

GCSE

English Literature

General Certificate of Secondary Education **J360**

OCR Report to Centres June 2014

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

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

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A661 Literary Heritage Linked Texts

General Comments:

In this entry there were over 30,000 candidates entered from over 260 centres. It is very pleasing to report that overall there was a consistency of marking and application of standards, and the responses to a wide range of tasks underlined the clear guidance that the teachers had given in order for students to complete their assignments without any teacher intervention. In general moderators were pleased to report that they were impressed with what they saw and were particularly pleased to see that many candidates had chosen texts from across the whole selection for both poetry and Shakespeare.

The amount of recent changes to the KS4 curriculum might have been a major contributory factor to the amount of administration and clerical errors this year, as teachers have a number of other tasks which distracts them from the careful presentation of Controlled Assessments. Too many centres were slow in sending MS1s, CCS160 and the samples. A few failed to complete the candidate numbers on front of folders and moderators reported that a number of centres had not marked essays in detail to show how marks had been awarded. A number of moderators also reported that, at internal moderation, some centres had changed the original mark on the folders (usually up) without any justification for the amended mark.

Centres need to be aware that this year OCR will not accept tasks that have been incorrectly set from previous years. Where the incorrect tasks have been set, that centre will be referred to the Assessment and Standards team, and they will be contacted by OCR about any further action that might be taken.

A number of centres had used the incorrect mark scheme for 2014. They had in fact used the mark scheme that will be used in 2015, which reflects the specific weighting of the components. In most cases this did not affect the final mark that had been awarded, and again this is an error which may well have been the result of the vast amount of change that has been imposed upon the specification in the last few months.

Centres are urged in the future to make sure that the cover sheets for each folder are clearly filled in for all candidates that have been selected in the sample, and that the overall mark on the folder is the same as the one submitted on the final mark sheets. A minority of centres sent the assignments in a separate package to the final annotated cover sheets and the moderator was then left with the task of collating the complete folder before the moderation process could begin.

Centres only need to include materials that they feel will facilitate the moderation process and which will clarify how the final mark has been awarded. There was clear evidence that internal moderation had taken place in the vast majority of centres and on this entry there were only some small adjustments needed to a small minority of centres. Marking was generally consistent and centres had been rigorous in their application of the assessment criteria.

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

Comments on Individual Questions:

Response to Shakespeare

On this entry the vast majority of centres responded to the tasks on Macbeth or Romeo and Juliet, but there were also responses to the tasks on Julius Caesar and The Merchant of Venice. There was clear evidence that the use of the film had enhanced the interpretation of the play, and centres had clearly used the film to stimulate a general interest in the text. A number of teachers had clearly encouraged their candidates to watch more than one version of the Shakespeare film studied and were able to use this effectively in their work. As a result it was reported that there were some perceptive comments on directors at work. Unfortunately, on this entry, it was reported that a minority of students paid scant attention to the written text and did not see it as a piece of drama for performance but as a 'text' for a director to manipulate. A number of moderators reported this year that a closer focus and analysis of Shakespeare's words was needed. Nevertheless marks that were awarded for this unit were rarely out of tolerance.

A small minority of centres were using alternative film versions of the play that were not on the recommended list that accompanied the tasks. Centres are advised to refer to this list when preparing to show the filmed version before undertaking future tasks.

It is pleasing to report however that the majority of centres are getting a sound balance between commenting upon the performed version against the literal interpretation of the text.

Most candidates showed clear and critical engagement with the play and were able to refer to the text to support their observations. Centres had also clearly encouraged their students to look at the set scene in the context of the whole play and this enhanced the final response as a result. Moderators reported that candidates had been well prepared and were able to refer to the characters selected in the context of the rest of the play. There was no evidence to suggest that centres had been anything other than totally diligent and conscientious in their study of the whole play, and then directed this into the selected scene for the final assessment piece.

Response to poetry

The majority of centres responded to the poems by Wilfred Owen, but there were also responses to the Browning poems and also to Chaucer, Rossetti, and Hardy. The responses were generally of a very high standard and centres had applied the assessment criteria consistently.

A662 Modern Drama

General Comments:

The overall quality of the work submitted was generally perceived as of a praiseworthy standard, with the paper being seen as very accessible. It has again been particularly encouraging to note some pleasing traits that may well have reflected a tendency for centres to take on board the messages of previous Principal Examiner's Reports. There seemed, generally, to be stronger evidence of candidates at both tiers of entry having absorbed the advice to contextualise extract questions succinctly. There was continuing evidence of candidates really thinking about what characters are onstage, what they know, what has led up to the extract and what happens as a result of it. In this session there appeared generally to be a pleasing absence of responses that merely worked through the passages as if they were unseen and far fewer references to "readers" in proportion to "audience", which seems to provide continuing evidence that many centres are now adapting their approaches to the teaching of the play as a performance, seen from an audience perspective, rather than merely as a text on the page. The general consensus from examiners was that there was a significant and growing amount of analytical work, showing very sound knowledge of texts, evidence of thorough and imaginative teaching and an encouragingly increasing amount of comment directed at the play in performance. A significant number of candidates were able to cite specific productions and film versions that they had experienced and were, therefore, able to see themselves not merely as readers of a text, but as members of an audience and to engage with the ways in which an audience's reactions are influenced by sound, movement, gesture and tone as well as the crucial effects of dialogue, characterisation and plot development.

The passage-based question remains the preferred option of the great majority of candidates. A number of examiners did, however, observe that the quality of the discursive responses that they saw was very impressive. Whilst the organisational skills required to address these questions are clearly of a different order to the extract-based option, it seems to be the case that some candidates of all abilities, and particularly the more able, are often better served by selecting a discursive task and it is to be hoped that the perceived drop in the numbers of candidates attempting this option will not become an established trend.

