

GCE

English Language & Literature

Advanced GCE **A2 H473**

Advanced Subsidiary GCE **AS H073**

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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CONTENTS

Advanced GCE English Language and Literature – H473

Advanced Subsidiary GCE English Language and Literature – H073

OCR REPORT TO CENTRES

Content	Page
F671 Speaking Voices	1
F672 Changing Texts	7
F673 Dramatic Voices	9
F674 Connections Across Texts	12

F671 Speaking Voices

General Comments

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

Centres and candidates were generally well-prepared to apply a judicious selection of the required combined linguistic-literary approaches. The material provided as passages A and B in Section A, or as 'cue-quotation' and supporting passage in Section B, gave ample opportunity to candidates to demonstrate what they had learned.

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

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

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

Bearing this in mind, Centres might want to consider that the single most difficult aspect for a number of candidates was how to integrate useful comment on "*the influence of the contextual factors*" into their Section B answers, especially on *The Child in Time*. It may be that the social and/or ideological climate of the 1980s is too recent to allow evaluation to be made; and 'potted' versions of the decade offered in the media are unlikely to be helpful. Centres and candidates would be well-advised not to prepare and offer large quantities of assertion about 'Thatcher-ism', unemployment or the Miners' Strike, or any other supposedly significant aspect of the time in which the novel was conceived, written and published. The question paper will provide more reliable material.

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

- making repeated assertions that interaction or lexis is formal/informal without any textual support or exploration
- making imprecise use of terminology, e.g. syntax/lexis/register used interchangeably, with no clear reference to any relevant examples
- setting themselves the trap of confusion/conflation over accent/dialect/idiolect/sociolect

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A

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

Question 1: *Oranges are Not the Only Fruit*

A conversation between two men in their forties about the possibilities of eventually retiring to Italy, and the difficulties of having to make new friends there, was paired with the first meeting between Jeanette and Melanie – a rather awkward attempt by Jeanette to ‘make a new friend’, which is curtailed by the behaviour of her mother.

The most successful answers revealed:

- careful reading of how speech style is used to construct and reveal emotion and character
- accurate specific reference to features of language and interaction
- productive application of linguistic approaches to an analysis of Passage B
- apt references to relevant moments elsewhere in the novel, mainly concerning Jeanette’s social awkwardness
- sensitive reading of the interaction between Lou and Harry as generally co-operative, with an appreciation of how features of spoken language such as non-fluency construct meaning

Some answers took an approach which depended on cataloguing features of spoken language, and an attempt to ‘prove’ that Passage A was spontaneous or semi-spontaneous. Such lines of argument did not take discussion very far. Similarly, although knowledge of theories of “gendered” speech can shed light on some interactions, the evidence in the conversation between Lou and Harry was not that interruptions showed a power struggle, but rather that overlaps were supportive, showing mutual understanding.

This might usefully have been contrasted with the absence of shared understanding between Melanie and Jeanette in Passage B. And there was plenty of material in this passage on which candidates could with profit practise what they knew of combined linguistic-literary approaches, without ‘drift’ into general discussion of Mother’s influence and Winterson’s/Jeanette’s lesbianism.

Question 2: *The Remains of the Day*

The common theme of the two passages was retirement. Candidates wrote well about the coldness and the absence of a ‘normal’ father-son bond between Stevens and his Father in the conversation where the former has to break the news that Lord Darlington no longer considers the latter capable of waiting at table. They were less secure in exploring the ways in which, in Passage A, Laurie and his friend Jim re-visit Laurie’s decision to retire four years earlier from his career as a university librarian.

Successful answers revealed:

- good knowledge of the situation in the novel, making relevant reference to other episodes (the death of Stevens senior, conversations with Miss Kenton) and to the themes of dignity and butler-ing
- imaginatively-chosen details of Stevens senior’s past – the death of his other son, his story of the tiger in the dining room, his silent rebuke of the two drunken gentlemen
- careful reading and understanding of the dynamics of interaction between Stevens and his father, analysing for example how a rare attempt by Stevens junior at phatic conversation is rebuffed

- an appreciation that Stevens is uncomfortable: he is in a sense invading his father's privacy, though with the best of intentions
- analysis of specific lexical/grammatical items which construct levels of formality – for example, Stevens's regular references to his father in the third person
- well-developed discussion of how features of Laurie's speech style construct a certain level of defensiveness and self-justification
- detailed attention to variations in Jim's overlaps and pauses, and to the movement of the interaction from a certain amount of discomfort to something closer to agreement

