Chinese A: Language and Literature

Overall grade boundaries

Higher level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 12	13 - 27	28 - 41	42 - 55	56 - 69	70 - 84	85 - 100

Standard level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 11	12 - 26	27 - 43	44 - 58	59 - 68	69 - 83	84 - 100

Higher level internal assessment

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 4	5 - 9	10 - 13	14 - 17	18 - 20	21 - 24	25 - 30

The range and suitability of the work submitted

The materials chosen for the higher level Chinese oral commentary test this year were diverse and suitable. It was pleasing to see the increase in the number of works chosen from classical Chinese literature. These included: the poetry of Li Po and the essays of Ouyang Xiu. For the first time, the choices included the famous ballad "Peacocks Flying Southeast" of the Han Dynasty, the classical vernacular novels "Journey to the West" (Xiyouji) and "All Men are Brothers" (Shuihuzhuan), as well as the Ming Dynasty vernacular story collection "Strange Tales from the Past and Present" (Jingu qiguan). At the same time, classic works by writers from the first half of the 20th century still remained as popular choices, such as Lu Xun (stories), Xu Zhimo (poetry), Cao Yu (drama), Qian Zhongshu (novel), Lao She (drama), Ba Jin (novel) and Zhang Ailing (stories). Li Bihua (novel) was the favourite Hong Kong writer. Bai Xianyong (stories), Long Yintai and Chen Zhongshi are well-known contemporary writers. The chosen pieces were generally appropriate materials for analysis.

Candidate performance against each criterion

In general, the candidates performed well in the analysis of both the classical and modern works. This indicates that most of them have a good command of the language in Mandarin or Cantonese. They usually began by giving the life stories and social backgrounds of the writers, and then went on to the analysis. Many candidates demonstrated a very good sense of organization; some presented the material in a line-by-line or paragraph-by-paragraph fashion, whereas others organized around topics such as theme, technique, rhythm and symbolisms. However, there was a tendency by some candidates to give sweeping remarks.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

It would be useful for teachers to train candidates to begin textual analysis with a preconceived structure, whether in linear, overarching, or another method. They could practise this in class.

Further comments

Nowadays, with the Internet, the candidates should be encouraged to look at what other critics have said about the work in question. This will give the candidates greater scholarly stimulation.

Standard level internal assessment

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 4	5 - 9	10 - 13	14 - 17	18 - 20	21 - 24	25 - 30

The range and suitability of the work submitted

The range of material chosen by this year's standard level cohort was wide and varied. Compared to previous years, there was a clear increase in the number of works from classical Chinese literature, namely: the poems of Li Po (Tang Dynasty), Su Tongpo and an essay by Ouyang Xiu (both Song Dynasty). It was pleasing to see the inclusion of the ballad "Peacocks Flying Southeast" (Kongque dongnanfei) from the Han Dynasty. There was also an increase in the number of writers chosen from Taiwan and Hong Kong, such as Lin Haiyin (novel), Bai Xianyong (short stories), Yu Guangzhong (poems), San Mao (stories), Bei Dao (poems) and Li Bihua (novel). It was also pleasing to see the choice of classic works by well-known writers from the first half of the 20th century such as Xu Zhimo (poems), prominent literary figures Lu Xun (short stories), Cao Yu (drama), Zhu Ziqing (essays), Liang Shiqiu (essays). The choices were appropriate for the examination.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Overall, the candidates performed well in the presentations. Most demonstrated that they had a good knowledge of the chosen texts. Most were able to include biographical information of the writer, especially the romantic writers such as Xu Zhimo and San Mao. In the analysis of fiction, the candidates usually gave in various degrees socio-political backgrounds to the works written, or discussed the social analysis revealed in the work. On the negative side, they tended to use too many general remarks such as 'dark side of society' or 'feudalism' without exploring other aspects. Many candidates were able to give impressive literary analysis, employing suitable technical terminologies, but some tended to dwell solely on the plot. As most of them were native speakers of Mandarin or Cantonese, the language use was usually grammatically correct and appropriate.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

Some candidates did not gain the marks possible for organization because they seemed to begin at a random point. It would be useful to remind candidates to pay more attention to structuring their analysis before beginning their presentations.

Further comments

With the Internet, candidates should be encouraged to find out what other critics have said about the work in question. This will broaden their understanding of the work.

