

English Language & Literature

Advanced GCE A2 H473

Advanced Subsidiary GCE AS H073

Report on the Units

June 2009

HX73/MS/R/09

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

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F671 Speaking Voices [Closed Text]

General Comments

It is always difficult for Centres and candidates to adapt to the changed requirements of a new specification. Performance on the first May/June F671 paper provided ample evidence of careful preparation, but also demonstrated the height of the step up from GCSE to AS level.

In each of Sections A and B there was a choice of three texts, with one question on each. The overwhelming majority of candidates chose to answer on *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* in Section A; and most chose question 4 (*The Great Gatsby*) in Section B. A smaller but significant number did *A Room with a View* or *Wide Sargasso Sea*. The numbers of candidates doing question 1 or question 3 (*Surfacing* or *Hawksmoor*) were smaller still, but all texts stimulated interest and engagement. Teachers are to be congratulated on not allowing fear of Assessment Objectives to destroy literary appreciation, and on inculcating in their students a working knowledge of basic linguistic concepts and approaches.

Individual candidates often perform better on one question than the other. The script evidence suggested that this was more a matter of time management and examination technique than an indication that they were finding either Section A or Section B more difficult. Most candidates did Section A first – though there is no absolute requirement to do so – but it was interesting also to see groups of candidates who had decided on the opposite strategy.

The Assessment Objective weightings for the Unit mean that AO2 is dominant in Section A, AO3 in Section B. However, there will always be significant overlap between the AOs, and a competent integrated linguistic/literary approach is likely to include aspects of AO1, AO2 and AO3 in virtually every relevant comment.

The following comments on responses in this session should provide helpful guidance to those entering in subsequent sessions. Reference should also be made to the published mark-scheme for an indication of appropriate response in terms of the Assessment Objectives.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A

Since Section A questions are passage-based, it should actually be easier for candidates to maintain a focus on relevant textual detail in this Section than in Section B. A sensible strategy would be to make substantial annotation on the question paper while reading the passages: this would enable candidates more readily to support points with appropriate reference. Many answers, however, made *general* points about the ‘speaking voices’ in the passages and the novel without citing (and therefore without being able to *analyse* and *evaluate*) *specific* features of language.

The question-wording invites candidates to *compare the construction and effects of the speaking voices* in a piece (Passage A) of transcribed spoken English and an extract (Passage B) from their chosen novel. The bullet-prompts remind candidates to consider

- features in Passage A which are characteristic of spoken language
- how features of syntax, lexis and register produce distinctive voices in these two passages
- ways in which the writer uses speaking voices in Passage B and elsewhere in the novel.

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Construction refers to the key constituents of language – in the words of AO2, *the ways in which structure, form and language shape meanings*. The first two bullet-prompts direct attention particularly to features characteristic of *spoken language* and features of *syntax, lexis and register*.

Effects refers to the impact of language choice on audience – which may be listener, viewer, interlocutor, reader. The third bullet-prompt directs attention particularly to the (variety of) uses of speaking voices in the novel as a whole, and candidates should find plenty of scope to explore both narrative and dialogue.

There is no expectation of a set formula for addressing the question, nor is there a fixed proportion of credit for response to particular elements. Most candidates tended – as might be thought likely – to start with Passage A and the first bullet-prompt, with more developed answers beginning to make cross-references between the passages and the novel as they progress. But there were good answers which started with the novel and then ranged confidently across aspects of the two passages in order to make comparisons.

The danger of beginning with the novel as a whole is that such an approach risks discussion which is too general. Candidates are likely to have in mind a number of examples from their chosen novel of ‘typical’ aspects of voice: Christopher Boone’s tendency to simple declaratives which state the obvious (“The dog is dead”); Nick Dyer’s grim and/or humorous ‘asides’ to the reader (“*Let alone, puppy, let alone* was my Thought as I measured him up for his shroud”); the disarming uncertainties and contradictions of the narrator in *Surfacing* (“I wonder how I feel about that ...”). Such examples should provide a helpful starting point for any discussion. Some answers, however, moved from these specific examples of *voice* to much less helpful generalities and assertions about character and psychology, poorly supported by the text, and in some cases quite untenable.

It may be a safer strategy for most candidates, therefore, to begin with Passage A and spoken language. Sometimes this will be interactional speech, and sometimes it will be wholly spontaneous; sometimes it may be monologic or semi-spontaneous.

Teething Troubles

The Report on the January session identified some fundamental difficulties which Centres and candidates had experienced with this Unit, which it is worth reproducing here:

Candidates have to get over the first hurdle, which is to realise (and remember!) that *voice* in Passage B and elsewhere in the chosen novel is a *fictional construct*, whereas the spontaneous speech in Passage A is someone’s more-or-less natural utterance. So it is not helpful to write of the speaker(s) *using* (for example) fillers, repairs or micro-pauses: these might be features of their spoken language, but they *construct* voice rather than the other way round. Similarly, it is almost always unhelpful to identify “errors” in spoken language as if it were an inferior version of written Standard English.

