

English Literature

General Certificate of Secondary Education **J360**

Examiners' Reports

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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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A661 Literary Heritage Linked Texts

A661: Literary Heritage Linked Texts

As there was only one centre entered for this examination it is perhaps more appropriate for the Principal's report to focus upon issues that have been of major concern to centres and which have been raised formally as Controlled Assessment Enquiries.

Application of the Assessment Criteria

Whilst individual pieces of work may (and probably will) be marked separately in the first instance, the intention is that a candidate's final submission should be marked as a whole - holistically, using 'best fit'. (This maintains the practice used in the last syllabus, and earlier ones, where individual pieces with different weightings were subsumed into a single, overall mark.)

Since the Poetry task is weighted more highly, a candidate's performance here will provide the starting point for the overall judgement. Then, how far does performance in the Shakespeare task confirm, raise or lower that judgement?

Experience suggests that (unless pieces of work are completed at widely differing times in the course or under widely differing circumstances) many candidates are likely to be placed within the same mark-band for both pieces of work. In these cases, there should be little difficulty in arriving at an overall mark, refinement within the band being all that is required.

Where pieces are placed in different bands, the different weightings of the tasks will come into play. For example, if the Poetry piece is placed in the middle of band 2 and the Shakespeare in the middle of band 3, the overall mark is likely to be at the bottom end of band 2. However, if the Poetry piece is placed only at the bottom of band 2 and the Shakespeare at the bottom of band 3, the overall mark is likely to be at the upper end of band 3.

Conversely, if the Poetry piece is placed in the middle of band 3 but the Shakespeare in the middle of band 2, the overall mark is likely to be at the upper end of band 3. However, if the Poetry piece is placed only at the bottom of band 3 and the Shakespeare at the bottom of band 2, the overall mark is likely to be in the middle of band 3.

These examples are guidelines only. As always with internally-assessed work, it is OCR's wish to support as far as possible the judgements made by teachers. The external moderation process is designed to ensure (a) that these judgements are consistent with the quality of evidence submitted and (b) that the overall standard inherent in the judgements is consistent with the national standard set by OCR. Where a Moderator finds variation of any kind, appropriate adjustments will be made a centre's marks and advice will be given as to how marking may be brought into line in future.

Guidance on the Shakespeare response

The key issue with the Shakespeare response is that it is a linked text response using the performed version not for comparative purposes but to illuminate the text, recognising that it is a play written to be performed and rooting the response in performance - this is the reason it is assessed via AO1. The primary focus should therefore be on the play itself. The prescribed scene is meant to be the initial focal point for the exploration which should then develop across the play as a whole. Overall the key issue is to focus on the wording of the task and maintain focus and relevance to that.

As the central focus is on the characters and their relationship, the key area of focus in respect of the performance needs to be the actors' interpretation of their parts and any other aspect of the performance which sheds light on relationships. It really should be the case that the performance is there to illuminate the text and root the response in performance. We are looking for a literature response not a media one; the response should concentrate upon the dramatic effect of the play, and not analyse media techniques such as camera shots or angles, sound, lighting or special effects.

The use of film can encourage candidates to experience the play being performed and interpreted in a realistic way, and should enhance their understanding and interpretation of the text.

Centres must therefore be aware that this should not become a media response.

The text used must be a complete version of the Shakespeare text. The film is meant to be a "performance" which enhances the understanding of the text, and the recommendations give a fairly comprehensive list of versions of the complete play.

Some centres have asked if it is acceptable to use the "Shakespeare Retold" film version of Macbeth - an adaptation, starring James McAvoy and Keeley Hawes. This may well serve as a "taster" to establish the students' interest, but does not have sufficient content or language from the original text to be classed as a "performance" which complements the Shakespeare text.

When the task refers to the set scene and "elsewhere" in the play, what does it mean?

Candidates should have studied, and should be able to refer to, the play as a whole.

A candidate's response should be measured against the marking criteria outlined in the specification on pages 19 – 20 of the English Literature specification. The detailed study of a scene and analysis of the relationship between the characters, in this scene, and the way other characters react to them, here and in the rest of the play, will form the basis of the response.