Answers which began in discussion of the common theme of the two passages – retirement, and the acceptance (or otherwise) of waning powers – sometimes developed into detailed discussion of specific instances, such as Mr Stevens Senior's topic loops back to the supposedly crooked steps, and the implication that someone else (Seamus) was to blame. Some candidates were inclined to read into the exchanges in Passage A emotions and disagreements which were at odds with the evidence

Question 3: Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha

A 'conversation' between Damien, a researcher, and twelve-year-old Jane about how she was affected by the break-up of her parents' marriage was paired with Paddy's attempt at confiding in his friend Kevin about the conflict between his parents.

Candidates were less damagingly diverted from the question this time than in previous sessions by trying to pursue an agenda concerned with Paddy's supposed maturing through the course of the novel. But they still found it difficult to analyse accurately Doyle's methods in constructing Paddy's speaking and narrative voices.

Successful answers revealed:

- thoughtful understanding of the context of Passage A, and consideration of how even though each speaker might have a slightly different agenda both might be 'satisfied' by the interaction
- careful reading of detail, such as Damien's non-fluent pauses as he tries to formulate questions
- flexible understanding of Paddy's exchanges with Kevin in usefully linguistic terms – making use, for example, of 'Face' theory and the concept of preferred/dis-preferred responses
- detailed and accurate attention to specific elements of language use, such as the sequence of simple and compound sentences which end Passage B

As with the other Section A questions, some candidates tended to assume there would be conflict and attempts at dominance in both passages, and then to look for possible evidence of (for example) floor-holding strategies. It is always safer and more profitable to start with the evidence and build a reading of the passage.

One potentially interesting feature in Passage A was the way Damien used declaratives as interrogatives, looking for confirmation from Jane: *so (.) you live with your mum (.) but you and you spend every second weekend with your dad*

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

Section B

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

Question 4: *A Handful of Dust*

The task in this question was to *examine ways in which Waugh presents conflict between the old-fashioned and the modern in A Handful of Dust*. The cue-quotation offered the conversation involving Brenda and her London friends discussing how to make the small sitting-room “*habitable*” with suggestions from Mrs Beaver of “*walls with white chromium plating and ... natural sheepskin carpet*”.

Passage A was the complete lyric of Cole Porter’s “*Anything Goes*”.

Successful answers revealed:

- clear engagement with the question-focus and ready reference to instances in the novel of *conflict between the old-fashioned and the modern*
- careful reading of the cue-quotation, paying attention to how Waugh constructs meaning in direct speech by using a variety of utterance types
- understanding of Waugh’s satirical style, and how he allows characters to condemn themselves in the dialogue
- some relevant comparisons with Passage A: John Beaver as a “*gigolo*”, Brenda as one of the “*mothers (who) pack and leave poor father*”
- thoughtful use of the between-the-wars Bright-Young-People context

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

Discussion of the relationship between the novel and Passage A was disappointingly short of understanding of style and point of view, missing especially the nuances of Waugh’s and Porter’s humour. Similarly, the ancient/modern dichotomy was seldom analysed in terms of language – for example, the contrast between past and present verb-tenses and time adverbials in the first two verses of “*Anything Goes*”.

However, the contrast was well-understood in terms of ideas, and this understanding was linked to lexical features such as the oppositions of *And good’s bad today, / And black’s white today, / And day’s night today*, which were compared to Daisy’s criticisms (“*Everything’s horrible. It’s so dark.*”) and Mrs Beaver’s suggestions of *white chromium plating and ... natural sheepskin carpet*.

As many candidates observed, the paralinguistics were significant: it was un-surprising that *Brenda explained, not looking at Tony* and that *Tony left them to their discussion*. There was some very impressive textual knowledge, and examiners were delighted to find obscure textual detail used to illuminate connections. For example, one candidate offered the reference from late in the novel – when Tony is in a state of fever-induced delirium – to “*a chromium plated wall on the south side of the village*”.

