

May 2016 subject reports

English A: Literature TZ1

Overall grade boundaries

Higher level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 – 17	18 – 32	33 – 44	45 – 56	57 – 68	69 – 79	80 – 100

Standard level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 – 15	16 – 29	30 – 41	42 – 53	54 – 66	67 – 78	79 – 100

Higher level internal assessment

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 – 5	6 – 10	11 – 13	14 – 17	18 – 21	22 – 25	26 – 30

The range and suitability of the work submitted

A wide range of works was represented, with most of them suiting the nature of the assessment. For the commentary, the most popular authors included Sylvia Plath, Carol Ann Duffy, Wilfred Owen, Seamus Heaney, John Donne, John Keats, Langston Hughes, William Blake, T.S. Eliot and Ted Hughes. The less frequently chosen authors included W.B. Yeats, Auden, Giovanni, Coleridge, Dickinson, Dawe, Walcott, Stevens, Lorna Crozier and Frost. For the discussion, the most popular plays were by Shakespeare, especially Hamlet, Othello, Lear, The Merchant of Venice and Macbeth. Other plays used included The Crucible and A Streetcar Named Desire. In prose fiction, popular choices included Running in the Family, In Cold Blood, The Great

Gatsby, Things Fall Apart, The Handmaid's Tale, Wuthering Heights, Heart of Darkness and Pride and Prejudice. The Awakening, The Age of Innocence, The Dubliners and As I Lay Dying were also represented. The most popular non-fiction choices were works by Martin Luther King, Didion, Orwell, Maya Angelou and O'Brien.

The works with which most candidates seemed to struggle were by T. S. Eliot, Blake, Stevens, Conrad, Wilde and Faulkner. In addition, Wilfred Owen's "Greater Love" was a challenge for candidates.

Some poems or extracts were far too long – or far too short – for candidates to analyze successfully in the eight minutes. Once again, centers are reminded of the 20-30 line requirement, as stated in the Subject Guide.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A:

As in the past, candidates who demonstrated a genuine sense of engagement with the poem as a literary text performed very well. They explored the content and form of the piece, showing how the two contribute to its meaning (s). They avoided the temptation to see the poem a springboard to talk about matters of biographical, cultural or social context; and they avoided the temptation to lapse into paraphrase and description in place of analysis and interpretation. As one moderator reports, 'candidates who gave a convincing overview of the poem from the outset and proceeded to elaborate on this overview, examining the text and subtext of the piece normally conveyed their knowledge and understanding more convincingly.' However, many candidates continue to deliver pre-learned biographical introductions; these are always unhelpful. Moderators are also concerned that although 'context' is no longer discretely rewarded, teachers' subsequent questions continue to focus on this aspect instead of the poem itself.

Criterion B:

Candidates who showed a clear awareness of the poet's techniques and their effect in shaping and giving meaning to the poem or extract tended to do very well. Overall, however, this remains the most problematic criterion with moderators and teachers disagreeing sharply in their marking. Some candidates tended to see the demands of the criterion as best served through reference to as many literary features as possible. As one senior moderator put it, "Selecting the few that generate the most impact, or play the most significant role, and wrestling with them in some detail, is a key way in which the sense of independent critical response can be generated." In addition, many moderators observed that too often candidates relied on paraphrase coupled with reader response, rather than a clear awareness of techniques and their effects. In some cases, the teacher's subsequent questions failed to focus the candidate on missing details in the analysis. In other cases, some candidates damaged their cause by making judgments that were vague, unsupported or speculative, as exemplified by statements like "this helps the reader to visualise the scene" and "the colour red is usually associated with passion."

Criterion C

There was a wide range in the organizational quality of the commentary. Excellent analyses demonstrated careful arrangement of points or ideas, with candidates progressing through each point with carefully integrated textual evidence to support their interpretations. Such candidates had very effective introductions in which they announced the intended focus of the analysis and they brought the commentary to a meaningful end through a concluding statement, however brief. This independent control of material was further evidenced in the 'body' of the analysis in which candidates produced a deliberate and persuasive response to the poem. However, many commentaries tended to rely on the kind of linear approach that easily invited paraphrase and 'explanation' in place of analysis and interpretation. To paraphrase one senior moderator's report, candidates who organized their ideas around 3-4 broad concepts and who stuck to them were the ones who typically scored higher marks in this criterion.

Criterion D

Most candidates demonstrated adequate knowledge of the work. They knew the plot and characters and discussed them at length; however, many did not explore the implications of the work. As a result, they lost marks for not showing enough 'understanding' of the text. Responses which showed a good understanding of the conventions of the work tended to do well. Still, very often, the quality of the candidate's response very much depended on the kind of questions asked by the teacher. For example, candidates who were simply confined to 'interviews' about the work did not score high marks. Similarly, weak responses were elicited by vague and unhelpful questions like 'What can you tell me about this work?' or equally inappropriate questions, like 'Who was your favorite character?' or 'Which character would you like to hang out (sic) with?' or 'How enthusiastic were you about the beginning of the play?' and so on. In some cases, candidates merely reproduced taught material as prompted by questions like "In class we discussed the underlying reasons why Myrtle (in *The Great Gatsby*) feels compelled to buy a dog. What are those reasons?" Answers to such questions hardly showed the candidate's insights into the work.

Criterion E

Once again, candidate performance in this criterion very much depended on the teacher's questions. Candidates who were engaged in a dynamic and spontaneous discussion about the work as a literary artefact, with the teachers asking pertinent and probing questions performed very well. Their answers were often independent, thoughtful and lively. As one moderator observes, it was unfortunate that teachers' questions often led candidates' responses into "territory that is speculative (e.g. 'What would have happened if Okonkwo had not accidentally killed his kinsman in *Things Fall Apart*?'), unhelpfully personal or subjective or irrelevant (e.g. 'As a person of color, how do you respond to Othello's tribulations in this play?')." Even weaker responses were those that talked about the characters in the works as if they were real people.

Criterion F

Most of the performances ranged from adequate to excellent. The most successful were candidates who expressed themselves clearly, cogently and fluently. However, many candidates seemed unaware that they were sitting an examination, which by definition is a

formal undertaking. Consequently, the quality of their expression was dampened by the ubiquitous use of 'like' and equivalent fillers. Again, some teachers seemed unaware of the appropriate register. In such cases, candidates lost marks needlessly.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

It is important for teachers to be most familiar with all the clerical and administrative regulations for the oral examination. Similarly, schools which continue to ignore the moderators' feedback in previous sessions as well as recommendations in the annual subject reports disadvantage their next batch of candidates. For example, no candidate should have to be handicapped by the teacher's continued use of poems that are either too long or too short. In the light of this, teachers are strongly urged not only to consult support materials available: the Subject Guide, Teacher Support Material and the current Handbook of Procedures. Also useful is attending workshops, consulting various published course books and the online curriculum forums.