Examiners generally felt that candidates had been well prepared for the extract-based question and were usually able to get the balance right between dealing with the dramatic detail of the extract and with its wider significance within the play as a whole. Answers including partially assimilated material, particularly in an attention to Priestley's supposed Communist leanings and Sherriff's war experiences, for example, were encouragingly fewer than previous years. On a positive note, it is worth mentioning that the number of feature-logging responses that become an exhaustive analysis of the linguistic features of, for example, Miller's stage directions and even punctuation, which after all are not seen by an audience, were also not very evident.

Comparatively few examples of rubric infringements were reported, with the "multiple" answer seeming rare.

The best extract-based responses still managed to achieve a balance, spending the bulk of their time on the extract itself and moving out from it and returning to integrate comment on its wider importance within the play. The best discursive responses made a judicious selection of material and kept the given question in sight at all times, pursuing the dramatic function of the character/relationship. A succinct and focused introduction often made a massive difference to the quality and structure of an answer, regardless of whether it was an extract-based or discursive response.

Once again, it is pleasing to report that all six texts were covered in this examination session. "An Inspector Calls" remains the most popular choice; and it was generally considered that

candidates engaged effectively with it and were able to explore the issues arising with some sensitivity. “Journey’s End” and “A View from the Bridge” appear to be the next most popular options. “Educating Rita” continues to be studied by a significant number of centres, with candidates seeming to engage positively with the cultural and social issues the play encapsulates, though the humour of the dialogue sometimes proves difficult for some to grasp. “The History Boys” remains a minority choice and, again, the comic dialogue is often appreciated fully only by the most able candidates, though it is a text that has yielded some extremely sophisticated and critically aware answers. “Hobson’s Choice” seems to have been more popular this year, with centres perhaps attracted by the play’s strong themes and characterisation.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question 1: The History Boys

A relatively small number of centres selected this text and the majority of candidates were entered for the Higher Tier.

Question 1(a)

The passage-based Q1(a) was the preferred option of most candidates and it met with varying degrees of success. Most candidates were able to note the light-hearted but probing, even mischievous, language of the boys. Similarly, most candidates were able to use the passage to write purposefully on the different approaches to teaching favoured by Hector and Irwin, and the boys’ developing and sometimes ambivalent attitudes, without sacrificing detail from the language and the drama of the specific passage. Better answers relished the awkward humour of the exchanges and the best were able to contextualise the references to Auden and make sensitive comments on Posner’s admission at the end of the extract.

Question 1(b)

This was a less popular choice and attempted by relatively few candidates. The question demanded relevant selection, thought and development if a balanced argument was to be achieved – the early verbal sparring; the comments on Auden; the lessons on the First World War; Dakin’s propositioning. The temptation to chronicle exchanges between the characters was ignored, and those candidates who attempted the question were able generally to focus on the “how” of Bennett’s presentation of the relationship, and an analysis of the growing respect and admiration from Dakin, and a sense of the relationship as an indicator of the balance of power in the play.

Question 2: Hobson’s Choice

Although there were not a large number of responses on this text on the Higher paper, there were encouragingly more centres and more candidates this year. The strong characterisation and clear thematic elements certainly helped nearly all candidates to keep a focussed and relevant response.

Question 2(a)

Most responses seem to have been to Question 2(a), with candidates mostly responding successfully to the humorous contrast between Maggie’s forthright, unromantic, business-like approach and Willie’s uncertain and confused reticence. The stronger answers were able to see the wider significance of the extract in terms of the play’s wider concerns of equality and self-improvement. These better answers were also able to balance comments on the developing drama of the moment on stage with comment on how it sows the seeds of future developments and ensuing conflict within the family.

Question 2(b)

At the time of writing, very few responses to Question 2(b) had been reported, but examiners felt that those seen had handled the question competently and displayed a clear awareness of the relationship in terms of the growing domestic power struggle caused by the conflict between Maggie's ambitions and Hobson's dismissal of her life choices. The stronger answers were able to set this within the contexts of the play's wider themes of equality and changing gender roles, without losing a sense of the many dramatic and humorous exchanges in the play.

Question 3: A View from the Bridge

This is an increasingly popular text, that again appears to have been both well-received and well-taught by centres and greatly enjoyed by candidates.

Question 3(a)

The extract Question 3(a) was by far the most popular choice on this text and demanded both discussion of context as well as of the wealth of material available in the dialogue and staging. It was successfully answered by the majority of candidates, who were aware of it showing early signs of Eddie's over-protective nature and were able to make measured judgements about Eddie's dynamic and emotional relationship with his niece. Most answers also linked the problematic relationship between Eddie and Catherine with the deteriorating relationship between Eddie and Beatrice, and were able to write about Beatrice's anguished loyalties. Stronger answers displayed a clear understanding not only of the dramatic nature of the scene, but also of its context within the play as a whole; how we have arrived at this point and foreshadowing where events are leading. These answers often made useful reference to the irony of comments about trusting nobody. Miller's stage directions were generally related to the onstage action. Examiners reported that there was a particularly pleasing response to this question, with a high proportion of very strong answers. The "Madonna" reference needs addressing by Centres to make sure that what is perhaps a culturally unfamiliar image is explored and linked appropriately to Eddie's complex relationship with his niece; as where this wasn't understood, candidates made erroneous (if understandable) comments about how he perceives her.