Higher level written tasks

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 5	6 - 11	12 - 18	19 - 23	24 - 28	29 - 33	34 - 40

General comments

A majority of schools followed the IB procedures to complete and submit their written tasks. In many cases the instructions were correctly understood and the regulations were closely observed.

This year with the advent of the new course, the new requirement of a word count is being implemented. A majority of schools were fully aware of this change and provided correct word counts. Their candidates also wisely kept the length of their rationale within the required range. Conversely, some candidates received a penalty for exceeding the word count limit and lost marks as a result of being ignorant of the new rules. Also if the candidate did not give enough information in the rationale, the marks (one or two) could not be awarded.

HL candidates have a new written task to present this year: a formal essay to answer one of the six prescribed generic questions. Most candidates managed to work out the format of the new task, which starts with an outline instead of a rationale. But a certain number of candidates seemed to have problems with this. They either forgot writing the outline or used a format close to a rationale. The problem tends to occur in certain schools. That means some teachers may not have become familiar with the new requirements.

In general, different schools presented the questions in different ways. Some simply used the questions in English, which means the candidates answered the questions in Chinese according to the English questions. Some translated the questions into Chinese and then answered them. This usually produced no problem, but sometimes different translations may twist the focus of the questions to varied directions. Some even rewrote the questions according to the texts they referred to. This could restrict the presentation and discussions. In the worst cases, the candidates did not clearly say which questions they had chosen to answer. Another serious problem was that some candidates were still submitting two literary or two culture written tasks and ignoring the new regulations completely.

The range and suitability of the work submitted

Many candidates in their written tasks were trying to extend the story of the original literary work as a literary creation. But such a creation often ended up as a simple repetition of the original story. Candidates should understand that they were expected to create literary writing as an additional part of the original work, instead of a summary of a character's life to show the candidate had read and understood the whole story. It is not useful to repeat or summarise the known story, because candidates are actually expected to add something new to the original text.

While creating a written task, candidates should first clearly decide on who their audience would be. For example, a speech at a funeral could be very odd if it is only addressed to the dead, exposing him or her as the author did. A candidate can use it as a rhetorical device to address directly the dead, but should remember who the audience are. Some candidates were trying to speak to the dead directly while blaming them; such comments you do not want to mention in front of an audience.

Some candidates chose a task to present the language and culture of a particular region, which is certainly feasible. But sometimes, they were not clear about who they were speaking to. As a result, the tone of either a column article or a public speech became inconsistent. In some paragraphs or even sentences, candidates sounded as if they were speaking to the local people, varying their audiences among parents, pupils and government officials. It was difficult to understand whom they were trying to persuade. Sometimes, they sounded like they were speaking to outsiders or even foreigners, but the background was not clearly and fundamentally introduced. As a result, they simply said what they knew about, but did not consider how much the audience has already or not yet known.

The most serious problem with the HL written task 2 was that some candidates did not attempt to use the format of a formal essay. They turned it into blogs and interviews by mistake, completely ignoring the new requirement. Some candidates struggled to keep the

format, such as introduction, paragraphs of discussion and examples and then conclusion, but they still had problems with the essay style and language register. These were the weak points of their writing and showed they did not well understand how to apply the neutral essay approaches to a formal presentation with convincing arguments. Personal feelings were often mixed up with some dogmatic comments.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Most candidates lost more marks in criterion B this year, due to their inaccurate understanding of the task or the criteria. 'Task and content' require three fundamental aspects.

The first is the understanding of the topic or text, which is not all the topics or texts having been studied in the whole programme or the chosen works. It actually refers to the topic or text that has been chosen by the candidate to write the task on. This means the candidate can choose a topic or text to write on, without reflecting on the fact that he or she knows all the topics or texts in the programme. The connection of the candidate's chosen topic or text to the topics or texts of the programme should have been mentioned in the rationale. Criterion B requires demonstration of understanding required for the chosen topic or text, or what functions need to be involved.

The second aspect is whether the candidate has got sufficient content for the chosen task. As the chosen task is now different from the writing purposes of the original work, the candidate should demonstrate he or she has got new content or could make an appropriate reuse of some content from the original work. A good task shows a creative use of content instead of simple repetition.