Question 5: *The Child in Time*

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

The cue-quotation offered part of Thelma's explanation to Stephen of How Time Works: *'But whatever time is, the common-sense, everyday version of it as linear, regular, absolute, marching from left to right, from the past through the present to the future, is either nonsense or a tiny fraction of the truth. We know this from our own experience. An hour can seem like five minutes or a week. Time is variable.'*

Passage A was the lyric of "*Time after Time*", which a fair number of candidates identified as being by Cyndi Lauper.

Successful answers revealed:

- clear engagement with the question-focus, and accurate reference to a range of Time-related episodes and 'strands' in the novel
- relevant examples from the novel of McEwan's narrative methods, appreciating that the novel is often subtle and metaphorical/symbolic, and that Passage A might be seen as similar in its lack of explicitness
- analysis of genuinely significant details from the cue-quotation, such as the contrast between *regular*, *absolute* and *variable*
- detailed attention to the grammar and syntax of Passage A, exploring for example the range of verb tenses
- awareness of the prevailing political orthodoxies of the 1980s in the UK, taking care not to over-simplify or to assume that the political always invades the personal

Examiners were dismayed and puzzled, however, by the prevalence of poorly-understood generalisations about the 1980s, many of which were just wrong and unhelpful, and which tended to take over the agenda of the answer.

The cue-quotations for these Section B questions are designed (as are the supporting passages) to give candidates extra help, but they need to be read carefully in the examination, even if they have not been properly understood before. Thelma's comments here were often mis-read, and she was thought to be saying that "Time ... is nonsense".

Question 6: *Persuasion*

This question invited *examination of Austen's presentation of characters resisting or giving in to persuasion*, and the cue-quotation was the account (or re-count) of how Anne Elliot had been persuaded, seven years earlier, to reject Frederick Wentworth. Passage A was a series of definitions from Johnson's Dictionary.

Successful answers revealed:

- clear engagement with the question-focus
- well-chosen examples and quotations from elsewhere in the novel: Sir Walter being persuaded to "*retrench*" and move to Bath, Mary being persuaded to leave her son and go out to dinner, Anne being persuaded out of her mistakenly good opinion of Mr Elliot
- judicious comment on Austen's narrative method, including how she uses "free-indirect discourse"
- some detailed attention to the lexis of the cue-quotation, for example the amplification of how the engagement would have been *a wrong thing: indiscreet, improper, hardly capable of success, and not deserving it*

Many answers offered an outline of the social context, more or less related to ideas of what might constitute a successful marriage in Austen's time. Those which read the cue-quotation carefully were less likely to mis-lead themselves; those which picked phrases out of their syntactical context (for example "*she had to encounter all the additional pain of opinions*") were likely to reach insecure conclusions.

F672 Changing Texts

General Comments:

As has been the case in previous sessions the most successful work for this unit contains an impressive combination of theoretical debate, textual analysis and creative writing. It is quite a challenge for candidates to achieve all of these things but in every session there is some outstanding work submitted that does just that. What tends to characterise this work is that candidates really engage with the idea of multi-modal text transformation, and reflect on why it is that texts are constantly being reinterpreted and what happens to a text in its journey from single mode to multi-modal form. These candidates then illustrate this debate by focusing on specific sections from both of the Task 1 texts. This work is detailed and specific at this point and looks closely at choices of language and how the multi-modal version has re-worked the language of the original text to meet the needs of the new audience, purpose and mode. This work, assessed as being in Bands 4 and 5, will be using a repertoire of critical terminology in the textual analysis, drawn from literary and linguistic study. Candidates are also likely to be drawing on the language of other critical discourses appropriate to the multimodal text they are studying, such as Film or Media studies. The critical terminology allows candidates to interrogate the texts and be precise in the judgements made. The application of such terminology, and the analytical skills candidates are developing for unit F671, will really productively be used here. Original ideas about, and enthusiasm for, the texts being studied will be apparent in this work.