Question 3(b)

Although the majority of candidates on this text went for the extract-based response, Question 3(b) seems to have been competently answered by those candidates that attempted it. It may well be that the very powerful and packed nature of the extract may have led candidates away from the discursive option here. Most examiners felt that candidates had a good sense of the inappropriate nature of the relationship. The better answers were able to chart the developing crisis by careful and thoughtful selection of detail from the large amount of potentially appropriate and relevant episodes and language (the job offer, the sitting on the edge of the bath, the boxing tuition, the kiss, the "rat" accusation, etc). Some answers tended to lose focus on the relationship and its dramatic function and tended to embark, perhaps unsurprisingly, solely on a study of Eddie's unacknowledged incestuous feelings for Catherine.

Question 4: An Inspector Calls

Perhaps, unsurprisingly, still the most popular choice of text by some distance; and, as with all other sessions of this paper, candidates made comments that cast new light onto the text for even the most experienced of examiners.

Question 4(a)

Answers to Question 4(a), the passage-based question, generated the full range of achievement, with candidates clearly appearing to have engaged with the play and to have understood the dramatic context and to have at least some awareness of the wider significance of the extract. Most answers were aware of the key features of the scene's dramatic aspects: the complacency and "ignorance" of the Birling family, Birling's dominant position and "lecturing" of

the others, Eric's betrayal of what he knows. Many stronger answers also commented on the dramatic significance of the sharp ring of the door-bell and the demand to "give us more light", and linked them well with the events of the play that will unfold and with Priestley's emerging socialist message. It is encouraging that most answers avoided the temptation to become side-tracked by the play's "political message" around the role of women (including Edna) and ideas of collective responsibility, and instead wrote sensitively on the dramatic unfolding of the complex relationships and how they voiced Priestley's passionate intent.

Question 4(b)

This question was attempted by a much smaller, though nonetheless significant number of candidates, probably being the most popular (b) question, and was probably done equally well as the extract-based option, with the majority able to show a secure understanding of the relationship between Sheila and Mrs Birling. It was pleasing that few candidates adopted a character sketch approach, commenting on one character and then the other. Instead, most candidates were able to describe and explore the key moments and speeches, considering appropriately Priestley's wider concerns in terms of the generational divide and social responsibility. The better answers managed to stay focused on the nature of the failed relationship, the reasons for its failure and the dramatic consequences, particularly in their different reactions to the news of the girl's death, each of their involvements, the Inspector's comments, the unborn fatality, Gerald's revelation about the "fake" Inspector, the offering of the ring, another Inspector being on his way, and so much more. Such stronger responses were able to link the relationship to Priestley's themes of the generational divide and collective responsibility and explore Mrs Birling's refusal to accept any responsibility in contrast to Sheila's genuine remorse. The very best answers had an awareness of how the divide between the two is a developing picture, and is not as apparent in the early scenes and speeches as it is later.

Question 5: Educating Rita

"Educating Rita" was a reasonably widely-studied text in this session, with the majority of candidates opting to attempt Question 5(a); a particularly popular option for Foundation Tier candidates.

Question 5(a)

The passage and question allowed good scope for meaningful answers with the majority of candidates able to pick up on Rita's enthusiastic involvement in her studies, her husband Denny's response, and Frank's shifts of feeling (from annoyance, to sympathy and understanding, to romantic hope and expectation). The stronger and more developed answer picked up on and illustrated the complex feelings and emotions – the "moving-ness" of pressures within Rita's marriage coupled with her confiding and honest declaration of her hopes for her life. Those answers also tended to show an understanding rather than a condemnation of Denny when faced with the loss of the girl he married; and were able to use the language and stage directions to illustrate where she has reached in her journey of "education" and what might lie ahead of her. There was in general a sensitive and focussed discussion of how the symbolism of windows and views of life helped us to understand Rita's situation.

Question 5(b)

Question 5(b) was, predictably, the less popular option on this text, but those that attempted it appeared to have a clear sense of Frank's constantly shifting and changing attitude to Rita – from the early encounters and lack of any real understanding, to a fear and concern that he is going to lose the fresh, original Rita he valued, to the development of a relationship that offers Frank something that looks like an education, to the suspicious and resentful attitude that surfaces later, to the closing scene. Answers generally were able to select relevantly and keep the focus of the question.

Question 6: Journey's End

This is still a very popular text, enjoyed by the majority of candidates who, despite their relative youth and inexperience of such things as the play ostensibly deals with, were able to engage with the very human dilemmas.

Question 6(a)

This question, as in previous sessions, remains the most frequently attempted question, eliciting the full range of responses. It was encouraging that, although there is not a huge amount that “happens” in the extract, candidates in general responded to the emotionally charged situation. Most candidates were aware and able to articulate the poignancy of Stanhope’s slow, lingering exit, and the business of Osborne’s cherished possessions. Candidates in general responded with compassion and were able to understand how the scene’s dynamics were changed by the short, hesitant expressions. The better answers were those that commented on the subtleties of the scene – the meeting of eyes, the agreed avoidance of the obvious. Those better answers were able to make reference to incidents and language from elsewhere in the play, without sacrificing the focus on what is a very full and complex scene.

Question 6(b)

There were proportionally far fewer responses to Question 6(b), yet it was probably the second most attempted discursive option, after Question 4(b), and the consensus was that it was generally well done by those who attempted it. Candidates in general were advantaged rather than otherwise by the amount of material available – the first meeting, Osborne’s paternal attitude, the early conversations about their homes, the veiled warnings about Stanhope, the details of the fateful raid, and the reaction of Raleigh following the loss of Osborne. Despite the amount of material, there were few answers that retold the narrative; and a pleasing number of candidates on both tiers addressed both strands of the question and commented explicitly on the playwright’s method in linking the idealistic new boy with the more experienced soldier to bring the play’s concerns of comradeship and shared humanity to the audience of the time.

