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Report on the Units

June 2010

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2441 Drama Post – 1914

General Comments (including 2445)

Once again, Examiners were very impressed with the overall quality of the entry in this session and there was a strong feeling that candidates had benefitted from a great deal of thorough, sensitive and imaginative teaching. The proportion of candidates entered for the Foundation Tier papers has continued to shrink (from one in four of all 2441 candidates in May 2005 to substantially less than one in ten for this session) and although it was clear that Centres had made shrewd tiering decisions, there was a substantial minority of these Foundation Tier candidates who had been so well taught that they could have coped comfortably with the Higher Tier papers. Indecision about question choice or possibly a misunderstanding of the paper format led some candidates to conflate two questions to such an extent that it was often difficult to work out which option had been attempted. This was particularly noticeable in some answers to Question 11 (on Raleigh in *Journey's End*) or to Question 8 (on a selected member of the medical staff in *Whose Life is it Anyway?*) which relied heavily and sometimes exclusively on the material provided by the extracts printed for Questions 10 and 7 on those two texts. A smaller number of candidates made the mistake of answering extract questions based only on the lines of the extract which appeared on the same page as the question, but there were very few unfinished answers or rubric infringements or multiple answers as if the majority of Centres have ensured that their candidates were familiar with the well-established format of the Drama Units. Although a few candidates plunged into the detail of the extracts without conveying a clear understanding of the dramatic context or drifted away from the moment prescribed by the empathic questions, it was felt that the candidates' knowledge of their set play was almost universally sound and that the majority of extract-based answers displayed a good balance between scrutiny of the printed passage and wider perspectives. The terms of the question were consistently foregrounded, many candidates demonstrated great skill in selecting and using quotations and much of the writing communicated remarkable individuality, engagement and enjoyment. In fact the sophisticated understanding and originality of insight achieved by so many of these fifteen and sixteen year-old candidates in a forty-five minute exam continue to amaze and enlighten Examiners, many of whom have marked English Literature papers for over thirty years. Two Examiners reported that they were "moved to tears" (and certainly not of exasperation or frustration) by the thoughts of Osborne before the raid on enemy lines (in response to the empathic Question 12 on *Journey's End*), and others felt that Arthur Miller himself would have been proud of the reproductions of Willy Loman's voice (in response to the empathic Question 3 on *Death of a Salesman*).

Journey's End has remained by far the most popular post-1914 Drama text, closely followed by *Death of a Salesman* and *Whose Life is it Anyway?*, and *The Caretaker* continues to be taught and studied by a number of dedicated Pinter enthusiasts. *Romeo and Juliet* remains the most popular pre-1914 choice, followed by *Much Ado About Nothing*, with the non-Shakespearean options, Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People* and Wilde's *An Ideal Husband*, attracting very few takers this time round. The pattern of question choice varied significantly from Centre to Centre but remains fairly well established overall with the vast majority of candidates tackling the extract-based question, the empathic question providing the "marmite" option, enthusiastically and very successfully embraced by some Centres and completely avoided by others, and the middle discursive question remaining the least popular (although the opportunity to write about Raleigh and Mercutio proved attractive to many).

Finding an effective starting-point for their answer continues to provide a difficult challenge for some candidates and a huge amount of time was occasionally wasted in the production of an introductory paragraph which simply reworked the terms of the question without beginning to answer it or in providing unhelpful biographical details about the playwrights (like Sherriff's own wartime experiences or Pinter's East End upbringing in the 1930s) or detailing a meaty historical

background for the text (exploring the concept of the American Dream, or Great War propaganda or Shakespeare's theatre and audience at great length) as if addressing the social/historical/cultural contexts assessment objective which is not required for the Drama Units. Some candidates appeared to have been over-coached in the art of constructing an exam answer using plans which were almost as long as the answers themselves or scaffolding lists which were often so elaborate that they assumed lives of their own and obscured the nature of the question being tackled. A learned agenda for all extract-based questions such as "context, plot, setting, character, theme, lighting, stage directions, dialogue, language..." often encourages candidates to reserve a paragraph for each heading irrespective of the focus of the question and leads them away from the dramatic detail of a specific moment, into sweeping and repetitive comment. Time would be much better spent establishing the exact location of the extract in the play, clarifying which characters are onstage, what they know and what they are feeling at this point, and what the audience knows and is likely to be feeling as well. The stronger candidates were able to identify dramatic context immediately. Some examples from candidates of this were: that after a disastrous day Willy is near to breakdown in the Chop House washroom and is recalling a moment from about seventeen years before the main action of the play; or that the audience know that Ken will never get better and is to be transferred to a long-stay hospital for the rest of his life but Ken has not yet had this categorically confirmed (*Whose Life is it Anyway?*, Question 7); or that the audience know Stanhope has already resolved to take the unusual course of censoring Raleigh's letter because he is fearful of what may be revealed about how he has changed (*Journey's End*, Question 10); or that the Nurse and the audience know that Romeo has killed Tybalt and has been banished whereas the newlywed Juliet is blissfully unaware of this (*Romeo and Juliet*, Question 4, 2445). Such responses were particularly worthy of credit.

Similarly the starting-point for successful empathic answers has to be a return to the prescribed moment in the text to ascertain exactly what the character knows and has just experienced: Mr Hill, for instance, has enjoyed his dinner date with Clare Scott and hopes to see her again (and will surely be thinking of her as Clare and not "Dr Scott") and his conversation with her has convinced him to represent Ken Harrison so he may already be planning ahead to instruct a barrister (Peter Kershaw) because he knows that Dr Emerson is a formidable adversary determined to keep Ken in hospital under the Mental Health Act (*Whose Life is it Anyway?*, Question 9).

Successful candidates had clearly been encouraged to see their text as a play script, to visualise the action, to keep all the onstage characters in mind and to consider the impact on a theatre audience, and the benefits of watching or being involved in a live performance and of classroom-based drama activities like role-play, hot-seating and the presentation of key scenes, were strikingly evident in many answers. Strong responses to the drama of particular moments often declared themselves in a keen awareness of the contribution of all the onstage characters and even the significance of a particular character's silence: Osborne's presence throughout Stanhope's embarrassingly aggressive seizing of Raleigh's letter (*Journey's End*, Question 10) or Ken's exclusion from the medical conversations between Drs Emerson and Scott (*Whose Life is it Anyway?*, Question 7).

Nevertheless some candidates see no clear distinction between the Drama Units and the Poetry/Prose Units, find it very difficult to adapt their approach to each genre, see the plays as "reading matter" (sometimes referring to them as "novels" or "poems"), refer only to "the reader" and convey little sense of a theatrical experience. At its worst this approach can lead to a minute linguistic analysis of the wording of stage directions and the logging within them of sibilance or alliteration or even the style of font as if these words have nothing to do with the onstage action and have an independent life on the page. Similarly there appears to be a relatively widespread belief that the use of written symbols like exclamation marks or even dashes will in itself create dramatic tension; indeed it was a fairly frequently expressed view that Miller or Pinter or even Shakespeare make their plays dramatic with their "use of punctuation" rather than the words and the actions they ascribe to their characters and the situations in which they place them. The

damaging tendency to start an essay on a play by examining punctuation and to count features like dashes, ellipses and exclamation marks and ascribe astonishingly dramatic powers to them without exploring what is actually being said or responding to the onstage action, is a sure sign that some candidates continue to see their plays as written texts only.

Examiners continue to express regret at the number of Centres who appear to discourage their candidates from attempting the empathic questions even though this is an approach which many candidates clearly relish and the quality of empathic answers remains consistently and often staggeringly high. There were fewer third-person or voiceless empathic answers and unhelpful “Dear Diary” approaches this time although some candidates opted to answer Question 12 on *Journey’s End* in the form of a letter from Osborne to his wife instead of allowing his thoughts free reign, and rather restricted the range of their answers as a result.

Generalising about the findings of many examiners based on the work of over 20,000 candidates is always a difficult exercise but after fifteen sessions assessing the Drama Units since May 2003, it’s possible to continue to offer this summary of the features which tend to characterise successful and less successful answers.

Generally

Successful candidates:

- see the texts as scripts for performance and themselves as members of an audience
- see the stage directions as part of the dramatic action of the scene and visualise this onstage action and all the onstage characters
- pay explicit attention to the wording of the question and balance attention to each strand of the question
- construct purposeful opening paragraphs which focus specifically on a particular question about a particular play
- select and integrate brief quotations to support and amplify their ideas
- avoid formulaic approaches and trust their own direct personal response.

Less successful candidates:

- see the texts as pieces of writing only and themselves as readers
- see the stage directions merely as a pieces of tacked-on written communication and ignore the onstage action
- start with a pre-packaged introduction which is unhelpfully generalised, biographical or list-like and says nothing specific about the play or the question
- lose the focus of the question and import prepared material which has very little direct relevance, or misread the question entirely and write about the wrong character or wrong moment
- become bogged down in feature-logging and detached from the dramatic action
- work through a pre-digested agenda without fully engaging the question or the play, and without expressing a personal response.

Extract-based Questions

Successful candidates:

- devote at least two-thirds of answers to discussing, quoting from and commenting on the extract itself but still convey understanding of the whole-play context
- start by returning to their text to locate the extract in the context of the whole play
- establish the dramatic context for the characters and the audience quickly and economically in the opening paragraph
- ground their whole-play reflections firmly in the detail of the extract

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- pay close attention to the way the dramatic action evolves throughout the extract.

Less successful candidates:

- produce generalised answers with little attention to the printed passage, or approach the extract as if it is an “unseen” exercise and give little sense of the rest of the play
- produce a sweeping opening paragraph with an all-purpose list of headings and largely ignore the question
- rarely quote from the extract or copy out huge chunks unaccompanied by any attempt at commentary
- miss the reference to “this moment” in the question and as a result answer the question on the play as a whole with little reference to the printed extract.

Discursive Questions

Successful candidates:

- focus rigorously on (and sometimes challenge) the terms of the question and maintain relevance throughout
- range selectively across the text to find supporting detail for their arguments
- balance their attention to double-stranded questions on two characters/two moments/two elements
- show a sharp awareness of audience response
- quote shrewdly and economically
- reach a relevant conclusion.

Less successful candidates:

- become bogged down in one moment in the play so that the range of reference becomes too narrow
- rely only on the printed extract for the previous question for their ideas and quotations
- spend the bulk of their time on one strand of a two-stranded question
- lose the question entirely and unload pre-packaged and lengthy material about “the American Dream” in *Death of a Salesman* or about coping strategies or the effects of propaganda in *Journey's End*, or on another previously prepared topic with limited relevance to the question.