As stressed in previous subject reports, teaching close analysis of short texts including poems throughout the diploma course has immense benefits for the student. Special emphasis needs to be placed on examining the different literary features of the text, how they collectively contribute to the meaning of the text and its effects on the reader. To quote one moderator, "Students should be encouraged to delve into elements of the poem that for them are the most significant, not to see them as a formulaic walk through a series of pre-determined check list of points – nor to think they have to cover everything." Equally important is practising doing the oral commentary, with the teacher crafting suitable guiding questions for each text. In the latter case, one question should address the content of the text (e.g. theme) and the other some aspect of the language (e.g. a stylistic feature). For some teachers, it is also useful to remember that pre-set subsequent questions hardly ever help the candidate's commentary. Please note that the Subject Guide requires the candidate to speak for 8 minutes, at which point the teacher should step in - even if the analysis is incomplete - and ask the subsequent questions. Moderators are instructed to take no account of any points made after the 10 minutes have elapsed, however strong.

It is important to distinguish between an interview and a discussion. Whereas it is acceptable to use some of the questions suggested in the subject guide and TSM, using them mechanically tends to limit the candidate's ability to display their own insights into the work. Teachers who are always alert and interested in the response, asking pertinent follow-up questions, enable the candidate to reveal their strengths. To quote one moderator, "Understanding how to make the discussion work for the benefit of the student is particularly important. Questions should be appropriate, responses nurtured carefully and ideally developed, new topics brought up when a particular line of enquiry has been more or less exhausted." Questions which focus on the ways in which people, events, settings and themes are presented in the work and which encourage students to make reference to the literary elements of the text help to produce quality responses. It is therefore important to avoid questions that invite speculation, generalization or simply memorized taught detail. Also, teachers are advised to refrain from asking whether a student was 'satisfied' with the ending of a work; instead, the teacher could ask about the extent to which things are resolved at the end so as to gauge the nature of the student's understanding of the work. Further, it is never a good idea to lead students into discussion about politics or

race relations. As one veteran moderator says, "Doing so removes focus from the text and encourages comments for which no marks can be awarded."

Further comments

Happily, the vast majority of schools adhered to the regulations and thus ensured a smooth moderation of the sample. However, some schools continue to use two short poems for the commentary instead of one; others continue to disregard the rule about the duration of each part of the oral examination, much to the disadvantage of the candidate. Although the majority of schools did an excellent job, others neglected to ensure that the recordings had been fully uploaded and that every sample was audible throughout. This slowed the moderation process considerably. Similarly, schools are reminded to upload a clean copy of the poem or extract for each candidate separately. Forms 1/LIA should be completed fully, with the teacher's comments reflecting the candidate's performance on each criterion. Cavalier comments like 'Fantastic job!' and 'Very impressive!' undermine the spirit of the moderation, which is to ensure that the external examiner understands the teacher's assessment of the different areas of the oral.

Standard level internal assessment

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 – 4	5 – 8	9 – 12	13 – 16	17 – 19	20 – 23	24 – 30

The range and suitability of the work submitted

Almost all the works chosen for commentary were suitable. Amongst the poets, Duffy, Frost, Heaney, Owen and Plath were most popular, but Blake, Eliot, Hughes, Keats, Larkin, , and others, also were chosen. Teachers wishing to study Blake with their students might consider looking beyond *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, which though certainly amongst Blake's more approachable works, leave some candidates at a loss for how to develop full commentaries. At the other extreme, *The Waste Land*, is hardly the most accessible of Eliot's poems. Although candidates demonstrate some sense of the context of the poem and some of its concerns, most are ultimately overwhelmed by the complexity of the text. Candidates are also undone by less obviously difficult poems when they assume these are little more than coded autobiographical revelations, and that it is sufficient to decode the appropriate details of the poet's life. This happens most often with Plath's poems, but Heaney and Owen are sometimes also subjected to this treatment. The task of discussing how the text works, independent of who wrote it, is then neglected.

Shakespeare continues to dominate drama selections. The plays studied most often remain *Othello*, *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*, but some centres opt for *The Merchant of Venice*, *Much Ado*

About Nothing, Anthony and Cleopatra, The Tempest, Twelfth Night and the Henry plays. The obvious extracts from Shakespeare plays are nearly always selected, while interesting, less obvious possibilities are often overlooked. A few centres have studied plays by Tennessee Williams, Mamet or Albee.

Prose was less often chosen. Mostly fiction, selections included *The Great Gatsby, 1984, The Bluest Eye, Pride and Prejudice*, stories by Poe and *The Scarlet Letter*. Some non-fiction was used, such as *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* and essays by Orwell.

Several moderators noted that the range of work offered this year seemed narrower because of the smaller variety of extracts used within centres. It is important that centres follow guidelines (to be found in both the *Language A: Literature* guide and the *Handbook of procedures*) for determining the required number of different extracts to be prepared for candidates, and that they ensure all Part 2 works are used equally.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A

The majority of candidates demonstrated some degree of understanding of the text, generally either by moving through it line by line (particularly in the case of Shakespeare and much lyric poetry), or identifying a series of literary features as a way of explaining that the presence of the feature or its use demonstrates something about the text. ("There are many breaks in the text, which shows Hamlet's confused state.") Many commentaries offered a combination of quotation, paraphrase and interpretation, a combination which sometimes suggested some degree of confusion of purpose and method.

The strongest candidates offered an interpretation of the extract that accounted for all essential details and that investigated nuances of meaning. They consistently derived their arguments from the text itself, rather than attempting to impose meaning on it, as weaker candidates often did. Better commentaries conveyed a sense of meaning as something that they could demonstrate as developing in the course of the extract, and they showed how the parts fit into and contributed to the whole.

More candidates with poems or Shakespeare extracts recognised the need to cite specific textual detail in support of their readings than did those with prose extracts, where paraphrase and generalisation were more common.

Criterion B

To demonstrate a genuine appreciation of a writer's choices, a candidate needs to do more than list the literary devices at work in an extract. Whether or not such a listing is replete with technical terminology, it remains merely a listing. Candidates certainly should be able to identify such features as a speaker's or a narrator's voice, structure, word choice, imagery, pattern, repetition and contrast, but they need also to be able to articulate which choices are most significant in the particular extract, and to demonstrate why this is the case. Few commentaries convey a sense of how meaning is being created and shaped by the writer. Fewer still show a recognition of multiple meanings, or of how ambiguity contributes to meaning and effect. Links

between a stylistic device and meaning, when attempted, are often arbitrary. Many candidates become obsessed with identifying techniques, and they focus very little on what is at work in the extract as a result of these techniques. Few candidates seem aware of the crucial role of the speaker's point of view, both in prose and poetry, in determining meaning. The best commentaries, in contrast, demonstrate not only understanding and analytical ability, but also display a genuine appreciation of what the author has accomplished in the extract. Such commentaries confirm that candidates can indeed be guided to analyse texts closely.