SPAG

This is the third session that includes the SPAG mark in this unit, and it is perhaps worth making some general observations on candidates’ performance. The level of achievement for SPAG was seen as largely very sound, particularly at the Higher Tier, with few candidates at either tier falling into the Threshold performance band. Three areas for attention were highlighted by examiners: better paragraphing practice, where evident, helped candidates to structure their ideas and guide the reader to an understanding of the analysis and support being offered; the correct spelling of the names of dramatists and characters gave confidence and fluency to the assessment process; and the same fluency around the use of the possessive apostrophe helped the marker follow the candidates’ ideas with a sense of confidence and assuredness.

A663 Prose from Different Cultures

General Comments:

This year's examination differentiated well in both tiers: examiners were able to award the full range of marks. The number of candidates at band 3 in the Foundation Tier and band 5 or below in the Higher Tier was extremely low this time, indicating that schools have become very adept at entering students for the correct Tier.

The passage-based questions continue to be chosen by the vast majority of candidates, no doubt attracted by the accessibility of the material, particularly with a view to directly quoting from the text. Responses to the (a) questions tended to focus more on AO2, the author's choice of words, analysing metaphorical language for example or examining the effect of sound features. There was less evidence of the corollary – (b) responses focusing more on AO4 – but the opportunity to take a broader view of the novel did tend to mean that comment on the social context was better integrated into the response in the (b) answers.

A strong personal response continues to be a feature of A663: examiners commented frequently on the candidates' level of engagement with the texts. Those who could use that empathy to explore the characters' difficulties and dilemmas tended to score highly ('critical insight' is a band 2 descriptor); those who allowed themselves to be side-tracked into a general attack on racism or sexism for example, tended to do less well.

Awareness of the demand to include reference to the social context continues to grow. More candidates than ever were alert to the opportunities to compare that society – whether it be California in the 1930s or South Africa in the 1950s – to our own. The extent to which they succeeded in integrating that knowledge into the response to the particular question rather than offering it as general background to the novel was again a significant factor in the assessment of the quality of the work.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question 1(a)

This was by a long way the most popular question and on the whole produced responses that mirrored the abilities of the candidates. Because there was so much in the passage - Curley's wife; the description of the atmosphere in the barn; the reactions of the horses; Candy and George, all make significant contributions - candidates had to select which aspects to cover in order to address what makes the scene '*dramatic*'. Strong responses managed to at least touch on all these areas; weaker candidates often dwelt almost exclusively on Curley's wife with rather too much general information about her character and role in the novel. Examiners felt on occasion that these candidates were answering the question they hoped would be asked rather than the one on the paper.

Best answers combined a detailed exploration of the language in the passage with a range of links to context as they arose, often displaying a strong compassion for Curley's wife, informed by a clear insight into the particular difficulties faced by women at that time in that place. Middle range responses were usually less focused on language development with a tendency to dwell too much on other moments in the novel without firm links back to the passage. Even quite strong responses were sometimes guilty of exaggerated, sweeping statements about how *all* women were treated at that time. Weaker responses contained tracts of narrative or tended to weave in and out of relevance. References to context tended to be bolt-on passages on aspects of the Depression. Below band 4 scripts were often quite short.

Question 1(b)

This question discriminated effectively, though regardless of ability candidates often wrote with great passion; in many cases their indignation at Crooks's ill-treatment was palpable.

Those who knew the novel well could find and quote from several key moments where Crooks is present, and one or two where he is talked about; they tended to attain highly. Good answers also tended to allude effectively to his cynicism and defensive behaviour and the poignancy of his habitual disappointment. High-achieving candidates often exploited the details of his living conditions to make some telling references to Steinbeck's choice of words (AO2).

In middle range responses candidates tended to allow their personal feelings to lead them away from the question, expressing their own views about the evils of racial prejudice somewhat divorced from the novel. There was a trend in weaker answers also to see Crooks as the embodiment of racism in society rather than to treat him as a rounded character with his own individual traits. Low-achieving responses tended to be undermined by an absence of specific reference, arising from a lack of basic knowledge of the text.

Question 2(a)

The extract is long and very meaty, and high-achieving candidates made the most of their opportunities both to discuss how Lee creates and maintains suspense here and also to reflect on what the passage illuminates about life in the Deep South at that time, particularly for the black population.

Another characteristic of good responses was the understanding that, while these men provide a real threat to Tom and arguably to Atticus, they are not demonised – it is the fact that they remain the ordinary folk of Maycomb that shows just how entrenched racist attitudes were then. Candidates who explored this element of the scene tended to score highly.

The most challenging element in the passage is the effect of Scout, the narrator's, imperfect understanding of what's going on. Success in exploring what this adds to the writing was another marker of high achievement.

In terms of the Assessment Objectives, middle range responses could point to phrases like *'light revealed solid shapes'* as creating suspense but without the analytical development present in bands 1 and 2 work (AO2). They could also comment on what the men's presence and their intentions reveal about prevailing social attitudes though perhaps without acknowledging the counterweight provided by Atticus (AO4).

Weaker responses tended to narrate the episode in their own words, or go off at a tangent exploring historical context without reference to what is happening here, or, conversely, fail to mention why the men are outside the jail in the first place.