Empathic Questions

Successful candidates:

- anchor empathic questions securely to the prescribed moment to focus solely on what that character knows, thinks and feels at that point
- emphasise the character's dominant feelings and priorities at that point in the play
- select appropriate detail and integrate quotations of the character's actual words smoothly into the answer
- maintain a limited point-of-view so that knowledge and attitudes are credibly circumscribed
- sustain a voice that rings true in terms of language and tone
- know when to stop and therefore avoid repetition.

Less successful candidates:

- ascribe knowledge, feelings and attitudes to characters in empathic answers which are inappropriate to that character at that point in the play
- work through the character's experiences in a chronological and unselective way up to the prescribed point without asking "what's my main feeling at this precise moment?"
- lose the moment entirely and leap on the later moments in the play
- use inappropriate or anachronistic idioms
- over-simplify or stereotype both character and language
- write too much and therefore lose control of point-of-view and repeat themselves.

Comments on Individual Questions

Death of a Salesman

The climactic scene in the Boston hotel room made **Question 1** a popular and successful extract-based choice for many candidates. Strong answers conveyed a clear understanding of the dramatic context - that these events are taking place inside Willy Loman's head, that the audience has been primed for this moment throughout the play by the laughter and the appearances of the Woman, and that the "what happened in Boston?" mystery and the tension between Willy and Biff are finally to be explained. The majority of candidates managed to balance their attention to the dramatic detail, the building suspense and the shifting moods within the extract and their attention to the play as a whole, although there was a tendency, at times, to lose focus on the passage in the determination to pursue broader discussions of Willy's flawed values or the contrast between Linda and the Woman or the events which have forced this memory back to the surface. The closeness of the relationship between Willy and Biff in the extract was often minutely analysed and contrasted with the reality and the bitterness elsewhere in the play, and powerful points were often made about the dramatic ironies – that Biff confesses to letting his adulterous father down or his naive faith that his father is the kind of man who could talk Birnbaum round or that the close bonding between father and son immediately precedes the destructive discovery or that the cruel mockery of the teacher leads to the laughter which betrays the Woman and reveals Willy's infidelity, for instance. There was a fascinating exploration, from one candidate, of "suitcase symbolism" and the shared rootlessness of the Loman men, and another candidate aptly described Biff's horrified reaction to the Woman as "a cringe moment for the audience". Some candidates, especially at Foundation Tier, experienced problems with the complicated time-line, Biff's age and the placing of the extract within the action of the play.

Question 2 was the least popular Death of a Salesman choice. Several candidates constructed convincing arguments for sympathising with Young Happy as the less favoured son desperately seeking his father's attention and approval, and he was often viewed indulgently as the victim of his upbringing and as a sad product and reflection of his father's inadequacies especially in terms of his attitudes to women and his competitiveness. The expression in the Requiem of Happy's enduring loyalty to his father's flawed values was often thoughtfully explored. A few confident candidates were prepared to take a much harder line on Happy especially those who focused on his denial of his father in the Chop House scene or compared him with Biff or Bernard, and some made very subtle distinctions between feelings of pity and feelings of sympathy. There was a widespread tendency, however, to concentrate on the memory scenes involving the Young Happy and pay rather cursory attention to the portrayal of his later relationship with his father.

Question 3 proved to be a popular empathic choice and the most successful candidates were clearly those who had re-read the opening to Act Two and were aware not just of Willy's deluded optimism about his visit to Howard and about Biff's "business opportunity" with Bill Oliver (and the planned celebration at the Chop House) but also the money worries, the exhaustion, the guilt, the sense of failure and the desperation that is to surface in Howard's office. Examiners saw some wonderfully confused and contradictory rambles which seemed entirely consistent

with Miller's portrayal of his complex central character at this point in the play. The most convincing answers got right to the heart of Willy's mercurial nature and managed to lurch from self-pitying despair to vaunting self-confidence, sometimes within the same sentence, and to ground the portrayal of Willy in well-selected details (like Willy's memory of his relationship with old man Wagner and the "naming" of Howard, the thirty-four years of service, the use of the word "gee"...). Willy's voice was often authentically realised and direct quotation skilfully integrated, and one ingenious candidate found time to include an authentic imaginary exchange with Ben to suggest Willy's insecurity. Less developed answers tended to be exclusively optimistic as if Willy has no anxieties about his current predicament, and missed the falteringly nervous nature of his arrival in Howard's office. Some candidates lost the focus on the prescribed moment, drifted too far forwards and included Willy's reactions to his conversation with Howard.

The Caretaker

Question 4 was tackled by the vast majority of Pinter students and there were many strong answers which placed the extract in context, tried hard to visualise the dramatic action by focusing on movement, props, sound and lighting, responded to the tension and the undercurrent of violence and saw the moment as part of a broader power struggle. As is often the case with Pinter answers, there was much impressively detailed analysis of the impact of the language, and the best candidates were confident enough to explore the humorous potential in the absurdity of the situation and in much of the dialogue – especially in Mick's incongruous pleasantries alongside his use of the electrolux as an offensive weapon. The most successful candidates managed to explore the unsettling tone shifts, the comedy alongside the menace and the mixture of the two. Occasionally, answers were sidetracked into an unloading of pre-prepared material about Pinter's key "themes" or into a discussion of the relationship between Mick and Davies throughout the play, but the majority remained well focused on the extract itself.

Answers to both **Question 5** and **Question 6** were so rare that generalised comment is difficult but successful answers to Question 5 developed a detailed and direct comparison, never losing sight of the question and often shaping strong contrasts between Aston's kindly, generous nature and Davies's manipulative meanness. There was a tiny number of authentically Pinteresque Astons, steeped in the language of the play and the character.

Whose Life Is It Anyway?

Once again, the extract-based **Question 7** was by far the most popular choice on this text. The majority focused very effectively on Ken's tense relationship with Dr Emerson and clearly understood that this is the crushing moment when the full implications of Ken's condition are openly confirmed, though there was a tendency in some answers to suggest that the bleakness of Emerson's prognosis comes as a complete surprise to both Ken and the audience. There was much intelligent discussion of the detachment and "professionalism" of the doctors with the best answers not only noting the initial discussion between Dr Scott and Dr Emerson which excludes the subject of their conversation but also the implications of the doctors' decision, taken in private in "the corridor area", to increase the Valium dose. A few candidates were so keen to expound at length on the theme of "professionalism" and the "optimism industry" throughout the play that they lost touch with the detail of the extract, and hostility to Dr Emerson became rather overstated, on occasions, although Ken's appreciation of his "honesty" was sensitively handled by some candidates. The response to Ken's witticisms, especially his "vegetable" remark, was often a key discriminator and the best answers not only pointed out the bitterness of the humour but explored the implications for Ken's state of mind and saw that Ken's humour, far from providing simple comic relief, actually intensifies the audience's understanding of his suffering.

Dr Emerson and Mrs Boyle were the most popular choices for **Question 8** as the members of the hospital staff who have the least success in dealing with Ken, and there were many convincing and well-supported arguments about the failure to listen, about professional detachment and the inability to relate to Ken as an individual, about decision-making without consultation, and about power and choice. Once again, there was a tendency to become so wrapped up in the theme of “professionalism” that the focus on the portrayal of the selected character became rather blurred and some candidates adopted a “process of elimination” approach which led them to work through each member of the hospital staff in turn before reaching a conclusion about the least successful and thereby left themselves with insufficient time to do justice to their selected character. The damaging tendency, noted in the *General Comments* section, to rely too heavily on the material in the printed extract for one of the other questions also undermined the achievement of some candidates who chose Dr Emerson for Question 8 but only used supporting evidence from the printed extract for Question 7. Dr Scott was a much less popular selection but some candidates shaped interesting arguments about the dangers of hospital staff becoming too personally involved with their patients.

The best answers to **Question 9** were securely rooted in the conversation between Dr Scott and Mr Hill which precedes the moment prescribed by the question. Even though Mr Hill is a relatively minor character, many candidates managed to convey a convincing impression of a thoughtful and intelligent professional who has made the decision to take on an extremely challenging case and is fully aware of the legal and medical issues involved, and the best answers managed to personalise Mr Hill’s reflections with touches of wry humour, particularly about the medical staff he has encountered. Some candidates found the voice of a mature and educated solicitor difficult to maintain, and there was occasional drift into excessively sentimental reflection about the date with Dr Scott or inappropriately rude remarks about Dr Emerson. On the other hand, some of Mr Hill’s thought processes were so unrealistically formal that “Clare” Scott remained “Dr” Scott throughout or the dinner date was entirely overlooked in favour of a detailed exposition of the ethics of Ken’s case.

Journey’s End

Question 10 was by far the most frequently answered question on the paper and a large number of candidates wrote with great intelligence about both the “dramatic” and “moving” elements of the extract, and tending to concentrate for the former on Stanhope’s dramatic seizing of Raleigh’s letter, and, for the latter, on his silent response to the reading of it and the irony of Raleigh’s loyal tributes. Most successful answers began by establishing the context and making it clear that the audience has been primed for this moment and fully understands Stanhope’s insecurities and reasons for wanting to read the letter. Less developed answers tended to suggest that the censorship of Officers’ letters is the norm or that Stanhope is drunk and therefore out of control. Careful consideration of the way the tension escalates from a threatening tone to verbal and then physical aggression, of Osborne’s role and of the contrasting moods in the extract often characterised strong answers, and the dramatic effect of movement, silence, and the shadow/sun symbolism... was often explored with great sensitivity. Many commented perceptively on the singularity and significance of Stanhope’s angry comments to Osborne and on Stanhope’s behaviour and likely feelings at the end of the extract. There was widespread sympathy for Raleigh but, amongst the candidates who clearly understood the broader context and the intolerable stresses of war, a great deal of sympathy for Stanhope too. For some candidates the idea of sympathy for Raleigh took over almost completely as if they had drifted into an answer to Question 11. A few candidates thought that the word “moving” in the question referred to onstage “movement”. For some, the play continues to be written by “The Sherriff” and for others, Stanhope has risen to the rank of the “Sherriff”. A great deal of time was wasted (in answers to both Questions 10 and 11) in detailing R.C. Sherriff’s wartime experiences or in discussing the effects of WWI propaganda on “the lost generation” – or, as the *General Comments* indicate, in devoting large sections of answers to the analysis of punctuation and the wording of stage directions. Many candidates mistakenly attributed the “trembling”

stage direction to Raleigh rather than Stanhope and many avoided any attempt to explain why Osborne “clears his throat” as he reads Raleigh’s letter. A few saw the moment as a turning-point and claimed that Stanhope’s guilt and embarrassment would lead him to treat his loyal school-friend with much greater sensitivity in the future – which suggested that they were rather uncertain about later developments in the play.