Criterion C

Increasing numbers of candidates are offering an outline at the start of their commentaries. This is helpful when the plan makes sense, and when the candidate actually follows the plan. Plans composed of seemingly arbitrarily selected items - "I'm going to talk about Macbeth's state of mind, images of disease, and alliteration" – do not represent effective organisation, unless the candidate is able to link the different items and to show why these are of primary importance. Candidates who organised their presentations around the discussion of three or four literary features had varying results, depending on the logic of the choices. This approach often led to substantial portions of the extract remaining untreated.

Stronger candidates provide a clear thesis and used this as a basis for organising their points, while still taking care to treat all significant details in the extract. The weakest candidates offer only very general comments, randomly selecting details to address, or ignoring details completely, in favour of unsubstantiated generalisations. Most candidates fall between these extremes. Candidates fare better on this criterion because most of the commentaries are focused, if not always fully planned. Some candidates evidently feel that mentioning what is happening in the poem or passage constitutes a plan. A few candidates offer inordinately long introductions before turning to an analysis of the extract. The tendency of the majority of candidates to use a line-by-line approach in their commentaries, although not always the most effective approach, at least provides a structure, and may force some analysis of particular sections. It can create problems, however, when candidates assume that individual lines are necessarily independent units of thought.

Some candidates are incorrectly allowed to continue beyond eight minutes – some beyond nine – before they are stopped and subsequent questions are put to them. Inevitably, this leads either to an insufficient subsequent question period, or to an overlong recording.

Criterion D

Using appropriate and effective language consistently appears to be the least difficult requirement for candidates. The vast majority of candidates are able to reach at least the 3 level in Criterion D, and there are many more above average marks in Language than in any other criterion. Even those who, to judge by their pronunciation, have been studying in English for a relatively brief time, can usually manage satisfactory marks for this criterion. Fewer candidates now slip into inappropriate levels of language, except in cases of vague colloquial expressions and/or dead metaphors they use in everyday speech ("When Hamlet tries to reach out to his mother..").

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

These recommendations have been made before, as the work of candidates continues to show many of the same strengths and weaknesses from year to year. Candidates should be encouraged to look carefully at the text in front of them, rather than simply trying to recall what they have been taught about it (or worse, seen on internet review sites). For poems, this means considering the complete experience of the poem, and not merely individual images or particular figures of speech and other stylistic choices. The author's choices must be examined in the context of how they contribute to the overall meaning or experience of the poem. Candidates should examine how the speaker's voice and point of view are developed as part of the creative act that is the writing of the poem, and not simply equate poet with speaker, or biographical details with meaning. Prose extracts, too, should not be approached as mere vehicles for the conveyance of information. Rather, they must be examined in the same detail as poems: a focus on narrative voice is absolutely crucial, as well as a consideration of how structure, diction and syntax contribute to overall meaning.

At the same time, the extensive use of critical studies of the texts is probably unhelpful, as it discourages candidates from having, developing and articulating their own responses to the works they are studying. Candidates need to be aware that the study of literature is not a matter of learning what statements are to be parroted back about a text, but rather learning how to articulate and defend their own readings, whether or not these correspond to those of published studies.

Teachers and centres new to the IB are particularly urged to familiarise themselves with Teacher Support Material and to attend workshops, where they will have the opportunity to listen to examples of best practice, and to hear explanations for why these constitute best practice, while other samples do not.

As has been noted repeatedly, candidates need to have had regular practice in oral commentary throughout the course if they are to do well in the Internal Assessment. Oral commentary can be usefully practised in all parts of the course; it does not have to be limited to Part 2 texts.

Further comments

Most centres are following prescribed procedures for the Oral Commentary. A few reminders, however, bear repeating:

- Teachers should note feedback from previous years' moderation and ensure that suggestions are being followed and previous deviations from correct procedure are not repeated.
- Extracts produced by typing or OCR should be checked carefully. Many are sent with uncorrected errors. Please do not assume that any text downloaded from the internet is error-free either. Photographed (as opposed to scanned or photocopied) pages are often difficult to read.
- Centres should have the courtesy to ensure that scanned files are saved with the text upright on all pages.

- All extracts should be line-numbered (beginning at 1), and should be free of notes or indications of act and scene numbers.
- Teachers' comments on the 1/LIA are most helpful if they address the different criteria separately.
- The extract length should generally be 20-30 lines. There are exceptions to the lower limit. Shorter extracts (particularly denser poems, such as sonnets) may be perfectly appropriate. More important than length is suitability. The extract should offer the candidate significant aspects of content as well as technique to treat.
- The upper limit of 30 lines, however, should not be exceeded (certainly not by more than a line or two). The rule is not an arbitrary one. Candidates repeatedly demonstrate that it is almost impossible for them to treat longer extracts in sufficient depth in the eight minutes allotted to the commentary.
- Some centres continue to have difficulty ensuring that the commentary is limited to eight minutes, and that the entire recording does not exceed ten minutes. Teachers should keep in mind that at least two minutes of subsequent questions are expected, and that moderators will not listen to anything said after ten minutes.
- Good Guiding and Subsequent Questions are very helpful to candidates without being too directive. Teachers must avoid Guiding Questions that suggest a certain approach or interpretation, because in such cases candidates can receive no credit for taking up the suggestion. A question such as "What mood is created in this passage?" is preferable to "How does the writer create tension in this passage?" which offers far too much guidance, because it tells the candidate how the extract is to be read.
- Subsequent Questions are most helpful if they return the candidate to a point that would benefit from clarification, further elaboration, a specific example, etc. Subsequent questions preceded by the teacher's own commentary, and efforts to evoke responses that the teacher may have expected but the candidate has not made, are seldom if ever helpful to the candidate.

Written Assignment

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 – 6	7 – 9	10 – 12	13 – 15	16 – 18	19 – 20	21 – 25

The range and suitability of the work submitted

In this first year of combined assessment for Standard and Higher Level, examiners noted a pleasing range of texts studied, with centres increasingly responding to the need for the Reflective Statement to address matters of the work's and the writer's culture and context and for the Assignment itself to have a literary focus. Some centres are still submitting assignments on cultural or sociological topics. There are, in addition, centres submitting work based on the old Subject Guide (which was examined for the last time in 2012: these often head the work

“World Literature English A1”) or where the teacher’s understanding of the requirements is confused. Teachers are urged to make full use of the range of materials available to support them in this: the *Subject Guide*, the criteria, previous reports and the Teacher Support Material, including a film of sample Interactive Orals are_ all on the Online Curriculum Centre, where there is also a very useful Forum. Examiners find it very disappointing when they have to give low marks to a candidate simply because of the teacher’s failure to make good use of the resources listed above: that this has been reported in all recent Subject Reports only exacerbates the feelings of frustration.