It is almost always the case that in successful work of this kind there will have been a strong element of candidate choice in the selection of texts for Task 1, and in the forms and genre types for the Task 2 original writing. Some centres deliver this coursework by having complete candidate choice in the text pairings for Task 1. Having been taught the skills of analysis, including how to apply linguistic terminology, and having engaged in debates about multi-modal text transformation, the candidates then show what they have learnt by applying these skills and knowledge to texts they are personally enthusiastic about. This approach can produce stunning work, and has done in every session since 2009. The range of texts studied can be very impressive, and the possibilities this raises for candidates sharing their reading with others and significantly developing the wider reading of the group makes this a very attractive way of working. These centres often model the approach by studying as a whole group a short literary text, such as a short story, and a film or TV version of it, as a way of enabling candidates to develop the appropriate skills in a 'risk-free' way before being released to select their own texts. One centre used for this purpose Chaucer's *The Miller's Tale* with the highly entertaining BBC version (2003), starring Billie Piper and Dennis Waterman. This seemed to have been very successful as the candidates were then able to produce a very informed debate as well as in several cases making reference this study, in their own textual comparison. Other centres adopt the approach of a 'core' literary text studied by all and a variety of different multi-modal versions compared with it. This approach obviously demands that the literary text chosen has given rise to a variety of new versions, but this too can be a very effective approach. As mentioned in this report in July 2013, Shakespeare plays can work well as core texts, with candidates choosing to compare multi-modal versions such as films, TV versions, children's stories derived from the text, graphic novels, musical versions, etc.

What tends to be a less successful approach is when all candidates compare the same two texts. Inevitably this leads to a sameness in responses and often the regurgitation of received opinion. Rarely in these responses is there a sense of real engagement and originality, and this way of working seems to close down so many of the opportunities that a coursework unit should open up. Coursework should enable candidates to engage with texts in a more autonomous way than an examined unit does thus helping them develop the individual learning and production skills that will likely be demanded of them in the future.

The best work submitted for Task 2 was genuinely creative and original. It has a close connection with the studied texts but is a realised artefact in its own right. This work is a continuation of the multi-modal 'journey' of the original text but will have a life of its own. This work utilises the modes of communication employed as a new means of telling a story rather than as adornment. The best of this work is highly original and sophisticated. It often demonstrates great commitment on the part of the candidate and superb support on the part of the centre. Some of the less successful work for Task 2, this session and in all previous sessions, included: diaries and letters from characters accompanied by the odd image; scrapbooks; stories for very young children; art works with accompanying commentaries; newspaper articles; and *faux* transcripts of would-be spontaneous talk. These kinds of task are rarely challenging enough. In this unit candidates should be submitting work that they couldn't reasonably have been expected to have produced before AS Level study. Centres are also reminded that, although Task 2 may have been produced in a digital form, a paper-based record - screenshots for example - should be presented for moderation rather than submitting a CD or memory stick.

For further ideas on text choices and approaches to Task 1 and Task 2, please consult the F672 /F674 Delivery Guide, a new resource on the OCR English Language and Literature website pages. This is a very detailed and informative account of the whole process of delivering this coursework unit in a large and successful Sixth Form College.

Some administrative points.

- Please despatch coursework samples to moderators as soon as possible after notification of the sample request is received.
- Put candidate work in candidate number order, and securely attach a candidate cover sheet (CCS/F672) with staples or treasury tags.
- Complete all details of the CCS as fully as possible, including all candidate numbers.
- Complete a detailed summative comment to explain why a particular mark has been awarded.
- Annotate scripts with detailed comments to assist in moderation. Some of this annotation, but not necessarily all, should be drawn from the coursework assessment criteria.
- Avoid bulky sending bulky plastic wallets, A3 sheets, scrapbooks/notebooks, CD's and memory sticks.

F673 Dramatic Voices

General Comments:

Centres are to be commended for their extensive efforts in addressing some challenging text pairs in the teaching and learning of assimilated approaches to the specific requirements and challenges of this Paper. Many candidates have demonstrated an integrated approach to linguistic and literary study with some impressive textual knowledge in a 'closed book' examination. Many candidates chose to address the specific key words of the question when structuring their responses.

The questions provided a consistently fair level of accessibility and provided clear opportunities for differentiation. Many candidates responded by offering a welcome range of relevant interpretations and approaches.

Successful responses included one or more of the following:

- focused and developed response to question
- clarity in communicating ideas
- sustained and accurate language analysis
- sustained exploration of literary text
- sustained use of textual/contextual/stylistic/genre-specific evidence
- relevant material, especially contextual (often literary)
- clear distinction of points and arguments between Sections A and B
- Section A - frequent or accurate attempts to address either of the two chosen extracts
- Section B - avoidance of Section A answer or/and over-use of Section A extract for evidence; clear awareness of genre.