Successful answers to **Question 11** ranged widely across Raleigh’s appearances in the play to explore the idea of “sympathy”, and made effective use of his initial nervousness on arrival, the frosty reception he receives from Stanhope, the letter-seizing, the pre-raid conversations with Osborne, the impact of the raid and Osborne’s death on him and his final scene, to shape sympathetic arguments about his youth, innocence and inexperience, his hero-worship, bravery, his modesty and, ultimately, his suffering and death. Close attention to the impact on an audience of Raleigh’s youth and likeability was complemented, on occasions, by subtle insights into the way the audience learns about trench-life along with the new arrival and therefore identifies most strongly with him. A few candidates felt confident enough to challenge the terms of the question and to find some reasons for not sympathising fully with the privileged young man for whom conditions in the trenches are far better than those of the men and who has brought the problems with Stanhope on himself by getting his high-ranking uncle to bend the rules. Some candidates under-achieved by conflating Questions 10 and 11 (as noted in the *General Comments*) and confining themselves to the printed extract in order to focus on sympathy for Raleigh to the extent that it was often difficult for Examiners to work out which question was being answered. There was a general tendency to focus on the early rather than the later scenes so that several answers made no reference to the sadness of his death. Some candidates argued that Stanhope blames Raleigh for Osborne’s death or that Raleigh blames himself without offering any evidence of this.

Some astonishingly convincing Osbornes were reproduced in response to **Question 12** and Examiners often reported that they found many answers to this question genuinely moving. Osborne’s unselfish concern for both Raleigh and Stanhope, and his determination to shield Raleigh from the full horror of the raid’s likely outcome, figured prominently in successful answers, and several candidates managed the difficult balance between his realistic fear that the raid will be “murder” and his stoicism, his resilience, his quiet heroism and his sense of duty. Many candidates remained fully anchored to the moment but also integrated appropriate reflections and details about his family life, his rockery, his school-teaching, Lewis Carroll, the New Forest... and already had Osborne thinking about leaving his ring, watch and letter with Stanhope. Some candidates, however, projected forward rather too far and misplaced the moment at the end of Osborne’s long pre-raid conversation with Raleigh; others underachieved because they expressed Osborne’s thoughts in the form of the letter which he is writing to his wife at the end of Act Two, and thereby either constrained what he was able to think and say or had him unrealistically worrying his wife with all his fears about the raid. Osborne’s calm restraint, his modesty and his courage were often beautifully conveyed but the voice became overly jingoistic, bloodthirstily gung-ho, unconvincingly optimistic or inappropriately cynical about the war in some answers and the repetitive use of expressions like “cheero... righto... topping ... frightfully... awfully... splendid...” sometimes tipped over into caricature. A small number of candidates confused Osborne’s voice with Trotter’s.

2442 Poetry and Prose Post – 1914

It is impossible, within the scope of this Report, to give a comprehensive review of the work of so many candidates on so many texts. As might be expected, candidates who had mastered their set texts, thoroughly understood them, and paid close attention to the writing and not just to the content, did very well. Examiners were delighted with some of the responses they encountered. All in all, there was evidence that many candidates, whatever their ability, had engaged with the texts they had studied and were able to write at some length, and with some understanding, about them.

The first paragraph refers to “so many texts”. Indeed, after breaking *Opening Worlds* into two separate sections, there are thirteen different texts on the paper, with thirty-two poems in *Opening Lines* alone. In practice, the choice of texts by Centres has become increasingly narrow. Some examiners saw only responses to *Opening Lines* and *Opening Worlds*, these very often to Question 4 on the poetry (Herbertson and Owen) and Question 13 (on the passages from *The Red Ball* and *Two Kinds*). There were so few responses to some of the texts, for example *Modern Women’s Short Stories*, that it is impossible to make any useful comment whatsoever on them. Similarly responses to some of the other questions were so few that, again, useful comment is impossible.

It was felt that most Centres entered their candidates at the appropriate Tier. However, some Centres entering candidates at Higher Tier might have been better advised to have considered the Foundation Tier option where at least one question per text offers bullet points.

As ever, gender issues arise, this year concerning the unfortunate Herbertson, who was often thought to be male. Some examiners were surprised to find candidates on quite intimate terms with the poets. Most examiners do not hob-nob with Agnes and Wilfred.

Written Communication is assessed on this Unit alone in Scheme A, with a maximum of four marks on offer at Foundation Tier and six at Higher. Almost no other subject requires candidates to write two successive essays over an hour and a half, so teachers of English Literature are almost on their own when essay-writing skills are to be acquired. There is no supporting work now from teachers of other subjects, as there was some years ago when a considerable number of subjects set questions requiring an essay in response. Responses that have an introduction and a conclusion, are properly paragraphed and punctuated, and in which spelling favours orthodoxy rather than idiosyncrasy, all aids to clear communication, are likely to be put towards or at the top of the descriptors for Written Communication.

Poetry

There were many good responses to the poetry questions where, at Foundation Tier, candidates were able to show understanding of what the two poems were about (the “what”); and, at Higher, where candidates looked, not just at the “what” but also the “how”; for example, how feelings of sadness are communicated. Good answers embedded quotations correctly and commented on the language of the quotation in some detail. At Higher Tier they approached the comparison logically, often providing an overview of the poems in the introduction: discussing/analysing the first poem; then discussing/analysing the second poem, comparing it with the first in the process; then concluding by highlighting the similarities/differences between the poems. Weaker responses switched speedily between poems, offering a one-sentence paragraph on each without indicating what point was being made.

Weak responses at Higher Tier often failed to mention both poems in the introductory paragraph, surely a basic requirement in what is a comparison of two poems. Second paragraphs often

neglected to discuss what the poems were actually about, the mood/atmosphere of the poem, the poet's treatment of his/her subject matter. Instead there were frequent comments on rhyme, rhythm, enjambment, use of caesura with unhelpful generalisations about their effect. Enjambment was usually "to help the poem flow" or, as with rhyme and rhythm, "to grab the reader's attention" or "to draw the reader in". There were some careful delineations of a poem's rhyme scheme with no attempt to explain what the purpose of the rhyme scheme might be, except to show that the other poem rhymed differently.

Comfortably the most popular of the poetry texts was *The 1914-1918 War (ii)* in *Opening Lines*. The least popular was *Poems 2: Larkin and Fanthorpe*; at the time of writing this Report, too few responses have been seen for useful comment to be made.

How It Looks From Here

There were a number of responses to this section of *Opening Lines*, about equally divided between the three questions set.

The first question, on the way *Defying Gravity* and *Sometimes* are moving, produced a number of good answers at both Tiers. Most contrasted the health and strength of the friend on the rugby field with "the armful of bones" he has become, focusing on such details as the wife carrying "him aw-Kwardly" and arranging "him gently" for visitors. They also saw the "Condition Inoperable" and "the box of left-overs" as being moving. Good responses also saw how the friend "defies gravity". Weaker responses often failed to focus on the key word of the question at both Tiers, "moving", by explaining the image of the "giant yo-yo", without relating it to the friend's death. *Sometimes* was pleasingly compared with the McGough, not least when candidates discussed the title of the poem and the frequent use of "sometimes" in the poem. Some were moved to pleasure in the way things "sometimes" go well. Others were moved to sadness because only "sometimes" they do. Weaker responses tended to say very little about *Sometimes*, or to claim it was "positive" or "negative", words which are distinctly unhelpful and need fleshing out if they are to show any understanding of a poem.

The question on moments of happiness in *Wedding-Wind* and *In Your Mind* produced good answers where candidates looked closely enough at the Larkin to recognise the wife's regret that "any man or beast that night should lack/The happiness I had". Often the mundane "chipped pail" and "hanging cloths on the line" were quoted to indicate that the wife must be totally and terminally unhappy. Good answers also focused closely on the language of *In Your Mind*, especially the imagery in lines 7-23, the bulk of the poem, to illustrate the happiness in the poem and were able to show how Duffy makes the happiness so colourful and vivid.

Comparatively few candidates chose to answer on criticisms of modern life made in *A Consumer's Report* and *I am a Cameraman*. Good responses at both Tiers were able to make something of the humour and structure of the Porter and identify areas of criticism in the Dunn. Weaker responses tended to select and explain lines from either poem, without providing comment on what aspect of modern life was being criticised.

The 1914-1918 War (ii)

The most popular of the three questions was the first, putting together *The Seed-Merchant's Son* and *The Send-Off*. Most candidates were able to comment on the sadness in *The Seed-Merchant's Son*, identifying the youth and energy of the "child" and the devastating effect of his loss on the Seed-Merchant. Some responses focused exclusively on the son's description and paid little attention to the final seven couplets. Comparatively few candidates tried to integrate the final couplet into their response. Those that did advanced the sensible point that the Seed-Merchant's sadness was tempered by his realisation that "the seed in his hand" represented the

possibility of new life. Candidates sometimes struggled to make much of *The Send-Off*. There was some misunderstanding of the mood of the soldiers whose singing down the close darkening lanes and gay faces led to assertions that they had no idea of what awaited them. That their faces were “grimly gay” was often ignored, even by candidates who correctly identified the phrase as an oxymoron. Spotting the use of a literary device is unhelpful if its effect is not seen. Some responses did not focus sufficiently on the way feelings of sadness are conveyed in the poem, instead seeing the poem as an attack on the war, the army general staff and the government. It was a pity that such responses struggled to slant material they had been taught to fit the question that was asked. Other basic misunderstandings asserted that this was a big celebratory send-off (confusing it perhaps with *Joining the Colours*), that the white flowers given by the women were symbolic of cowardice, and that the roads were “half-known” because they had been bombed out of all recognition. There were good responses that recognised the mood of the men, the significance of the flowers, and the poignant return of the few. The best responses successfully compared the ways in which Herbertson and Owen conveyed feelings of sadness.

Question 5 was possibly the least popular of the questions on the war poems. Candidates were usually able to understand the reactions of both women in *Reported Missing* and *Perhaps* – and contrast them successfully. Most understood that the voice in the Keown was “in denial”, whereas, in the Brittain, the voice was not really able to “move on”. Disappointingly, some candidates simply identified literary devices in *Reported Missing*, such as personification (“Death’s stead”), alliteration (“pious platitudes of pain”) and repetition (“I laugh! I laugh!”) but made no comment on how these convey the reactions of the woman. Weaker responses on *Perhaps* asserted, despite the repetition of “Perhaps”, that Brittain had overcome her grief and was ready to enjoy the beauty of the seasons, the Christmas songs and experience great joy, despite the moving last verse.

