

**GCE**

**English Language & Literature**

Advanced GCE **A2 H473**

Advanced Subsidiary GCE **AS H073**

**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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## F671 Speaking Voices

### General Comments:

Centres and candidates have benefited from the specification having run for a number of years and therefore the scripts indicate that they are usually able to apply a judicious selection of the required combined linguistic-literary approaches. Candidates that 'scan' the transcripts and locate heavily occurring features in the Transcription Key are prone to making instant 'conclusions' about the nature of the discourse that can hamper development of analysis. The material provided as passages A and B in Section A, or as 'cue-quotation' and supporting passage in Section B, gave ample opportunity for candidates to demonstrate what they had learned. In Section A, relevant references to 'elsewhere in the novel' needed to be supported with a quotation or a very detailed illustration to enable the candidates to engage with language, otherwise they could achieve little reward.

The best answers were those which applied knowledge of language and of literary forms in a discriminating way, with candidates realising for example that 'dominance' theories of spoken language would not be helpful in exploring a co-operative conversation such as that between Bea and Karen in Q.1. Answers which depended on labelling words and phrases – "this premodified noun phrase" / "with this declarative utterance" / "Paddy uses this interrogative utterance" – were undermined when such labelling was inaccurate. Even an accurate display of knowledge about language will not earn many marks if it is not tied closely to the nature of the interaction and thematic concerns of the question paper.

Good answers adopt an approach which integrates linguistic and literary elements. They also take an integrated approach to coverage of the skills categorised by Assessment Objectives. For example, "*critical analysis of ways in which structure, form and language shape meanings*" (AO2 – the dominant AO in Section A) cannot helpfully be separated from "*application of relevant concepts and approaches from integrated linguistic and literary study*" and the accurate use of "*critical terminology, appropriate to the subject matter*" (AO1).

Similarly, AO3 is the dominant Assessment Objective in Section B. Its twin requirements – to "*use integrated approaches to explore relationships between texts*" and to "*analyse and evaluate the influence of the contextual factors on the production and reception of texts, as appropriate to the question*" – cannot be met without the application of AO1 and AO2 skills.

Bearing this in mind, Centres might want to consider that, as has been evident in previous years, the single most difficult aspect for a number of candidates was how to integrate useful comment on "*the influence of the contextual factors*" into their Section B answers, especially on *The Child in Time*. It may be that the social and/or ideological climate of the 1980s is too recent to allow evaluation to be made; and 'potted' versions of the decade offered in the media are unlikely to be helpful. Centres and candidates are well-advised not to prepare and offer large quantities of assertion about 'Thatcherism', unemployment or the Miners' Strike, or any other supposedly significant aspect of the time in which the novel was conceived, written and published as these usually do not allow the candidates to evaluate the influence on the narrative methods employed by the writer. The question paper will provide more reliable material which needs to be related in terms of the language as well as content to the extract and wider novel.

Centres and candidates will want to practise and internalise good habits. The detailed published mark-scheme for each question indicates a range of fruitful approaches. It may also help if candidates know what to avoid, and actively practise NOT doing the following:

- making repeated assertions that interaction or lexis is formal/informal without any textual support or exploration
- making imprecise use of terminology, e.g. syntax/lexis/register used interchangeably,

- with no clear reference to any relevant examples
- setting themselves the trap of confusion/conflation over accent/dialect/idiolect/sociolect

This is a technically demanding paper which requires a range of integrated linguistic-literary skills and good knowledge of two set texts.

## Comments on Individual Questions

### Section A

In Section A, candidates had to select one question on one text: *Oranges are Not the Only Fruit*, or *The Remains of the Day*, or *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha*.

#### Question 1: *Oranges are Not the Only Fruit*

A conversation between two women in their early twenties over lunch in which they share feelings about buying presents for Christmas, was paired with the extract from *Ruth* in which Jeanette returns home at Christmas after a number of years away.