These are things which candidates will become more adept at handling as they are exposed to more recorded or transcribed speech. Similarly, practice will allow them to become more comfortable (and more accurate) in employing (AO1) linguistic/literary terminology and the associated concepts.

Amongst terms which caused problems this session were the following:

- formal/informal – register and levels of formality are a continuum; so, rather than asserting that an utterance or passage is formal or informal, it's much more helpful to identify and explore the features that might determine a position on that continuum. In addition, lexis and syntax may be pulling in opposite directions in terms of formality. Christopher Boone's *lexis* is often so simple as to register quite low on any scale of formality, yet his *syntax* is extremely stiff and inappropriately over-formal
- lexical/semantic field – candidates regularly asserted that the speaker in Passage A was using a particular semantic field when what they meant was *field-specific lexis*. Issues of *semantics* (and *morphology*) will be of interest in some passages: no-one remarked, for example, on how Dr Spergel in Question 2 uses the lexical item *microwave* as an adjective to pre-modify the noun *sky* whereas in 'normal' everyday parlance it has *narrowed* in meaning to denote a kind of oven
- idiolect/sociolect/(occupational) dialect – candidates wanted to characterise features of Julian-the-architect's utterance (Question 3, Passage A) in terms of *something-lect*, but struggled to find evidence that would allow them to do so; and they struggled also with all speakers to make distinctions between *speech sounds (accent)* and *lexical* features.

Question 1: *Surfacing*

The narrator's rather incidental account of her first meeting with Joe was paired with Jatinder and Sarbjit talking about their arranged marriage and describing their first meeting at a motorway service station.

Some candidates picked up the notion that the context of this conversation – the couple's video-diary – might suggest some preparation on their part; and the most astute readers found support for such a view in the absence of overlaps/interruptions. It was possible, and entirely acceptable, to interpret the many features of co-operative speech (see mark-scheme) as evidence that the couple had told this story before and were in a sense a semi-rehearsed double-act 'performing' to the video-diary audience.

However, some candidates made less tenable assumptions of a cultural nature (AO3) on the basis of the arranged marriage, arguing that Jatinder was dominant and Sarbjit submissive, or that some utterances (*nothing to do with me then*) were bitter or sarcastic. Perhaps candidates were expecting that humour would be signalled by paralinguistic clues and cues such as laughter. In any case, careful attention to features of syntax, lexis and register yields much stronger evidence of good humour and co-operation: *both* speakers use tag questions to involve and seek the agreement of the other, and both move comfortably between first, second and third person pronouns to talk to and about each other:

JATINDER: I just started babbling on didn't I (.) I said you know I (.) sometimes I had these weird dreams and you thought (.) she thought

SARBJIT: I thought he said wet dreams

The extract from *Surfacing* could hardly be more different in tone and emotional content. Astute readers noticed the fine detail of paralinguistic features in the exchanges between the narrator and Joe, Claude and David, and the most sophisticated answers recognised that Atwood was playing with issues of politeness strategies and phatic communion (or their absence) in conversation (*I say, to David because it's his car*).

Most candidates had plenty to say about the narrator's speech and narrative styles and their effects, but struggled to analyse *construction*. For example, none commented on the use of the present tense in the extract and elsewhere in the novel. And few could explain how Atwood adds to our perception of David by having him speak like a 'hick' American with non-standard ('incorrect') use of reflexive verb and determiner. Yet these are students who probably laugh knowingly at the utterances of Clitus the Slack-Jawed Yokel in *The Simpsons*.

Question 2: *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*

Christopher's account of being driven to the police station and displaying his knowledge of astronomy was paired with a transcription from a television programme in the BBC TV science series *Horizon*.

The main speaker was Dr David Spergel, professor in astrophysics at Princeton University; he was explaining the importance of the WMAP space mission in investigating how the universe began. Well-prepared candidates recognised that there were features of spontaneous natural speech in Dr Spergel's utterance, but realised also that the context (AO3) of an expert talking to an interested audience meant it was likely to be at least semi-scripted.

The mark-scheme provides many examples of features of language which candidates might with profit have identified and explored. It was disappointing to see how often they managed the former (identifying hesitations, repetitions, false starts and repairs, for example) without seeming to see the need to move on to the latter (analysing the constructions and evaluating the effects). There were therefore many answers which reached Band 4 competence without moving on to Band 5 development.

Discussion of *syntax* was certainly a weakness. Many candidates used the word as an all-purpose term, covering almost anything, from the conventions of transcription to the (purported) 'simple' sentence structure of Christopher in Passage B. It may be that close analysis of grammatical/syntactic construction is the most difficult thing for candidates to understand in the first year of A-level, but they do themselves no favours by making wrong assertions about sentence structure and then flailing wildly about in an attempt to explain or exemplify their point.