Question 6 invited candidates to discuss criticisms of the war in two poems selected from *Recruiting*, *The Target*, and *Bohemians*. *The Bohemians* is not an easy poem, and candidates who chose to discuss it sometimes appeared to have only limited understanding of it. Some thought the Bohemians were both groups of soldiers in the poem; others that the poet thoroughly condemned the Bohemians for making other soldiers work hard and conform. Few saw that army life wrenched the little soul of the conformists “still further from shape” and that both conformist and Bohemian would come to the same end in Artois or Picardy. *The Target* presented some candidates with difficulties when they stuck rigidly to a line by line explanation of what the poem was about. Good responses identified the anguish experienced by a soldier forced by war to kill or be killed; the anxiety of mothers, both in England and Germany, over “what might be a-happening” to their sons; and possible loss of faith in a God who “takes no sort of heed”. More might often have been made of the soldier’s language, not least in the last, ambiguous, line of the poem. Good responses did look at Gurney’s language, comparing its agonised simplicity with Mackintosh’s bitterly ironic tome in *Recruiting*. Most were able to comment on his attack on war-time propaganda and those who penned it, and plot the increasingly bitter variations on the “Lads, you’re wanted ...” motif. Weakish responses tended to explain sometimes rather randomly selected lines from the poem, rather than exploring them for the criticism asked for in the question.

Poems 2: Larkin and Fanthorpe

At the time of writing this Report, some six weeks after candidates sat the examination, the Principal Examiner has seen no scripts on this text. A coalition of *Opening Lines* and *Touched with Fire* appears, unfortunately, to have thoroughly marginalised *Poems 2*.

Touched with Fire

This text continues to hold its own, and candidates often wrote well about the six poems set in this examination session. Better answers kept the question firmly in mind, and avoided a line-by-line explanation of poems like *Mid-Term Break* and *Digging*, selecting only material relevant to Heaney's "memories of his family". Unfocused responses often explained that in *Mid-Term Break* the boy is, unusually, in the college sick bay and that he is driven home by neighbours. They recognised that the boy is emotionally detached from what is happening about him, but, highlighting his detachment, neglected the reactions of his father, mother and the baby. Some responses perceptively included the grandfather in *Digging*, opening up the opportunity to engage with the language ("nicking and slicing ... heaving") that conveys the boy's admiration of his grandfather's skill with a spade. These also focused on the language describing his father's digging, emphasising his skill and the children's "loving the cool hardness" of the new potatoes that his skill had unearthed. Some Higher Tier responses simply ran through the poem as autobiography, arguing that Heaney felt some guilt at not inheriting the skills of his forebears, but relief at following their tradition in digging metaphorically. Such answers centred on Heaney the poet, and not on "striking images" conveying memories of his family. Some examiners felt that candidates did not always understand what is meant by "image" and "imagery" and therefore struggled to answer a question that invited personal engagement with the writing.

The pairing of *Piano and Drums* and *Our History* proved interesting. Most candidates, at both Tiers, were able to describe the clash of cultures clearly, but the better ones engaged with the language of the poems in some detail. The best devoured the invitation at Higher to consider the ways the clash is vividly conveyed in both poems, focusing closely on the simplicity of the drums and the contrast with the complexity of the piano. The best also engaged closely with Dipoko's language, especially with the imagery of the poem's concluding lines.

There were some lively responses to the characters in *Telephone Conversation* and *In Westminster Abbey*, with candidates understanding the racism of the landlady, and the intelligence of the would-be lodger in the Soyinka, and the snobbishness of the lady "at prayer" in the Betjeman. Most commented on the humour in both poems, with the best looking at the language in some detail. Some examiners, not yet fallen into the sere, the yellow leaf, noted that telephone boxes now have no button A and button B, and that candidates aged sixteen would know what these were only if they had visited a museum, or if their teachers had shared this memory. Interestingly, candidates often intelligently selected material from whichever part of the poem that best illustrated their assessment of the characters to support their discussion of these poems, avoiding line by line explanation in favour of an overview of the characters.

PROSE FICTION

Opening Worlds was comfortably the most popular prose text amongst those offered to Centres. Many examiners saw work only on *Opening Worlds*. A number also saw responses to Hemingway. Fewer saw responses to Orwell, Lawrence, Achebe and Ballard. Interestingly, a number of examiners reported that Orwell and Achebe, in particular, and to a lesser extent Ballard, had seemed to challenge candidates more than the stories in *Opening Worlds*. More importantly, they felt that candidates had risen to the challenge and had engaged closely with such issues as totalitarianism and colonialism, with the best showing insight into the texts they had studied.

Opening Worlds

Of the three questions on this text, the passage-based question was the most popular at both Foundation and Higher Tier. It invited personal response to the confrontations between parents and children, the question using the phrase "so disturbing for you". Most candidates at both Tiers were disturbed by the brutal beating endured by Bolan. Weaker responses tended to note the

beating and then provided an analysis of how fathers and mothers should behave, treating their children with respect. “Child abuse” was frequently mentioned, and the father damned for his drunkenness, uneducated language, taking out his frustrations on Bolan, and refusing to listen to Bolan’s side of the story. These responses usually acquitted Bolan of theft. Personal response often extended to thankfulness that their fathers did not treat them as his father did Bolan. Some stated that, had their fathers threatened them with “a cut-ass”, they would have summoned a social worker before a switch had reached the paternal hand. Stronger responses referred to the differences between the cultures of Trinidad and Great Britain, showing some understanding of the story and, at the same time, indicating the disturbing nature of the passage. The best responses at Higher Tier looked closely at Khan’s writing, focusing on the “the lashes” that “rained down”, “the switch” that “whistled”, and Bolan’s dancing giving way to stillness. Some candidates disadvantaged themselves by discussing the confrontation between Bolan’s mother and father, when the question asked only about the confrontation between parents and children. Some responses, trying to focus on language, which is admirable, suggested that Bolan was having a nice time as he “danced up and down”, a reading at odds with phrases like “stinging lashes on his legs”.

Candidates, perhaps because of their age, often sided closely with Jing-mei in the passage from *Two Kinds*, making clear their disapproval of a parent trying to make their child something the child does not want to be. They were, quite legitimately, disturbed by such language as she “yanked ...pulled ... snapped ... smiling crazily as if she was pleased I was crying”. Weaker responses did not explore the sentence “It felt like worms and toads and slimy things crawling out of my chest”, the cruelty of Jing-mei’s words and their effect on her mother. The best answers explored them carefully looking at her cruelty and understanding its effect both on the mother and the reader. Weaker responses did not see the significance of, and the pain inflicted by, the retort.

Some candidates disadvantaged themselves because they pursued comparison at the expense of the actual question. Again it is perhaps important to emphasise that AO3 is tested only in Poetry. Responses too often compared Bolan’s beating with Jing-mei’s yanking to illustrate how parents everywhere are disposed to abuse their children, often switching from a sentence from Khan to another from Tan to prove the point. Comparison here may help to structure an essay, but becomes unhelpful when parallels are sought as ends in themselves. The best candidates here, as ever, looked at the language the writers use, gave their own response, and used the language of the extracts to support their response. They also kept reference outside the passages to a minimum, usually, at best, to show Bolan’s father’s love of his son revealed at the end of the story.

Question 14 invited personal response to hardship in *The Gold-Legged Frog* and *The Pieces of Silver*, with, at Higher Tier, an emphasis on how Srinawak and Sealy make the hardship moving. Candidates who worked to a definition of what “hardship” meant generally did well, looking at such issues as the climate, poverty, unsympathetic officialdom, uncomprehending neighbours in *The Gold-Legged Frog*; and poverty, unsympathetic, even brutal, teachers in *The Pieces of Silver*. They selected appropriate textual detail to support their ideas and focused on some of the language the writers use. Weaker responses tend to drift from hardship, for example, writing at length on the ending of *The Pieces of Silver* to include the irony of Mr Megahey donating so generously to his own retirement fund, thereby allowing Clement to face down Mr Chase. This, of course, shows knowledge of the story, but proved difficult, though not impossible, to integrate into an argument about the moving portrayal of hardship.

Question 15 invited discussion of unexpected endings to two of three stories: *Dead Men’s Path*, *Games at Twilight*, and *The Train from Rhodesia*. Best answers focused closely on two parts of the chosen stories, and most closely on the endings. For example, in *Dead Men’s Path*, on Michael Obi’s vision of the school and the last two paragraphs of the story, describing its fate and the Supervisor’s report. And in *Games at Twilight* on Ravi’s hopes, and the detailed description of his response to his insignificance that ends the story. Weaker responses

depended on telling the whole story and nodding, in the cases of both characters, that they had not foreseen the unexpected outcomes. Best responses to the Desai focused very closely on the last paragraphs of the story, skillfully analysing the way the writer's language makes the ending memorable.

D H Lawrence: Ten Short Stories

A number of candidates answered on the Lawrence text. Weaker candidates found the passage-based question, with its emphasis on description, rather challenging, but were usually able to comment satisfactorily on the pictures of town and country the extracts offered. There were some good responses that followed the roller-coaster ride of the tram, identifying the powerful verbs and commenting on the surprising simile "green as a jaunty sprig of parsley out of a black colliery garden". The best responses considered the language, focused closely on the passages and did not succumb to any temptation to compare them.

A less popular question was that on the relationship between teachers and pupils in *A Lesson on a Tortoise* and *Lessford's Rabbits*. The best responses avoided simply summarising the plot of each story and selected apt material to illustrate the relationships.

There were too few responses to Question 18 at both Tiers for any useful comment to be made.

J G Ballard: Empire of the Sun

A number of Centres use this text, which clearly continues to capture the imagination of candidates. The passage-based question was the most popular of the three and most candidates were able to respond to the danger Jim is in and to the powerful language Ballard uses. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the extract with little attempt to engage with its excitement and drama.

The question on Dr Ransome being a good friend to Jim was well answered by candidates who focused on what the doctor does and says to Jim, using the text to support their ideas. Weaker responses tended simply to summarise those parts of the novel involving Dr Ransome and Jim without highlighting how Dr Ransome cares for and protects Jim, and, at Higher Tier saying too little about how Ballard's writing brings Dr Ransome's care for Jim to life.

There were too few responses to Question 20 for any useful comment to be made.