The most successful answers revealed:

- careful reading of how speech style is used to construct and reveal emotion and character
- accurate specific reference to features of language and interaction
- productive application of linguistic approaches to an analysis of Passage B
- apt references to relevant moments elsewhere in the novel, mainly concerning her mother's control and judgemental behaviour
- sensitive reading of the interaction between Bea and Karen as warm and co-operative, with an appreciation of how features of spoken language such as non-fluency construct meaning.

Some answers took an approach which depended on cataloguing features of spoken language, and an attempt to 'prove' that Passage A was spontaneous. Such lines of argument did not take discussion very far. The laughter, pauses and overlaps in Q1 were sometimes mis-read as a mix of discomfiture, uncertainty or other tensions between the speakers. Similarly, although knowledge of theories can shed light on some interactions, the evidence in the conversation between Bea and Karen was not that interruptions showed a power struggle, but rather that overlaps were supportive, showing mutual understanding and a sense of humour. This might usefully have been contrasted with the tension between Jeanette and her mother in Passage B, although astute readers would pick up on the evidence of shared understanding and the way Jeanette's narrative creates humour at her mother's expense. Many candidates clearly view the mother as a monster and while there is tension in the extract (not quite the outright aggression located by many), plenty of candidates focused well on the child-like quality of mother, set against the more mature voice of the narrator at the end of the novel deflecting insults rather than rising to them, and challenging the mother in pulling the angel down. Many candidates developed these observations to focus on the perceived hypocrisy of the mother in a variety of ways (drinking port and the swift dismissal of the Lord to get to her presents). The way in which the mother is brought somewhat down to earth in the extract was well exemplified by some candidates.

#### Question 2: *The Remains of the Day*

The common theme of the two passages was the failure to condemn Hitler and the issue of "deliberate blindness" on the part of Professor X and Stevens. Candidates wrote well about the loyalty of Stevens to Lord Darlington and the way this prevents him from acknowledging any

truth in Mr Cardinal's views, appreciating how this stems from Stevens' role as butler. They were less secure in exploring the ways in which the Lawyer and Judge show mutual understanding of the role of Professor X, often making assertions about the likely power and desire for control expected in a court of law.

Successful answers revealed:

- good knowledge of the situation in the novel, making relevant reference to other episodes (the dismissal of the Jewish maids, conversations with Miss Kenton) and to the themes of dignity and butler-ing
- careful reading and understanding of the dynamics of interaction between Stevens and Mr Cardinal, referring to other times when Stevens feels uncomfortable (for example in bantering with Mr Faraday)
- an appreciation that Stevens is defensive and takes refuge in platitudes, contrasting this with the good intentions and urgency of Mr Cardinal
- analysis of specific lexical/grammatical items which construct levels of formality – for example, Stevens's regular references to his father in the third person
- well-developed discussion of how features of the lawyer and judge's language create a collaborative indictment of Professor X
- attention to the figurative language in the extract from the novel and its use in the court room (and its contrast to the usual formality/need for concrete evidence).

Some candidates were inclined to read into the exchanges in Passage A emotions and disagreements which were at odds with the evidence, making assertions based on their assumptions about the relationship between the Judge and the Lawyer in the courtroom. The overlaps, pauses and raised volume were taken for power struggle, uncertainty and aggression.

### **Question 3: *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha***

A 'conversation' between Grant, a researcher, and two young males about how they deal with confrontation was paired with Paddy's attempt to prevent an argument between his parents. Whilst some candidates still wished to focus Paddy's supposed maturing through the course of the novel, they were able to relate this episode to other moments of such conflict and Paddy's naivety. However, they still found it difficult to analyse accurately Doyle's methods in constructing Paddy's speaking and narrative voices.

Successful answers revealed:

- thoughtful understanding of the context of Passage A, and consideration of how even though each speaker might have a slightly different agenda both might be 'satisfied' by the interaction
- careful reading of detail, such as the young men's non-fluent pauses as they try to formulate responses which do not reveal them as weak and the difference between lexical terms of low frequency and non-standard English
- secure understanding of the interaction between Paddy's parents in usefully linguistic terms
- making use, for example, of 'Face' theory and the use of declaratives to avoid real communication
- exploration of the details of the narrative commentary given by Doyle to Paddy here and elsewhere in the novel, for example with reference to other moments of parental conflict and Paddy's relationship with his friends
- detailed and accurate attention to specific elements of language use, such as the way Nik and Ross support each other and the attempt at using humour to deflect any sense of weakness at the end of the exchange.

