



## **Level 1/2 Certificate**

### **Living Texts**

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

## **OCR Report to Centres June 2015**

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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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## Level 1/2 Certificate

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#### OCR REPORT TO CENTRES

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## **B931 Analysing Texts**

### **General Comments**

This June there were 13 centres that 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. Marking was generally consistent and centres had been conscientious in their application of the assessment criteria.

### **Response to texts**

The diversity of texts that had been chosen on this entry was reflected in some of the original and interesting responses of the candidates. Some of the texts used this year were Churchill's war time speeches; *Of Mice and Men*; *Harry Potter*; the poetry of EE Cummings; *Wuthering Heights*; *Macbeth*; Boris Johnson's party conference speech; *An Inspector Calls*; *Animal Farm*; *The Crucible*; *Sherlock Holmes*; Eddie Izzard's comedy; *Great Expectations*; *Graham Greene's the Fallen Idol*.

There were a range of interesting and original responses, and it was encouraging to see that centres had enabled candidates to pursue some of their specific personal interests. There were a large number of sustained, confident responses with most candidates showing that they were able to make relevant reference to their chosen texts.

### **Summary**

Generally this was an impressive entry, and 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.

## **B932 Recreating Texts**

### **General Comments**

This year's entry was universally worthwhile, and contained some very witty and sometimes highly perceptive work: at its very best, folders were of a remarkably high standard. There was pleasing evidence that some of the exemplar material and suggestions offered by the Board over the past year have sparked some new approaches. We would still like to see more diversity of textual stimulus, especially in centres with a smaller entry: unusual texts both spark lively responses and give more evidence of teachers' own enthusiasms, but we can see that resourcing this course does depend on the range of books already available in a centre's bookstore.

### **Tasks**

It could be seen this year that some classic texts (especially authors such as Hardy, and Robert Louis Stevenson) can provoke some very atmospheric writing - and some faith based schools have used challenging scriptural materials with quite remarkable results, in terms of the evocation of tone and communication of message. As was observed last year, centres who allow students to incorporate their own life experience into, say, travel or descriptive work tend to get more varied and better results. This year students offered graphic and sometimes entertaining travel writing covering the globe, from County Durham to Nigeria. It is important that pieces offer a diversity of writing experiences: two journalistic pieces, say Charlie Brooker and Bill Bryson should not be set together because such an overlap decreases the opportunity that the component offers to students.

### **Assessment and Clerical errors**

Annotation to assist the Moderator in coming to an agreement with the centre marks was almost uniformly good, with evidence of constructive cross-moderation from larger centres. A slightly worrying increase in incorrectly reported marks on mark recording forms was noticed. Marks need to be double-checked before submission to the Board.

There is a pleasing sense that centres are 'growing into' and making more creative use of this specification, and the enjoyment of students is clearly communicated in their writing. This is a very welcome continuation of a good start to the specification, and it is to be hoped that it may soon be more widely acknowledged to be an excellent way of adding value and creative focus to literature studies in the middle school year

## B933 Comparing Texts

### General Comments

Unit B933 involves candidates studying two texts, of any genre, and exploring connections and relationships between them. These texts must be, in the words of the specification, 'of sufficient quality and substance to support detailed study and analysis by students at L1/2'. The specification also reminds centres that this is an 'extended study' of up to 1000 words as the outcome of a suggested 35 hours of study. This written work is supported in the unit by a presentation which seeks to build on the ideas developed in the written work. The mark awarded for the unit is holistic, combining both the written element and the presentation. The specification also makes clear that in the selection of texts, at least one of which must be different to those studied in B931 and B932, students should be encouraged to 'develop their own personal interests'.

The unit represents therefore quite a high level of challenge for teachers and candidates alike. Many centres respond to this challenge with great effectiveness and enthusiasm. What tends to characterise the work of the most successful centres is where candidates are involved in the selection of texts for study and are given some choices as to the focus of their comparative study. Some centres organise this by teaching a 'core' text to the whole cohort and then enabling candidates to choose their own second text from a range of alternatives. This approach works very well as candidates can be guided toward comparisons that are likely to appeal to their particular interests. It also allows for differentiation in terms of levels of ability. This approach makes the whole study more exploratory and individualises the responses. Moderators often comment on the levels of engagement and enthusiasm generated in responses where candidates have been enabled to be a part of the text selection process. This approach does offer the opportunity to develop the candidates wider reading too. Some centres in this session had more than twenty different texts and pairings represented in the study for this unit, ranging from very accessible young adult fiction to texts that offer a degree of challenge right at the top of what might be expected at Level 2, such as Alan Bennett's *The History Boys* and Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. Much of this work was really impressive. Involving the candidates in these choices of text and task is one of the opportunities that a coursework unit offers. It also enables different opportunities for delivery of the unit with candidates working in a supported self-study capacity or in small groups.

Less successful approaches are where there is seemingly no element of choice in text or task, and the whole cohort answer the same question on centre-prescribed texts. These questions tend to resemble the type of question candidates are likely to encounter in an exam context and the responses have a strong degree of sameness, deriving, as they are likely to have done, from whole-class delivery by a teacher. This approach seems to limit the degree of engagement and original thought relative to that demonstrated by the very similar candidates in centres that organise their approach to the unit differently. The specification does have a very flexible attitude toward what kinds of text can be used in the three units. It would be perfectly acceptable, for example, to have candidates gather their own group of media texts on attitudes to war and conflict to use comparatively with the whole-class taught World War 1 poems that have again proved a popular text choice this year. Or to study the poems alongside a contemporary film dealing with issues of war and conflict.

As was mentioned earlier Unit B933 is intended to be an 'extended study'. That implies that the written work is developed beyond a single comparison of a short extract from each text. To merely base the written work on short paragraphs, often right from the start of two texts, is to limit the potential of the unit. This approach produces work that would be more appropriate for Unit B931. Similarly to treat a selection of poems as containing many different 'texts' and have

candidates fulfil the requirement to compare texts by discussing the relationship between two poems is against the spirit, and the rubric, of the unit.

The presentation element of the unit is an opportunity for candidates to develop ideas raised in the written work. As has been mentioned in these reports for previous sessions, to have the presentation merely replicate, in a spoken form, that which has been explored in the written work doesn't seem to exploit the potential of this element. The most successful approach to the presentation is to take a theme or idea from the studied text and to explore that idea in other contexts. For example candidates from the centres that used Carol Ann Duffy's poems *Stealing* and *Education for Leisure* in the written work could do some research on social exclusion and present on ways in which young people have, say, turned their lives around. Or they might do a presentation on how young people are represented through the voices in these poems and in other texts/media. As the mark for the presentation element is part of the overall mark for the unit as a whole it is important that centres provide, with the sample of work for moderation, some details about what constituted the presentation, how and where it was performed, and the level of achievement shown by the candidate. Some centres in this session produced their own *pro forma* to record what happened in the presentation. This was really helpful at moderation and helped justify the marks for the unit awarded by the centre.

Much of the teacher annotation and summative comment on scripts was really detailed and informative. These comments are most helpfully a combination of the language of the mark scheme and teacher judgement. It is important that the sample for moderation is marked in detail with some evidence of internal standardisation evident. Please can centres ensure that all candidate details are included on the coversheet, which should be securely attached to the work with a treasury tag or staple.

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