Chinua Achebe: Things Fall Apart

This is a reasonably popular text and seems to challenge candidates to produce good work. The passage-based question was the most popular of the three and candidates found plenty on which to comment. Personal response to Ezeudu's blunt message was often strongly expressed and strong sympathy for the likeable Ikemefuna shown. At Foundation Tier, candidates used the second bullet sensibly to identify, and comment on the reactions of Nwoye and his mother. At Higher Tier candidates often looked closely at the last three paragraphs of the extract and were able to find much in Achebe's writing that made the moment so ominous.

There were too few responses to Question 23 for useful comment to be made.

However, a number of candidates answered Question 24, mainly at Higher Tier. Responses often showed sound knowledge of what the white man, in the shape of Mr Brown, and, in particular, Mr Smith and the District Commissioner, do to Umuofia. These gained some reward for their knowledge, but better answers were those that actually answered the question, which

was “How does Achebe’s writing make you feel ...?”. Personal response was looked for, and, as the Mark Scheme makes clear, answers which applauded the white man, answers which damned the white man, or answers which saw him as half-blessing, half-curse were all acceptable (as long as textual support was provided). Answers which provided no personal engagement with the text but simply recounted what the white man did missed the thrust of the question.

Hemingway: The Old Man and the Sea

The passage-based question, at both Tiers, was the most popular question of the three. Most candidates were able to find material to support the claim that the passage was exciting: for example, the weight of the fish, the line slipping “down, down, down,” the cry of “Now!” that accompanies an action that should finish the fish, and the following anti-climax, the old man’s concern about what will happen if the fish “decides to go down” ...Answers which focused closely on the passage and its language were well rewarded. Some answers simply paraphrased the passage, or drifted away from it to other parts of the novella (to the old man’s friendship with Manolin, for example, since Manolin is mentioned in the extract) and could not be so well rewarded.

There were interesting responses at both Tiers to the question about what a man can do and what a man can endure. Candidates ranged widely over the text to illustrate the actions and the endurance of Santiago. There was much available material and candidates usually selected sensibly. Most focused, probably rightly, on what the old man endures. At Higher Tier, the best responses looked closely at the language Hemingway uses in the novel to portray what the old man does and endures.

The third question on this text required candidates to show how the old man was different (intriguingly so, at Higher Tier) from the other members of the Cuban community. There were good responses from candidates who compared the old man and his view of the sea as feminine with the younger fishermen with their motor boats and their view of the sea as masculine. Weaker responses made a number of assertions about the old man and the Cuban community without being able to offer textual support; for example, that younger fishermen never went out far and lived a life of luxury, whereas the old man ventured far out and was poor. The analogy with Christ made regular appearances; for example, that the old man is like Christ (with some textual detail in support) and other members of the Cuban community are not like Christ. Similarly, some suggested that the old man was like Hemingway, whose work had been savaged by critics, and the Cuban community was different because, presumably, literary critics had never attacked them. Some examiners reported that candidates had not really digested material they had been given, but felt they had to introduce it even if it was inappropriate to the question they were answering.

Orwell: Nineteen Eighty-Four

There were good answers to all three questions at both Tiers. Candidates found much material on which to comment in the extract. The terror of the skull-faced man, his preference to see the throats of his wife and three children cut than face Room 101, the impassive officer with his unvarying order, the physical violence, the inability of any of the other prisoners to respond: all were seen as horrifying. Some candidates focused too much on the way the extract is preparing Winston to confront Room 101 at the expense of the horrifying nature of the extract. At Higher Tier Orwell’s language was sometimes discussed in detail, for example the way the skull-faced man howls “like an animal”, showing how the Party has dehumanised him (as does his denunciation of the chinless man who has so recently taken pity on him).

Reports on the Units taken in June 2010

There were good answers too on the importance of Winston's relationship with Julia, how it is a rebellion against the Party, how the Party can crush it, and what this says about the Party's power and methods. Weaker responses tended to narrate the various stages through which the relationship passes. However, almost all candidates showed knowledge and understanding of the text.

So too did those candidates who wrote about the horrifying nature of the Party's aims and methods. Most candidates were able to write about its methods and what it permits: Victory Mansions, living conditions, the Ministry of Truth and the Ministry of Love ...

Some candidates clearly understood the purposes of the Party, focusing on what O'Brien tells Winston in the Ministry of Love.

Nineteen Eighty-Four is a challenging text and it brought the best out in a pleasing number of candidates.

There were too few responses to *Modern Women's Short Stories*, *Pole to Pole* and *Fever Pitch* for any useful comments about them to be made in this report.

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2444 Pre-1914 Texts

General Comments

This was a pleasing session, and examiners reported seeing much work of a very good standard. Candidates showed a generally secure knowledge of their three texts, and wrote on them with confidence and a good deal of thoughtful critical understanding; this was particularly true of responses in the Drama and Prose sections of the examination. One examiner put it like this: *“a strong feature was understanding of both texts and questions; candidates had read conscientiously and with interest”*.

Quotations were used widely and generally well, and very few answers completely lacked at least some textual support. There were as usual some answers that simply asserted things, especially with regard to poetic devices such as alliteration, assonance, onomatopoeia and so on, where the effects of these devices were either simply ignored or somehow taken for granted, with little or no attempt to explain or explore in even brief detail.

There appeared to be virtually no problem with timing this session, and indeed the third answer was very often the best; and almost every candidate tackled exactly three questions!

Comments on Individual Questions

NB Where a text or question is not mentioned it is because there were no answers to it.

Much Ado About Nothing

- 1 This was by far the more popular of the two questions on the play, and was generally answered with confident knowledge of the passage, and of how Shakespeare makes it an enjoyable conclusion; the main focus, understandably, was upon Benedick and Beatrice, and their humorous reluctance to admit to loving each other – this was seen by all candidates as the most enjoyable aspect, and a thoroughly good way to round off a play that so nearly becomes tragic. Some mentioned Hero and Claudio; although both speak only very briefly here and their renewed love is not mentioned it is something that a few candidates felt added to the pleasure of the scene. Most noted that the play ends with music and dance, and commented on how this adds to the general enjoyment of characters and audience alike; one or two spoke of the way Benedick appears to take charge at the end, too, ordering the dancing and then dismissing any talk of Don John. It was disappointing that so many mis-read line 51, assuming it to mean that Don John has in fact escaped rather than having been “ta’en”, but overall this was a well-answered question.
- 2 There was only a very small handful of answers to this question, too few to make worthwhile general comment.

Romeo and Juliet

- 3 This was the more popular of the two questions, and usually managed with confidence and often sensitivity. Most candidates set the passage in its context, occasionally rather more fully than was helpful, but most focused closely upon what actually happens and what is said in it. There is more than enough that is dramatic, of course, in every sense of the word, and few candidates failed to show an appreciation of how Shakespeare creates such a theatrically powerful moment here. “Moving” was perhaps a bit less well tackled, though

most saw at least something of the ways in which an audience is likely to react to knowing – which none of the three characters does – that Juliet is not in fact dead, or to Romeo’s perhaps unexpectedly noble and sympathetic actions and words to the Paris he has just killed. The words used by both main characters were well used in support, with a few quite common misreadings – particularly in line 6, where Romeo’s words to Paris were frequently assumed to be directed to Juliet; a surprising number of candidates appeared unaware that Romeo and Juliet are in fact married, and an even more surprising number seemed not to know that Juliet is not actually dead at this point. A good number, presumably having been taught this, took Romeo’s final speech here to be a sonnet, and commented on its echo therefore of the sonnet the two lovers share at the Capulet ball; it is true that there are fourteen lines, but that is really the only similarity there is to this particular verse-form. Overall, however, a well managed question.

- 4 Not surprisingly, almost all answers – and there were not many – took Mercutio as their subject; a few explored candidates’ feelings about Lady Capulet (never favourably) and just one candidate wrote on Benvolio. Mercutio’s name was mentioned as reflecting his lively, quicksilver character, as was his wit and banter, with his friends and of course with the Nurse. His dying speech attracted a good deal of attention, as did his Queen Mab monologue – which many candidates found dull and irrelevant. Several stated as if a known fact that Shakespeare was obliged to kill Mercutio, as he was in danger of becoming the central character of the play rather than either of the two lovers – a piece of speculation that may or not be true, but which either way does not really help to make his character memorable. This last word from the question (“memorable”) was an angle that too many candidates appeared to forget, or simply did not notice; character studies were all well and good, but they were not in fact answering what was asked.

An Ideal Husband

- 5 Most candidates responded to this passage, and often did so with thoroughness and sensitivity, not just to what happens and to what the characters say, but more importantly also to how Wilde makes us respond to Sir Robert, looking at the words used, and at the dramatic actions outlined in the stage directions. Better answers noted how our opinion is likely to change as the passage develops, becoming increasingly antipathetic as he tries in vain to wriggle his way out of Mrs Cheveley’s accusations, which are of course entirely true. Some candidates felt sympathy for him in the face of being accused by “such a horrible women”, but while personal response is always to be encouraged this does perhaps suggest a lack of understanding of what he has actually done.
- 6 There was only a very small handful of answers to this question, too few to make worthwhile general comment.

Opening Lines: War

- 9 Most “War” candidates wrote on this pair of poems, and most made some good and thoughtful comparisons between Lovelace’s love of honour rather than of his mistress (the word “girl-friend”, however homely, does not quite do justice to the poet or the poem, or indeed to the period when it was written), and the idea of making “the first foe in the field” his new mistress was seen by most candidates, though a few regarded this as entirely disgraceful or even immoral, rather than as either heroic or simply as a kind of dark joke. Many – too many – thought quite categorically that this is a letter; it is not – it is a poem. Scott’s hatred of the drum and what it lures young men into was better appreciated and argued by most, who could see how he creates his growing anger as the poem progresses, particularly by means of its insistent rhythm and repetition.

- 10 There were relatively fewer answers to this question, but all three poems were used, and used with some general confidence and understanding. As was the case in Q9 there was plenty of supportive and illustrative quotation from the two poems used, and mostly these quotations were explored with at least some degree of critical acumen; this was especially true of Byron and Tennyson, perhaps because Southey's poem is rather less obvious in what it says, and certainly for the most part less blatantly horrific.