The third aspect requires an understanding of the chosen text type in order to see if the candidate knows how to use the text type. Some text types were not kept to consistently because the candidates sometimes lost their audience and turned the written task into a kind of homework that answered teachers' questions. Candidates showed the examiner precisely what the teachers had taught them while forgetting they were actually writing a piece with their own purposes to fulfil a task.

Some candidates' performance was flawed from the very beginning of task 2, because they did not understand the chosen question from the six prescribed questions. For example, one of the questions was about how different people read and interpret the same text. But some candidates mistook it as controversial opinions and even conflicting political views. Eventually, such a formal essay inevitably became a description of two social and political views on the same event. Candidates should be reminded that they are asked to discuss on the same text with different views instead of different ideas on the same issue.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

Some schools introduced a framework for the rationale, encouraging their students to think according to the framework. For example, all the candidates of some schools followed a pattern in which task 1 is always based on a literary work and task 2 is always based on a

culture option. When such a pattern is introduced, candidates are less likely to treat the written tasks as a way of encouraging creation of written work, but are most likely to treat it as a kind of homework they are required to write. Some schools even introduced a rigid pattern with introduction, discussion and conclusion. It was obvious that their candidates were asked to follow the pattern closely and fill in chunks of texts under such subtitles. In teaching, framework can be used to help average students to get on to the right track but should not be overused to restrict the creativity of brighter students.

As this is a written task, the candidates are very much expected to show how well they can write. The written language tends to be more formal than the spoken language. Some candidates had a good topic with materials which were enough for a column article, but they used them to write blogs. By choosing the genre, they were found to struggle between a blog and a column article, between formal use of language and choice of easy structures, between presentation of serious content and unfounded personal views. This simply demonstrates that they do not understand the style or text type of blog writing. You can argue that a blog is an independent source of information and should be acceptable. The issue here is not whether you can write a blog, but whether your blog is of good quality with interesting content that can attract an audience. You need to think that your blog should be read by many and given good comments, before it can become successful. Only such good blogs can be cheered and get good marks. It is unjustifiable to claim blogs are usually full of such free personal views and therefore should be kept as such, though in reality blogs do contain more not worth reading than column articles because they do not need to pass the approval of editors. In teaching, students should be made aware that no genre or text type should be allowed to present low quality writing. So a blog might be a more difficult text type to choose because there are fewer good examples of blog writing than column articles.

Standard level written task

Component grade boundaries

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Mark range:	0 - 2	3 - 5	6 - 9	10 - 12	13 - 14	15 - 17	18 - 20

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Higher level paper one

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 2	3 - 5	6 - 8	9 - 11	12 - 14	15 - 17	18 - 20

The areas of the programme and examination which appeared difficult for the candidates

Most of candidates were able to identify the common theme of their two selected texts, but their understanding of the purposes of writing and a wider expectation of audience could only reach certain levels with limited depth. Therefore, criteria A and B proved to be more difficult for the candidates than criteria C and D. For criterion A, some candidates were demonstrating only a basic level of understanding of the paired texts. Some of them could only identify the superficial meanings of the authors' points, which were the most obvious content. Some candidates fully understood the authors' words on the specific matters, but were incapable of extending the arguments to a wide range of applications. In other words, they know what was said in the words and sentences, but not what was hinted at between the lines. These candidates also tend to narrow down the audience group of the texts. For example, they may consider text 1 was written for parents only and regard text 2 as official instead of academic writing. Some commented on texts 3 and 4 as written for girls or as an advertisement without touching upon their functions on providing information and exposing social problems. In this way, their understanding of the purposes of writing would be limited to a personal level of likes or dislikes, good or bad, must or not, and so on. By confining themselves to such a basic understanding, the candidates would often struggle between achievements of 2 or 3 marks.

For criterion B, most of the candidates were aware of some stylistic features applied by the authors, but some of their comparison and analyses often remained on a superficial level. The rhetorical devices were correctly identified and named, but the authors' appropriate or effective uses of such devices were not sufficiently discussed or analysed. There were also some problems in recognising whole structures of the style. For example, some candidates were able to analyse the uses of words and phrases, but not able to deal with more complicated structures such as echoing, figurative consistence or coherence. Candidates are not actually expected to compare the two texts of each group side by side on each individual point or cover all the stylistic features in the selected pair of texts, but what they have raised for discussion should be comparatively fully attended to. Examiners do not count what is missed, but would have to be convinced that the points of argument on each author's styles are persuasive and comprehensive, instead of casual personal feelings. Some candidates could only list a number of writing skills without effective analysis of them. This usually would result in no more than a mark of 3.