Candidates are only responding to AO1 in this task, and centres need to familiarise themselves with the wording of the marking criteria. Some candidates will find it challenging to make a detailed analysis of the chosen scene, but other candidates who may be able to achieve Bands 1 – 3, will be able to place the scene in the context of the whole play and show "sophisticated critical perception" or "critical engagement and insight" into other scenes in the play where the relationship between the two characters and the way other characters react to them is an important element in the development of events.

In essence, therefore, candidates must be able to demonstrate a detailed understanding of this scene, but those who are able to make reference to the importance of the relationship "elsewhere" in the play will provide evidence that they can meet the higher bands in the marking criteria and will show detailed evidence that they have an understanding of this scene in the context of the play as a whole.

What should happen if the candidate makes no reference to the film version of the play?

If the student makes no reference to a film version, then marks can still be awarded for their interpretation and perception of the text of the play. Their final response may lack some of the elements of those who have referred to the text and the performed version. The centre must apply the assessment criteria as consistently as possible.

Re-sitting the Shakespeare task

As there is only one Shakespeare task in the Controlled Assessment materials for up to 2012, we are allowing the re-sitting of the task already taken. This will be the case up to 2012. When the next set of Controlled Assessment tasks are released, there will be two tasks on each play and students re-sitting will then need to do a different task. It is hoped that this will allow some candidates to have a second attempt if the centre should feel that it is necessary.

Centres have generally raised few questions in relation to the poetry tasks; it is to be hoped that, since these tasks are of a similar nature to those that students were prepared for in the previous English Literature Specification (1901), teachers therefore feel much more confident in the application of the Assessment Criteria.

A662 Modern Drama

General Comments

After only one term, some two thousand seven hundred candidates took advantage of this early opportunity to enter for the Modern Drama Units. Foundation Tier candidates accounted for 20% of the total entry and centres had clearly made careful, and largely justified tiering decisions, although a small minority of Higher Tier candidates might have benefitted from answering the more structured Foundation Tier questions. The overall quality of the work was often extremely impressive, given that centres had in a relatively short time prepared candidates who were, presumably, in the early stages of Year 10; there were, however, some candidates who may have been better served by a more extended preparation period. Generally, candidates had studied their texts closely and had engaged effectively with the process.

There was much evidence of thorough, imaginative teaching in the way that candidates were able to support sound textual knowledge with judiciously selected references and focus clearly on the demands of the question. Particularly pleasing was the extent to which many candidates were able to see themselves not just as readers of a text, but as members of an audience and to engage with the ways in which audience reactions are influenced by sound, movement, gesture and tone as well as the crucial effects of dialogue, characterisation and plot development. Clearly, the responses of many candidates had been effectively enhanced by the experience of seeing a stage or film version of their chosen text, though it should be noted that film versions are not always entirely faithful to the original text.

There were some examples of candidates answering more than one question or tackling more than one text; this may have been due to the comparative inexperience of some Year 10 candidates in public examinations. Foundation Tier candidates, generally, made good use of the bullet points to structure their answers, though some found it difficult to avoid the tendency to re-tell details of the action and a minority tended to distance themselves from the task by providing unhelpful biographical details or historical background - the social/cultural Assessment Objective is *not* assessed in the Modern Drama Units. A few candidates were disadvantaged by devoting lengthy sections of their answers to written features like punctuation and the *literary and linguistic qualities* of the stage directions, with little reference to the crucial onstage action, as if the plays were written texts only.

The majority of candidates seemed to have been successfully prepared for the demanding task of producing a well-structured response in a 45 minute exam, though some of the small, but significant number of unfinished answers could be ascribed to the length of time devoted to writing out an elaborate plan, with insufficient time left to complete the response. The extract answer, in particular, requires an understanding of where the prescribed moment fits into the play and, therefore, planning time would be much better spent in swiftly establishing the exact location of the moment, clarifying which characters are onstage at this point, what they know and are feeling and also what the audience knows and is likely to be feeling, which would give a firm base for a successful response. Many answers to the extract-based question on "A View from the Bridge", for example, were particularly successful in finding an effective starting point in quickly establishing the context of the "boxing tuition" in Eddie's perturbation at the burgeoning relationship between Rodolpho and Catherine, then moving on to explore the subtext of its *real* purpose and the dramatic build up of the extract and its wider implications within the play.