Question 2(b)

This question offered similar opportunities to Question 1(b) and those who chose to write about Jem often did so with great gusto. His admirable qualities were effectively documented. Comments were very well supported and generally candidates demonstrated wide ranging and confident knowledge of the text. Jem is obviously a character whose appeal to readers transcends time and place.

High-achieving responses focused on some or all of the following: the way Jem changes as he grows up; his father's influence on him; his courage, decency and sense of justice. Good candidates selected well: key episodes like the Mrs Dubose affair or the trial or Bob Ewell's attack were examined for what they reveal about Jem – and also about Maycomb society. They

also managed at least a brief analysis of Lee's language: the description of Jem's reaction to the verdict was a popular choice here.

Weaker responses – mid and low range – tended to select less appropriately; some argued for Jem being bossy on the strength of some early scenes without demonstrating how he changes; or dwelt on some of the scrapes they got into, mostly connected with Boo Radley, again without focusing on how Jem matures through the novel. Band 4 answers sometimes did not make effective links to either AO, providing a partial character sketch without much awareness of the society that surrounds and in many ways defines Jem.

Question 6(a)

This vivid, hard-hitting passage inspired some energetic writing. Many candidates wrote effectively about the cruelty and the violence perpetrated by the police in the moments preceding the extract and by Tsotsi's father during it. Best answers saw the symbolism in the fate of the dog though some candidates took that too far, building their whole response round the idea of the dog as metaphor for the boy or the family or the country or all three. Many were alert to the vividness of the description of its injuries and its suffering, making full use of the opportunity to analyse Fugard's choice of words. Picking up on the pathos in the image of the 'little animal' running away at the end was another marker of high achievement.

The links to context were fairly straightforward here and most candidates linked their wider comments on Apartheid closely to the events of the passage. Many mid and top range responses, for example, focused on the seminal role of these events in the personal development of Tsotsi; this point offers straightforward AO4 links.

Less successful answers tended to drift away from the extract to provide background information about the Pass Laws and other instruments of oppression that made up the system. Occasional weak responses showed some confusion about what is happening here, sometimes about who was doing the shouting and why.

Question 6(b)

This question was well done by the few candidates who chose it. The influences on Tsotsi are varied and some candidates took a broad view and tried to deal with all or most of them. This sometimes led to rather a thin coverage and high-achieving responses tended to focus on one or two moments or characters and look more deeply. This also made targeting AO2 easier.

Many candidates chose to examine the ending as proof of the extent to which Tsotsi had re-made himself and wrote movingly about how the novel offers hope for the future not only for South Africa but for all of us.

The six questions dealt with above represented well over 99% of all the scripts read, making it all but impossible to draw conclusions from the very few examples of the rest; therefore these following remarks are anecdotal and tentative and conclusions need to be regarded with some caution. They all refer to the passage-based questions.

Questions 3(a) and 4(a) were similar in as much as they asked candidates to consider a clash between a daughter and her parent(s), a confrontation which was as much cultural as generational, so that there were good opportunities to make links to the social context. In 'Anita and Me' candidates tended to focus on describing the shock and outrage felt by the parents to the exclusion of a consideration of its cultural roots; in 'The Joy Luck Club' candidates tended to see and exploit this dimension with more confidence, which is perhaps a reflection of the nature of the candidature for this particularly challenging novel.

'Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha' is a novel suited to candidates comfortable with the demands of its narrative form. Those who chose Question 5(a) were mostly quite skilled at building on Paddy's partial understanding of what he is describing and could draw conclusions about Paddy's father's strengths and weakness as a parent.

A664 Literary Heritage Prose and Contemporary Poetry

General Comments:

Entries for this unit were somewhat down at Foundation Tier, with some 3698 candidates entered. However, the number of Higher Tier entries, 27729, was consistent with previous years.

Candidates do themselves no favours by misidentifying parts of speech. Too often, much is made of a writer's use of adverbs when referring to adjectives, nouns, or even verbs. It is better perhaps to comment on language more generally than draw unnecessary attention to what one misunderstands or does not know.

Examiners on this unit are increasingly surprised that readers of novels and poems are now almost universally described by candidates as "the audience". The term is thoroughly appropriate when writing on a drama text for A662, but not so on A664 texts, unless the candidate is writing about Zephaniah. The experience of reading is not identical to being part of an audience in a theatre or concert-hall. To blur the boundaries over-simplifies the processes involved. An audience experiences what an actor or musician communicates by speaking, moving, singing, playing, as an auditory and part visual experience. A reader experiences the word as communicated from the printed page through the eye. No doubt the brain is excited by both experiences but the excitement comes from very different stimuli. If Jane Eyre had written, "Audience, I married him", the effect would have been more amusing than perhaps it already is.

Examiners were also surprised by the frequent confusion of "juxtaposed" with "contrasted with". Juxtaposed does not mean the same, but it has an impressive Latinate ring. Perhaps that's the attraction.

Section A: Literary Heritage Prose

Animal Farm was the most popular of the prose texts, closely followed by *Lord of the Flies*, with *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* some distance behind but attracting quite a number of candidates. *Pride and Prejudice* proved rather less attractive though there were a significant number of responses. Few candidates responded to *The Withered Hand and Other Wessex Tales*. Examiners reported seeing very few responses to *Silas Marner*.

It remains noteworthy that the extract-based question on all the prose texts was the overwhelmingly popular choice of question, with the discursive question the choice of comparatively few candidates. The extract-based question requires candidates to focus closely on the set extract and not use it as a peg on which to hang a discursive essay on a character or theme touched on in the extract. For example, in the Golding extract, the appearance of Jack, unnamed, as "a little boy who wore the remains of an extraordinary black cap on his red hair" should not be a cue for a lengthy account of Jack's struggle for control throughout the novel. Such accounts distract from focusing on other significant areas of the extract, and at Higher Tier, from considering the way Golding's writing makes the moment so powerful.

