality total just 2900? Perhaps least helpful of all are those Centres which have obviously advised all their candidates to write exactly the same total on the front, regardless of the truth – especially odd are the Centres all of whose totals are 'approx 6000 words'. Better, surely, to be honest than openly dishonest, and simultaneously incorrect?

A plea – repeated from earlier years – has come from several Moderators, that Centres should use the '**plain limp folder**' which the syllabus requires. Most Centres do abide by this requirement, at least in some degree, but there are a few which appear to delight in making their candidates' work as inaccessible as possible, using various kinds of complex and sophisticated files or folders; Moderators are warm and caring people, but even their inexhaustible love for the job and for 'their' candidates can wear a little thin when they have to extricate work painfully (often literally so) from a range of plastic and/or metallic devices before an after reading

the essays. And it would surely be cheaper for Centres to post work if it was not so heavily bound?

A few minor stylistic and spelling gripes: can candidates (and, it seems, some teachers too) be reminded that the words 'quote' and 'quotation' are not interchangeable? And to say that, for example, 'the author quotes on page 34....', unless he/she actually *is* quoting, is not just a careless error, but a serious misuse and misunderstanding. Conventions for textual reference should be adhered to as well; to say that something happens 'on page 57' is not sufficient, especially if the text is a selection of poems. Candidates, especially those who have studied the poem, should be aware that T S Elliot (frequently *sic*) did not write a poem called *The Wasteland*. At Advanced Level, too, candidates should be starting to avoid words such as 'a lot' (*sic*), 'incredibly', 'fantastically', 'grabs our attention', 'gets across the idea' and so on; one Moderator, with humour but exasperation, makes this comment towards the end of her report – 'I had more than one candidate who wrote *"If you read the book carefully you will see that....."* – careful reading is surely the basis of this syllabus! This kind of chat is not what is meant by 'personal response'.'

The same Moderator does, however, conclude with the following words; I should like this Report to do the same – as was said at the start, there was an overwhelming amount of good work, and much that was truly excellent, from many, many Centres:

*'Enough of this churlishness! These minor flaws grate only because most candidates write accurately, fluently and often eloquently, with many instances of sophisticated scholarship. The high standard of literary discussion is a tribute to their teachers who have fostered such attentive and searching responses, and their own energy and enthusiasm.'*



## 9000/7 – Comment and Appreciation

### General Comments

In many respects this was perhaps the most pleasing year of the Paper so far, with Examiners reporting a very large number of good scripts, and almost no significantly poor ones; candidates generally demonstrated a considerably greater awareness than in previous years of how to approach the questions set, and there was much evidence of the closely detailed critical discussion which is looked for, as well as the wider overall knowledge and understanding of texts, which is of course equally required but must at least to some degree be taken for granted.

As usual, every question on the Paper opened with a clear instruction to candidates to write a close and critical commentary on a given extract or poem; the wording was slightly different in some cases, but there could be no doubt as to what was expected: *'Write a critical appreciation ....', 'Beginning with a critical discussion.....', 'Write a critical commentary....', 'Beginning with a close examination .....*'. Every question made it abundantly clear that, as always in this Paper, the starting-point must be a closely analytical critical commentary and/or discussion, preferably though not necessarily formal in content and structure; this was then required, again as always, to be related in some given way to the remainder of the text, but to remain the central focus of the answer. Previous Reports have suggested that an approximate 60-40/70-30 split might be appropriate, but whatever the arithmetic the commentary must come first and foremost – the Paper is after all called **Comment and Appreciation**.

In past years it has not always been the case that candidates have adopted this approach, and there were again some who appeared to ignore the question, preferring instead to write – often at length, and often with great perception and sophistication – about the text as a whole, sometimes perhaps with a brief nod towards the extract, but with the clear intention of saying what they wanted to say about it rather than showing an ability to write in close critical detail on a specific and 'unprepared' piece. It cannot be too strongly emphasised that the primary purpose of this Paper, to deliberately balance the much broader and more 'leisurely' 9000/6 Coursework, is to test the ability to write a critical commentary, and unless this is done fully and properly candidates cannot expect to achieve high marks.

Happily, as was said above, many more Centres and candidates were clearly aware of this than has been the case in previous years, and there were some quite excellent commentaries as a result. The most confident candidates often used the extract as a springboard, discussing other relevant and appropriate parts of the whole text as they went along; others wrote the commentary first, and only secondly moved outwards. Neither approach is necessarily better – though it has to be said that the second is in fact more exactly doing what the questions ask; provided that close, incisive, detailed and formal critical discussion of the set extract is undertaken then the essay is likely to be at least competent, and hopefully better than just that.