Only four of the six prescribed texts were covered in this examination session with no answers appearing on either "The History Boys" or, perhaps more surprisingly, "Hobson's Choice". "An Inspector Calls" was the most popular choice, though there were encouragingly large numbers of responses on "A View from the Bridge" and on "Journey's End", with only a small number on "Educating Rita".

After only one session, comprising a comparatively small entry, it is difficult to be entirely specific about the strengths and weaknesses that have typified responses, but some general guidelines can be offered:

Successful candidates:

- see the texts as **plays in performance** and themselves as **members of an audience**
- see the stage directions as **part of the dramatic action** of the scene and visualise this onstage action
- pay explicit attention to the **wording of the question** and balance attention on **each strand** of the question
- construct succinct and **purposeful opening paragraphs**, focusing specifically on the given question
- select and **integrate brief quotations** to explore the dialogue and to support and amplify their ideas
- **avoid pre-conceived model answers and formulaic approaches** and trust their own direct personal response.

Less successful candidates:

- see the **texts as pieces of writing only** and themselves as readers
- see the **stage directions merely as pieces of bolted-on written communication** and ignore their significance to the onstage action
- start with a **pre-conceived** introductory paragraph, which is **unhelpfully generalised, biographical or list-like** and says nothing specific about the play or question
- **lose the focus of the question** and use pre-prepared material which has little direct relevance to the question
- **misread the question** and write about the wrong character or moment
- **become detached from the dramatic action** and resort to listing features

Extract-based Questions

Successful candidates:

- devote at least two-thirds of answers to **discussing, quoting from and commenting on the extract itself**, but still convey understanding of the whole play context
- begin their response by **locating the extract in the context of the whole play**
- succinctly **establish the dramatic context for the characters and audience** in the opening paragraph
- **ground their reflections on the whole play** firmly in the detail of the extract
- pay close attention to the **build-up of dramatic detail** throughout the extract.

Less successful candidates:

- produce **generalised answers with limited attention to the given extract**, or approach the extract as if it is an “unseen” exercise and **give little sense of the rest of the play**
- produce a **sweeping opening paragraph** and largely ignore the question
- **rarely offer quoted material** from the extract or, conversely, **copy out large chunks** without any attempt at commentary
- **miss the reference to the given moment** in the question and, as a result, **answer on the play as a whole** with little or no reference to the printed extract.

Discursive Questions

Successful candidates:

- **focus rigorously** on (and sometimes challenge) the terms of the question, **maintaining relevance throughout** their response
- **select judiciously** across the text to find supporting detail for their arguments
- **balance their answers** thoughtfully when answering double-stranded questions
- show a **sharp awareness of audience response**

- quote **shrewdly and economically**
- arrive at a relevant and well-reasoned conclusion.

Less successful candidates:

- become bogged down in one moment in the play so that the **range of reference becomes too narrow**
- **rely, mistakenly, on the printed extract** for the previous question for their ideas and quotations
- spend too much of their time on **one strand of a two-stranded question**
- completely **lose focus on the question** and write pre-prepared material with limited relevance.

Comments on Individual Questions

A View from the Bridge

The extract question (3a) provided much scope for engaged response and candidates at both tiers of entry were able to respond in some detail to the drama of this scene. It was encouraging to see awareness of the play in performance and a willingness to firmly place the extract in the play's overall context as a foreshadowing of the ending. Many candidates were able to work through the extract, exploring the growing tension, the progress of the boxing from 'play' to serious and the power of Marco's warning to Eddie. It was also encouraging to see that candidates were often able to extend their analysis of the extract to the play's wider themes – the code of honour, loyalty of families, the macho aspect of the scene and even the clear challenge of Rodolpho and Catherine's dance, which was perceived as a useful discriminator. Some examiners observed that there was occasional uncertainty about how hard Eddie actually hits Rodolpho and perhaps some candidates over-estimated the degree to which his behaviour is overtly aggressive. Generally though, both strands of the question were successfully addressed and large numbers of candidates were able to offer well-balanced, searching answers.

