

A LEVEL

Moderators' report

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE (EMC)

H474

For first teaching in 2015

H474/04 Summer 2024 series

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Introduction

Our moderators' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on candidates' performance in the examinations. They provide useful guidance for future candidates.

The reports will include a general commentary on candidates' performance, identify technical aspects examined in the questions and highlight good performance and where performance could be improved. The reports will also explain aspects which caused difficulty and why the difficulties arose, whether through a lack of knowledge, poor examination technique, or any other identifiable and explainable reason.

Where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

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General overview

In this session, moderators observed many examples of the positive achievements noted in previous reports. At its best, the work submitted for this component is exploratory and ambitious in Task 1 and authentic and creative in Task 2. The most successful submissions reflected a deep understanding developed over the course of two years of study for the qualification as a whole: of non-fiction text types for Paper 1, of literary genres in Papers 2 and 3, and of the construction of narrative in Paper 3. This work demonstrated skills in applying a wide range of analytical concepts and methods with associated critical terminology.

Candidates who did well on Task 1: Analytical and comparative writing generally:	Candidates who did less well on Task 1: Analytical and comparative writing generally:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> produced a fully integrated discussion of both texts enabling one text to shed light on the other (AO4) created convincing AO1/AO2 links and explored in detail how language choices create meaning selected a free-choice text that was engaging and challenging and explored a variety of means by which it could be linked to the specification text (AO4) integrated contextual references judiciously to explore writers' social and cultural attitudes (AO3) and inform AO1/AO2 linkages. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> wrote about each text in parallel, or linked using token comparative discourse markers (AO4) explored a shared topic or theme across texts but used only a limited range of concepts and methods (AO1) selected a limiting free-choice text and explored surface connections with the specification text produced work that was insufficiently drafted with limited focus on language effects and terminology that was limited or misapplied (AO1) included some relevant contextual information but presented it in a standalone form (AO3).

Candidates who did well on Task 2: Original writing non-fiction generally:	Candidates who did less well on Task 2: Original writing non-fiction generally:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> had studied a wide variety of non-fiction texts in preparation for Task 2 cited specific style models and contexts of reception in Task 2 introductions produced original non-fiction writing that was ambitious, creative and had a keen sense of genre conventions produced texts with multiple purposes (inform/persuade/entertain) explored topics for which they had real commitment, knowledge and understanding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> did not demonstrate a deep understanding of non-fiction writing conventions produced a generalised introduction or something more akin to a commentary produced work that was rather generic or shapeless without clear genre features replicated created a text that was too-narrowly informative and struggled to demonstrate the flair and creativity required at the higher levels produced an introduction that was too general and topic-focused.

Assessment for learning



The non-exam assessment (NEA) is at its best when genuinely synoptic, allowing students to showcase the skills, knowledge and understanding gained through A Level study in the exploration and creation of texts and topics. The most successful work is highly ambitious in the selection of texts and topic focus in Task 1 and in the writing of challenging non-fiction text types in Task 2. This work reflects the best that candidates can achieve at this stage of their school career and is often highly impressive and a pleasure to moderate.

Task 1: Analytical and comparative writing

Moderators reported a wide range of texts being studied for Task 1, which is pleasing to see, along with the degree of student autonomy evident in these text choices. The number of different texts being studied overall has risen over the last several years, encompassing both free-choice and specification texts. All of the specification texts were represented this year with some very interesting pairings, including:

- *Stasiland* with Dave Eggers' *The Circle*
- *Down and Out in Paris and London* with Jonathan Franzen's *The Corrections*
- *Stuart: A Life Backwards* with Hanya Yanagihara's *A Little Life*
- *Hyperbole and a Half* with Jenny Lawson's *Furiously Happy*
- *What the Chinese Don't Eat* with Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*
- *In Cold Blood* with Patrick Radden Keefe's *Say Nothing*
- *Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal?* with E M Forster's *Maurice*
- *The Secret Footballer* with Adam Kay's *This is Going to Hurt*
- *Twelve Years a Slave* with Bernadine Evaristo's *Blonde Roots*

This diversity in text selection demonstrates a broad and engaged approach to the NEA, reflecting the wide-ranging interests and openness to exploring connections between texts. Many of these text pairings revealed candidates' clear engagement, sense of discovery, and enjoyment.