Key areas of concern remain, as in previous sessions, in the levels of achievement in Criteria A and C: where examiners often comment that teachers’ failings in interpreting the requirements correctly result in underachievement for their candidates.

Text choice is one of the elements behind a successful Written Assignment. Choosing a work simply because it is short, when it may present real challenges to some students, is a continuing problem, as is the use of dense and demanding works which may be a teacher’s favourite. It is clear that candidates write better on texts with which they can engage and feel they really understand. When using a selection of poems or short stories centres should remember that the work is the whole collection and that some sort of nod must be made towards this if there is to be a good mark in Criterion B. There were few infringements of the requirement that texts be selected from the Prescribed Literature in Translation List; in an ideal world there would be none.

With all this said, some work was of an extremely high calibre and persuasively argued: examiners continue to be impressed by the best work that the candidates produce.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A: Fulfilling the requirements of the reflective statement

Very few candidates failed to upload a Reflective Statement, but sometimes those that were uploaded were not on the text chosen for the Assignment. Candidates who fully understand the nature of the requirement here write with engagement and sensitivity about the specifics of matters discussed in the Oral, confirming the value of the exercise. A number of candidates lost a mark by exceeding the word limit of 400. Clearly some centres are still conducting inappropriate interactive orals, making it impossible to do well here: responses which focus entirely on the work studied and do not bring in anything from beyond it are missing the point: their attention is drawn to the Special Supplement on the Interactive Oral and the Reflective Statement provided at the end of the May 2015 Written Assignment Report for Higher Level. Examiners do not want to know how well individual members spoke or how good their use of power-point was, they want to know how the discovery of details about the time and place in which the work was written, and perhaps something about the author, have an impact on a reading of the work itself. Generalised statements such as “women were oppressed in those days” are unlikely to be useful, unless there is something a bit more factual to illustrate them. Some are very under-informed, even when there is help very close to hand. For example, the graphic novel *Persepolis* has a very enlightening introduction relevant to the Reflective Statement – but few candidates give any indication that they have read it. Sometimes

inaccurate details have been presented in the Oral: teachers should intervene when information is simply wrong. Too much personal reflection on student's own life/circumstances does not generally show understanding of the culture/context of the work. Most candidates are now writing the question stated on p30 of the *Subject Guide*, "How was your understanding of cultural and contextual consideration of the work developed through the interactive oral?" as a heading to the Reflective Statement: this is a useful focusing device. Many examiners note the wastage of valuable words on introductory and concluding paragraphs: an efficient Reflective Statement will identify two or three relevant points of detail about the culture and context of the work and show how knowing this makes a difference to a reading of the work in some way. Candidates who find themselves repeating a good deal of the material from their Reflective Statements in the Assignment have probably got one or the other wrong.

Criterion B: Knowledge and understanding

Knowledge of the works was in the majority of cases adequate, with most marks falling into the 3-4 range. To show real insight the candidate needs to be able to arrive at some conclusion from the body of evidence assembled, to consider "what all this adds up to". Candidates should read through the story or the plot or the superficial meaning of the words to what the work actually means. The work should ideally have been read and re-read, with candidates familiar with their texts on a range of levels of meaning. Some candidates offer quotations but do not contextualize them and thus the point being made loses much of its impact. Summary and narrative rather than analysis remains a hallmark of the weaker submissions. Accuracy of detail is important, too: the Written Assignment is a honed piece of writing and basic factual errors about characters, events and places do not bode well here.

Criterion C: Appreciation of the writer's choices

This remains the criterion for which many appear under-prepared; candidates need more guidance in selecting a topic which invites a high level of achievement in C. Supervised writing prompts are the foundation stone to this. If the topic is focused on "how" something is achieved rather than "what" happens then it appears that the essay will work. Candidates need to demonstrate that they are in some way conscious of the existence of a writer at work, making stylistic choices relevant to the genre. There should be ample brief quotation from the text and a discussion of its features, geared of course towards the chosen topic: quotation used merely to underpin narrative is not of much use here. On the point of genre, far too many candidates write with limited awareness of it. A play will be discussed as though a novel, for example, with focus only on what happens and not how the dramatist has presented it. Particular weakness in this respect is evident in assignments on graphic novels: few candidates discuss anything beyond dialogue in speech bubbles and possibly the voice over, leaving most other features of the genre undisturbed. Always remember that it is the author who makes the choices, not the character.

Criterion D: Organisation and development

The majority of candidates at least offer a clear, if basic, sense of structuring. Lengthy quotation can interrupt the flow of an argument: candidates should select the briefest quotation possible, clearly identifying the key words which create the effect under discussion, and try to incorporate those quotations more seamlessly into the grammar of their own sentences.

The best candidates lay out a clear line of thesis in an introduction and then use that to signpost the way each successive point contributes to the argument, arriving at a conclusion which draws all lines of thinking together neatly.

As in Criterion A, it was disappointing to see far too many candidates exceeding the 1500 word limit. Careful checking and editing should make it easy to lose unnecessary words – thereby often improving the chance of a high mark in Criterion E at the same time.

Criterion E: Language

Most candidates write reasonably well. Areas of weakness include the use of an inappropriate register, whether lax and informal or overblown and purple; insecure grasp of the correct punctuation of complex sentences, with the colon and semi-colon making far too few appearances; and careless or perhaps even non-existent checking or proof-reading.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Examiners cannot emphasize strongly enough the need for all teachers to be fully aware of the requirements for this component, referring to the resources listed above. Good teamwork within departments, supporting new or inexperienced colleagues, is also essential.

Further comments

The comments made above imply much that is not being well done at the moment. However, the examiners would like to leave teachers with a more positive thought. Most candidates, regardless of the quality of achievement and the mark awarded, submit Written Assignments which truly underscore the value of the exercise: in our international context, the opportunity to read and, more importantly appreciate, literature from other cultures is a valuable – indeed indispensable – component of a well-rounded education fit for globally-minded learners.

Higher level paper one

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 – 3	4 – 6	7 – 8	9 – 11	12 – 13	14 – 16	17 – 20

General comments

Both the passage and the poem were accessible and many candidates engaged very well with these. Several examiners noted a marked improvement in this year's responses compared with those of previous sessions.

The areas of the programme and examination which appeared difficult for the candidates

Both the passage and the poem allowed the majority of candidates to demonstrate at least some understanding but, as in previous years, Criterion B proved a key discriminator. Several candidates identified features but didn't go much beyond this. Criterion C also proved problematic for some. Most candidates did refer to the text but there was a noticeable lack of development in some responses.

The areas of the programme and examination in which candidates appeared well prepared

Most candidates seemed to grasp the requirements of writing a literary commentary, and the majority were able to engage with their chosen text and show at least some understanding. Several examiners also noted an apparent improvement in language skills this session.