Austen: *Pride and Prejudice*

Question 1(a)

Pride and Prejudice attracted a significant number of candidates, principally at Higher Tier, who, on the evidence of responses to the extract-base question, derive considerable enjoyment from

it. Most were able to comment on the amusing relationship between Mr and Mrs Collins, usually commenting on the reasons for their marrying. Charlotte's embarrassment in her husband's presence and greater ease in his absence came in for comment. Perhaps the only fairly widespread false note came when candidates claimed that Charlotte shared her husband's sycophancy as regards Lady Catherine. Closer attention to the manner of speech Austen creates would have shown a marked lack of enthusiasm for Charlotte's "attentive neighbour".

Question 1(b)

There were few responses to the significance of Lydia Bennet. These usually managed to avoid the temptation to provide a straightforward character study, and looked at her as a means of bringing Elizabeth and Darcy together or as a means of highlighting the absurdity of Mrs Bennet and her ideas.

Eliot: *Silas Marner*

So few responses to this text have been seen that it is impossible to provide helpful comment on the overall performance of candidates.

Golding: *Lord of the Flies*

Question 3(a)

As stated above, this was a very popular text at both Tiers. There were numerous responses to the extract from the last chapter. At Foundation Tier, most were able to comment on the naval officer's opportune arrival and his conversation with Ralph. The officer's jolly tone and initial total misunderstanding of the situation on the island invited and received comment, candidates referring to his "fun and games" and "Having a war or something?" as indicative of his disbelief that "a pack of British boys" could have descended to savagery. Interpretations of the portrayal of Ralph here were very varied. Some suggested that Ralph had become hardened by his experience on the island and indifferent to death ("Only two. And they've gone".) Others felt that his experience had made him stupid (this based on "dumbly" in the modern American sense). Others felt that his loud assertion that he was the "boss" was a re-claiming of the leadership, a view re-enforced by the reaction of the "little boy ...who started forward, then changed his mind".

Some responses argued that the extract illustrated the boys' savagery, citing their hunting down of Ralph, the bodies streaked with coloured clay, and the sharp sticks. However, candidates at Higher Tier often noted that the boys are being seen through the eyes of the naval officer who initially knows nothing of their previous behaviour. He sees a "semicircle of little boys", Ralph as a "kid" in need of a bath, "tiny tots", and the fearsome Jack as a "little boy". Such responses argued that it was the changed perspective that gave the moment its power and extra force to Golding's theme that "kids" "tiny tots" and "little boys" already contain within themselves the darkness of man's heart".

The extract provided plenty of material, of which candidates took advantage. The effect of Percival Wemys Madison's experience on the island was often taken as symptomatic of the boys' descent into savagery; the fire, lit to smoke Ralph out, but, ironically saving both him and the hunters; the blackness of the sky; the reminder of the war in the macrocosm: all came in for discussion. The best responses selected wisely, focused on what was powerful about the material selected for discussion and avoided limiting the range of material to a single area. Less persuasive responses tended to focus on "Having a war or something?" and limiting discussion to the war away from the island; concentrating on the sub-machine gun (often said to be carried by the naval officer); and the presumed savagery of the naval officer because he was serving during a war.

At Higher Tier, in particular, candidates found much to discuss about Golding's writing. Few candidates commented on "ululation" and "incantation" but usually did so very perceptively. More commented successfully on the "shuddering" island and on the use of "pack" to describe the British boys.

Question 3(b)

Comparatively few candidates wrote about the "beast" and its significant presence. Candidates who attempted the question often confined themselves to the early pages of the novel and the fears of the "littluns". The presence and significance of the parachutist were usually ignored. Few engaged with Simon's "conversation" with the Lord of the Flies and the significance of what Simon is told. Sometimes Jack was identified as the beast. Sometimes the beast's significance was that the boys mistook Simon for the beast and accordingly killed him. The best responses recognised the importance of what the Lord of the Flies tells Simon and engaged with that area of the text.

Hardy: *The Withered Arm and Other Wessex Tales*

Question 4(a)

This is not a popular text with Centres, and some examiners saw no responses to the two questions. Again, the extract-based question was the more popular of the two. What was quite apparent about responses to the extract from *The Melancholy Hussar of the German Legion* at both Tiers was the focus on AO4. Responses usually recognised that Phyllis's dilemma was moving, and this was because she was a woman in a male-dominated society, oppressed by her father, bound by a promise to Humphrey Gould, and expected to conform to society's expectation that a woman would run her home. This usually led to a comparison between early nineteenth-century society and an enlightened modern society where women fortunately do not have such shackles. This might well be true, but Phyllis's fatal misunderstanding of Gould's words, her sacrifice of love in the face of her need to keep her word, and the horrible coincidence of Gould's return at the moment she is about to run away with the man she loves, were often lost in the contrast between then and now. This is a cross-over text for English J350, and candidates should be aware that AO4, important for J350, is not assessed on this Literature unit.

Question 4(b)

There were very few responses to this question on superstitions in *The Withered Arm*. Most focused solely on Rhoda's dream, without showing how this shocking experience was a superstition.