As the comments which follow show, a somewhat wider range of texts was used this year, which was very pleasing for Examiners; *The Great Gatsby* did again dominate, but not quite so hugely as in previous years, and every text was studied by at least a few Centres, in most cases by a good number. It is difficult to say – and perhaps unhelpful anyway – which text or which genre produced the best work, but it is worth making a few remarks at this point about drama and poetry, both of which have regularly produced their own peculiar concerns.

Previous Reports have commented upon the need to treat drama as theatre, whether actual or imagined, and not just as a different kind of prose, and it was evident that Centres this year had taken this very much on board: candidates writing about *The Crucible*, *The Playboy of the Western World* and *Educating Rita* almost invariably made good use of such things as stage directions (Miller's, of course, being especially detailed and specific), stage properties (Frank's mug and swivel-chair were particularly strong examples here), characters' movements (Rita's entrance, Elizabeth and Abigail's contrasting body-language), and the actual rhythm of both language (Pegeen and Christy) and scene development (Miller's use of crescendo and climax); there was a much greater confidence in the writing on drama this year. No mention has been made of *Murder in the Cathedral* for two reasons: it is a different kind of play, and sadly very few candidates actually tackled it.

Work on poetry was a little more worrying in one crucial respect: many candidates wrote about either *War Photographer* or *The Apparition* – a few, but unfortunately only a very few, worked on Wordsworth's *Ode* – and there were plenty of intelligent, thoughtful discussions about the contents and ideas of each poem, combined as appropriate with thoughts on how or how not these were characteristic of Duffy's or Donne's writing more generally. No complaints yet, but ..... Almost without exception, little or usually nothing at all was made of the fact that these were *poems*, not just prose randomly chopped up into little bits. The words *rhythm*, *rhyme*, *enjambement*, *iambic*, *stanza*, *couplet* were certainly used (often spelt with what can only be called distressing abandon), but almost never with any real suggestion that the candidates actually *understood what their purpose was*; almost no candidate anywhere was able to discuss with either confidence or apparent knowledge how the structure, the formality, the tightness of control, of the poem in hand was able in some way to add to its impact upon the reader. There were, for example, candidates who stated with absolute conviction that Duffy's poem had no rhyme, or that Donne was writing free verse; the fact that extracts from both poems were sometimes written with no concern whatsoever for the poets' own line-divisions – and indeed that many candidates copied out several lines with no divisions at all, exactly as if they were prose pieces – suggests strongly that they did not understand (had not been taught?) poetry as a unique literary form, instead of just strangely set-out prose (or *pro's*, as some spelt it). It is surely not expecting too much at Advanced Level that candidates should know at least something of how – but above all *why* – a poem is written?

This part of the Report should not, however, end on such a negative note; there was a great deal which was good – perceptive, tightly-focused, tightly-argued, abundantly illustrated, very knowledgeable; there had very clearly been a great deal of quite excellent work by both teachers and candidates, and reading their scripts gave Examiners much entirely genuine pleasure.

### **Comments on Individual Questions**

#### **1) Four Women Poets – War Photographer**

With the provisos already noted about work on poetry, this question was done reasonably well, though not often excellently; candidates in general failed to do what the question required – to ‘write a critical appreciation’ of the poem – and however good or relevant their subsequent discussion might be they had immediately and seriously damaged their chances of a high mark. Many attempted to do so, but were quickly distracted in a number of ways, either extraneous to the poem itself (the poet’s Catholic upbringing, her meetings with the photographer Don McCullin, for example), or by comparisons with other poems by Duffy which failed properly and consistently to return to *War Photographer* (such comparisons were frequent, wide-ranging and often very sound in their awareness of the poet’s stance and style); very few indeed made more than token note of the poem’s structure, beyond simply noting its stanzaic construction and the fact that each line was of approximately the same length as all the others. Some candidates did write a kind of running paraphrase, with thoughtful and often perceptive comments about some of Duffy’s images and ideas, but failed to link these to her very tight and formal technique – surely central to a poem whose half-spoken thoughts are so emotionally-charged? Some candidates made reference to Liz Lochhead and one or two of her poems, but clearly found difficulties in drawing many useful parallels or contrasts; the question’s phrasing – ‘If you wish, you may also compare .....’ was deliberately open, to allow any positive thoughts that might occur to candidates, but perhaps wisely most chose to focus upon Duffy alone.