As with the other Section A questions, some candidates tended to assume there would be conflict and attempts at dominance in both passages, and then to look for possible evidence of (for example) floor-holding strategies. Grant's supposed dominance was often located, while too much was made of the opening line as the 'start' of the discourse to 'evidence' Nik's 'aggression', when it is clearly already in flow. It is always safer and more profitable to start with the evidence and build a reading of the passage.

One potentially interesting feature in Passage A was the way Grant used declaratives and imagined scenarios to elicit feelings about confrontation from Nik and Ross.

The features of emphatic speech – the raised volume represented by CAPITALS and the stressed sound/syllable(s) represented by underlining – tended to be over-interpreted and seen as signs of hostility or distress rather than as perfectly normal features of natural speech. This may have been a result of modern usage: “stress” nowadays generally connotes an emotional state rather than a prosodic feature; and, by the conventions of ‘netiquette’, capitals are perceived as ‘shouting’.

## Section B

As in Section A, candidates had to select one question on one text: *A Handful of Dust* or *The Child in Time* or *Persuasion*. The selection of texts was more balanced in this session than for many of the previous papers, with all texts attracting a substantial number of answers.

### Question 4: *A Handful of Dust*

The task in this question was to *examine ways in which Waugh presents conflict between life in London and life in the countryside* in *A Handful of Dust*. The cue-quotation offered the conversation involving Tony and John Andrew waiting for Brenda at the railway station. Passage A was an article from *The Children's Newspaper of July 1933* and Passage B an article from the “Country Life” section of a weekly newspaper published in September 1936. Successful answers revealed:

- clear engagement with the question-focus and ready reference to instances in the novel of conflict between life in the city and in the countryside
- careful reading of the cue-quotation, paying attention to how Waugh constructs meaning in direct speech by using a variety of utterance types
- understanding of Waugh's satirical style, and how he allows characters to condemn themselves in the dialogue
- some relevant comparisons with Passage A in terms of its views about London, some candidates seeing it as reflecting Brenda's desire to live there and others contrasting its reference to “absence of fuss” to the chaos caused by her affair, and between Passage B and John Andrew's enjoyment of country pursuits and subsequent tragedy
- thoughtful use of the between-the-wars Bright-Young-People context.

Some candidates picked up the “conflict” theme in the question, but applied it more generally to the action of the novel rather than concentrating on the city/country dichotomy. Although such an approach led to some less relevant discussion, it was better than the method of ‘front-loading’ the answer with lengthy assertion of connections between Waugh's personal life and divorce and his presentation of Brenda and Tony, or inaccurate potted history of the 1930s – the First World War, the Lost Generation, the General Strike, and the Suffragette Movement.

Discussion of the relationship between the novel and Passages A and B was disappointingly short of understanding of style and point of view, missing the nuances of Waugh's humour (irony of the stationmaster's comments about Sam Brace's wife) and the challenges to expectations

about London and country in the given passages. The reference to Polly Cockpurse as 'Monkey woman' triggered in many candidates the idea that London and/or the country were populated with animalistic behaviours, and where exemplification was sound much of this commentary could be rewarded.

However, the contrast was well-understood in terms of ideas, and there was a wealth of references to other parts of the novel where Tony and Brenda's attitudes reflect the contrast between country and city: Tony's love of Hetton and Brenda's response to the death of John Andrew.

There was some very impressive textual knowledge, and examiners were delighted to find obscure textual detail used to illuminate connections, for example the names of the rooms at Hetton, Mrs Beaver's reaction to the roof collapse (seeing it as another opportunity to make money) and that Tony's quest leads him to the discovery of a different jungle.