The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions

Prose

Most candidates seemed to grasp what was actually happening in this passage, and there was some sensitive engagement with the dual identity of Hilola Bigtree and, at the top end, with the natural imagery. Some candidates did resort to a narrative approach and some did impose readings that were not easily supported by the text.

Poetry

The majority of candidates seemed to note the contrasts and comparisons in the poem, and many made sensible comments on how art and craft can be related. At the top end there were some impressive attempts to deal with the ambiguities of 'the listener' and 'some version of herself'. Some candidates did resort to feature spotting and some ignored the more ambiguous elements entirely. As with the prose, there were some imposed readings and some misreadings.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Remind students of the importance of multiple readings of the text, identifying its complexities. The difficult areas are there to be grappled with, not ignored. The time allocated to Paper 1 gives ample opportunity for reading and planning.

Work on how to introduce the essay and the overarching interpretation of the text. This was missing in some of the responses. This clear overview at the start can be a key contributor to a good score under Criterion A.

Students should be trained in how to develop one particular point in a paragraph and to connect it to the previous or following ones showing logical development of thoughts.

Practise unseen commentary frequently, both as class and individual exercises. This could even be broken down so that candidates can practise the opening paragraph or two in which they demonstrate a clear overview, or practise writing a paragraph or two on a particular feature and its effects.

Terms and phrases should be understood, rather than simply deployed, by candidates. Many use literary words without a full understanding of their meaning, their use and their effect. The terms 'symbol' and 'theme' are overused and misunderstood by many. Many students also seem convinced that poems in particular must have some 'message'. This 'message' is rarely articulated and, often, leads them away from an appreciation of the poem on its own merits.

Standard level paper one

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 – 2	3 – 5	6 – 8	9 – 10	11 – 13	14 – 16	17 – 20

General comments

Handwriting was sometimes an issue. Some scripts were very hard to decipher due to the handwriting or poor pens/intermittent ink flow. Black ink should be used to ensure the scripts scan as clearly as possible. Writing on alternate lines is helpful; the writing is easier to read and there is more space to write comments.

The areas of the programme and examination which appeared difficult for the candidates

The biggest difficulty that many candidates had was analysing the stylistic devices and linking them to overall effect. Many could identify these features but lost marks for simply not commenting on them sufficiently. For example, detailed analysis of imagery and its effect and linking it with overall meaning was often lacking. Structural features such as sentence length was often identified, but analysis often got lost in summaries of the general situation. Some candidates offered analysis of stylistic features without substantiating their comments with direct references.

Candidates appeared to find it difficult to integrate into the commentary responses to the guiding questions. Too many either structured their answer into a) and b) sections, some actually writing a) and b) in the margin. Others seemed to ignore the guiding questions completely. Many candidates' scripts lacked organisation. Essays had obviously not been planned

sufficiently, introductions were lacking, there was no sense of a logical sequence of points and there were frequent crossings out due to "false starts" or added asterisked sentences that made reading the scripts difficult.

The areas of the programme and examination in which candidates appeared well prepared

Candidates who had been taught the importance of planning were at an advantage. Good, clear introductions gave them a helpful lead into the commentary and many were able to establish a good understanding with insightful comments here. Indeed, the overall structure of the responses seemed better this year, with a competent use of paragraphs and linking devices, and clear conclusions.

Some candidates had clearly been taught to read and annotate the text carefully, and these commentaries showed insight and a confidence in ranging over the text to gather references and ideas to support points.

The better candidates linked stylistic features to effect and wrote fluent, cogent commentaries. Their responses suggest that they have been taught the value of a very careful reading of the text.

The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions

PROSE

Weaknesses: There was a tendency to paraphrase/explain events rather than analyse/appreciate stylistic features. Often, focus on individual words and their effect was lacking. Although many picked up on the discomfort/awkwardness at the beginning of the passage, many missed elements such as the "looking back in time" idea or the sense of foreboding in the repeated "regret what it started" idea. Relatively few picked up on the idea of time travel and, of those who did, few developed it. Candidates often failed to link the narrator's changing perception of his father directly to events, as specified in guiding question a). Some candidates seemed to be limited by the guiding questions, failing to go beyond them to investigate more subtle elements of the extract.

Strengths: Many candidates had a good grasp of the situation, the relationship between the father and the narrator and were able to identify the narrator's tone and analyse how it developed. Many candidates were able to explore the significance of the descriptive language in the first section.

POETRY

Weaknesses: Candidates tried to make ideas jigsaw together when the poem did not necessarily lend itself to such "linking". Many candidates failed to understand what the term "tone" meant.

Some candidates had difficulty connecting "physical beauty" with the "beauty" in the second half of the text. A surprising number mistook Banff, Alberta for the writer's name.

Strengths: Many candidates saw the link between the two "beauties" and dealt with it very well. Generally, stronger candidates gave excellent interpretations which were fully supported by relevant references, convincingly linking stylistic effects with meaning.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Candidates need to be taught how to plan – too many scripts had no plan whatsoever. They should be taught to allocate time to reading, annotating and planning before they start writing. The importance of a clear and focused introduction and a logical sequence of points supported by cohesive devices needs also to be emphasised.

The idea of analysis of devices and how they are created to craft meaning needs to be reinforced; too many candidates just label features without analysing their effects or linking them to overall meaning.

They need to be warned not to narrate or simply explain what is happening in the text. Too many candidates tend to fall into a narrative overview of events.

The importance of directly referring to the text should be emphasised; some otherwise good analysis of stylistic features were spoilt by no substantiation with specific examples at all, while other weaker candidates simply did not make any direct references but gave vague generalisations.

Candidates need to be taught how to integrate quotes into the body of the commentary; many seemed to have no idea how to do this.

Candidates need to be taught how to manage their time more effectively. Some good scripts lost marks for not being complete or including a conclusion.

Teachers should make a point of advising candidates how to deal with the guiding questions, and how important it is to include focus on them in the commentary but not to structure it into two parts or include a) and b) in the margin.

More work should be done on the importance of punctuation for the cohesion and coherence of the commentary; the apostrophe for possession was frequently omitted.

Higher level paper two

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 – 3	4 – 7	8 – 11	12 – 13	14 – 16	17 – 18	19 – 25

General comments

Examiners remarked that candidates are very familiar with the works they have studied and are also familiar with the nature of the examination itself. Candidates more frequently than in years past make specific reference to the works and often use detailed examples. Also, during the past few sessions, examiners have seen increased attention to comparison, evaluation and the generic conventions of the works. One might wonder, then, why overall results do not seem leap ahead with every session. While there are many possible answers to the question, at the heart of almost any answer is a paradox of the testing situation: while teaching with the examination and the criteria in mind leads to better prepared candidates versed in the requirements of test taking (and less likely to simply miss a necessary element of response), "teaching to the test," even though the test looms on the academic horizon, probably does not increase depth of understanding of the works, procedural knowledge of generic conventions, or the ability to respond thoughtfully to unique questions. Of course, this points to the difficulty of teaching in general and teaching literature in particular. The attention to the details of the examination have assured that candidates understand the rules of the game, but the difficulty of the game means that performance ranges from weak to remarkable.