AO4 is the weighted Assessment Objective in Task 1, and most candidates understand the benefits of integrating discussion of the two texts in a way that allows one text to shed light on the other. Approaches where the two texts are considered essentially in parallel, even if the discussion of each concentrates on a shared theme, topic, or method, tended to be less successful, as did those that used token comparative discourse markers in place of genuine comparison. Constructing purposeful titles can help with the integration of texts in Task 1. Some titles this year did seem rather narrow in focus. For example, 'How do the writers use narrative voice to present [theme]...' concentrates on one writing technique and perhaps limits other fruitful areas of comparison and exploration of non-fiction texts such as rhetorical strategies, structural devices, use of evidence/research, ethical considerations, genre conventions, and stylistic choices. A title broadened to 'How do the writers use narrative voice, rhetorical strategies, and characterisation to explore [theme] in their texts?' might more readily incorporate non-fiction approaches and give students more areas to explore. Alternatively, 'Compare how the writers use narrative techniques, including point of view, structure, and stylistic choices, to explore [theme] in their texts' would encourage students to examine both structural and stylistic approaches of non-fiction and fiction texts in exploring common themes. One candidate, exploring one of the text pairings cited above, wrote to the title 'In what ways do Xinran's *What the Chinese Don't Eat* and Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* use narrative voice, personal reflection, and storytelling to address gender identity and culture?' This allowed for a broad range of points of comparison to be made across a clear point of connection between the two texts and was very successful.

At the highest levels, AO1 selection should be apt and used meaningfully for analysis. Moderators report that there is a general improvement in this area overall but still some evidence of feature spotting, or vague identification. Given that the NEA is planned and drafted, students should be able to refine their AO1 selection to make it purposeful, as well as ensuring that the quality of written expression is as strong as it could be. There seems to be an increasing tendency by students to reference language theorists in Task 1, particularly around gender (Tannen, Cameron, Lackoff) and conversational analysis (Grice, Goffman) when exploring scripted language. While such theories can be interesting in considering how gender dynamics are constructed, or how characters are constructed through their spoken language, they should be applied with caution given that scripted language is crafted by an author with specific intentions, unlike spontaneous speech, and may or may not reflect natural speech patterns.

Some text pairings lent themselves very well to AO3 contextualisation based on societal mores and attitudes, such as pairings involving Orwell, Masters, Winterson, and Funder. Others, like Bryson and Capote, were less effective for AO3. Candidates discussing Capote often diverted into lengthy contextual narratives. The quality of, and potential for, contextual commentary depended on the pairing of the specification and free-choice text, and centres may wish to consider the potential for AO3 commentary during the planning stage, including text pairings. Some of the most effective AO3 analysis was around Solomon Northup's *Twelve Years a Slave*, a text that has become more popular in recent sessions, and one which is often very productively explored. In this session, *Twelve Years a Slave* was very effectively paired with *The Underground Railroad* by Colson Whitehead, *Nothing to Envy* by Barbara Demick, and *They Can't Kill Us All* by Wesley Lowery, among others.

The key differentiator in the most successful Task 1 responses was the AO1/AO2 linkages; at the highest level, these were genuine, consistent, perceptive, and effectively balanced with AO3.

Centres could also encourage candidates to learn academic referencing conventions, which will benefit those progressing to higher education and undertaking EPQs. Whether using Oxford or Harvard styles, consistency is key. Proper bibliographies should be provided, rather than mere weblinks to resources like SparkNotes.

Task 2: Original writing non-fiction

Task 2 requires candidates to produce a non-fiction piece of approximately 1000-1200 words, preceded by a 150-word introduction that demonstrates an understanding of the chosen non-fiction form and reflects on the literary and linguistic techniques used. Moderators noted an improvement in the use of introductions this session, with many candidates citing specific style models and identifying detailed contexts of reception. It was encouraging to see references to non-fiction texts from Paper 1 as style models for Task 2. The Paper 1 non-fiction anthology is a rich resource for students to use in preparation for this component, highlighting their developmental learning journey.

The most successful work identified and shaped writing for specific publications. Less successful work lacked a well-defined sense of genre. Blogs can sometimes fall into the latter category. A blog can be a very effective vehicle for candidates to write on issues that really matter to them (again this year there was lots of impassioned writing on social issues such as mental health, gender, sexuality, and identity). However, it is more secure if the initial groundwork establishes where such a blog would appear and for whom it would be directed.