### **Question 5: *The Child in Time***

This question invited examination of *ways in which McEwan explores ideas about coping with loss in *The Child in Time**.

The cue-quotations offered an extract from the end of Chapter 1 when Stephen comes home to discover that Julie has left their flat and then just before the birth of their second child at the end of the novel where they remember Kate.

Passage A was the opening of an article published in a journal of psychology in 1989 in which the authors are investigating what they believe to be mistaken ideas about how people cope with loss.

Successful answers revealed:

- clear engagement with the question-focus, and accurate reference to a range of examples of loss such as the separation of Julie and Stephen and the attempt by Charles Darke to regain his lost childhood and Thelma's loss after his death in the novel
- relevant examples from the novel of McEwan's narrative methods, appreciating that the novel is often subtle and metaphorical/symbolic, and that the cue passage is similar in its use of water related imagery as well as its approach to time
- analysis of genuinely significant details from the cue-quotations and the change which has taken place in Stephen as well as in his relationship with Julie by the extract from the end of the novel
- detailed attention to the conventions of discourse in Passage A, exploring for example the use of general/impersonal nouns and the tone created by reference to what is "expected" and the "requirement of marking", comparing this with the approach taken by Stephen and, to a lesser extent, Julie. An awareness that Passage A was itself questioning ideas about how people cope with loss indicated high level responses
- awareness of the prevailing political orthodoxies of the 1980s in the UK, taking care not to over-simplify or to assume that the political always invades the personal. There was still a tendency for candidates to include poorly-understood generalisations about the 1980s, many of which were just wrong and unhelpful, and which tended to take over the agenda of the answer.

The cue-quotations for these Section B questions are designed (as are the supporting passages) to give candidates extra help, but they need to be read carefully in the examination.



### Question 6: *Persuasion*

This question invited *examination of Austen's presentation of manners and correct behaviour*, and the cue-quotation was the account in Chapter 9 of Captain Wentworth's visit to Uppercross Cottage; Passage A comprised three brief extracts from letters written by Sir Walter Scott in 1815 and 1816.

Successful answers revealed:

- clear engagement with the question-focus and understanding of the way Austen's views are reflected in those provided by Passage A
- well-chosen examples and quotations from elsewhere in the novel: the initially pleasing manners and behaviour of Mr Elliot contrasted with those of Admiral Croft and priorities of Sir Walter and Lady Russell and what they reveal
- judicious comment on Austen's narrative method, including how she uses "free indirect discourse"
- some detailed attention to the context and lexis of the cue-quotation, for example the attempt by Captain Wentworth to "recollect himself" and the way the encounter "deprived his manners of his usual composure".

Many answers offered an outline of the social context, more or less related to ideas of what might constitute manners and correct behaviour in Austen's time but often failing to link this to the way Austen presents these as being problematic. There were many responses which were unrelated to the question and were either paraphrases or lengthy references to how characters interacted with each other. The concept of manners and correct behaviour was not always grasped in the context of *Persuasion*. The views expressed in Passage A caused some confusion, with some candidates asserting that Sir Walter Scott disapproved of a requirement for good manners, misinterpreting the statement about Mr Blore being "unaffected in his manners."

## F672 Changing Texts

### General Comments:

There has again been some interesting and effective work submitted for Unit F672 'Changing Texts' in this session, its last full outing. As usual a wide range of literary texts and their multimodal adaptations have been studied by candidates. It is always pleasing to see texts being explored that have not appeared before and this was again the case this year. The most successful candidate work does seem to come from those Centres who encourage their learners to be involved in the selection of texts for study. This selection does, of course, need to be guided by teachers as candidates given complete freedom of choice can come up with pairings that are not as productive for analysis as they might be. For example the tendency of some candidates to start with a favourite or admired film/TV series and then look back to the often not well known literary text on which it was based rather inverts the specification requirement that candidates study a 'substantial literary text' that has given rise to a related multimodal version. It is almost certainly best practice that the detailed study of the literary text should precede consideration of the multimodal version. One way of facilitating this kind of study is the approach taken by several Centres again in this session to have all candidates study a 'core' text that has given rise to multiple multimodal adaptations. After this study has been undertaken then the range of adaptations and approaches aimed at different audiences and purposes will allow candidates to develop focused and individualised responses in Task 1. Shakespeare, Chaucer, Jane Austen and Conan Doyle were all used effectively in this way. Overall the best text choices for Task 1 are pairs of texts in which the multimodal version not only *re-tells* but *re-imagines* the original text: that is a new text in which multimodal forms of storytelling are more than just a means of delivery of the narrative, but work to confer new meanings on the text – both the multimodal version and in how an audience subsequently thinks about the original work.