The areas of the programme and examination which appeared difficult for the candidates

Overall, the candidates are well prepared for the expectations of the exam. The candidates have clearly studied the works and they understand the expectations of the paper in relation to the criteria. Candidates have clearly received direct instruction in organization, comparison, evaluation and approaches to generic conventions. But here is where the candidates run into difficulty. Candidates struggle at times to approach the question and the task in an authentic way. In other words, some candidates have "learned" the texts so well that they are not able to approach the question itself. They spend most of the time struggling to fit set ideas into a new question (the American Dream in *A Streetcar Named Desire* into "flight"). Learning a variety of interpretations of a work does not necessarily lead to the ability to *produce* interpretations in relation to a question. This is a similar problem with evaluation-- good evaluation amounts to evaluative interpretation, to getting at why the question actually matters to the works and to literature, to understanding why the problem might shed insight into the works. Since candidates have learned they must evaluate, some are reduced to the notion of "author x does this better than author y." This arises again with comparison. Candidates throw in words like "similar" when there is only a faint similarity, or "on the other hand" when the subsequent idea does not seem to be another hand. The same might be said for generic conventions. Candidates who have memorized a few key generic conventions struggle to fit these into an authentic answer to a text. What results is some sort of tortuous thesis that says "Williams shows us the exciting force in "Death of a Salesman" through diction, imagery and interesting set design in order to show the false promise of the American Dream" instead of getting at the question at hand ("In *Death of a Salesman* the return of Biff sets into motion...that not only shows tension between the characters but indicates that family itself... "). In much the same vein, a strict structure of organization, while sometimes helpful to students as a scaffold while learning, may not always serve them well in an exam and may take the candidates away from the "content" (the question) at hand.

Another issue in terms of meaning and effect is the tendency for students to talk about the "relatability" of characters. This is an issue with some examiners (and literary critics). While we won't argue the use of the word relatability one way or the other, suffice it to say that many candidates begin and end their discussion of the effect of a generic convention or the meaning of a text with the fact that it somehow "affects" the reader and makes them closer to the character or situation. An opening, for example, might draw us in. A character going through hardship is "relatable" and the audience sympathizes with her. While we may recognize and forgive this sentiment or notion, it can only be a starting point. If sympathy is created we must wonder why and to what ends.

The areas of the programme and examination in which candidates appeared well prepared

Candidates have clearly studied the works and have looked at important themes, issues and generic conventions in the works. Some candidates, in their answers, may reveal a lack of depth of understanding but they have at least learned key elements and have a sense of the task at hand. Candidates are very strong on the plots of various works and the content of whole poems. Candidates also consistently have a broad sense of possible themes, issues or concerns raised in the works they have studied. Examiners consistently remark that the overall quality of exam papers is good and that there are many papers that surprise and delight. Though the examination situation can be stressful and artificial, many of the candidates have read with attention, have understood what is at stake in a literary discussion, and seem eager to share their thoughts.

The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions

1. This was a very popular question and allowed students to look closely at a variety of dramatic conventions and to consider plays as they would be staged. Examiners were advised to allow students some liberty in relation to the word "indispensable." At the same time, the candidates did need to push to how seeing and hearing was important in a work and, by implication, how this was more important or effective than simply reading. Some candidates ended the argument by essentially saying sight/sound is "more effective" or "enhances" understanding. Better responses, however, were clear about how these elements worked to enhance or related to meaning in a way that is different from simply reading about (in stage directions, for example) the sound or sight effect.
2. This was also a popular question. While candidates had a broad definition of underdog and chose some surprising characters as "underdog" (Macbeth?), candidates were also quite successful at making a brief argument for the status of a character and focusing on how attention was drawn to their struggles. The sticking point for candidates tended to be the ways in which a playwright might "draw attention."
3. Most candidates were able to point to a specific thought, action or event and make an argument for how it served as an exciting force. Candidates who were very specific about this had the best results. Broad concepts such as "poverty" may have been more difficult to discuss. The most difficult aspect of the question proved trying to show how the exciting force was significant to meaning as opposed to simply being a catalyst that

leads to one plot even and then the next.

4. This was a popular question in poetry. Candidates seemed to have a wide variety of images to discuss and clearly tied these to thoughts and feelings (of either the speaker, the poet or both). Candidates who use a wide variety of poems often have more success than candidates who stick to only two poems (one from two different poets). These candidates often slip into extended commentary rather than a focus on the question
5. There was some confusion in relation to this question with some candidates choosing to write about death or the “end of something” rather than closure or resolution at the end of poems. Examiners, however, gave some leeway for this interpretation and candidates tended to be successful with a discussion of how poets deal well with either kind of closure.
6. While this was not a popular question, it tended to be one that allowed students to pay close attention to generic conventions such as stanzaic structure, rhythm, line length, etc. Candidates who had paid close attention to how poems are structured and the relationship between form and content, found success.
7. This was another very popular question. Some students struggled to identify a plot twist and those that did, obviously had difficulty talking about how a reader is prepared for the moment. On the other hand, candidates who were attentive to this aspect of the question, did well.
8. Students found a lot of success with this question and dealt with a wide range of works. It was important to get to the narrative significance of flight, though. Some candidates stopped short by simply identifying moments or types of flight. Many candidates, however, easily tied flights to elements such as characterization or important ideas or themes raised in the texts.
9. Candidates tended to take two different routes with this question—some candidates focused on narrators who are themselves interesting “characters.” Other candidates focused on the way in which the narration in and of itself was interesting or idiosyncratic (because it was unreliable, or from a distance, or close to the action). Either approach was accepted by examiners and many candidates wrote well about the distinctive features of these narrators. It was more difficult, however, for candidates to deal with the significance of some of the interesting features observed.
10. Candidates handled this question well. There were at least a few centers that studied travel narratives or autobiographies that involved some sort of dis/re-location and candidates from these centers had a wealth of material to discuss.
11. Too few responses to discuss the question.
12. Too few responses to discuss the question.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

- Generic conventions and literary features should be taught on a need-to-know basis. Candidates always need to approach texts as works of art. As they read and respond to texts they should begin to understand that the moves they are making have names and are part of a literary tradition or that the striking things they notice beyond the story

itself also have names or have interested people in the past. Any way to “teach” conventions without making this learning an isolated exercise is a move in the right direction.