Less successful responses included one or more of the following:

- limited attention to question
- some difficulty communicating ideas
- sustained and wide-spread errors in language analysis
- sustained misreading of literary text
- sustained assertion of ideas without evidence
- narrating the plot or describing the extracts/characters/themes
- irrelevant material, especially contextual (often biographical)
- sustained repetition of points within and across Sections A and B
- Section A - infrequent or inaccurate attempts to address either of the two chosen extracts
- Section B - sustained repetition of Section A answer or/and sole use of Section A extract for evidence; complete lack of awareness of genre.

Assessment Objective One

It was pleasing to see some candidates attempting to work relevantly with linguistic concepts, research and theories to illuminate the dramatic voices in the texts. For example, language and gender theory, Grice, face needs, adjacency pair structures and discourse dominance strategies were all employed and assimilated with some confidence and success.

Assessment Objective Two

It remains the case that some candidates did not engage with opportunities for linguistic analysis provided by the passages in Section A or dramatic effects in Section B. In all cases, candidates who focused on the texts as *dramatic voices* - noting dramatic character interaction with each

other and the audience, dramatic genre and sub-genres - produced more developed responses than candidates who failed to demonstrate a grasp of the texts as a performance/ realisable medium.

Additionally, candidates are again advised against applying the general and often inaccurate label of 'adjective' to every word with some descriptive potential, irrespective of its grammatical function in the dramatic discourse.

There was a significant use of inaccurate sentence types. Many candidates misappropriated the term 'declarative' – even to sentences with clear punctuation indicators such as an exclamation mark – and some wrote about “declarative imperatives”, struggling to grasp command structures and intentions in dialogue. A basic grasp of parts of speech and sentence types and the relationship between form and function would improve some answers.

Assessment Objective Three

Evaluation of contextual influences on the text was typically handled with varying success.

Developed approaches selected the context that can be evidenced in the text, that best answers the themes in the question and that serves to illuminate the extracts. There was a pleasing grasp of relevant literary contexts across all the texts and an increased awareness of useful social and political contexts in many responses.

The least successful offered contextual knowledge as a bolted-on feature of the answer, either in the introduction or the conclusion or in digressive paragraphs within the body of the essay. In these cases, it was substituted for textual analysis and contextual evaluation. In a few cases, in Section B it formed the basis of the answer. It was least successful where the described contexts would not, even if evaluated, illuminate the presentation of the particular theme in the question. This limited approach was pleasingly less prevalent in this series.

Comments on Individual Questions:

1. Some candidates demonstrated:

- a sound grasp of who is the deceiver/deceived and how that functions within the discourse and meta-theatre in both extracts
- shaky textual knowledge: sustained misreading of the *Volpone* extract to assume Volpone is Voltore
- sustained distraction from Roma and Levene's deception in *Glengarry Glen Ross (GGR)*.

2. Some candidates demonstrated:

- a sound exploration of the ways in which ideas about time steers the interactions of characters in both extracts
- some misunderstanding of conversational dominance in extract A/*As You Like It (AYLI)*
- simplistic address of the changeability of time in *Arcadia*/Extract B with only a partial understanding of the forest as timeless in the former and the end of time in the latter.

3. Some candidates demonstrated:

- a developed focus on how language is used to create or discuss attitudes to violence with the extracts as a substantial starting point
- a narrative-driven approach to Vindice's motivation in *The Revenger's Tragedy*
- assertions about how the Irish are stupid in *The Lieutenant of Inishmore (LoI)*
- descriptions of episodes in which characters are violent.

4. Some candidates demonstrated:

- a sound grasp of the moral and social nature of greed in either play
- the links between 'talking and speaking' in *GGR* or the links between motivation, greed, desire and corruption in *Volpone*
- grasp of (often) literary contexts in *Volpone* and (often) socio-economic contexts in *GGR*.

5. Some candidates demonstrated:

- a sustained exploration of documents, and/or poems and/or letters in either play
- a sound grasp of the role of the lovers and Touchstone in *AYLI*
- an exploration of the themes and motifs or /and contexts of love, pastoral, parody and resolution in the written props of *AYLI*
- a grasp of the role of forgotten/lost/mistaken knowledge and/or concepts of Romanticism and The Enlightenment in *Arcadia*
- the relevance of merging and separating time periods in the written props of *Arcadia*
- a simplistic commentary on the poems in the forest in *AYLI*
- over-complicated and tangential narratives on entropy or/and narratives on the plot implications of documents in *Arcadia*.