The old adage is wise advice: when in a hole, stop digging. Better still, don't start by digging a hole. Start with what is actually in the passage on the question paper. Credit went to those candidates who argued (correctly) that Dr Spergel's utterances in passage A are far from unstructured: *we're looking out at the oldest light in the universe (.) light that last interacted with matter only three hundred thousand years after the big bang (2)* This is highly structured language, with repetition of *light* being here a feature of rhetoric rather than of non-fluency. Astute readers saw that pauses were often to allow a piece of information to be absorbed by the viewer/listener rather than to allow the speaker thinking time or pause for breath. The most developed readings noticed the syntactic patternings/repetitions for rhetorical effect (*we've learned ... we've learned ... we've measured ...*) and noticed that the utterances become less structured as the speaker moves to a close.

As with Question 1, it was possible to argue for alternative interpretations of this deterioration of coherence: perhaps there's downward convergence going on; perhaps the speaker has used up his scripted utterance and is now improvising. Dr Spergel clearly sees the need to reformulate ideas to cater for the needs of his audience, so he offers figurative explanation in layman's terms (*baby picture ... like peeling an onion ...*) and admits that even the experts don't have a full understanding (.) a final theory.

Few candidates dealt well – or indeed at all – with phonological features or their representation. Attempts at evaluation of representations of sound often degenerated into blurred assertions

about dialect/Standard English/Received Pronunciation/accent. Almost everyone noticed the convention of underlining stressed syllables, but hardly anyone took their evaluation beyond a rather circular argument about how these were *for emphasis*. One very astute candidate, however, argued that Dr Spergel's intonation pattern was typical of American (rather than British) English and that, together with the elision in *a couple per cent* and the formulation *the exact thing*, this was evidence of an accent from the southern USA.

Pronoun use and field-specific lexis provided candidates with helpful ways of comparing the voices in the passages. Dr Spergel's use of *we* was seen as inclusive (of the audience) or exclusive (the community of experts/scientists) or both. Candidates moved on to observe that Christopher characteristically, in Passage B, talks about himself – *I like this fact* – but also that he addresses the reader (*When you look in direction A, at 90° to the disc, you don't see many stars*) and that he contrasts what he is about to expound with what the average person thinks – *Some people think the Milky Way is a long line of stars, but it isn't*.

Christopher's *lexis* was recognised as being different from Dr Spergel's, but candidates had great difficulty in explaining exactly how it was different. They did notice that Dr Spergel explained some of his technical lexical items in simpler terms (*a theory called inflation (.) the idea that the universe underwent an incredibly rapid expansion during its first moments*) whereas Christopher initially uses 'everyday' lexis (*long line/disc/stripe*).

Candidates had clearly engaged with the character of Christopher, and had useful general comments to make about his 'voice' throughout the novel. Some were rather too keen to see some kind of character development or process of learning which Christopher (allegedly) goes through in the course of the novel. Similarly, some of the discussion depended too much on assertions about what might be typical of someone with Asperger's Syndrome, and not enough on the linguistic features of his utterance.

Weaker answers depended on a lot of not-particularly-relevant prepared material about Christopher as a narrator, some of which was directly contradicted by the passage (eg that he only speaks in monotonous short sentences, that he never shows any emotions). Candidates – and especially those whose AO1 and AO2 skills are least secure – need to start from what is in the text and build up to a view of what is typical of Christopher's voice rather than starting with assertions and hoping that the examples they quote or refer to will match.

The mark-scheme offers some further examples of potentially fruitful avenues for exploration.

Question 3: *Hawksmoor*

Only one centre offered *Hawksmoor* this year, but the indications are that more will do so in 2010.

Nick Dyer's 'voice' was rather more accurately characterised than Christopher Boone's, perhaps because the disjunctions between his 'public' and 'private', and narrative and introspective, voices were more pronounced. In any case, there was some intelligent analysis of construction of voice in terms of lexis and syntax, and clear critical evaluation of effects on the reader as well as on Sir Chris. in the passage. Some candidates rather over-stated the *asymmetrical* nature of the exchanges between Dyer and Sir Chris., arguing that the latter is dominant and the former submissive in both linguistic (*Pish, he replied*) and paralinguistic (*And I bowed down ... Sir Chris. laughed at this*) terms. Such a line of argument misses the subtleties of Ackroyd's narration and Dyer's commentary.

Lexis was dealt with thoroughly, with candidates noticing how Sir Chris. employs a lexical field of measurement and engineering, while Dyer's language is altogether less rational. Julian-the-architect (Passage A) was harder to categorise lexically, but candidates wrote well about how non-fluency features constructed a voice of regret as well as of hesitancy.