The areas of the programme and examination in which candidates appeared well prepared

Compared with the understanding of theme and style, structure and language were better prepared by the candidates. A majority of the candidates have clearly been trained in writing such commentaries and using appropriate patterns or formats. Some could use their own language precisely, but many could absorb useful terms and expressions from the paired texts and introduce them into their own meaningful patterns and structures. This is a better approach than those who quoted many words from the texts in order to express their own points because candidates are expected to demonstrate that they are good at using their own words and sentence patterns to express their ideas. Most candidates were able to express their meanings in a reasonably clear language, but many of them tended to use a straightforward daily conversation style. Only a minority of the candidates were able to use a formal and academic language style for such commentaries.

Some candidates were capable of developing their points of understanding in steps of discussion, as they organised their arguments into a structure with various issues. Some well-prepared candidates understood that they were expected to give equal treatments to each of the two texts, so they kept such a balance and discussed similarity as well as difference between them from various aspects they defined. They used appropriate examples to support their points of view and were able to complete their writings with well-framed structures. The examiners could usually find clear paragraphs in an organised composition of introduction, points of views and conclusion. Although some of these did not always support each other consistently or coherently, the structure was there to show the evidence of training.

The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions

The two sections were equally chosen and done equally well, while both of themes were easily identified by all the candidates as the common themes. Candidates could read and understand the texts very well and some even spent a lot of time and space to outline their points. The majority of candidates included clear introductions and appropriate conclusions, and understood the expectation to include quotations. Therefore, the candidates' strengths or weaknesses were not shown particularly in one section or the other.

In section A, the common theme of texts 1 and 2 is identified as approaches and attitudes towards education, and a majority of the candidates could easily recognise and convey this. But some candidates did not outline the contrasting differences between the genres of the two texts or use the examples from text 1 to support the definitions of text 2. Some candidates were discussing such issues in a very indifferent tone as if they had never had such experiences. This might show that they were capable of coping with the texts, but not with the contexts.

In section B, the common theme of texts 3 and 4 was recognised by everyone as losing weight. Many candidates could find and discuss the different styles of writing between the two authors. They were capable of pointing out the convincing report with vivid descriptions of the cases in text 3 and the authoritative tone in the questions and answers of text 4. But

sometimes, some candidates were uncertain about their definitions of genres. They could misunderstand text 3 as a personal account instead of a journalistic report and identify text 4 as an advertisement instead of professional and objective information. Because such boundaries of genres were not clearly defined in the commentary, some candidates struggled with precision and so did not hit the targets.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

The themes of each section of paired texts were well comprehended by a majority of the candidates and their writing illustrated the requirements of the comparative commentary. This is a general impression of the examination session and the performance of most candidates. That also means the teachers have been doing the right things to help their students with their skills of commentary writing. Therefore, if there are some suggestions to make for the future candidates, this does not mean the need to bring any dramatic changes to the current teaching approaches. Teachers could bear the following in mind in their normal practice.

Teachers need to encourage their students to read more critically and identify as many different genres as possible in their reading. They should learn to appreciate different purposes and styles of writing, but not necessarily to label them with fixed names. In the first examination of the new course this year, the genre labels in the examination paper were removed from all the selected texts. This is standard for all the languages. Candidates are not expected to name the genres of the texts precisely but, preferably, to identify who wrote this and for whom. In other words, they should reveal the author's purposes of writing and their intended audience. In the practice of teaching, students should not be given a list of genres to remember or apply them mechanically to the texts, but should try to work out the purposes and audience of the texts first before making concluding about the genre.

In approaches to writing, candidates should avoid offering lengthy summaries of the texts. They were typically able to identify stylistic devices, but they should be encouraged to explain their effects in more detail. Candidates are advised not to resort to counting the number of paragraphs, sentences per paragraph, and so on, and offering this as a statement on structure. Teachers might help candidates with exercises to identify the way in which a text's structure contributes to its meaning or purpose. Although a majority of candidates are able to make points and provide relevant examples, they should also be encouraged to comment on the points and examples of their choice.