Reviews of films, concerts, and albums were common again this year; the most successful had a clear sense of the intended publication, while less specific reviews did not rise above basic research. Moderators look for tasks of this kind to be shaped and mediated; otherwise, it is difficult for candidates to demonstrate the kinds of flair, creativity, and originality sought in Levels 5 and 6 of the mark scheme. Previous Principal Moderator reports further develop these ideas around the issue of writing reviews, and it could be worth revisiting them alongside this report.

As in previous sessions, the most successful Task 2 original writing was driven and informed by the candidates' own interests and lived experiences: autobiography/memoir, journalistic pieces in various forms and modes, and opinion pieces. As has been mentioned previously, students often underestimate the power of their own stories and reflections. In their lived experience, they have huge resources to fashion into powerful and effective non-fiction writing. Moderators often report being very moved by such pieces.

There were some instances again where candidates sought to script pieces that are essentially unscriptable. Sometimes these issues arose out of a confusion on the distinction between a transcript (a verbatim written record of spontaneous/semi-spontaneous spoken language) and a script (a written text designed to be read or performed). In these instances, some candidates produced work that they described as a script (an interview with a film star, for example) that could only be a transcript in that it contained seemingly spontaneous speech with associated non-fluency features. In other instances, it was how a non-fiction form had been interpreted and treated that was the problem. A diary, for example, is, of course, a non-fiction form when it refers to, say, that of Samuel Pepys, but not when it refers to Bridget Jones. A Task 2 diary of a candidate's experiences of a particular issue at a particular time (especially when precisely targeted) is fine, but a diary of a soldier in World War I is not, because it is a creative writing task.

Administration

Please make sure that all work is received by moderators by the due date of 15th May.

If centres submit work for H474/04 via Submit for Assessment, please make sure that all elements of the work, including fully completed CCS, are included.

The sample of work should be securely fastened by treasury tag or staple, rather than being placed in plastic wallets.

If more than one teacher has been involved in the delivery of this component, then there should be evidence of internal standardisation. This is best achieved by the use of different coloured pens by assessors.

Marginal annotation and summative comments by assessors are very important at moderation to chart the development of assessment decisions and should be as detailed as possible.

Please do not send the candidate authentication forms to the moderator. These should be completed and retained in centre as part of your records.

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Online courses

Enhance your skills and confidence in internal assessment

What are our online courses?

Our online courses are self-paced eLearning courses designed to help you deliver, mark and administer internal assessment for our qualifications. They are suitable for both new and experienced teachers who want to refresh their knowledge and practice.

Why should you use our online courses?

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- learn about the key principles and processes of internal assessment and standardisation
- gain a deeper understanding of the marking criteria and how to apply them consistently and accurately
- see examples of student work with commentary and feedback from OCR moderators
- have the opportunity to practise marking and compare your judgements with those of OCR moderators
- receive instant feedback and guidance on your marking and standardisation skills
- be able to track your progress and achievements through the courses.

How can you access our online courses?

Access courses from [Teach Cambridge](#). Teach Cambridge is our secure teacher website, where you'll find all teacher support for your subject.

If you already have a Teach Cambridge account, you'll find available courses for your subject under Assessment - NEA/Coursework - Online courses. Click on the blue arrow to start the course.

If you don't have a Teach Cambridge account yet, ask your exams officer to set you up – just send them this [link](#) and ask them to add you as a Teacher.

Access the courses **anytime, anywhere and at your own pace**. You can also revisit the courses as many times as you need.

Which courses are available?

There are **two types** of online course: an **introductory module** and **subject-specific** courses.

The introductory module, Building your Confidence in Internal Assessment, is designed for all teachers who are involved in internal assessment for our qualifications. It covers the following topics:

- the purpose and benefits of internal assessment
- the roles and responsibilities of teachers, assessors, internal verifiers and moderators
- the principles and methods of standardisation
- the best practices for collecting, storing and submitting evidence
- the common issues and challenges in internal assessment and how to avoid them.

The subject-specific courses are tailored for each qualification that has non-exam assessment (NEA) units, except for AS Level and Entry Level. They cover the following topics:

- the structure and content of the NEA units
- the assessment objectives and marking criteria for the NEA units
- examples of student work with commentary and feedback for the NEA units
- interactive marking practice and feedback for the NEA units.

We are also developing courses for some of the examined units, which will be available soon.

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