Section B

The Report for January 2009 offered a reminder of the structure of questions in this Section, as follows:

- a theme central to the chosen novel is identified
- a 'cue-quotation' from the novel is offered as an example of how this theme is presented in the novel
- (a) passage(s) is/are provided for comparison/contrast.

The dominant Assessment Objective in Section B is AO3 – *Contexts, Analysis and Evaluation* – and it is worth also offering here a reminder of the AO's full wording:

Use integrated approaches to explore relationships between texts, analysing and evaluating the significance of contextual factors in their production and reception.

In short, there is much more to AO3 than just the (very problematic) word 'context'.

It is not helpful for candidates to have learned, and then indiscriminately to unload, chunks of information about the social/cultural/historical context of the chosen novel. A much more fruitful approach is to see the additional passage(s) provided for comparison/contrast as a useful source of ideas that help to set the chosen novel in its cultural context; and one way into the task is to begin by considering what further light this material sheds on the theme identified by the question-wording. More will be said about this aspect in the comments which follow on individual questions.

Most candidates answered on *The Great Gatsby*, but there were also substantial numbers of responses on the other two texts. The more general of the following comments on candidates' performance on *The Great Gatsby* apply equally – *mutatis mutandis* – to the other texts.

Question 4: *The Great Gatsby*

The cue-quotation was Nick's comment – from the very end of the novel – about the Buchanans: "They were careless people, Tom and Daisy – they smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness ... " This introduced a question about *Fitzgerald's presentation of irresponsible behaviour*.

Candidates had little difficulty with the idea of *irresponsible behaviour*, nor with finding and discussing examples from the novel of characters behaving in irresponsible ways. Many commented that the cue-quotation "shows" how irresponsible Tom and Daisy are – which, of course, it does not. It *asserts* or *judges* that they have been; and it is then up to the candidates to *show*.

This kind of looseness of expression (AO1) was characteristic of most candidates' writing in Section B. Although it is not wholly undermining of the argument, the tendency to assume that a point has been *proved* (or, further, *explored* or *analysed* or *evaluated*) merely by being *asserted* meant that many candidates left the examiner to do half of the work. In class they have their teacher to encourage them to *develop* a point; in examination conditions they need to do this for themselves.

Report on the Units taken in June 2009

As noted above, and as in the January session, many candidates began by introducing (prepared) material of limited or generalised contextual relevance, outlining their understanding of the American Dream/the Jazz Age/the Depression/Prohibition/the Wall Street Crash. Such an approach is unhelpful. These topics may relate to *irresponsible behaviour*, but any such relation needs to be located in textual detail, either from the novel or from the comparative passage(s). Section B questions can be made quite simple. Candidates who start by writing a page on the American Dream are making things very hard for themselves.

It makes better sense to begin with the *specifics* of that textual detail, and only afterwards to move outwards to extrapolation about the social or cultural context. The second bullet-prompt for each question directs attention to *the influence on the novel of the context in which it was produced*: good answers will begin with textual evidence of that influence.

Thus, answers which picked up on Tom Buchanan's description of Gatsby as *some big bootlegger*, and who then linked this textual detail to the lavish alcoholic hospitality in the novel and in Passage A, were adopting a more fruitful approach than those who wrote a paragraph of assertion about Prohibition and its (assumed) effect on American society.

An even greater danger of starting with generalised (contextual) assertions is that they encourage wrong statements about what is said and done in the novel. For example, many candidates tried to link irresponsible drinking with irresponsible driving and subsequent and/or consequent car accidents. This is an entirely valid and logical connection, and could lead to useful AO3 work – *exploring relationships between texts, analysing and evaluating the significance of contextual factors*.

However, in practice there were at least two things often wrong with this approach:

- 1 2009 attitudes to drink-driving simply did not exist in 1920s America, and to apply such standards is mistaken.
- 2 Daisy was not irresponsibly drunk when she knocked down and killed Myrtle Wilson – or, at least, whatever textual evidence there is gives a reader no reason to infer that she was. At lunch Tom brought in a tray with *four* drinks (for five people); and Jordan Baker has told us that Daisy doesn't drink. The one occasion on which she did was the night before her wedding to Tom. (It might, of course, be objected that Jordan is hardly reliable.)

Similarly, to accuse Nick of irresponsible behaviour in getting drunk at Tom and Myrtle's apartment ignores the fact that he tells us it was the second of the two occasions in his life when he had been drunk, and his narration makes it clear that *everything that happened has a dim, hazy cast over it*.

Similar errors and over-statements were made in exploring the relationship between wealth and irresponsibility. Clearly such a relationship exists, explicitly in the novel and implicitly in the comparative passage. But it is worse than an over-simplification – it is actually wrong – to say that Daisy is completely absorbed or obsessed or motivated by money, or that Tom thinks he can get away with the way he behaves because he's wealthy.