Orwell: *Animal Farm*

Question 5(a)

There were many responses at both Tiers to *Animal Farm* with most answering the extract-based question. Candidates at Foundation Tier were usually able to provide a reasonable response to the unfairness of the relationship showing how the pigs were manipulating the Commandments and taking advantage of the trust and lack of intelligence of the other animals. Squealer's description of the pigs as "the brains of the farm" was taken as an assertion of the pigs' superiority. Stronger responses at Foundation Tier recognised that this became a justification for sleeping in beds and rising from them an hour later than the other animals. At Higher Tier, responses engaged more closely with Squealer and his rhetoric, considering his rhetorical questions, his dubious distinction between sheets and blankets, his subtle attribution of ingratitude on the part of the animals who would "rob" the brains of the farm from their necessary repose, and the threat of the return of Jones. Good responses paid close attention to

the language of the extract, noting that “the animals seemed to remember “ and Clover “thought she remembered”, where less careful reading asserted that the animals remembered quite clearly and even that they knew very well what the pigs were up to. There was sometimes careful evaluation of details of Orwell’s writing: Squealer’s appearance with the dogs was variously noted as his having a retinue befitting a figure of significance, or as an accompanying threat to the animals; but that he “happened to be passing at this moment” was considered by candidates alert to Orwell’s irony, as was the “curiously enough” comment on Clover’s not remembering about the sheets.

There seemed to be fewer digressions into the history of the Soviet Union than in previous years. However, some responses strayed too far from *Animal Farm* and the extract in the pursuit of historical parallels. Perhaps inevitably, weaker responses dwelt too long on Boxer, commenting on his lack of intelligence, his loyalty to Napoleon and the ingratitude to him that consigns him to his fate and Alfred Simmons.

Question 5(b)

There were comparatively few responses to the discursive questions on Napoleon gaining and keeping control of Animal Farm (Foundation Tier) and the inevitability of his gaining control (Higher Tier). The importance of the dogs, the removal of Snowball, Squealer and his methods, the other animals’ lack of intelligence, Benjamin’s stubborn silence; all came into consideration and, in the best responses, their effects were well illustrated and given strong textual support.

Stevenson: *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*

Question 6(a)

This remains a fairly popular text. Most candidates at both Tiers who wrote on it responded to the extract-based question. The best responses were able to comment on Hyde’s dress, the reason for his visit to Lanyon, and the taunting, boastful speech that concludes the extract. Surprisingly few candidates at either Tier ventured any comment on Hyde’s “ludicrous accoutrement” beyond the basic one that his clothes were indeed “enormously too large for him”. Those few recognised that Hyde was dressed in Jekyll’s clothing as Jekyll’s unexpected transformation into Hyde had been involuntary; the clothing was not the consequence of Hyde’s absurd sartorial taste. There was some consideration of Hyde’s excitable behaviour resulting from his need to conceal himself as Jekyll, as he is a wanted man. Some candidates thought the final speech was delivered by Jekyll and not by Hyde, though the desire to justify his scientific theories is probably Jekyll’s.

Candidates were able to comment on some of the language of the extract to show how Lanyon is encountering a “creature” with animal characteristics, one which has haunches, springs to the drawer, and grinds its teeth.

Fewer responses this year wandered from the extract into discussions of the duality of man, the effect of Darwinism, the immorality and hypocrisy of the Victorian gentleman, Jack the Ripper, and the shock that Victorians would have experienced by seeing the word “Satan” on the printed page. Closer concentration on the text and AO1 and AO2 helped candidates here; AO4 is not assessed on this unit.

Question 6(b)

Surprisingly few candidates answered this question. At both Tiers, candidates made good use of the incidents involving the little girl, and the Carew murder. Some candidates knew both incidents in detail and quoted extensively from them, commenting on the language in some detail.

Section B: Contemporary Poetry

As in previous years, the most popular poets were Carol Ann Duffy, Simon Armitage, and Seamus Heaney, though there were quite a few responses to Benjamin Zephaniah. There were comparatively few to Gillian Clarke and Wendy Cope. A significant number of candidates at both Tiers answered on the Unseen Poem.

As ever, there were often excellent responses on the poems, so it is perhaps mean-spirited to begin this section of the report on a complaining note. However, many examiners reported that, as in previous years, candidates often become bogged down in trying unsuccessfully to find something significant to say about rhyme schemes, stanza lengths, enjambement (however spelt), caesuras ... This is often because there is nothing significant to say, and candidates spend ten minutes or so in the vain search. AO2 refers to “language, structure and form”, and candidates seem misled into believing that these are three separate entities that should be weighted equally. Usually, language is the most profitable area to explore.

Some candidates apparently feel that searching for literary devices is the hidden agenda behind the setting of poetry questions. As ever, the effect of the device is important, and not just its discovery. More impressive titles appear annually. Anaphora is, like juxtaposition (see above), well entrenched. This year hypophora and exophora made their debut. The use of such terms, rather than their effect, was an end in itself.

Armitage

Question 7(a)

Mother Any Distance was impressively well understood with the central metaphor of the tape measure/umbilical cord, the pointed comparison of “Anchor. Kite.”, the way the poem begins by addressing his Mother tenderly etc. often thoroughly discussed. Some candidates felt that the boy was growing apart from his mother too brusquely and in a way which would damage their relationship but as long as that was justified by, for instance, “..something has to give,” then that was perfectly acceptable. Many candidates appreciated the sense of love in the poem on a personal level.

Question 7(b)

Both poems were popular here, particularly *Hitcher*. There is plenty for candidates to write about in either poem and it was good to see many engaging with the black humour in both poems and with the deliberate language techniques Armitage employs.

Question 7(c)

There were a few answers on *In Our Tenth Year*, although candidates found it quite difficult to determine precisely the state of the persona’s marriage, some feeling that the last line indicates the couple are ending it. Comparatively few, surprisingly, used the more humorous and straightforward *Wintering Out*.