- Many examiners have noted that candidates have difficulty attending to the question. Candidates need practice in reading and understanding the nuances of question. Candidates should also spend less time preparing answers to past questions and more time responding to authentic, problematic, in-the-moment questions that can be generated in class discussion.
- Be careful of formulae for organization. Of course we have a desire to give candidates something to hold on to in order to ensure that “the basics” are met, or to give them the most important keys to the exam. Some candidates clearly follow formulae (particular elements in an introduction, particular parts to a thesis statement, particular features to cover in a body) and are very successful. Just as often, however, a formula can act as a restraint, as a further hurdle to worry about in an exam as opposed to a helpful scaffold.
- Teachers have the greatest effect on student learning. Reading, responding and learning alongside students can act as a model for literary response while at the same time serving as simultaneous professional development.

Standard level paper two

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 – 3	4 – 7	8 – 9	10 – 12	13 – 16	17 – 19	20 – 25

General comments

Candidates had studied a wide range of texts, predominantly from the genres of Prose and Drama but with a slight increase in the study of Poetry. Although *The Great Gatsby*, *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *Death of a Salesman* remain the most popular choices, novels by William Faulkner made a welcome re-appearance and we saw some variety with *Dilemma of a Ghost* and *Anowa*.

Incidence of rubric error was rare but two examples stand out. Despite previous warnings against use of incorrect texts, examiners saw a number of responses using Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House* and penalties were applied. Although it is still rare for candidates to make an incorrect selection of questions, every year there are candidates who have studied Prose yet believe the Prose non-fiction questions are open to them. Not only does this incur a penalty but also the questions are unlikely to suit the genre of the texts, as with the question on how a writer crafts ‘fact and information’.

The areas of the programme and examination which appeared difficult for the candidates

Knowledge and understanding must be offered 'in relation to the question' and careful decoding of a question is vital. Ability to select the best material relevant to the question and the best material for comparison is an issue for some candidates and this does link into how well the candidates are planning their responses and thinking about the implications of the question. More detailed, question specific comment will follow but, in general terms, if a question demands attention to 'key moments, thoughts, actions, events' then the candidate does need to make some sound choices and should indicate these to the examiner quite early on in the response. Regrettably, examiners read answers where the candidates seem to stumble upon what was potentially their most useful material just before they close. A moment of reflection and forward planning is never wasted in an examination.

In selecting material, all questions will require attention to 'at least two' works. For all genres, with the possible exception of Poetry, two is sufficient. An increased number of candidates are attempting to cover three texts. Such responses are almost invariably characterised by a lack of depth when for example, just at the point the response should move into more detailed exploration of how each 'escape' is presented, the candidates begin to introduce a new character and situation, achieving only superficial description. However, with regard to Poetry, if only two fairly brief and readily accessible poems are offered, fulfilling only the bare minimum of the question, then candidates may not be allowing themselves to demonstrate good knowledge and understanding and will be limiting the development that would be possible with a wider range of reference.

The areas of the programme and examination in which candidates appeared well prepared

It might be worth spending some time here in saying that examiners do enjoy engaging with these scripts. Responses at all levels can include some freshly personal observations and insights and this year some questions seemed to encourage this particularly. Q1 saw candidates sharing their own experience of texts in performance and Q7 likewise encouraged candidates to tell us how they had reacted to unexpected plot twists. Whilst this was not always literary criticism of the highest order, it was convincing and suggested that candidates have enjoyed and do benefit from their study of texts. Candidates are well prepared to voice an opinion and that is to be applauded.

The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions

Q1. Candidates are always entitled to disagree with a prompt and several did so, arguing that seeing and hearing was not 'indispensable' and citing, for example, works by Shakespeare where the playwright had used language to feed the readers' imagination and create memorable sights and sounds: Oberon's speeches as he tells Puck where to find the 'love-in-idleness' flower and his description of Titania's bower, for example. Candidates offered interesting discussion on whether one needed to 'see' Banquo's ghost or the invisible dagger

that Macbeth tries to clutch, often concluding that the words alone conveyed the effect. However, most responses concluded that seeing and hearing was 'indispensable' and success in handling the question was determined by how effectively the candidates had explored their chosen 'key moments'. The best responses selected only one or two 'moments' from each play and offered appreciation of the holistic experience; the interplay between the visual and aural effects of the drama, with the language of the text. 'Understanding of key moments' was an important phrase in this question and candidates did need to not only describe the techniques employed but offer some thought on what the playwright needed us to understand about the selected key moment. There were some superb answers using *Amadeus* and *Equus*. Weaker answers tended to identify various sound or lighting effects, often in great quantity, but not to tie those effects to a 'key moment' and such responses narrowed the scope of the question and often took on a 'listing' quality. It was also a little problematic when candidates referred to particular productions they had seen on stage or in film, if they were not distinguishing between an effect specified by the writer or an embellishment from the producer.

Q2. A good choice of 'underdog' was essential and a brief justification, delineating how the character was presented as 'downtrodden' was helpful in supporting the choice. The thrust of the prompt was towards consideration of how playwrights might direct our attention to the overlooked characters that are deemed inferior and show how they can come to the foreground and 'have their moment'. It was often focus on a secondary character that was most appropriate, such as on Lucky in *Waiting for Godot*, with attention to the significance of his monologue. Generally, though, candidates were better at establishing what was oppressing their chosen underdog than they were at considering how they were given a voice and a 'triumph', however minor. Laura from *The Glass Menagerie* was a good choice, and there were plenty of potential underdogs from *Death of a Salesman*. Opinion was divided as to whether it was Blanche or Stanley that had 'underdog' status in *A Streetcar Named Desire* with candidates arguing from both sides, drawing on Blanche's attempts to assert class-based dominance over Stanley, with her refinement set against Stanley's determination to be 'King' in his own house. Several drew attention to Blanche's 'I want magic' speech, which gives her a temporary 'triumph' before it is crushed by Stanley's relentless insistence on reality and his 'triumph' not through 'voice' but by asserting his physical presence.

Q3. The chosen convention here was 'catalyst' and to support candidates not familiar with the term this had been elaborated on to describe 'exciting forces', actions, thoughts, events working to begin the central conflict. This question proved the most popular as it suited virtually all of the texts studied; most candidates could find a conflict and suggest what had sparked it. The very best responses offered clearly defined points in the drama where a situation of underlying tension was inflamed by the introduction of a new force. Some candidates opted for a broader approach, such as asserting that the force driving *The Crucible* was 'McCarthyism' or the force driving *Master Harold and the Boys* was 'apartheid'. This thematic approach had some validity but led to predominantly 'ideas-driven' responses which closed down opportunities to consider moments of high drama, such as the point when Abigail discovers the power she can wield through her accusations and the change in atmosphere and tonal quality after the phone calls from Harold's mother.