The most common simple error of all was to mis-quote (and presumably to have mis-read and therefore mis-understood) Nick's remark and Gatsby's reply about *the past*. Nick doesn't say that you can't *re-live* or *change*, but that *You can't repeat the past*. And Gatsby's answer is more than simply *Of course you can*. The entire exchange at the end of Chapter VI is recommended to candidates' attention.

It was, on the other hand, most encouraging to see some very impressive attempts to apply linguistic analysis to textual detail in both passage and novel. For example, the lexis of plenty and excess in Passage A (*Bottles of White Rock and of ginger ale decked the tables, out of capacious masculine hip pockets came flasks of gin*) was compared with the lush descriptions of Gatsby's parties. Some very good candidates detected the signs of corruption in both. The vague language used by Frederick Lewis Allen to refer to guests at the dinner dance (*Mrs. So-and-so ... Mrs. Such-and-such*) was seen as an interesting parallel to the anonymity of Gatsby's guests, for example the man known only as Owl Eyes, and subtle readers recognised that the host himself was in effect just as anonymous – Nick fails to recognise him.

Fitzgerald's narrative methods (the first bullet-prompt) proved elusive for many. Candidates were keen to see Nick as an unreliable narrator, claiming to be impartial and non-judgemental but actually involved/biased. This line might work when substantiated by examples, but more often than not it was unsupported. Since virtually every page of the text yields rich and memorable examples of the author's style, there is really no excuse.

Similarly, few could evaluate the tone of Passage A. Students need to practise locating tone and attitude precisely in textual detail: how does the language of the text (and the time and the culture) construct meaning? One very good candidate located Frederick Lewis Allen's wit in the construction of the very complex and convoluted first sentence, noticing that the really telling detail (the drinking) is relegated to – even hidden in – the parentheses, while the reversed syntax foregrounds the destination while concealing the grammatical subject and the main verb.

Candidates did appreciate that *tripping up waiters* and *throwing bread about the table* was rather less serious than betraying one's spouse, and commented that *substantial married men* should know better than to behave irresponsibly. There was good knowledge of aspects of the text which exemplified the question-focus, and thorough discussion of Jordan Baker's dishonesty at golf and carelessness when driving, as well as detailed exploration of irresponsibility within marriage.

Again, 21st century standards were unhelpfully applied, to Daisy's parenting skills and to Myrtle's social aspirations. An approach to teaching the AO3 element which might be helpful would be to encourage students to question their 2009 attitudes to events and characters in the novel, and to explore how far these might have obtained in 1920s America.

Question 5: *Wide Sargasso Sea*

A small but significant number of candidates did this question about Rhys's presentation of the experience of being a stranger.

The cue-quotation was Rochester's comment "*I feel very much a stranger here," I said. "I feel that this place is my enemy and on your side."* Most candidates identified Antoinette as the speaker of these words, which in itself caused no great problem, though it did incline them to concentrate on Antoinette's alienation rather than anyone else's.

However, many answers were quite well-informed about alienation and issues pertaining to race and gender. Although answers tended to focus on Antoinette, there was also good discussion of her husband, of Annette, and even of Christophine. Most answers at least managed to mention the alternation of narrative voices in the novel, and many had remembered at least a couple of useful quotations, such as comments on the strangeness of each other's countries by Antoinette and her husband. There was also commentary on Antoinette's relationship with Tia, and the presentation of differences between different islands in the Caribbean. Some answers dealt with the problematic concept of 'Creole' as an identity, and others focused on Antoinette's particular identity crisis as being separate from notions of race and class.

There was some impressive control of (AO3) the different contexts which inform the novel. Some candidates were able to synthesise what they knew of *Jane Eyre* and of the historical and geographical setting of the novel with brief but relevant comment on Jean Rhys's life and the time of writing the novel. But excursions into author-biography need to be handled with great care: we know what Antoinette thinks because she tells us in the novel, whereas we can only speculate about the author, and such speculation is usually not helpful. Even so, brief reference to the author was more pertinent with this text and this question than might often be the case.

Weaker answers revealed only a hazy idea of the novel's historical setting or the significance of the Emancipation Act. They tended to make general assertions about being a stranger or an immigrant, and to become entirely involved in perceived factual comparisons between the novel and Passage A, such as the welcoming welfare state which is England in the latter contrasted with the unfriendly England where Antoinette fails to find shelter. Few answers made very effective use of Passage A, though a few contrasted its 'community of exiles' with the representation of isolated otherness in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, and some also picked up the idea of empire and (post-) colonialism (*India was gone, Africa was going*).

Question 6: A Room with a View

Candidates were more inclined to offer a 'prepared' essay on this question than on any other. Many were pursuing their own agenda, not entirely regardless of the question but still not directly answering it either.