Task 1 requires candidates to explore the language of their studied texts drawing on concepts and approaches from integrated literary and linguistic study and to use a range of critical terminology. It is the case that there is variability in levels of success in how candidates fulfil this requirement. What is clear is that unless candidates are explicitly taught how to engage in close language study and how to employ the accompanying linguistic and literary terminology then it is very difficult for them to fulfil these AO1 and AO2 requirements. The absence of such analysis and terminology makes it impossible for work to be assessed as being in Bands 4 or 5. Where candidates were confident in undertaking this kind of analysis – which is, after all, the kind of approach that is essential for success in the examined units F671 and F673 – the precision of the Task 1 responses and degrees of insight were very impressive. Detailed language analysis (AO1 and AO2) enables thoughtful and interesting things to be said about the relationship between the texts and the factors that have influenced the multimodal version (AO3).

Task 2 requires candidates to produce their own multimodal text as a re-creation of the original text, or part of the original text. The most successful work emerges from discoveries made in the Task 1 study. Having understood how the studied multimodal re-imagined the source text for a new audience and purpose candidates should be in a good position to plan and create their own multimodal adaptation in this light. It is important that the text for this element makes use of at least two different modes. Much of the work submitted was genuinely multimodal – graphic novels, film scripts and storyboards and the like - but some text types that have persisted in popularity in Task 2 such as dramatic monologues are scarcely multimodal forms when they contain very little indication of how a performance might work visually or aurally or contain any other mode than the spoken voice. The warned-against tendency in this unit over the years of some candidates to produce physical artefacts (tea-stained scrapbooks, collages, wooden caskets containing objects relating to a character's life etc.) did feature again this year. It is very difficult to see how work of this kind can be assessed against the AO4 criteria. The work submitted should be paper-based and be a multimodal re-imagining of the source text. For the

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small number of centres who will be submitting work in May 2016 for this unit there is lots of advice on the best approaches to this element of the submission in previous Principal Moderator reports and in the really helpful resource labelled *Units F672 & F674: a Guide to AS and A Level Language and Literature Coursework* in the Support Materials section of this website.

## F673 Dramatic Voices

### General Comments:

Centres had given considerable attention in preparing candidates for the specific demands of the paper. Candidates showed some ability in applying a range of critical and interpretative skills to the specific texts. There was some clear evidence that candidates were able to adopt the necessary integrated approach in their answers; so meeting the twin demands of literary and linguistic study. General textual knowledge of each of the six plays was satisfactory. The passages and set questions proved to be reasonably accessible to most candidates and provided clear opportunities for a range of responses. A number of candidates were able to respond to the paper with considerable critical and interpretative rigour.

Successful responses included one or more of the following:

- detailed close analytical reading of the passages in Section A
- avoidance of repeating material used in Section A in Section B
- ability to use a reasonably wide range of linguistic/literary terminology
- selected and focused contextual comments
- selected and focused address to *dramatic importance* in Section B
- some idea of what constituted *dramatic voice* in Section A
- some idea of what constituted generic features in the texts
- clarity of written expression and an academic approach to written analysis in both answers.

Less successful responses included one or more of the following:

- a narrative reading of the passages in Section A
- repetition of contents and ideas used in Section A repeated in Section B
- limited and often very inaccurate use of linguistic terminology
- contextual material which was not well integrated and often drawn from text-book glosses
- narrating general features of the plot in Section B
- focus on describing characters in Section A
- little understanding of what constituted generic features in the texts
- insecure written expression and a limited method of academic written analysis.

