

Level 1/2 Certificate

Living Texts

OCR Level 1/2 Certificate Living Texts **J945**

OCR Report to Centres June 2014

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This report on the examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the examination.

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B931 Analysing Texts

General Comments:

This June, 14 centres entered their candidates for the Analysing Texts unit. The entry was very encouraging as the quality of the responses adequately met the assessment criteria and the consistency of marking indicated that centres had been able to meet the requirements of this relatively new specification.

General Admin

This was excellent overall. Folders were submitted on time and were all well presented with detailed annotated comments making the moderation process much easier. In many cases the annotated comments helpfully referred to the assessment criteria.

Generally there was clear evidence that internal moderation had taken place and on this entry it was not necessary to make any adjustments to the marks for the unit. Marking was generally consistent and centres had been conscientious in their application of the assessment criteria.

Centres demonstrated a clear understanding of the specification and responded appropriately. Teachers are to be complimented for their hard work in delivering this component, and their conscientious approach and consistency of standards was reflected in the quality of work that was submitted for final moderation.

Comments on Individual Questions:

The diversity of texts that had been chosen was reflected in some of the original and interesting responses of the candidates. Interestingly this year some centres had chosen media texts ranging from the humour of Black Adder to the war time speeches of Winston Churchill. In addition there were responses to a wide range of texts which were clearly of the candidates own choosing. Centres should be reminded however that their choice of text sometimes prevents candidates from making the sustained and convincing response that is expected of a Band 1 or Band 2 candidate, especially when there is a requirement to make precise and perceptive references to detail from the text. This year some centres were only just within the accepted tolerances of OCR because of this lack of detail, and centres need to be aware of this in the future if they are to avoid having their marks scaled accordingly.

B932 Recreating Texts

General Comments:

In this third year of the Living Texts specification, it is pleasing to see that Centres are becoming more aware of the manifold opportunities it offers. Folders from candidates of all levels of ability were seen this Summer, and it was especially pleasing to see that, given the varying abilities and interests of different groups, worthwhile and enjoyable work could be offered at all ability levels.

Assessment was, in the main, very sound, with most Centres offering thoughtful marginal annotation on work, and helpful summative comments carefully linked to the assessment criteria. Clear evidence of cross-moderation (with some very worthwhile noted discussions) was present in most work from larger Centres. One Centre, perhaps influenced by the similar task at Advanced Level, had also allowed a measure of reflective self-evaluation from candidates at the end of pieces: this was generally insightful and often much more critical than the teachers' view.

Increasingly, Centres had allowed more free choice to their candidates, and almost invariably this produced more individual, more personal work. Where a decision had been made to contrast a piece of travel writing, say, with a novelistic text, candidates seemed to be more confident in inhabiting pieces which they had chosen personally, and it was refreshing after reading an entire Centre working in the style of Bill Bryson, to encounter Centres where a variety of writers – from Celia Fiennes to Jeremy Clarkson - had been studied and a free choice offered: style nuances became more closely followed, with pleasing results.

Travel writing offered candidates the opportunity to use their own experiences in a pithy and amusing way: the experience of moderating such work was highly enjoyable.

Teachers have clearly also found ample resources in Reportage collections: similarly, in Centres with a tradition of offering meaty literary fare even in the middle years, Gothic writing and the Victorian novel inspired a number of candidates to heady creative flights. One especially good practice a number of Centres are following is to allow candidates to enclose a one-page sample of their stimulus text alongside their finished piece: this helps to show the accuracy and insight of many recreative pieces. Even candidates of limited ability respond with vigour to stimulating writing: astonishing pieces were provoked by *Frankenstein* and Biblical texts.

The co-teachability of this specification alongside year 9 work or GCSE, or even with younger candidates, shows in the vigorous and warm responses it evokes to core GCSE texts, with witty and thoughtful stylistic forays into Steinbeck and extra scenes for familiar plays, including some striking Shakespeare.

This specification is rooted in the idea that close study of literary material is simply fun – the growing interest in this specification shows that centres are seeing it as a worthwhile add-on to more conventional English Courses. Long may this continue.

B933 Comparing Texts

General Comments:

In this unit candidates develop the skills of analysing texts that they have acquired for unit B931 by producing a comparative and extended study of two texts, drawn from a variety of different genre. The submission, which is marked holistically out of 40, comprises two elements: a written study and a presentation.