Opening Lines: Town and Country

- 11 Hood's poem is not an easy one, with its multiple puns and strikingly clever rhymes, and most answers clearly found it hard to explain why or even where the poet uses humour in his portrayal of London; far more common, unexpectedly, were those answers that seemed to think it is actually a serious poem about the difficulties of life in such a busy (lines 3-4), dangerous (lines 45-46), crime-ridden (lines 61-62) city. Whatever approach was taken, of course, examiners accepted and rewarded almost any view or interpretation that was not undeniably *wrong* – as, for example, were those who read lines 47-48 as suggesting that London was so wonderful that it was really like Heaven to be there. Blake's poem, possibly because shorter, attracted more attention, and generally better understanding; there was never any doubt as to the poet's feelings here, and there was plenty of illustrative support for these in answers. Some interesting ideas were proposed, for example that the tightly-structured verse-form reflects the restricted nature of London life, a thoughtful reflection upon Blake's writing and its impact on his readers. Few answers this session made much of the dreadful pair of words at the very end of the poem – “the marriage hearse” – and even when they were mentioned their effect was almost never fully grasped. To be fair to candidates, however, there was a lot of useful and apt comparing or contrasting – virtually no answers failed to do this, and indeed the same was true of all the poetry answers.
- 12 Answers to this question, the less popular of the two on “Town and Country” poems, showed generally sound knowledge but relatively little real critical confidence; most preferred to simply outline what each poem was about, with some illustration and comment on this, but few candidates *really* took hold of what the question in either Tier asks, relying more straightforwardly upon paraphrase and general illustrative quotation, rather than demonstrating either what makes the images of nature so memorable, or exactly how the poets make them so. Knowledge alone will certainly gain marks, but for the higher Bands the exact question must be addressed.

Dickens: Hard Times

- 19 Most answers on this passage were fully aware of Stephen Blackpool's situation, and knew exactly why he was in this dreadful predicament, though a few appeared to be seeing the passage for the first time, and had no knowledge whatsoever of what was going on. There was very little sentimentality in any answer, though plenty of sympathy for Stephen, and some good close reading of the language used by Dickens.
- 20 There was only a very small handful of answers to this question, too few to make worthwhile general comment.

Hardy: Far From the Madding Crowd

- 21 This was not a widely-used text, but this question led to some sensitive and thoughtfully supported responses, with both characters attracting a good deal of scorn and contempt;

there was some sympathy for Boldwood's position in the face of Troy's ruthless cruelty here, but most candidates tempered this sympathy with a perfectly reasonable appreciation that he had to a large extent brought it on himself, and his attempt to buy Troy off was regarded universally as contemptible. A few did refer back to Bathsheba's initial valentine joke, but none wanted this to excuse Boldwood's behaviour here. Troy – mysteriously promoted by several candidates to Captain Troy here – was viewed with nothing but sheer hatred.

- 22 There was only a very small handful of answers to this question, too few to make worthwhile general comment.

Eliot: Silas Marner

- 23 This was by far the more popular question, and done with almost universal warmth and understanding of the situation faced by Godfrey and Nancy here. Godfrey was regarded with mixed feelings, but most answers praised his courage in finally confessing his long-held secret to his wife, and while his selfish reasons for doing so were acknowledged there was virtually unanimous approval of his confession, and sympathy for the nervousness that Eliot creates so vividly in his speech. Nancy's inability to have children, and the loss of her baby, attracted very much warm and often strongly personal sympathy, as did her quiet restraint in the way she reacts to what is clearly a huge shock to her. Her longing for a child, which she now knows she will never have, was appreciated by all candidates, as was her tearful breaking down. And even when Godfrey tries towards the end of the passage to further justify his actions most candidates still showed respect and admiration, though for many it was tempered by knowing what is to come a little later when he visits Silas to try to "recover" Eppie. A very well answered question, with plenty of detailed and apt quotation from the passage.
- 24 A very small number of candidates tackled this question, and almost all failed to demonstrate in any real way what they had found to be *amusing* in their chosen moment. Even where they took the line that some of the novel's more coincidental moments were laughable because so unlikely there was almost never any real attempt to do more than simply paraphrase what happened. The question was not managed well.

Poe: Selected Stories

- 25 There was only a very small handful of answers to this question, too few to make worthwhile general comment.

Wells: The History of Mr Polly

- 27 There were some good and entertaining responses to this passage, but curiously very few candidates found much, or indeed anything at all, to be *amusing* in it; some were moved by Mr Polly's distress when he realises that he has been "set up", and saw how his romantic daydreaming has led him into this utter dead end and embarrassment. Most candidates, perhaps influenced more by contemporary morality rather than by what Wells actually says, were angry at what they saw as a kind of paedophilia, and disliked what was going on here, even saying how much Mr Polly deserves what happens to him. The fact that the whole episode is a deliberately sentimental and exaggerated one was very largely ignored.

2445 Drama Pre – 1914

General Comments

There was a much smaller entry for these papers than for 2441, and a very small entry for Foundation Tier which makes generalised comment difficult. The two most popular texts were *Romeo and Juliet* (by far) and *Much Ado About Nothing*, and the two non-Shakespearean choices, Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People* and Wilde's *An Ideal Husband* were so rarely attempted that secure conclusions about the general characteristics of candidate performance are difficult to reach. There was a great deal of outstanding work but the remarks in the *General Comments* (2441) section of the report on the unnecessary use of historical detail are particularly relevant to the 2445 Shakespeare answers and some candidates were also distracted from the question by the logging of technical features (stycomythia was a particular favourite this time) or by the application of theories about dramatic shape (Freytag's Pyramid figuring prominently). Many Examiners lamented the rarity of empathic answers.

Comments on Individual Questions

Much Ado About Nothing

Question 1 was easily the most popular *Much Ado About Nothing* option and the strongest answers conveyed a clear understanding of the dramatic context. There were some subtle arguments about the rapid mood shift from the cheeriness of the gulling scenes to the darkness of Don John's villainy, about the audience's knowledge of the details of his unfolding plot, and also about the impact of the dramatic ironies. Many candidates wrestled interestingly with the portrayal of Claudio and Don Pedro and were willing to criticise their readiness to condemn and shame Hero, their gullibility and cruelty. There were some effectively integrated ideas about the scene in performance and some candidates felt confident enough to express their own views on how the scene should be dramatised. Some answers slipped into overlong discussions of "noting" or "gulling" and lost contact with the extract. The most successful candidates were able to comment in detail on the language and the ironies. A few displayed an uncertain grasp of plot details, appeared to take Don John's accusations at face value and believe that Hero had indeed been "disloyal".

Questions 2 and 3 were attempted by a very small minority of candidates. There were some lively responses to the character of Benedick with the majority adopting a highly sympathetic approach and a few shaping arguments which were more openly critical of his self-importance, his laddishness, his lack of awareness, his gullibility... Wide-ranging textual support was often the mark of successful answers but a few candidates were only able to see Benedick in terms of his relationship with Beatrice. **Question 3** was rarely attempted but a believable happiness, a willingness to endure and overcome the mockery of his friends, some uncertainty as to how he should play the lover and love for Beatrice tended to characterise the most convincing responses.

Romeo and Juliet

Question 4 was by far the most popular question on this text and on both tiers of this paper. Many candidates managed the balance between close attention to the printed extract and an evaluation of its overall impact in the play very shrewdly. A few worked through the passage with little sense of the broader dramatic context and the awareness which the audience shares with the Nurse that Romeo has killed Tybalt and is to be banished, and therefore the full impact of the nurse's delay in imparting the news and of the resulting ironies was rather overlooked;

others focused effectively on the dramatic irony and on the crushing contrast between the mood of Juliet's passionate and impatient soliloquy and her reactions to the Nurse's slow and misleading announcements. There were even some subtle connections made between this tragic scene and the earlier comic scene when the Nurse is slow to tell Juliet of the wedding arrangements. Close and sensitive attention to the language, to the drama of the misunderstandings and to the ironies, and a secure grasp of the dramatic context, tended to characterise the strongest answers. Weaker answers conveyed some confusion about plot details with some appearing to believe (like Juliet to begin with) that Romeo is already dead and even more not fully understanding that Juliet is already married to Romeo and awaiting her wedding-night. Decontextualised feature logging undermined some answers and the tendency to list oxymorons, in particular, without accompanying comment on Juliet's complex feelings was quite widespread. Mercutio was the subject of much intelligent comment in answer to **Question 5**. His character was widely understood and his liveliness and wit warmly appreciated. Some candidates constructed a full analysis of his character without fully focusing on his "dramatic impact" and others drifted into a narrative approach to explain the effect of his interventions on the course of the story. The "Queen Mab" speech was often mentioned but seldom discussed with any confidence. There were some convincingly outraged and nasty Lord Capulets produced in response to **Question 6**. Sensible candidates had clearly returned to Act Three, Scene Five and re-read it carefully to immerse themselves in Capulet's violent anger and to make shrewd selections of appropriate quotation to integrate into their answer. The best answers focused on Capulet's shock at Juliet's ingratitude and disobedience, were thoroughly indignant and self-righteous in tone, expressed irritation at the Nurse's interference, conveyed pride at the quality of the match with Paris and determination to see it through and avoid family embarrassment, and were fully acquainted with the details of Tybalt's death and the low-key nature of the planned nuptials. The weakest answers suggested that Capulet was angry because he knew about Juliet's marriage to Romeo or characterised Capulet as a very modern parent racked with guilt about losing his temper with his daughter and caring only for her right to choose for herself and achieve personal happiness.

2446 Poetry and Prose Pre – 1914

As this syllabus draws towards its close it is perhaps time to comment on how rewarding it has been to see candidates from the whole range of ability rise to the challenges of studying the great works of English Literature. Many examiners commented this year on the detailed knowledge shown by candidates and on their freshness of approach. This, of course, reflects the enthusiasm and commitment of their teachers. The skills they have acquired in response to these texts should stand them in good stead for the study of literature at a higher level. More importantly the level of involvement required to read these texts will have given them a deeper insight into the nature of the human condition. In response to prose texts, most candidates answered the passage-based questions with an absolute security in awareness of contexts as they set about their scrutiny of the particular writing in the extract. They have answered the discursive questions showing engagement with characterisation, plot and theme.

A desire to display knowledge, however, has had the opposite effect on poetry answers. The feeling that candidates must demonstrate the need to identify a knowledge of phonetics and obscure classical literary devices has meant that genuine personal response to poems, the ability to make the poem their own, has sometimes been denied them. Consequently, they have been deprived, on occasion, both of higher marks and, much more significantly, a genuine learning experience of lasting value. It has led to some rather mechanical analysis of style and verse form and where half-assimilated or inaccurate knowledge has hindered the clear communication of ideas. Whereas it has been refreshing to see a response to the sounds created by the poet, comment on plosives and fricatives, for example, need to be rooted in a sensitivity to the effects they make and not merely observed. Undeniably, however, there has also been some very strong work on the poetry, as the comments below will show.