### Assessment Objective One

In Section A many Candidates were able to comment upon and analyse a range of linguistic features to support the evaluation of the various dramatic voices in the texts. Frequent comment was made upon Adjacency pairs, face theory, Grice's maxims and issues linked to gender language. In addition a number of responses were able to illustrate particular discourse strategies in the writing. In Section B the demand for *close reference to...language* was much less evident. Centres should be reminded of the weighting of this A0 in this Section of the Paper. When reference was made, the exemplification of specific linguistic features in the chosen Section B texts was often technically inaccurate. Centres are reminded that this important issue was dealt with in some detail in two paragraphs in last year's Report.

### Assessment Objective Two

Candidates who focused on dramatic effects and dramatic action in Sections A and B produced some developed responses. They were able to discuss interactions between characters and the potential audience and give instances of what created specific generic characteristics in the texts.

In some quite mature answers this led to comments on the playwright's technique and some basic ideas about staging and stage directions. Candidates who did not grasp the idea of the texts as performance, produced responses which tended to categorise dramatic works as examples of prose narration rather than dramatic productions. This led to answers which were often predominantly summative in their contents.

### Assessment Objective Three

In a number of candidate responses this proved quite problematic in assessing. The more focused and pertinent work concentrated largely upon what contexts were generated by the language and ideas within the texts themselves. These could be linked in a meaningful way with broader social and basic ideological aspects evident in the drama. This met the question's demand to respond to *features... most significant in your study of the play*. As described in detail in last year's Report on performance, the least successful answers simply bolted-on a range of contextual features in very digressive and occasionally lengthy paragraphs. This material, drawn from general textual glosses, did not usually satisfy the particular literary or linguistic aspects of the text which was being studied .

### Comments on Individual Questions:

1. Some candidates demonstrated:
  - in *Volpone* close critical attention to the meanings of the language in the passage
  - the subtle interactions between characters as a deal is made
  - the likely contextual impact of the aside on line 49
  - in *Glengarry Glen Ross* The wide range of discourse features in the passage
  - the complexity behind completing a deal and the emotional input of the salesman
  - the range of specialised and idiomatic language used by the speakers.
  
2. Some candidates demonstrated:
  - in *As You Like it* close critical attention to the meanings of the language in the passage
  - the way Touchstone parodies courtly love
  - the background importance of the forest setting as a contextual feature
  - Jaques role as a moral reflector
  - in *Arcadia* the mixture of phatic and informational dialogue
  - differences in gender language between the two female characters
  - the symbolic importance of the apple as a contextual feature.
  
3. Some candidates demonstrated:
  - in *The Revenger's Tragedy* close critical attention to the language in the passage
  - Vindice's attempt to bring Gratiana to repentance and the conflict between morality and violence, which presages his own death
  - a tendency to give narrative account of Vindice's role in the drama
  - in *The Lieutenant of Inishmore* descriptive explanation of the events in passage
  - basic comments on the banality of the dialogue and the extraordinary dramatic situation
  - basic comments on the Hiberno-English syntax.
  
4. Some candidates demonstrated:
  - a sound grasp of the concept of winning and losing in both plays

- an almost universal omission of reference to the sub-plot in *Volpone*
- limited understanding of the unethical and illegal activities in *Glengarry Glen Ross*
- in *Volpone* over emphasis upon cultural generalities about Venetians/Machiavelli
- in *Glengarry Glen Ross* over emphasis upon Reaganomics in 1980's USA.

5. Some candidates demonstrated:

- very clear understanding of the two settings and relevance of such to question in AYLI.
- how order/disorder was reflected in the complexities of relationships in the text of AYLI
- the importance of the resolution of the two opposites in the conclusion of the play
- tendencies for too much intrusion of Elizabethan politics into contextual comments
- in *Arcadia* a tendency for some answers to include almost every dramatic issue as relevant to the question
- selective analysis and reaction to issues of entropy and Fermat's Last Theorem.
- the importance of the inventory of objects at the conclusion of the play.