Incidentally, a trivial but surely not insignificant point: the poem’s title does not include the word ‘*The*’ – one might have hoped that so many candidates, having studied the work for some months at least, would have noticed this?

#### **2) Captain Corelli’s Mandolin**

A relatively small number of candidates tackled this question – presumably a reflection simply of the length of the novel rather than of its difficulty; those who did answer the question almost always did so with confidence and indeed competence. It is of course a complex-looking novel, and the occasional critical comparison with Dickens perhaps reinforces this view, but its stories and characters are so appealing and so rich that it is surely not nearly so daunting as may be initially imagined. Almost without exception, candidates writing about this extract – the first of Pelagia’s letters to Mandras – were

able to see the deep sadness of the irony which a full reading of the novel gives, that the love and desolation which Pelagia thinks she feels here are in fact only too soon to be weakened and almost forgotten, both in her discovery of real love, with Captain Corelli, and in the horrific nature of Mandras' return in a state of shock and violence after the war. Unlike candidates writing about *War Photographer*, almost all here did write a full and critical discussion of the extract, noting its poignant contrasts – the romantic and near-mythical portrayal of Mandras as a folk-hero/god with his dolphins, and Pelagia's sentimental imaginings of a weeping sky reflecting her own tears, contrasting with her very down-to-earth anecdote of the goat (echoes of her similarly feet-on-the-ground father, of course), and the practicalities of socks, sweaters and kerosene. Somewhere between 5% and 8% of all candidates wrote an essay on this extract; Examiners would have liked more, as they were in general so very successful.

3) **The Woman in White**

There were – sadly – too few answers on this text to make general comments useful.

4) **Metaphysical Poetry – The Apparition**

Everything that has already been said about poetry must apply to this question, too; some candidates did address what was required – '*Write a critical commentary....*' – but again far more did not; perhaps because John Donne is a 'traditional' poet, a member for many years of the Great Set Books Club, many candidates felt it necessary to spend time writing about Metaphysical Poetry and its characteristics, or sometimes more parochially just about Donne and his concerns, rather than looking at this particular poem in the detail required. It is of course a short poem, but an intensely packed one, with more than enough to occupy an hour of an examination; perhaps even more than the poem by Duffy in Question 1, the contrast between the vehement, even vicious (unless it is entirely *humorous*?) emotions, and the very strict and carefully-wrought structure of the poem is surely so central to its effect that it cannot be ignored? Almost all candidates were able to pick out and discuss some of its images – 'fain'd vestall', 'thy sicke taper', 'poor Aspen wretch' and 'a cold quicksilver sweat' were especially noted – and there was a good deal of thoroughly pertinent cross-reference with other poems, both secular and religious. Too often, though, candidates took what they saw to be an opportunity simply to write about Donne and his poetry, with some reference to *The Apparition*, instead of doing what they were asked by the question.

5) **Murder in the Cathedral**

There were – again sadly – too few answers on this text to make general comments useful.

6) **The Great Gatsby**

In previous years *The Great Gatsby* has been by far the most popular text; this year it was again the biggest choice, but not quite so overwhelmingly. Possibly for this reason – though no doubt there were many others – it also produced some of the very best answers and relatively few which were poor. As with *Captain Corelli's Mandolin*, candidates did on the whole centre their work on the required critical commentary, as well as making frequent and good use of the wider text. The question asked 'how Fitzgerald introduces the novel's themes and concerns', the last three words being deliberately open to interpretation and choice. Almost without exception – and entirely correctly – candidates began by discussing *Fitzgerald's presentation of Nick* as narrator; what was so pleasing was that this was indeed the focus; virtually every essay saw Nick as a created character, deliberately and carefully rendered ambiguous and unreliable by the author, and there was ample illustration of the irony of his 'unaffected scorn' for a man he also found 'gorgeous' (a word sensitively and thoughtfully discussed by many), and the ways in which this introduces the novel's concern with judgement and prejudice, rather than simply characterisation and/or narrative. The position and role of Nick, as both narrator and active participant, is of course central to Fitzgerald's novel and its themes, and no answer could avoid discussion of the apparently gentle, unassuming but at the same time self-mockingly sardonic way in which he is introduced in these paragraphs; there are, though, many other concerns which can be quite validly drawn from them – social status, wealth, morality, puritanism-versus-hedonism, blindness to truth/reality, romance, optimism, and of course the ever-present but often rather mechanically-approached 'American Dream', with its wealth/poverty contrasts, 'riotous excursions' and 'foul dust'. The ingenuity or perspicacity here of some candidates was fascinating, with the whole of the novel's theme summed up in the lines at the end of the passage ('it is what preyed on Gatsby.... the wake of his dreams'), which pre-echo the party-goers who 'preyed' on him, and the 'foul dust' of the Valley of Ashes and the wealthy who attended his parties while simply making use of him, and who finally caused his death 'floating' in his swimming pool, leaving a 'wake' behind him – which was also at times a funeral wake, the irony of which was that nobody attended it ....; the novel is exceptionally rich in its language and imagery, and very many candidates made excellent use of it.