OCR: Opening Lines: War. In answer to Question 1 candidates showed clear awareness of the poets' feelings about war. Strong answers commented on Hardy's depiction of the kinship between the man and his "foe" and showed how the soldier's doubt was created by the use of the dash and of repetition. Weaker answers confused the character in the poem with Hardy and thought that the pauses were a sign that Hardy himself was becoming confused. Candidates saw that John Scott deplored the "spin" put on war by the personified "Ambition" of governments, which led young men to "march and fight and fall in foreign lands." The obvious horror in the language of this poem was compared to Hardy's more subtle approach. Weaker candidates tended to perceive this subtlety without having the vocabulary to express it. Many candidates thought the drum in Scott's poem was one of battle rather than recruitment. This often led to a partial understanding of what the poem is about. Foundation Tier candidates were helped considerably by the bullet points and coped well. Answers to Question 2 sometimes needed to pay more attention to the words "powerful" and "suffering" in the question. Less effective answers lacked pointed detail and failed to comment on how the poets achieved their effects. For example there was often scant consideration of the horrific imagery in *After Blenheim*. The basic narrative of the Whitman poem was understood but the poet's portrayal of impact of the boy's death upon his mother needed more detailed analysis. Question 3 was generally answered competently especially when candidates considered the heroic and romantic imagery of *The Volunteer* and fully grasped the cricket/war parallel in Newbolt's poem.

Town and Country: Question 4 was the by far the most popular of the *Town and Country* questions. The poems present a stark contrast in terms of overall mood and tone, and candidates in both tiers of the paper enjoyed the clear distinctions they could make between them. Most saw Wordsworth using the sonnet form to express his 'love' for London. Candidates who focused on the idea of the city "open unto the fields, and unto the sky" and the comparison with the natural world, were able to see how Meynell also compares town and country to very different effect. Candidates seemed less aware of the structure of a Petrarchan sonnet – indeed many thought the rhyme scheme "simple", "irregular" or much freer than Meynell's. Many noticed

that the overwhelming impression of the poem is one of peace. They worked their way towards this via comment on sibilance, imagery, personification, listing, contrast and colour and much of this attentive work on the language and techniques of verse was very impressive. Meynell threw up more problems: some candidates had difficulty distinguishing between the “dead leaves” in Kensington Gardens and the delicate “rows of hay raked long ago and far away”, especially at Foundation Tier. Candidates tended to get rather muddled in their assertions about the Industrial Revolution and pollution. A common mistake was to assume that the “grey” of the “rows of hay” alluded to the city and were part of the general depression associated with city life. This sort of carelessness in reading was not uncommon and often arose because candidates were too interested in making an easy stereotypical case, rather than looking at the more complex meanings that good literature presents. Better answers saw that the contrast was between the futility of the harvest of a regimented and tamed nature and the abundance and vivacity of the country. Few commented successfully on the form and structure of the poem except to call it “monotonous”. There is a tendency in some responses to *Composed Upon Westminster Bridge*... to concentrate about what Wordsworth does *not* see such as the crowds, the smoke and the traffic than what he actually *does* see. The garment that the city wears can be taken off again but this is not the emphasis of the poem and often distorts the candidates approach to the question.

Question 5 was generally answered very well. Good candidates had little difficulty in bringing *Beeny Cliff* and *Innisfree* to life in their answers: the poems do so with such vivacity and colour. Candidates responded well to “moving” when they connected their observations with the emotions of the poet: very good answers related Hardy’s poem to memories and their contrast with present feelings, and Yeats’s to yearnings about an idyllic future and their contrast with the “pavements grey”. It was a real pleasure to read such sensitive and detailed readings of *Beeny Cliff* as it is perhaps difficult for adolescents to identify with the grief of an older person looking back over a great swathe of time. Most found it easy, however, to find some aspects of Hardy’s descriptions which they could appreciate, such as the “wandering western sea” and the waves “babbling say” and many knew enough biography to see some foreshadowing of later tragedy in the “little cloud”. Good answers really appreciated how different the mood is in the final two stanzas and that the “chasmal beauty” of “old Beeny’s” bulk and the “wild weird western shore” is a comment on nature’s indifference to human loss and change. For Yeats too, the final stanza needed comment if “movingly” was to be addressed, as he hears the repeated sound of the lapping water in his “deep heart’s core” even by the roadway. Candidates need to be encouraged to see each poem as a whole, and to relate poetic effects to their overall mood and tone. Weaker candidates tended to set up false oppositions here, as in this quotation which was by no means atypical: “*Beeny Cliff* contains a story of his marriage to Emma and links with Beeny Cliff whereas Yeat’s (sic) poem is repetitious”.

The least successful approach to Question 6 was to divide time equally between each poem, often to provide a very superficial reading of Keats and an immensely over-complicated and symbolic reading of *The Eagle*. Candidates are better advised to pay plenty of attention to the surface meaning of poems before becoming obsessed with symbolism and “deeper meanings”. Good readings of Tennyson’s compact tercets were equally stark and pointed, paying attention to the harsh sounds, the mastery of the bird of prey and the cragginess of his mountain vastness and speed and power of his murderous dive as an example of “nature red in tooth and claw”. Less convincing reading saw him as symbolising old age, the monarchy or the British Empire or as dying in the final line as he falls off his perch. Those who focused on the raw, meaty and realistic portrait of nature by Tennyson could find apt contrasts with the dreamy, romantic and sensual vision of Keats. Good candidates found plenty of opportunity to comment on the ways in which different images appealed to different senses to provide the songs of Autumn and a harmonious music. Weaker answers avoided any mention of the ripeness and abundance described so sensuously. However, some very strong candidates showed an excellent understanding of what an ode is, or ways in which the poem may express an acceptance of the transience of all forms of life as well as seasonal change.

Blake: *Songs Of Innocence and Experience*. Candidates explored Blake's poetry with sensitivity and analytical ability. There were many excellent answers that looked closely at the words and structure of the poems and did not place this second to comment on themes and ideas. There is a tendency to write about the Industrial Revolution and Blake's quarrels with established religion rather than the poetry itself, which can detract from an otherwise sound answer. Candidates wrote clearly about how Blake's verse form and imagery creates different impressions of childhood in the two *Holy Thursday* poems. The strongest answers looked at the bright colours, the images of purity and Spring in the *Innocence* poem, contrasted with the satirical effect of the rhetorical questions and the images of "eternal winter" in the *Experience* version. The best recognised that the contrast is not as clear as it seems as the grey headed wise guardians of the poor in *Innocence* could well be those feeding with a "usurous hand" in *Experience*. One misconception was that the children in the *Innocence* poem are wealthy. Question 8 was less popular but candidates responded to the powerful ideas and imagery in both poems. Question 9 was popular and all three poems were chosen in relatively equal numbers. The best answers really focused on comparing the disturbing images in the poems, rather than merely writing an essay about the poems in general, including comment on the structure which wasn't strictly required here. *The Tyger*, not surprisingly produced some very strong responses although more obvious images such as "burning bright" and "forests of the night" were sometimes ignored in favour of a diversion into historical context. Many scripts, however, showed an absorption with Blake's ideas and a love of his unique verse style which shone from the page.

Hardy: *Selected Poems*. Answers to Question 10 tended to be more secure in their knowledge of *Neutral Tones* than *On the Departure Platform*. There was a misconception that the lovers are parting permanently in this poem and the last verse seems to have eluded many. This made comparison less than convincing when the opposite nature of the "departures" was not perceived. There were some strong answers to Question 11 noting the creation of atmosphere and the ironic structuring of *A Wife in London* and commenting on the impact of the dramatic monologue, the colloquial language and the questioning tone in *The Man He Killed*. Question 12 was rarely tackled.

Austen: *Northanger Abbey*. In answer to Question 13 Candidates found it easy to engage with Catherine's emotions in the passage. A number saw the difference between real "violent burst[s] of tears", "suffering", "bitter feeling", "grief" and "agitation" in this extract and Gothic fakery earlier in the novel, or even Isabella's excesses of sentiment. Not all saw the significance of passing close to Woodston, or just how much Catherine's feelings concentrate on Henry and how he would "think, and feel, and look". Austen makes it clear that Catherine is just as concerned with his reaction to her expulsion from Northanger, as her own anxiety. It is interesting that she trusts him as much with the secrets of her earlier foolish suspicions about the General as "her own heart". There was plenty of intelligent observation of Austen's use of free indirect discourse and punctuation to dramatise Catherine's feelings. Fewer traced her slightly confused thoughts precisely or contextualised them fully. However, plenty appreciated Catherine's mixed feelings about her return and her anxiety to "do justice to Henry and Eleanor's merit" at Fullerton, despite her mistreatment. Those who had not fully appreciated the context often assumed that it was written in the same ironic style as the chapters leading up to Catherine's stay at Northanger Abbey. More discerning candidates understood the change of tone and the growing maturity of the heroine.

The best answers to Question 14 recognised John Thorpe as a type and had fun with his boastfulness, boorishness, immaturity and inability to understand the impact he makes on others. They used a wide range of examples: weaker candidates drew mainly on the chapter in which he makes his entrance. Stronger candidates ranged more widely through the novel, examined Austen's contrast with Henry Tilney and pointed out just how much the author is manipulating our reaction to Thorpe, by encouraging us to share Catherine's distaste. It was really satisfying to read scripts which had a good understanding of Austen's humour. Good answers balanced out the funny and the dislikeable and realised that the impact of his boasting on General Tilney was probably unintentional. However, many also disapproved of his lies and

attempts to get between Catherine and Henry, and rightly felt the author was on their side. Some very good answers also focused on the humour of his "proposal" and Catherine's reaction. Fewer seemed to realise that he is also the person who tells General Tilney that the Morlands are not rich, and that this is a malicious response to the collapse of Isabella's schemes.

Dickens: *Hard Times*: Question 16. The best answers to this question understood the context and eschewed outpourings of sympathy for Stephen to comment on the power of the passage, both in terms of its content and its style. Weaker responses thought that Stephen Blackpool was allowing his wife to kill herself through alcohol. Question 17 was rarely tackled. Question 18 produced some searching and lively responses. Candidates were moved and mostly to anger. They selected Gradgrind's "system", working conditions and the divorce laws as well as examining the unfair treatment of individuals. There had clearly been some effective teaching of this text with candidates responding with a fervour which suggested that the themes of the novel were not merely mothballed in the past.