6. Some candidates demonstrated:

- in *The Revenger's Tragedy* secure knowledge of the conventions of revenge drama
- how the drama has satirical purpose and cynical morality throughout.
- the quality of some of the dramatic language, especially as delivered by Vindice
- tendencies to introduce extraneous issues concerning Elizabethan politics
- in *The Lieutenant of Inishmore* the comedic aspects of the plot and the characters
- how the political aspects of the text are embedded within conventions of theatrical absurdism
- some over-generalised/misunderstood comments on recent Northern Irish political history.

## F674 Connections Across Texts

### General Comments:

This unit is well established, with many Centres that have been submitting work since its start. The work submitted this year was very much in line with that from previous sessions, with an interesting range received from a wide variety of centres. As in past years, there is a slight issue with some candidates getting involved in the subject matter of their texts and thus moving away from literary and linguistic analysis. The focus should always be on ways and means in order to allow candidates to demonstrate analytical ability. In Task 1 this usually means that candidates who ask themselves a question with a trigger word in it ('how' or 'with what effects') move much more quickly towards hitting AO2 than those who want to move in through theme.

### Task 1

One of the joys of the unit is that it ensures that a wide range of challenging texts is submitted. Although these tend to fall into patterns such as those texts which have never quite been the literary canon (Alice and a Modest Proposal, for example), there have also been interesting excursions into more modern texts that are perhaps not canonical because of subject matter or form. It is always good to see Centres trying at new things and looking to challenge candidates to examine in detail texts that they may not have thought of as having particularly literary qualities.

Some Centres allow their candidates free rein, with each submission making use of a candidate's free choice of texts. Others are more directive, with one, or even all texts, selected and taught by the Centre before candidates set to work on their own writing. Neither method is better than the other, though Centres that follow the second route have to be aware that candidates can end up making the same argument and using the same examples in their work in Task 1. This can make it difficult to assess the originality of work, particularly when awarding marks in the top bands.

Centres that allow their candidates free range, on the other hand, can find that the texts chosen are not particularly suitable, and it is important for the unit that candidates understand the nature of the "accepted literary canon" before they make their choices about the substantial text for Task 1. Although a free view is taken of the idea of canonicity by the moderating panel, if the candidate chooses something that is very obscure, he or she must do the work during the essay to demonstrate why it sits outside the canon and for why this particular text might be thought of as 'influential or culturally significant.'

In this session, a number of Centres seemed to have side-lined (or forgotten) the requirement of the specification that candidates should deal with spontaneous spoken language. It is possible to do this through discussion of scripted language (just), but only if candidates engage with how this scripted language is a manipulation of the conventions of spontaneous speech because it uses few of the commonest aspects of spoken language such as hedges or fillers, for example. Similarly, at times some candidates could perhaps have been reminded that even if they were not dealing explicitly with literary texts (travel writing, for example) some of the techniques that might be applied to literary analysis could also prove useful here. Thus, at times, one element of AO1 was unduly neglected.

## **Task 2**

These tasks allow candidates to respond in a more creative way to the texts that they have studied earlier. For the most part, candidates showed that they were able to write in a variety of forms and to engage an audience in an appropriate way. The sorts of work reviewed were widely varied, with monologues and newspaper columns proving popular again. Commentaries often showed that candidates were able to step back from their work and give a clear account of some of the decisions they had made in order to create effective pieces. Descriptive commentaries did not, however, do very well: it is important that there is close analytical focus if these pieces are to rise to the higher bands.

## **Administration**

Centres generally annotate the candidates' work with close attention to the bands and the Assessment Objectives, and in the majority of cases this leads to great accuracy in the awarding of marks. The annotations are very useful for the moderators because they enable the team to follow the course of a teacher's thinking and to see how an internal moderation process has taken place over a number of sets. Work that is scantily marked presents the moderator with the challenge of starting from nowhere, and this sometimes leads to conclusions quite distant from the Centre's evaluation.



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