Forster's 'intention' was presumed to be a demonstration that it is better to follow the heart than the head. Some candidates had clearly been very thoroughly prepared to answer a question about the use of Italy as a touchstone for Forster-approved behaviour in the novel, and used this as a more-or-less legitimate approach to the question of truth (mostly in the sense of being 'true to yourself'). When this worked, it was well-argued and supported by numerous detailed and well-chosen examples, sometimes pushing the answers into Band 5 development, and it was seldom less than competent.

The context (AO3) was taken to be Victorian/Edwardian conventionality, which was variously characterised as promoting lying and abhorring lying. Either view could be argued, but some of the textual support and interpretation was questionable.

Few candidates were prepared to see either Forster or Mark Twain (in Passage A) as being witty, or indeed anything other than entirely serious. One very good candidate drew a parallel between Twain *dropping his napkin to his knee* and discoursing on truth and lies with Old Mr Emerson beating his fists on the table *like a naughty child* when frustrated by Charlotte's inability to behave naturally (=truthfully) and accept gracefully his offer of the rooms-with-a-view. But more often the response to the comparative passage was to take Twain's opinions literally and to assess Lucy against the judgement that *The best liars are savages and children*.

Section B overall

Centres and candidates seemed as a whole to have taken a more linguistic approach to Section A, and a more literary approach to Section B – that is to say, they took the opportunity afforded by having passages on the paper in Section A to make detailed comments about language, but rather avoided doing so in Section B.

It would be a mistake to see the two sections in those dichotomous terms. It is also unhelpful to take in Section B an approach which sees the novels as moral teaching and applies moral judgements to the behaviour of the characters, so that Daisy Buchanan is an example of a bad parent and a selfish woman, Cecil Vyse and Rochester instances of blinkered and domineering men.

F672 Changing Texts

Much of the work submitted for this unit demonstrated a keen engagement with the issues of multimodality and some real creativity in the production of new, stimulating transformations of the texts studied. The best folders were reflective, creative and analytical across the different elements of the assessment and rewarded the detailed study of the source texts undertaken. Some of the best folders included stunning reimaginings of these source texts, utilising a variety of different modes, and these pieces of work stood out as both excellent in their own right and also as highly imaginative companion texts to the original written text. In the best work submitted the detailed understanding of both the individual text studied and the genre conventions of the new modes produced reflected the substantial study undertaken before the writing of coursework was begun.

The specification stresses that effective coursework for this unit is both analytical and creative and we recognise the considerable demands of the different elements of the folder of work. It was therefore very pleasing to see how many centres had grasped so fully what is required in the unit in this the first session where candidates have submitted work. In this report the emphasis will be on the features of this good practice as well as indicating what centres can do to develop their students' work in future sessions.

Most centres seemed to readily find examples of substantial written texts for which there was a related multimodal version and there were a number of different texts explored. It is, of course, open to interpretation what constitutes a 'substantial' written text but it is hoped that the range of such texts chosen by centres will increase in future sessions. The specification does offer the possibility of literary non-fiction being chosen as a source text and there are many richly rewarding texts of this kind which would be stimulating and accessible to students as well as offering great possibilities for both Tasks 1 and 2. Centres should feel that they do not need to limit themselves to the study of canonical texts and less well known texts could be exciting to study and prove very stimulating for multimodal reworkings. Texts such as *Pride and Prejudice*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Macbeth* were very popular and of course offer opportunities for this unit, but it would be very interesting to see centres exploring more recently written literary texts with their students. For example the recent film and television reworkings of David Peace's *The Damned United* and *The Red-Riding Quartet* could be fascinating to look at, especially as the written texts already contain implicit multimodal elements. The possibilities of the unit are considerable in terms of text choice and the broader the bank of texts studied that accrues during the life of the specification the more interesting it will be.

A common approach was for the centre to choose a single source text that all students studied and this has obvious benefits in terms of a whole class shared experience of the work and the detailed analytical work that follows. However, it would be good in the future for centres to consider having students working with a variety of source texts, perhaps reflecting their own enthusiasms and preferences. As well as offering the students a way of exploring multimodality more broadly, this could have the benefit of significantly increasing the types of multimodal text produced for Task 2. It is very challenging for teachers to help plan a variety of multimodal texts for students to produce all from one source text; a range of texts could help alleviate this difficulty. In this first session there was a tendency for the creative tasks to be quite similar and a wider range of source texts should help counter this, too. It is worth pointing out, however, that the Task 2 multimodal text can, and perhaps should, be based on an excerpt from the original written text so it is possible even when based upon a single source text to have a series of different outcomes reflected in the candidates' own writing.