Clarke

Question 8(a)

The Field-Mouse is an intense and complex poem which candidates can find difficult to write clearly about. The question could perhaps best be answered by stating a confident overview of Clarke’s intentions with the poem and then analysing the language of death, innocence, war etc. in detail.

Question 8(b)

There were very few answers on either poem here, although *Marged* was understood well by the candidates who chose to write on it.

Question 8(c)

Sunday was the more popular poem amongst the few responses to this question, with candidates understanding the rather repressive, hostile atmosphere in the house. Some less successful responses tended simply to re-tell the poem.

Cope

Question 9(a)

The few candidates who tackled this question were able to do well if they recognised the sub-text of the poem and its sly satire on romantic relationships. The structure of the poem was very rarely commented on in any detail.

Question 9(b)

At the time of writing the report, no answers on either poem had been seen.

Question 9(c)

Reading Scheme is a very appealing poem but in answering on “the children”, candidates often found themselves explaining the parody and then concentrating on the parents’ dilemma, forgetting to filter that through the eyes of the children as Cope does. Surprisingly, not many answers on *Tich Miller* were seen.

Duffy

Question 10(a)

Before You Were Mine was generally well understood and liked, although some candidates found it hard to unpack Duffy’s techniques fully, tending to fall into explaining the poem rather than analysing it. A poem which invites personal engagement as strongly as this one does can yield some interestingly fresh ideas – for example, the roguish tease of “...and whose small bites on your neck, sweetheart?” adding a complex layer to the grandmother-mother-daughter relationships by suggesting added possessiveness.

Question 10(b)

In Your Mind was seldom seen which was a pity in many ways as the two places are so clearly different. More candidates chose *War Photographer* but then struggled a little to find much to say. However, those who chose “the dark room” as a place were sensible: the dark room yields much in this poem.

Question 10(c)

Both *Liar* and *Stealing* were popular choices. Questions on either invite an answer where the psychology of the central character is of the greatest interest – and subject to many theories – but as long as candidates could also unpack Duffy’s techniques to justify their psychiatric investigations, they could gain high marks.

Heaney

Question 11(a)

A number of candidates wrote on memories of the past in *Ancestral Photograph*, those memories consisting of looking at the great-uncle's photograph and taking it down. A number of responses limited themselves to the first two stanzas and described the great-uncle. Few considered "the fair days" described in such detail in stanzas three and four. Some interpreted the poem as Heaney's justifying his choice of being a poet instead of a farmer. *Ancestral Photograph* might perhaps be a less accessible poem than some of the others in the Anthology. That it was the poem printed on the question paper might have persuaded candidates to take it on and not engage with some of the more accessible poems set on Questions 11(b) and 11(c).

Question 11(b)

Both poems were well answered, with the frightening qualities of the frogs and the rats clearly brought out and Heaney's language carefully considered in the best responses.

Question 11(c)

More candidates chose *The Early Purges*, perhaps sensibly as the 'story' of the poem is clearer here than in *Punishment*, where candidates can find it difficult to marry the historical periods. The former poem uses language which is both straightforward and dramatic whereas the latter's poetic voice is more complicated to respond to.

Zephaniah

Question 12(a)

Most candidates studying Zephaniah chose to answer on the long poem, *Breakfast in East Timor*, generally to good effect. They found the bloodstained oats, the sister's grave, the coffins all very moving and had on the whole engaged with the poem and – to a lesser extent – with Zephaniah's techniques.

Question 12(b)

Answers to either poem were not seen in any great number. It was tempting for candidates to explain *Having a Word* without analysing Zephaniah's technique; analysis was easier for the few who answered on *Bought and Sold* with its strong rhythm and rhyming.

Question 12(c)

Most candidates answering on *Deep in Luv* didn't comment on the structure but did mainly understand the anti-romantic stance of the poet and the humour in the poem. All candidates answering on *The Woman Has to Die* expressed horror at the concept of honour killing but tended to fall into a re-telling of 'what happened.'

Unseen Poems

Foundation: *Don't Mention Rosie*

A considerable number of candidates chose to respond to the Unseen Poem, and generally did so well. The bullets seemed helpful and candidates contrasted the voice's feelings about the past and present successfully. One examiner remarked, "Many grasped the idea of having little to show for a life – remarkable in young people", a tribute to the sensitive response to the poem shown by many candidates. Comments on the lay-out of the poem were often perceptive, noting

the wistful fading out of a life in the last four lines. Comparatively few discussed the poem's title; those who did focused on the voice's pain when the subject of Rosie was raised.

Higher: *The Meadow Mouse*

The Unseen Poem once again proved to be a popular option with candidates, and again few approached it with a check-list of devices needing to be identified. As a result, responses seemed fresh, personal, and more engaged with the poem and its language than is sometimes the case with poems that have been taught in detail in the classroom.

Weaker responses drifted from the poem into rather general reflections about animals in general: whether they are happier in their natural environment; whether picking mice up by their tails constitutes cruelty to mice; whether man's building of highways damages animals' environment.

Many, however, picked up the references to the parent/child relationship ("cradled", "nuzzled", "thumb of a child", the sense of possession in "my meadow mouse") and linked them to strong feelings about animals. The change in tone between the two sections was often noted and explored. However, some responses focused closely on the first part of the poem and responded rather sketchily to the second part. With the Unseen Poem in particular, it is good practice to read the whole of the poem carefully before starting to write about it. Some candidates thought that the gloss, "Shrike: a bird" was the last line of the poem, misled, perhaps by the layout of the paper, but certainly not penalised for thinking so.

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