7) **The Crucible**

This was the first of three questions on drama this year (as said above, *Murder in the Cathedral* was answered by only a few candidates, and is anyway a very special kind of drama), and it is pleasing to be able to report how well it was done by most; it was again among the most popular texts – though not as widely so as in past years – but far more answers saw it very clearly and explicitly as theatre than has often been the case. The extract is of course an unusually (melo)dramatic moment in the play, giving candidates a huge amount to talk about, and most did indeed find a great deal. Most were

well able to discuss Miller's customarily detailed and explicit stage directions, and to show exactly how these reflected what he was showing about both characters and situations – for example, the 'indignant slowness' with which Abigail moves at the start of the extract, suggestive not merely of her stubborn nature, but more significantly of how, in direct contrast with Elizabeth, she is able to manipulate and even control the court proceedings, a very visible and theatrical display of character and motive; similarly, most spotted the different body and verbal languages of Danforth and Elizabeth herself, combined of course with the dreadful irony of Elizabeth's position, in which to lie and to tell the truth are equally damning for her and her husband; and although the extract ends at the very moment before this stage direction, many also noted the symbolism of the closing door after Elizabeth has told the first lie of her life. Candidates were also well aware of the way in which each Act of the play moves from a quiet opening to a loud, even hysterical climax, and to show how this short extract echoes this movement. In addition, of course, the presentation of very emotionally-charged but very different characters, all in different ways caught helplessly (Abigail apart) by the growing tension in Salem, was well discussed. Thankfully only a few candidates allowed themselves to be distracted from the question into a comparison between the witch trials and the American Communist-hunters of the 1950's – this was of course wholly irrelevant to this question, even allowing for the fact that it is a trial, and it was good to see that most Centres had successfully conveyed the message that candidates were to answer the set question, and not simply say whatever they felt they wanted to say about they had learned.

8) **Beloved**

*Beloved* has in past years been something of a minority text, so it was both somewhat unexpected and pleasing to find how many answers there were this summer – similar in number to those on *The Crucible* or *Educating Rita*, in fact. It is not an easy text to manage, so it was again good to read so many successful answers on this pivotal extract, and again to find so many which were unarguably 'critical commentaries', as required. Perhaps it would be truer to say that most were paraphrases of the contents, but with very clear discussion of how Morrison achieves her effects and how these can be related to other parts of the novel. Certainly there were attempts to explore the language used, and to talk about the images in themselves, though most – and this is hardly surprising in such a densely interwoven novel – concentrated upon how Morrison uses these techniques to reveal character, situation and atmosphere as they are developed later in the text. For example, the repeated references to the baby-like appearance of the 'fully dressed woman' as indicative of her strange, ghost-like nature, or the even more ominous description of her neck and throat, like that of an infant but with disturbing suggestions of the appalling cuts which Sethe had inflicted upon it; similarly, the (re)birth images of water, of painful breathing and uncertainty about how to drink, were all seen for the echoes and resonances they have at this and other points in the novel. Mention was made about other matters, and often

with great validity – the fact that ‘the Negroes were hitching rides home *if they were lucky*’, with the awful implications in these words of racial inequality, the repetition of ‘124’ and the ominousness of this number throughout the novel, for example.

Some candidates, incidentally, also discussed the paragraph which the examination paper omitted (simply because the extract would otherwise have seemed far too long and daunting); this was wholly acceptable, but no essay was either rewarded or penalised for doing or not doing so.