Q4. This was by far the most popular Poetry question, as might be expected, through candidates' familiarity with the term 'image'. Yet this question was not without its problems and

it did appear that many candidates used the term 'image' quite loosely. There were some candidates who did not get down to the detail at all but took the whole poem as an image in itself – *Drummer Hodge* as an 'image' of a hasty battlefield burial; *The Road Less Travelled* as an 'image' of a road that was, well, 'less travelled'. The best answers selected and close-analysed poems that were rich in descriptive language, which made appeal to the senses and employed the aid of figures of speech, simile, metaphor and personification. Of course, the question wasn't just asking for a list of good images and candidates did need the extension into 'how' such images had conveyed 'the thoughts and feelings of the speaker'. Clarity as to what those 'thoughts and feelings' might be was essential and this did require delivery of some overview of each of the chosen texts. *Havisham* was a popular and very good choice of a poem where striking imagery conveys the very strong feelings of the speaker.

Q5. This was a less popular choice, which was surprising given that so many poems have their strongest and most memorable lines at the end. Although the question did direct candidates to look at 'the means by which closure or resolution is achieved' there was, at times, slight distortion in that some candidates selected poems that were about 'endings' and looked at how a poet explored death or perhaps a departure. Examiners did accept this, provided that 'closure and resolution' had been considered in some form. The sharpest responses homed in on 'the means' and offered close study of how the work had built up to the expected, or unexpected resolution.

Q6. Many candidates opted for this question but dealt only with the prompting quotation, the more general notion of 'designing with words'. The heart of the question came in the following sentence where candidates were directed to compare 'ways in which' poets have 'given structure to their poems'. Almost everyone who did this question successfully chose poems where the structure was clearly identifiable; although there is no reason why 'free verse' could not have been used. Candidates opted for sonnets from Shakespeare, modified sonnets from Wilfred Owen (although not all candidates did recognise these poems as 'modified'), poems in ballad form and poems delivered as dialogue. One candidate who had recognised that '*Shooting Stars*' had adapted the form of a psalm and made connection to the content of psalm 147 wrote very well, also connecting structure and content by noting that *Drummer Hodge* was written in common meter, appropriate to a memorial for a common man. Success in response to this question varied, usually dependent on the amount of accurate and telling detail the candidates could draw on, for example, a reference to '*The Thought Fox*' which considered how the fox moves 'Across clearings' in a sentence which moves across two stanzas. Very pertinent to the topic of designing and planning with words was Robert Frost's '*Design*', although not all candidates appreciated the use of Petrarchan sonnet here.

This was a question which did require the candidates to know and understand something concrete about different poetic forms. If a candidate announces that their chosen focus is sonnet form, they do need to know how a sonnet works, not merely by naming the octave and sestet but offering some sense of how the poet might have exploited the convention, perhaps to introduce a problem and provide a resolution or provide a change of direction with the volta. Too many candidates merely counted the lines and provided the letters of the alphabet which may, or may not, have corresponded to the rhyme scheme. Analysis of metre was largely problematic.

Q7. This was a popular and readily accessible question in that most candidates could identify an intriguing plot twist. Again the question required attention to ‘the ways’ in which the writer prepares the reader for a turn of events. There were some very good responses drawing on *1984*; exploring how Orwell sets up the oppressive and all-pervading presence of Big Brother, paired with examples of Winston becoming less cautious. Another text that worked well here was *Oryx and Crake* with some perceptive study of Atwood’s characterisation of Crake and aspects of Snowman’s narration. One common misinterpretation from candidates who had not read the question carefully was that the notion of ‘plausibility’ was omitted from the response and candidates focused exclusively on the ‘twist’ itself, writing quite assertively that it was unexpected, shocking even, and unwittingly arguing the reverse of what the prompt had suggested.

Q8. Candidates who kept focus on a few good examples of ‘flight’ fared much better than those who tried to cover multiple examples. Examiners were prepared to accept a wide variety of interpretations of what might constitute an ‘escape’; the character didn’t have to physically run, a desire to escape social pressure by asserting individuality was one interpretation and a desire to escape a harrowing past in order to find peace of mind was another good choice. However, the question demanded focus on ‘the means by which such flight is presented’. There were some good responses using Jane Eyre’s flight from Thornfield Hall and Sethe’s flight from Sweet Home, drawing on the use of setting, images of physical deprivation and imagery from nature. Generally candidates spent a disproportionate amount of time in establishing what the character was running from as opposed to the presentation of the flight itself and this was a weakness. Focus didn’t have to be on a main protagonist; candidates using *The Great Gatsby* found good material in examination of Daisy and Myrtle as they try, and fail, to escape their marriages and the constraints of their social classes.

Q9 This was the least popular of the Prose questions and proved problematic for candidates who had not read the question carefully enough. Yes, the chosen convention was narration but here specifically the narrator’s ‘voice’. Too many candidates tried to deliver prepared material on the narrator’s reliability or otherwise, without saying anything about the narrator’s characterisation or the means by which a distinctive voice had been crafted. Some good responses included discussion of the highly differentiated voices in *As I Lay Dying* and the child’s voice in *Huckleberry Finn*.

Q10, Q11 & Q12 Too few candidates attempted these questions for comment to be reliable.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Promoting understanding of the conventions of the genre must be an integral part of all teaching. All too often candidates will respond to only the content-based or the ideas-based part of a prompt and they neglect the crucial ‘ways and to what effect’ or the ‘means by which’ aspects of the question. These phrases are intended to generate focus on literary concerns appropriate to the genre and it is much to the detriment of the response if they are neglected. Better attention to the terms of the question will certainly improve performance under Criterion B.

Another way in which teachers can support their candidates is with thoughtful choices of texts. Whilst it is laudable to wish to introduce candidates of modest abilities to weighty and complex classics, such choice does not always serve them well in an examination situation. We see many candidates achieving very well on this paper through study of more accessible and manageable contemporary works or collections of short stories. Moreover, candidates must be equipped with a choice of texts that enables meaningful comparison. Whilst there may be a scholarly paper which argues Vladimir and Estragon were based on Algernon Moncrieff and Jack Worthing, comparison between two texts as different as, for example, *Waiting for Godot* and the *Importance of Being Earnest* is not easy and candidates writing on poorly linked texts often find that the comparisons which can be drawn are overly simplistic or rather unconvincing assertions.

Criterion E is another area where improvement could be made, not so much in terms of technical accuracy but with greater attention to appropriateness of expression and clarity. Previous reports have drawn attention to use of idiom and slang and the problems are still present. Candidates should be encouraged to communicate with their examiner more effectively and with greater precision. A candidate writing, 'Biff has issues with his father' may have faultless understanding of what those issues are but the examiner will only know that and be able to give credit if the elaboration and clarification of 'issues' is offered. Even the best answers contain 'throwaway' lines such as, 'Everything comes together in the final act,' leaving the examiner to work out just what the 'everything' might be and which part of the final act the candidate might have in mind. General allusion to themes studied in class might well have significance to the candidates who know what they were taught about 'the American Dream', 'the power theme' or 'the appearance and reality theme' but to gain full credit here some extension to demonstrate to the examiner exactly what is understood by such terms and how such matters are presented in the texts is necessary. Examiners will always endeavour to meet candidates on the ground they choose to occupy but the occasional signpost is welcome.