Question 3b was also a frequent choice and perhaps a challenging option because of the sheer amount of available material. The major demand was perhaps to find a structure for the essay and to organise a range of ideas, rather than adopt a "scatter-gun" approach or, alternatively, to limit the scope of the response by confining comment to one small area such as Alfieri's opening soliloquy. Many answers overcame these difficulties impressively and showed a clear understanding of Alfieri's dramatic function as narrator/chorus. Such candidates were also able to offer a firm grasp of Alfieri's commentary on what happens to Eddie and his infatuation for his niece, showing a genuine sense of empathy for Alfieri and his variously timed appearances in the play. One examiner commented on the sophistication of answers that introduced the idea of Alfieri as the 'bridge' of the title, spanning as he does the worlds of Italy and America, national and community ideas of law, the action on stage and the audience etc.

An Inspector Calls

The most popular text, and Question 4a the most popular choice by some distance. Most candidates knew the play well and were able to identify key issues such as the apparent relief of the family at Gerald's revelation that the Inspector may have been a hoax and the real sense of contrast between the attitudes of older and younger generations. The best answers were able to point out the wider social and political references working within the play as long as they were grounded in the extract and in the context of the dramatic function of the events that impacted on the Birlings' lives. Some candidates, perhaps because they knew the whole play so well, didn't always find it easy to stay focused on the question/extract and sometimes awareness of the play in performance was not in evidence, with frequent references to "the reader".

Fewer candidates selected 4b and a significant number had problems in selecting and isolating one or two moments in terms of defining what sort of length to go for. Many wisely chose the Inspector's first entrance and his final exit. Others tried to define moments occurring during the

course of the action: still others wrote about multiple moments or simply about the Inspector's powerful impact generally. Some candidates had been taught a great deal about Priestley's views and, whilst such material could be used in answering this question, this sometimes caused them to fall into the trap of discussing Priestley and losing focus on the question. The best answers sought to write about Priestley's dramatic intent in the Inspector's direct dealings with the various members of the Birling family, especially where he reminds them of the social consequences of their actions.

Educating Rita

There were a small number of responses to the questions on this play, the vast majority to the extract-based question (5a). Most candidates were able to pick up on the humour and on Rita's character, but engagement with the language of the extract often proved elusive. Few dealt effectively with the aspect of the extract that talked about the nature of tragedy and although many offered some comment on Rita's growth as an individual, this was seldom really explored in any depth.

The few who chose to answer on 5b often felt that Rita had not changed for the better as a result of her educational advances – a legitimate viewpoint, but one which tended to lack balance in terms of any consideration of the extension of her choices.

Journey's End

Answers on both questions showed a sharp appreciation of staging, lighting, pauses – a clear sign that candidates had been encouraged to see the text very much as a play in performance and to respond as a member of an audience rather than a reader. Both 6a and 6b seem to have been popular options and the bullet points seemed to have been particularly helpful in encouraging Foundation Tier candidates to shape a response to 6a. The strongest answers to 6a often commented fully on the variety of possible responses to Hibbert's behaviour (Stanhope's, Osborne's, the audience's...) and on Stanhope's relationship with Osborne, seeing the implications of the "as long as the hero's a hero..." remark. The very best, and there were a good many of these, not only commented closely on the dramatic detail of the extract, but broadened their response to consider the conflicts building for Stanhope with both Hibbert and Raleigh in the future. Some candidates, however, found it difficult to move out at all and suggest any form of dramatic context and sometimes references to Raleigh were ignored with essays being entirely limited to discussion of the Stanhope/Hibbert situation, whilst others gave over-long school-based background detail to the Stanhope/Raleigh relationship.