Task 1

For a number of centres, this proved to be the more challenging of the two tasks. The three bullet points on Page 11 of the specification are very helpful in steering students in the right direction for this task. The Analytical Study needs to explore in some detail those factors in the original text that lent themselves to multimodal transformation: what was the purpose of the text's reworking and how effective is the new text as a result of utilising different modes of communication? Some candidates used Task 1 as something of a run in for Task 2, so they spent their time justifying what they were going to do next. A number of others took one text in one mode and then compared it to another in a different mode, thus theme was the only connection; for example, a comparison of Wilfred Owen's war poetry with *Oh! What a Lovely War*. These choices make consideration of the three bullet points for Task 1 difficult because the second text is not a multimodal 'version' of the first. More positively, many centres embraced ideas of multimodality by looking at linked texts such as - for example - *Apocalypse Now* in comparison with *The Heart of Darkness*. This example was very effective as the film is clearly a reworking of the novella but its radical reinterpretation of the latter offered lots of discussion points for Task 1 and a good range of imaginative ideas for Task 2. This meant that these candidates were plainly dealing with the pressures and forces that create these texts, and the requirements of a new audience and purpose. These tasks were by definition absolutely focused on the requirements of the specification.

There was also good work on the BBC's Shakespeare modernisation and the equivalent Chaucer series. Again, these examples seemed to be very helpful for students as the modernisations could be discussed in terms of audience, purpose and interpretation as well as mode. The specification makes clear that centres should deal with the actual ways in which transformations have taken place. Candidates from some centres wrote about speculative possibilities for a multimodal text that didn't actually exist, for example the problems that might be encountered were you to turn a series of poems into a TV documentary. Perhaps this comes about because of a misunderstanding of the specification which lists things that might be raised, but could be seen as the board insisting that reasons/opportunities/problems/issues/potential are all covered.

An analysis of small sections of the original text is quite acceptable, if that means that the analysis is deeper. Many centres felt that they had to cover a whole original text, whereas those that focused, for example, on the opening of a novel and then its film presentation seemed to be able to get into more depth. One scene from *Pride and Prejudice* is enough, or the presentation of one character, perhaps.

Overall there needs to be a balance in Task 1 between the discussion of source text and multimodal version. Some candidates focused too heavily on the latter, sometimes using quite technical media language. To use some of the terminology associated with, say, Film or Media Studies is of course fine where it allows for precise analysis of the multimodal text; it was clear that some candidates were confidently drawing on their knowledge of this language learnt in other A Levels. Some centres specifically teach a range of appropriate terminology to allow their students to explore texts in other modes with the same kind of precision that linguistic analysis allows them to examine written texts. Where a problem did exist it was when candidates were highly technical in the discussion of such matters as camera angles and the composition of a particular shot and this tended to rather overshadow the analysis of the written text, which is essential for coverage of AOs 1 and 2. Centres need to be aware that the unit is expecting candidates to make use of approaches from literary and linguistic study, so an exploration of the language structure and style of the source text is required.

Task 2

One of the challenges of Task 2 is getting the balance right between the multimodal text and the commentary. Some candidates produced very long texts with short commentaries and others produced the reverse. The 1500 to 2000 words available for this task need to be balanced between the two elements. AOs 1 and 4 are covered in Task 2 and the element of both of these AOs which concentrates on the application of insights drawn from literary and linguistic study clearly overlaps. It could be helpful to consider candidates' own texts as meeting this requirement implicitly and the commentary as making this knowledge explicit, thus considering the two elements of Task 2 holistically. Obviously the original work needs to be reasonably substantial, otherwise there would be little to discuss in the commentary, but even relatively short texts can be rich in detail that can be discussed. As well as covering the bullet points on Page 12 of the specification, the commentary is a good place to fulfil the unit's overall requirement to use approaches from literary and linguistic study. To explore specific language choices made in the candidate's own multimodal text by utilising a range of literary and linguistic terminology is excellent practice and consistent with the principles of a combined Language and Literature course.

Some candidates submitted commentaries which were in the form of diaries of the production of their own text and these often contained very little analysis or evaluation. Some centres had perhaps stressed too strongly to candidates the wording on Page 12 of the specification that says that the commentary "should explain the approach taken" without stressing fully enough the "reasons for choices made". A diary of when, where and how the text was produced is not what we are looking for in this element of the task.

The Specification is clear that candidates should present paper-based outcomes of their own multimodal text for external moderation. Not all centres heeded this requirement and in some cases commentaries discussed texts that were not evidenced in the folder. It is essential for moderators to be able to see evidence of the work undertaken in order to be able to support the centre mark awarded. Another problem, in a small number of centres, was where 'multimodal' had been interpreted as doing the same or a similar task twice, once in one mode and once in another. There should be one text produced that makes use of at least two different modes.