6. Some candidates demonstrated:

- an open exploration of comic elements in either play
- a sound grasp of the macabre, comic relief, horrid laughter as part of Jacobean dramatic conventions in *The Revenger's Tragedy*
- a sound grasp of the contextual influence of parody, Absurdism and/or violent gangster film sub-genres in *Lol*
- a summary of the comic elements of the plot in *The Revenger's Tragedy*
- an over-simplistic and usually assertive grasp of Irish political contexts in *Lol*.

F674 Connections Across Texts

General Comments:

Most centres are fully aware of the requirements for this unit and are quick to exploit the opportunities for candidates to demonstrate what they have learned through literary and linguistic study. Texts are carefully chosen to allow comparison, and there is often acute analysis of structure, form and language in both spoken and written texts.

A number of folders at the top end would have benefitted from a final proof read. It is always a disappointment if there are silly errors - this takes the edge off Assessment Objective 1, which requires 'consistently accurate written expression.'

Some centres focus on candidates exploring texts thematically rather than technically and this can weaken submissions. At times, candidates fail to recognise the importance of including a spoken text (whether scripted or spontaneous). This text should be dealt with through explicit discussion of the conventions of speech. Candidates should also focus more on the second part of Assessment Objective 3, which asks candidates to deal with contextual factors of production and reception. All too often this emerges in the work simply as biographical information about a writer or a summary of a historical or personal situation. A closer focus on genre might help candidates get a stronger grasp of how contexts need to be integrated into arguments. There is a particular danger that background information will simply fill out an essay, rather than adding to its substance.

Task 1

A range of different texts was used, with candidates engaging with suggestions from the specification or with some of the more controversial literary texts of the last few years (*Fight Club* or *American Psycho*) that sit uncomfortably with what might be thought of as a literary canon. Where more controversial texts are chosen, candidates could often engage more fully with issues of genre, particularly when the text chosen (*The Damned United* or *Fever Pitch*) actually then creates the rules for others to follow. One or two centres (legitimately) pick texts that are canonical but as worth examining because the canon has had to adapt to include them – Swift's *A Modest Proposal* is the most obvious example.

There has been a slight tendency for candidates to take up an issue (violence in the texts, for example) and this can move discussions away from the central discussions required by the unit. It is the 'how', not the 'what' of a text that should inform all discussions.

Centres perhaps need to be reminded that at some point in the course work, candidates must deal with spoken language. It's often better done here rather than in Task 2. But this does not simply mean that candidates must include a piece of speech: they must be prepared to analyse it in appropriate terms. Thus, it is perfectly in order for a candidate to write about the presentation of speech in a novel, for example, as long as the candidate also considers how this differs from natural speech whilst pretending to be precisely that. Work on Barack Obama or Nelson Mandela often made much of the rhetoric without then considering the many (and various) ways in which they attempt to give the speech some attributes of spontaneous speech.

Task 2

The tasks set here range widely. Monologues continue to be popular, as do newspaper articles, critical opinion pieces and speeches. As noted in previous reports, there is a slightly odd tendency for candidates to invent pieces of spontaneous speech in order to fulfil the requirements, and these come across as rather fake: it's usually far better for candidates to

invent something that sounds like real speech but is plainly speech representation and then analyse it in the commentary. If the former option is chosen, then candidates cannot readily focus on any 'approaches from...literary study' (AO1) and this then limits their overall performance, both in the work itself and in the commentary. Candidates submitting monologues often fail to give clues about how these might be performed and thus lose opportunities to discuss genre difference between, say, a theatre piece, a televised piece, or something for the radio.

Commentaries are often highly perceptive, though candidates in the lower bands still sometimes think that what is required is a process diary. It is important for candidates to note that, with the limited space (and marks) available, commentaries should not aim to be comprehensive. Often a commentary that is limited but intensely focused is clearer and more worthy of reward than one that attempts to cover all aspect of the creative piece.

Administration

For the most part, centres mark the work with great care and accuracy. Some centres could do more to ensure that the Assessment Objectives are clearly and qualitatively referenced, both on the work itself and on the cover sheets. A full overall assessment on the top sheet helps a moderator and makes it harder to disagree with a centre's decisions. In contrast, work that has simply been peppered with references to (for example) AO1 is more difficult to moderate, as the process of a teacher's thinking is not clearly mapped out.

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001