The selection of appropriate texts for candidates to compare is obviously crucial in the success of this task. The specification makes clear that 'in selecting texts candidates should be encouraged to develop their own interests'. An element of personal choice in one or both of the texts being compared is something that a coursework unit makes possible and is very much in the spirit of this qualification as a whole. Where centres do facilitate such choice the degree of informed personal engagement with the texts was evident in the candidate work presented for moderation. These candidates were often the ones who were able to demonstrate the levels of perception and insight required of Bands 1-3 of AO3. Some centres did enable an extremely wide degree of student choice in text selection with an impressive range of texts being studied. The way these choices were supported and facilitated by teachers demonstrated real possibilities for differentiation in a mixed ability group too, with the most able candidates being encouraged to tackle challenging texts and topics and less able candidates being directed to more straightforward text pairings and tasks. This approach also encourages wider reading as candidates can make their choices by sampling different kinds of text, thus broadening the range of texts and text types that candidates encounter in the course.

Some centres adopt the approach of having two or three 'core' texts that all candidates study and a much wider list of other texts from which a comparative choice can be made. If there is differentiation in the challenge offered in both the core and secondary texts then really tailored text choices can be made. One centre working in this way had *Measure for Measure*, a selection of poems by Seamus Heaney and Malorie Blackman's *Noughts and Crosses* as the core choices. Such is the range of genre, period, language, theme and challenge in this grouping of texts that it opened up huge possibilities for comparison with other texts. This seemed a really effective way of working as it allows both whole-class teaching and learning of the core text and candidate choice and autonomy in relation to the secondary text.

Other centres approached the text choices through the study of a particular theme or sub-genre. One centre focussed their work around dystopian texts, both fiction and media texts. Within this theme a really varied set of text combinations were offered.

When, as an alternative to this way of working, centres submit work where all candidates have completed the same task on the same two texts there is inevitably a high degree of 'sameness' in the responses. It would be very difficult in this context for candidates to demonstrate the individual perspectives, insights and creativity of thought made possible in the ways of working described earlier. On the most basic level students cannot have learnt as much by encountering the unit in this way.

In the specification for Living Texts it points out that the texts studied for B933 must be of sufficient quality and substance to support detailed study and analysis. 'Substance' can relate to issues of quality but also relates to length and challenge. As was pointed out in this report in June 2013 and was the case again this year, some work submitted by candidates did not fulfil this requirement. Obviously in the context of a 1000 word response it is going to be necessary to select which parts of the text are going to be discussed in the comparison, but to focus the study around a single short story or a poem and a single scene from a film, without any reference to the context in which the story/poem/scene exists is too narrow.

The written work for B933 should be seen as the outcome of study in which students have encountered some substantial texts and, in the words of the specification, 'demonstrated their ability to explore the ways in which texts link and connect with each other'.

It is also important in the written work to balance the discussion in this comparative study between the two texts. For those candidates awarded marks in the top bands it is expected that equal treatment of each text is given.

The mark scheme also makes clear that close illustration from the texts, with detailed references and quotation are a feature of higher band work.

The other element of this unit is the presentation. This presentation should be based on the study undertaken for the written work. Out of the 40 marks available it is suggested that 10 marks are available for the presentation. It is important that the presentation be based on *the study* for the written work rather than the written work itself. In other words the presentation should develop out of the learning undertaken for the written work rather than merely being a spoken version of it. The most interesting presentations emerge from themes and ideas encountered in the unit and enhance understanding by further research. For example the candidate who in their written work compared Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* with the Alex Garland screenplay/Mark Romanek film of the same, focussing appropriately on the dystopian world of human cloning, broadened out the focus in the presentation to discuss representations of school in various films, comparing treatments that idealised and those that demonised. The presentation included clips from YouTube in a PowerPoint presentation. An activity such as this offers so much more potential for the student, and potential interest for the audience, than merely describing the points of comparison between the original texts.

Centres are asked to include, in the work submitted for moderation, details of what constituted the presentation, in what circumstances it was delivered and how the candidate performed. One centre devised a single sheet *pro forma* that was attached to the all written work with headings to describe the above. This was invaluable at moderation in justifying the marks awarded.

Centres are also reminded that written work should be teacher annotated in some detail with appropriate references made to the mark scheme. Where candidates in the centre have been taught by more than one teacher there should be evidence of cross-moderation between those staff.

In terms of administration it is important that the appropriate J945 Unit B933 coversheet (CCS/B933) is fully completed for all candidates. In this session many candidate numbers were missing as well as incomplete descriptions of the work undertaken. In some cases the marks written on the cover sheet did not match those submitted electronically. These clerical errors are time consuming to resolve. Please also ensure that work is securely attached by using staples or treasury tags rather than paper clips. Work should not be sent to moderators in bulky plastic folders.

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations)
1 Hills Road
Cambridge
CB1 2EU

OCR Customer Contact Centre

Education and Learning

Telephone: 01223 553998

Facsimile: 01223 552627

Email: general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk

www.ocr.org.uk

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