Many of the texts produced were very skilled, including dance interpretations of poems, graphic representations of 'The Ancient Mariner' (as with Dore) and a number of effective extracts from graphic novels reworking classic literary works. Many candidates created spoken texts, most popular of which were dramatic monologues and film script extracts. In order to comply with the requirement that the text utilises at least two different modes of communication it is important that in the case of such texts visual or aural elements are clearly foregrounded in the work. To produce a spoken text clearly complements the work being undertaken by candidates for unit F671 Speaking Voices and many candidates were able to bring to bear their knowledge of the construction of voice in various texts. When producing a spoken text it seems much more effective to produce a crafted piece that is intended to be delivered by an actor or speaker rather than create a faux transcript of spontaneous speech. A transcript would only really be appropriate if the multimodal text produced actually had a spontaneous speech element and the transcript is offered by way of a record of this. A 'transcript' of - say - the appearance of the *Wife of Bath* on *The Jeremy Kyle Show*, whilst potentially very funny, is not a 'real' text in the sense that the spontaneous speech is being replicated rather than recorded. In this case a script for a dramatisation of such an encounter would likely work much better.

Some tasks that were undertaken did not seem quite challenging enough for AS Level study. Newspaper articles often seemed to fall into that category, perhaps because the students feel rather too familiar with that kind of task from earlier in their schooling. These kinds of task did tend to be a little over-rewarded by centres, too. It seems much more successful if candidates are trying to produce something radical and challenging but perhaps don't entirely succeed (and which of us would?), rather than to produce something too straightforward. One or two

candidates produced computer centred responses (*Frankenstein* games, for example); while these can be very interesting multimodally, they do often rely heavily on plot rather than allowing the candidate's knowledge of themes and techniques in the source text to be revealed.

General Principles

AO1 (10%)

This is available in both Task 1 and in the commentary to Task 2. AO1 focuses on the application of relevant critical concepts and the use of appropriate terminology. As mentioned earlier this can include both technical language as well as literary and linguistic terminology. Both of these elements therefore should be detailed, specific and analytical.

AO2 (5%)

As AO2 is available only in Task 1, there must be a considerable focus on this here. In other words camera angles etc are much less important than what characters actually say. There should be some consideration of spoken language as well as of written language. As mentioned earlier candidates should be drawing on their knowledge of the representation of spontaneous speech in literary, non-literary texts. This AO does not feature as part of Task 2, so candidates who produce scripts for Task 2 cannot be rewarded for this AO, though they may implicitly demonstrate how structure, form and language shape meanings in spoken texts. In many Task 1 submissions there was a lack of focus on structure, form and language, so it was hard to reward AO2. Centres need to note the word 'critical' too, which focuses on the use of appropriate but not exhaustive analysis, where candidates choose 'frameworks' which particularly suit their texts.

AO3 (10%)

'Contextual factors' can also be matters of attitudes and values or, indeed, complexities of genre transformation. This element was sometimes rather narrowly interpreted as being just an historical context.

AO4 (15%)

As this is the dominant AO for this unit, but is only available in Task 2, it is worth pointing out that one way of achieving this is to ensure language variety in the creative piece and to ensure that the commentary focuses on ways in which language is used creatively for the particular audience and purpose.

Some administrative Issues

It would be very helpful if centres could bear in mind the following administrative issues.

- Work needs to be clearly labelled Task 1, Task 2 and Commentary.
- Work requested by OCR for the sample should be sent as soon as possible to the moderator. Delays were caused this session by moderators having to contact centres about the despatch of the sample.
- The coursework cover sheet should be filled out as fully as possible with a clear identification of the written literary text and the related multimodal text.

Report on the Units taken in June 2009

- Teacher annotation is very helpful in terms of explaining and justifying the marks awarded and should be as full as possible. Some specific reference to the AOs is helpful in the body of the text.
- Work should be securely stapled or treasury tagged rather than using paper clips. Please do NOT put candidates' work in plastic wallets or bulky folders !
- Elements of a candidate's work that are not paper-based should be recorded on a suitable device and these should be retained in the centre rather than being sent to the moderator.

Grade Thresholds

Advanced GCE English Language and Literature (H073 H473)
June 2009 Examination Series

Unit Threshold Marks

Unit		Maximum Mark	A	B	C	D	E	U
F671	Raw	60	43	37	32	27	22	0
	UMS	120	96	84	72	60	48	0
F672	Raw	40	33	28	23	19	15	0
	UMS	80	64	56	48	40	32	0

Specification Aggregation Results

Overall threshold marks in UMS (ie after conversion of raw marks to uniform marks)

	Maximum Mark	A	B	C	D	E	U
H073	200	160	140	120	100	80	0

The cumulative percentage of candidates awarded each grade was as follows:

	A	B	C	D	E	U	Total Number of Candidates
H073	12.1	29.7	54.8	82.9	95.5	100.0	637

637 candidates aggregated this series

For a description of how UMS marks are calculated see:

http://www.ocr.org.uk/learners/ums_results.html

Statistics are correct at the time of publication.

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