Hardy: *Far From the Madding Crowd*: Question 19. There were many excellent answers to this powerful passage. Candidates were quick to pick up the foreboding atmosphere created at the beginning and responded carefully to the tension in the conversations. They enjoyed the ironies inherent in the triangular relationship of Bathsheba, Troy and Fanny Robin. Many were sympathetic to Troy's agitation, "strangely gentle" voice and confession that "I am a brute", seeing it as indication of love for Fanny. Others observed the relish he still seems to take in play-acting and dissembling. Many candidates were absorbed with the contrast between Troy's treatment of Bathsheba and Fanny. The best answers examined the dialogue really closely, noting, for example, the hesitant and confused tone of Troy's spoken concern for Fanny against his sharp, aggressive evasiveness towards Bathsheba. Candidates had less to say about what is "moving" here, especially the pathos of Fanny's plight, and the dishonesty of Troy's marriage to Bathsheba. This question, however, was seldom answered poorly. Most of the good answers showed how important it was in light of future developments. It seems that images of Fanny's coffin were seldom far from their minds.

Answers to Question 20 were variable in quality. Many candidates failed to see that the question required them to write about their feelings towards Bathsheba and concentrated more on Boldwood. The strongest answers evaluated the extent of Bathsheba's responsibility for Boldwood's growing obsession with her and thus her role in Boldwood's murder of Troy and its consequences for him. They moved beyond the sending of the Valentine to select material from the novel as a whole and made apt reference to show both her vanity and his mental instability. Question 21 posed similar issues in that the question required attention to the end of the novel rather than a narration of the relationship between Gabriel and Bathsheba as a whole. Candidates also had to evaluate how Bathsheba, in particular, had developed as a character during the novel. The novel continues to engage candidates who show strong feelings towards the characters and their situation and are fascinated by Hardy's treatment of fate.

Eliot: *Silas Marner*: Question 22. Close reading of the text was a feature of good answers to this question with candidates analysing how the context, the structure, the dialogue and the narration all contribute to its drama. Better answers gave plenty of weight to what is revealing in the extract: not only the two shocking revelations but also ways in which much is revealed to readers about Godfrey and Nancy. Godfrey's burden of guilt, and Nancy's moral certainties both meet a challenge here. Candidates were as sensitive to their looks and gestures here as to their language, and the stronger ones had no hesitation in relating the passage to the novel's narrative of moral renewal.

Question 23 . Candidates varied a little in their approach to this question. Weaker answers only wrote about the early pages of the novel, or about Lantern Yard. Better answers saw that this was about the 'early chapters' and that not only Silas' relationships with Raveloe and Lantern Yard, but also the ways in which he makes an idol of his gold, and personifies his pot, and the ways in which his profession and behaviour arouses the suspicion of the villagers called for

attention. Some saw how important his social and moral isolation are in order to prepare readers for the drama of his later re-integration into Raveloe society through Eppie. There were few responses to Question 24 though those who did so saw the humour in the villagers' conversation. They also analysed the episode when Silas bursts in searching for help after the theft of his gold, where their initial assumption that he is a ghost provides comedy.

Poe: *Selected Tales*. Edgar Allan Poe poses problems for certain candidates in that, whilst they find the horror in the stories fascinating and generally have a sound grasp of the narratives, they find Poe's language difficult. This was particularly evident at Foundation Tier where the third bullet point on Poe's language was rarely tackled. This becomes a disadvantage in both tiers when candidates have to analyse style in the passage-based questions to score really highly. Answers to Question 25 showed that candidates understood Poe's various methods of exposition and most candidates wrote very competently about the ways in which these openings worked. Weaker answers failed to realise that a persona rather than Poe himself was the narrator or struggled with some of the vocabulary. The nature of Montresor's intended revenge caused the most difficulty. Candidates tended to write about the rest of the story rather than to look at the passages themselves or to use quotations from them to support their points. Candidates can be over concerned with the narrator's mental state and this was equally true of answers to Question 27 where they wanted to write about insanity at the expense of the "evil" required by the question. Most candidates chose the narrators of *The Tell-Tale Heart* and *The Black Cat* as particularly evil and made a very good case. Many seemed to ignore, however, the fact that *The Black Cat's* narrator kills his wife as well as the various cats. Roderick Usher seemed a less appropriate choice. There were some strong answers to Question 26 on Auguste Dupin. Candidates who chose this question were clearly intrigued by Dupin as a precursor to Sherlock Holmes and analysed the eccentricity of his character and the clever ways in which he solves his crimes. The best answers were distinguished by apt textual reference from both stories, particularly in choosing the key moments in the solving of the case.

Wells: *The History of Mr. Polly*. It was pleasing to see more answers to this set text this year and that candidates are beginning to respond to the humour in the writing. The wonderful passage in Question 28 was the most popular choice and the strongest answers examined both the slapstick nature of the comedy and what is funny in Uncle Jim's language. The powerful contrast between rip-roaring Uncle Jim wielding his dead eel wrapped in newspaper, the posh bespectacled young gentleman and the "heroic" Mr Polly was analysed with some glee. Some candidates would benefit from developing a vocabulary to deal with the humour in the novel, as this would move their responses to above a middling level of achievement.

Chopin: *Short Stories*. In response to Question 31 the best answers supported their views by close reference to the passages from *The Dream of an Hour* and *Lilacs* and responded personally to what they found upsetting. Candidates generally showed stronger knowledge of the first story than the second. Less successful answers misunderstood the ending of the first story and thought that Louise had died of joy from seeing her husband again. Answers to Question 32 seemed more secure in their knowledge of *Tonie* than *At the 'Cadian Ball*. There were some engaged responses to Question 33 and the selection in general continues to prove both accessible to candidates and thought provoking.

Most candidates made good division of their time between questions. There were relatively few rubric infringements and most candidates tackled both questions. There were, however, some scripts that showed very limited response to the second poem or second story, where appropriate. The quality of written communication was generally high: paragraphing and organisation of argument was often impressive. If there were anything to be avoided in future sessions it would be candidates' adherence to formulaic essay plans and rewriting of a mock exam essays. A willingness to actively engage with the question set and to support views with evidence from the text reaps the best rewards.

2443/7 Pre/Post – 1914 Texts (Coursework)

General Comments

Unfortunate circumstances can arise during the last sessions of a specification. Teachers understandably have their eyes on the new regime and can be distracted from the routines of the current business. Thus more moderators than usual report coursework being sent late, forms not properly completed, cover sheets without centre or candidates' numbers, clerical errors and contents missing. In the present situation this is all understandable but results can become delayed, coursework lost and students disadvantaged.

However, the opposite can also occur and some centres seem to be making the most of the opportunity to choose texts and construct tasks. Keats, Hopkins and Wilde broke into the Browning, Blake and Wordsworth monopoly and prompted some refreshing poetry responses. Some centres encouraged their candidates to explore other texts by Wordsworth and Tennyson from the usual 'Westminster Bridge' or 'Light Brigade'. Some of the former's narrative poetry had been studied profitably and 'Lady of Shalott' and 'Mariana' provided rich material to explore the relationship between language and atmosphere, as well as AO4. The early poetry of Robert Frost also elicited excellent answers and only a pedant might reflect that some of the poetry used was actually first published a month or two after 1914! There remains an issue where Centres combine one pre-1914 poem with a post 1914 in that the candidate may be lured into concentrating on the more modern text at the expense of the other. Consequently both comparative skill and pre-1914 study may not adequately be represented. Many centres have taught students how to use sophisticated literary terminology very purposefully as a tool for appreciating the poem. At all levels candidates are increasingly able to scrutinise at least one or two points of language or structure. In some other cases the terminology is an end in itself and some studies were more like autopsies on poems; forensic dissections that were more in the ilk of 'Silent Witness' than an organic appreciation.

'The Taming of the Shrew' was a welcome addition to the Shakespeare arsenal and threw up clear topics for language and dramatic debate and particularly provided opportunities to apply an understanding of social, cultural and historical issue (AO4) to an analysis of the text. Some moderators were disappointed at how often a task required analysis of merely one scene (usually 'Romeo and Juliet 1.1') and answers inevitably appeared pale in comparison with students who roved across an entire play. In this rather over-used scene the sexual innuendo at least is remarked upon as a language feature, though the candidate who wrote that then "all the Copulates come on" may have gone too far.

Frequently the prose contribution was the strongest assignment, especially where candidates had a sense of genre conventions. 'Hard Times', 'Jekyll and Hyde', 'Silas Marner' and 'Jane Eyre' as well as the Hardy short stories provided good access to the assessment objectives.

Certain questions continue to be asked that divert students from meeting the criteria. 'Who was responsible for the deaths of Romeo and Juliet?' is one such. Tasks which ask what do texts reveal about historical periods are another. Questions beginning with 'How?' are often more productive. "How does the author influence our sympathies for the characters...?" drills further into analysis than "Who is your favourite character?"

2447 generally demands more of candidates in terms of quantity of texts and it is here that much experimentation with different books has taken place. Moderators can sense the relish with which some teachers have taught this specification.

Reports on the Units taken in June 2010

Since the inception of the current syllabus centres have consolidated their tasks and texts, availed themselves of the opportunities on offer and put into place rigorous assessment procedures. Moderators have come to admire the skills and hard work of teachers and the fairness and accuracy with which they have applied the assessment criteria. In the vast majority of cases folders are well constructed, stimulating and accurately marked and contacts with centres have been professional and amicable.

Moderators have remarked on the fine quality of teacher annotations, providing incisive commentary, indicating the application of the assessment objectives and giving much constructive and encouraging advice to candidates. Such students have been truly privileged.



2448 Post- 1914 Texts

There was a small entry, some seventy scripts, for these papers.

Some answers to Question 1 were able to discuss the importance of what is being said as well as dramatic features, but often answers merely treated the passage as a reading exercise. A few attempted Question 2 and it was on the whole well done, with reasonable attention to detail and a recognition that John, though a minor character, is an interesting one.

Better answers to Question 3 showed an understanding of the context of the passage as well as the ability to quote from it; weaker answers tended to paraphrase and stayed on the surface. There were relatively few answers on Question 4.

Better answers to Question 9 were able to address 'strong views'; weaker answers were merely at pains to explain each poem. Question 10 was the minority choice. Again, better answers to Question 11 were able to address 'strong feelings', and weaker answers tried merely to paraphrase the poems.

Question 17 was generally well answered at both tiers; Question 18 was a minority choice, but there was understanding of and response to the Sealy story.

A few detailed and sensitive responses were also seen to Questions 21 and 26. Question 29 was generally well done; candidates of all abilities were able to respond to the terrifying details in the passage and also show some understanding of context.

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