Some candidates confined their 6b answers to Raleigh's death, ignoring the early part of the scene, which is a particularly poignant and packed moment; such responses could still score highly if candidates explored its dramatic and moving qualities. A sharp awareness of audience perspectives - what is known about the attack, the unseen action offstage, the sound effects, the audience's shared understanding with Stanhope that Raleigh's wound is fatal and Raleigh's heart-rending ignorance of this - was a feature of the best answers. Keen appreciation of Sherriff's use of telling detail, such as the contrasting exits of Raleigh, Trotter, Mason/Hibbert, Stanhope's instructions about the wounded that he swiftly countermands for Raleigh, the significance of Osborne's bed, first name terms between Stanhope and Raleigh and the extinguished candles, was also a prominent feature of the best answers. Some candidates experienced problems in selecting material given the abundance on offer for this question, often spending so long on the opening stage directions or on just Hibbert, Trotter or wider thematic concerns e.g. class, the 'lost generation', propaganda, that they failed to address the real sources of the scene's power. Some answers also devoted disproportionate time to candles and red dawn glows at the expense of the very powerful onstage action.

A663 Prose from Different Cultures

General Comments

Because this unit requires a single answer on a single text, we were expecting some early entries from schools keen to take advantage of the modular structure. However, the size of the entry – approaching 7,000 candidates – did surprise us. Some English departments were very quick off the mark and will have gained valuable experience from the process, including, it is to be hoped, from this report.

The main text chosen was *Of Mice and Men*. Between 80% and 90% of all candidates answered on Steinbeck, and practically all the rest chose *To Kill a Mockingbird*. There were a small number of answers on *Anita and Me* and *Tsotsi*, but none on *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha* or *The Joy Luck Club*. This is hardly surprising given the numbers of copies of *Of Mice and Men* available in stock cupboards, but we did not think it would predominate to quite this extent.

The vast majority of students answered the passage-based question, either on *Of Mice and Men* or *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Passage-based questions require particular skills and, whilst some candidates showed good technique, others demonstrated a lack of focus on the passage and the question and so did not achieve as well as they might have done.

Answers were frequently shorter, comments about characters rather more simplistic and reference to language more cursory than is necessary to meet the full requirements of tasks at GCSE level; we must assume that many candidates were Year 10 students entering after only one term of preparation.

Many candidates had difficulty in managing their time with an inevitable impact on the quality of their answers. There were significant numbers of scripts which were unfinished and ended in the middle of a sentence because students ran out of time. This may be further evidence of a lack of maturity or a lack of experience of sitting external exams,

General advice about passage-based questions

There are two common failings in answers to passage-based questions: lack of focus on the passage and lack of focus on the question.

Where there is lack of focus on the **passage**, there is evidence of one or more of the following:

- an introductory general preamble focusing on the author
- a lengthy statement of intent – *in this essay I will...*
- extensive focus on the lead up to the passage, and the lead away, including the use of quotation from outside the extract
- inclusion of detailed contextual material not directly or specifically linked to the passage
- extensive focus on how characters behave similarly or differently at other points in the novel.

Where there is lack of focus on the **question**, there is evidence of one or more of the following:

- failure to refer to key words in the question at the start
- having a pre-prepared list of points to make about this particular episode, irrespective of the question
- other prepared agenda, often relating to style and narrative technique – foreshadowing, emotive language, sentence length, use of dialect and slang
- inclusion of long quotations with inadequate linking to the question
- inclusion of long passages of contextual information with inadequate linking to the question

Comments on individual questions

1a) At Foundation tier, the key word was 'powerful' and candidates were generally well aware that strong emotions were being generated here. The question required focus on Curley's Wife's threats, which are both vicious and by no means empty. (This latter point offered an excellent opportunity to bring in some social context.) As well as the nature of her threats there is her language - crude, uncompromising and racist. Next there is the extreme reaction of Crooks, effacing himself before her. There is also material in her exchange with Candy and the way he subsided. Finally there is Lennie's pitiful confusion and Curley's Wife's lack of sympathy for her husband.

Most candidates in both tiers knew the book well and showed genuine enthusiasm for it, as well as sympathy for the trio of men, and also, perhaps more surprisingly in this chapter, for Curley's Wife. They saw how she shattered these men's dreams but many also commented on her loneliness and frustration. Higher tier candidates were shocked by her treatment of Crooks particularly, though surprisingly most left "I could get you strung up..." to speak for itself without commenting on just exactly what she was prepared to have done to him.