9) **Educating Rita**

Another piece of drama, and again one which was tackled with considerably greater confidence and (often) theatrical awareness than in previous years; there were some very good answers to this question. The ‘critical commentary’ was generally addressed, though perhaps not with as much formality as might have been liked, though the great majority of candidates clearly saw how Russell presents his characters and their situation in staging and dramatic terms as well as simply literary ones. This scene is of course a crucial one in the play, overtly showing for the first time what has perhaps been inevitable and obvious for some scenes, that the relationship between Frank and Rita cannot be static and must change, probably for the worse (unless of course the play were to become just mawkishly sentimental); the question asked very specifically for discussion of how Russell has presented ‘the **changed** relationship’ – this word, rather than the possibly more anticipated ‘changing’, was quite deliberate, to encourage candidates to examine this scene closely and carefully, rather than to trace the plot of the play so far. In almost every case this worked, and few essays in fact wasted time telling the story, but did focus tightly upon how things had changed, and why; there was necessarily and rightly plenty of comparison with earlier scenes, but the concentration was upon Act Two Scene Five alone. And there is of course more than enough material here for a very full answer – the different, quieter way in which Rita makes her entrance, Frank’s open drinking, the fact that Rita takes the ‘control position’ in the swivel chair while Frank stands up, Frank’s new awareness of the outside world in the form of the radio, the increasing reversal in the kind of language used by the two characters, and most importantly of all the growing unease and finally anger (despair? frustration?) which leads Frank to shout at Rita, and to rip up his poems in what was frequently seen as a strikingly theatrical movement. Opinions varied as to exactly how each character should be portrayed, with Rita seen as sometimes secure and confident in her views, but sometimes as weakly and emptily reliant upon Trish’s own second-hand ideas (and Trish’s suicide attempt was often seen as symbolic here). Similarly, Frank’s reactions to Rita’s growing independence were variously described as anger, sadness, selfishness, sarcasm, hatred ..... the extract created a lot of quite powerful and striking personal responses from candidates, almost always well supported by detailed reference and/or quotation. All in all, this was a particularly well-answered question.

**10) The Playboy of the Western World**

There were rather fewer answers on this text than in past years, though they were on the whole done well, with greater concentration upon the extract and its theatrical impact than simply upon character and language. The question asked for discussion of Synge's presentation of the relationship between Pegeen and Christy, and candidates were well able to show how the beauty and poeticism of their dialogue in this scene is evidence of a genuine but inevitably doomed – because detached from all reality – love which has grown between them. The contrast between Christy's lyrical – even if perhaps self-conscious – speech and Pegeen's more down-to-earth and understandably sceptical responses was well seen, as was her slowly developing warmth as the scene progresses, only to be dramatically halted in her final speech, with the striking stage direction that she should speak '*with a qualm of dread*'. Very few candidates succumbed to the temptation to write simple character studies, and most were well able to trace the development of each of the two in relation to the other, making the point either explicitly or implicitly that without the other neither could have become what they nearly are at the end. The final words of the play were of course used, sometimes as evidence that their love was never anything more than self-indulgent pretence and fantasy, and that Pegeen's cry at the end is simply sentimental nonsense. Few answers were trivial, and few were irrelevant.

**11) Wordsworth – Ode: Intimations of Immortality**

There were not many answers to this question, and general comment would perhaps be unhelpful, though it perhaps should be said that very few seemed truly confident or at ease with this extract, or indeed with other poems from the selection.



## 9000 English Literature

These statistics are correct at the time of going to publication.

The number of candidates awarded each grade was as follows:

	A	B	C	D	E	N	U
Percentage in Grade	17.4	22.7	27.9	20.2	9.7	2.00	0.2
Cumulative Percentage in Grade	17.4	40.1	68.9	88.1	97.8	99.8	100

The total entry for the examination was 3085.

## Component Threshold Marks

Module	Max Mark	A	B	C	D	E	N	U
1 Paper 1	75	61	53	42	31	20	8	–
2 Paper 2	75	59	50	40	30	20	10	–
3 Paper 3	75	61	54	43	32	21	10	–
4 Paper 4	50	43	37	29	21	14	7	–
5 Paper 5	75	59	50	40	31	22	13	–
6 Coursework	100	76	64	52	40	28	16	–
7 Paper 7	25	22	17	13	10	7	4	–

	Max Mark	A	B	C	D	E	N	U
Overall Threshold Marks	300	230	207	182	157	132	107	N/A