However, many candidates at both tiers found it difficult to focus on the passage: all extract-based questions require candidates to stick predominantly to it, making no more than passing references to earlier or later events in the novel and integrating references to the social/cultural/historical context. Such references are well rewarded when they illuminate an observation rooted in the passage – for example a mention of a contrasting episode, as when Curley's Wife is kind to Lennie in the next chapter, or a point about the practice of lynching black men in parts of the USA in the time of the novel. Too many answers made lengthy detours into the social and cultural background by way of the Declaration of Independence, the Wall Street Crash and Billie Holliday. This may not provide too many difficulties for the examiner if the answer is fairly lengthy and also covers many of the key areas. However when the answer is short and the content of the passage is not directly referred to until half way through it, there is bound to be an impact on the mark given.

This issue of relevance cropped up to a greater or lesser extent in all passage based questions. Answers frequently spent much time recounting events leading up to the extract; quoting lines not in the extract; writing in as much detail about other episodes involving one or some of the same characters. These tended not to score highly.

This question engendered a considerable amount of background information, both from other places in the novel and from contemporary social and economic history. Some of the latter tended to be rather simplistic, for example about hierarchy – who was more socially disadvantaged than whom; there were many who thought that "nigger" was not a term of abuse in the 1930s.

Better answers here did not stray too far from the passage and looked at language: most candidates quoted "nigger" and made a comment about it, but such attempts as were made to focus on other expressions ('*faced her*'; '*stared hopelessly at her*'; '*drew into himself*'; '*pressed himself against the wall*'; to take four adjacent examples relating to Crooks) were infrequent and often fell short of being an effective response to language.

1b) Much of what is written about question 1a also applies here, although issues of relevance were less to the fore. There was no stipulation in the question about what constituted the ending of the novel, but we expected that candidates would write mostly about the death of Lennie and feature George's struggle to do the deed and the contrasting reactions of Slim and Carlson right at the end. Some mention of the death of Curley's Wife and the events between the two killings would be appropriate. The ending of the dream, affecting also Candy, would provide significant material, especially as Lennie dies while George paints a picture of it for him. Some candidates wrote eloquently of the two deaths and the death of the dream, showing a strong personal

response. There was less focus on George than was expected: candidates found it easier to sympathise with his loss (though one or two saw the blossoming of his friendship with Slim) than to demonstrate insight into the effort it must have taken him to put a bullet into Lennie's brain. There was effective comment on the cyclical nature of the novel, the structural importance of the two men arriving back at the same place, except the place has changed with the shadows falling and the killing of the snake.

However, some candidates went further back, to the death of the dog - which stretched the ending back into the middle of the novel. If it was securely linked, structurally or emotionally, to the death of Lennie (for example George not wanting to make the same mistake that Candy did) then credit was given; but some candidates did little more than tell the story of the second half of the novel. Such answers were weakened by having resorted to narrative, but it was harder to be irrelevant in this question than in 1a.

There were a considerable number of responses here that owed much to prepared material. In the final chapter this involved the symbolism of the heron and the snake, and the description of the shadows lengthening, representing the death of the dream and the destruction of paradise. These are fairly impressive notions, and relevant; but some candidates wrote about very little else, and the human events taking place there were rather relegated to the background.

Similarly in 1a there were essays where the students set out their stall at the start to focus on technique, so they wrote for example about foreshadowing, use of dialect, and alliteration. It is difficult to argue that Curley's Wife's words to Crooks are shocking because they foreshadow her own death unless we ascribe a god-like omniscience to the reader. Also the fact that Curley's Wife and Candy drop their aitches isn't really a key reason why the passage is shocking. For higher band achievement candidates have to look closely at language; but technical points must serve a higher purpose – be careful of putting the cart before the horse.

2a) Comments here will be briefer, as the evidence base is so much smaller. The question focused on the tense and exciting nature of the passage. The cinematic way Lee builds tension in this scene offers a rich source of material. It is interesting how candidates, even less able ones, tended to look habitually for thematic links and symbolism – in *Of Mice and Men* it was the halter chains and the heron eating the snake; here it was the dog, and a curious assertion that Tim Johnson represented Tom Robinson. A case could be made for Bob Ewell; but Tom would have to be a more complex character than he is, to be comfortably represented by both a mockingbird and a mad dog. The best points were usually on the characters, and the scene does jump from one point of view to another very quickly: from Heck, to Atticus, to the kids, to Calpurnia to the dog. Heck's panic, Atticus's reluctance, Calpurnia's anxiety, the children's amazement and the dog's inexorability were all mentioned, as well as the slowing down of the action.

There was much to be said here, but many candidates did not finish their responses, so the resounding climax to the scene was often perfunctorily dealt with or elided. The description of the dog offers quite a bit in respect of ominous detail, but this was often ignored in favour of the aforementioned symbolism; and a surprising number of candidates offered their sympathy to the dog, perhaps rather unaware of just what a dangerous threat it would have been.

2b) This was a relatively unpopular choice but those who attempted it often made a good fist of it. Some of the best answers linked Boo's 'memorableness' to the effect he had on others, mainly Scout, and how her level of maturity can be measured by her response to him. Surprisingly, Boo's appearance at the end didn't always take pride of place in responses so candidates missed rich pickings in the description of his physical appearance and behaviour. However, it was obvious from many of the responses to this question that the character of Boo struck a strong chord of sympathy with candidates who had clearly gained a lot from the novel, which sometimes made the scripts very enjoyable to read.

3a) There was a small number of answers to *Anita and Me*. There were some good responses concentrating on Meena's feelings towards Anita but many candidates strayed from the extract referring more to Anita's behaviour towards Meena in other areas of the novel, thus losing focus.

3(b) No answers on this question.

6a) This was the more popular question on *Tsotsi*. There were many detailed responses that were aware of the context as a whole and understood why this was a horrific moment for David. The brutality and confusion of the moment, the immediacy of being inside the room and the flashes of detail and sheer helplessness that caused panic and created empathy, featured in the more successful answers. The contrast between this and the brutality of the authorities was also explored. However, despite the good overall understanding displayed by the majority of responses, the use of language to create this horrific atmosphere was frequently referred to but infrequently analysed or explained. The chosen passage was rich in possible examples that should have allowed candidates to exploit the full potential of this question but many good candidates produced answers that were not deeply enough rooted in the text and therefore fell short of band 1 or 2 quality.

6b) This was the less popular question but gave the candidates every opportunity to exploit several routes to a good answer. Most managed to link violence and poverty to the harshness of everyday life in Sophiatown. Also, institutionalised violence and the effects of poverty were recognised as the major causes of suffering. Most candidates managed to refer to relevant incidents, people and locations but weaker answers remained superficial, simply providing brief examples of varied relevance rather than exploring detail to illustrate through the use of language why such detail reflected the harshness of everyday life. Responses that also looked at the effects of Fugard's language were rare.

A664 Literary Heritage Prose and Contemporary Poetry

Report on the work of candidates in the January 2011 examination.

There were just 575 entries for the paper, so examiners saw a limited range of texts. Of the prose texts, the only ones taken up were *Lord of the Flies* and *Animal Farm*. From the poetry section, of the named poets, responses to Armitage, Heaney and Zephaniah were offered, and a handful of candidates tackled the Unseen Poem.

Work was seen from candidates at both Foundation and Higher Tier. Generally speaking, they were usually entered at the appropriate Tier; however, this was not always the case, and Centres should note that, just as on the Legacy Specification, a candidate at Higher Tier whose work is assessed at below the allowed E grade will be awarded a U. Some candidates ran out of time, sometimes stopping mid-sentence in their second essay, but most were able to complete both tasks satisfactorily. There were some rubric infringements, with some attempting to write on all the novels. Some responses, particularly at Foundation Tier, were only a few lines long; it is impossible for such brief responses to gain high reward.

Prose

Lord of the Flies

Question 3a, the extract-based question, was comfortably the more popular of the *Lord of the Flies* questions. Many candidates were able to comment on the danger the boys are facing, from the fire, from their fear, and from their failure to organise themselves adequately. There was much focus on Piggy, his attempt to maintain order, and, in the view of some candidates, to make an unsuccessful bid for power. Most included in their discussion the disappearance of the child "with the mark on his face". The answers that reached the highest bands looked closely at the language Golding uses to emphasise the danger the boys are in, noting that the fire "growled", a "tree exploded", the creepers were "snakes", and "the drum-roll continued". These candidates drew parallels between the explosions in a greater world beyond the island with the explosive and dangerous island world in which the boys now find themselves.

Most candidates who wrote about the horrifying figure of Roger recognised that he evolves from a furtive schoolboy into a murderer and torturer, from a kicker-over of sandcastles into a horrific sharpener of a stick at both ends. Some spent rather too long in pursuing Roger chronologically through the novel, focusing on his actions at the expense of what made them and him horrifying to the candidate writing about him. The best responses took the opportunity to demonstrate their engagement with the novel and with aspects of its structure and the effects of Golding's language.

Animal Farm

The extract-based question was the more popular of the two. Candidates at both Tiers found much to say on the "debate" over the windmill, Snowball's eloquence, Napoleon's seizing of power and the terror of the animals. A number of candidates appeared to think that Napoleon drove Snowball off the farm because he had lost the debate, not considering why he "seemed almost indifferent as to the effect he produced" and why he had reared the dogs privately. A considerable number of candidates were not very secure on either the dramatic quality of this moment or its significance. Good responses picked up the parallel Orwell draws here between Napoleon and Mr Jones. Responses in the top bands looked in detail at Snowball's energetic mental processes, his passionate language about the windmill, and his energetic, dramatic, physical escape from the dogs and the farm.

Boxer as a hero of the farm was a less popular question. Those who attempted it acknowledged his hard work and often provided detailed textual support. Surprisingly some omitted any mention of the reason for the award, his heroism at the Battle of the Cowshed. Some strayed into providing a character study of Boxer, losing sight of the word "hero", and castigated the pigs at some length for selling him off to Alfred Simmonds.

Poetry

All responses to Armitage and Heaney were at Higher Tier.

Armitage

Several candidates responded to the first two Armitage questions at Higher Tier, but none to the third. Sound understanding of all three poems was evident, with the best responses looking closely at the structure and the effects of language. Writing on *Hitcher*, some candidates became a little side-tracked by speculating about the narrator's motives, his possible reasons for not going to work, and the possibility that he might be a serial murderer of hitchhikers; it was as if arriving at a satisfying explanation would make an "unsettling" poem settling.

There were some excellent and thoughtful discussions of the relationship with the mother in *Mother, any distance greater than a single span*, with candidates teasing out the metaphors very well and scoring highly on AO2.

There are early signs that Armitage will prove a very accessible poet at this level (and, of course at many other levels!).

Heaney

A significant number of candidates chose to write on Heaney and, in general, showed good understanding of the poems they chose. The best demonstrated a good understanding of the significance and effects of language choices, structure and form, responding to the focus on language highlighted by the use of "vividly", and "memorably" in the questions, words which encourage the candidate to look at the language. Some responses to *Death of a Naturalist* lost some focus on the question by considering what was, and what was not, childlike language, though the question was not really about seeing life through the eyes of a child.

Candidates clearly enjoyed the poems they wrote about and, like Armitage, Heaney should prove a good choice for future candidates.

Zephaniah

Zephaniah elicited some engaged responses from candidates at both Foundation and Higher Tiers, suggesting that he too should provide exciting stimulus for future candidates. In response to 12a, on *What if* and its criticisms of modern society, the best answers focused on "criticisms" and how the writing makes them striking. Weaker responses offered an explanation of the whole poem, making it difficult for them to reach the higher bands of AO2. Similarly, responses to the second and third Zephaniah questions often settled for explanation, rather than for the kind of language discussion that "so strikingly" and "so powerful" seek to prompt.

Unseen Poems

There were too few responses on which to make any valuable comment.

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