Candidates should be encouraged to use their own language to express their understanding of the features of different genres, especially in a comparative formal written style or language register. Teachers should comment on students' writing styles as well as correct their language and grammatical errors. Teachers should demonstrate the choices of appropriate references that can effectively support the opinions and arguments in writing. Some candidates were unable to write Chinese characters correctly. Teachers should ask students to submit more hand-written assignments during the course throughout the years, so that they do not rely on computers to process their writing.

Standard level paper one

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 2	3 - 5	6 - 9	10 - 12	13 - 14	15 - 17	18 - 20

The areas of the programme and examination which appeared difficult for the candidates

Generally speaking, criteria A and B proved to be more difficult for the candidates than criteria C and D.

For criterion A, some candidates were demonstrating only the basic level of understanding of the selected texts. Some of them could only identify the superficial meanings of the authors' points, which were the most obvious in the content. Some candidates fully understood the authors' words on the specific matters, but were incapable of extending the arguments to a wide range of applications. In other words, they know what was said in the words and sentences, but not what was hinted at between the lines. These candidates also tend to narrow down the audience group of the texts. For example, they may consider text 1 was written for students like themselves or text 2 for publishers only. In this way, their understanding of the purposes of writing would be limited to a personal level of likes or dislikes, advices and complaints, and so on. By confining themselves to such a basic understanding, the candidates would often struggle between achievements of 2 or 3 marks.

For criterion B, most of the candidates were aware of the stylistic features applied by the authors, but some of their analyses often remained on a superficial level. The names of rhetorical devices were correctly identified, but the authors' appropriate or effective uses of such devices were not sufficiently analysed. There were also some problems in recognising whole structures of the style. For example, some candidates were able to analyse the uses of words and phrases, but not able to deal with more complicated structures such as echoing, figurative consistence or coherence. Candidates are not actually expected to cover all the stylistic features in the selected text, but what they have raised for discussion should be comparatively fully attended to. Examiners do not count what is missed, but would have to be convinced that the points of argument on the authors' styles are persuasive and comprehensive instead of casual personal feelings. Some candidates could only list a number of writing skills without effective analysis of them. This usually would result in no more than a mark of 3.

The areas of the programme and examination in which candidates appeared well prepared

Compared with the understanding of theme and style, structure and language were better prepared by the candidates. A majority of the candidates were clearly trained in writing such

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commentaries. They knew their tasks well and formed, with some successful attempts, a consistent structure of writing. Some could use their own language precisely, but many could absorb useful terms and expressions from the selected text and introduce them into their own meaningful patterns and structures. The examiners could usually find clear paragraphs in an organised composition of introduction, points of views and conclusion. Although some of these did not always support each other consistently or coherently, the structure was there to show the evidence of training. Most candidates were able to express their meaning in a reasonably clear language, but many of them tended to use a straightforward daily conversation style. Some candidates were successfully using the guiding questions to make relevant points, but only a minority of the candidates were able to use a formal and academic language style.

The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions

There are two texts in the examination paper and the candidates' strengths or weaknesses were not shown particularly in one or the other. The general meanings of text 1 are obvious and the points of the theme are clearly supported by the examples from personal experiences. The candidates choosing text 1 were quite good at spotting these advantages and did catch the tone of advice and persuasion from the author. However, the weaknesses of some candidates could reach only this far. They picked up most obvious things with some impressive moments, but could not sufficiently reveal the author's underlined attitudes to life and work. Their commentaries accepted the controversial views with ready answers without giving any critical thinking and evaluation of such experiences and teachings.

On the other hand, the writing style of text 2 is much more formal. The theme is not guided by revealing the content of stories, but by presenting a series of arguments supported by impersonal evidence. The candidates were quite capable of identifying the criticisms made by the author, but may not have always been able to recognise the author's deep concerns about the future of publication. Some candidates were not aware that the author was actually making unique definitions regarding some social and cultural phenomena by referring to the cultural tradition of Chinese publication. In other words, the candidates were familiar with the criticising style of writing by journalists, but not sufficiently equipped with academic references occasionally used by commentators or editors, which are some essential parts of Chinese culture or history.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Both texts were well comprehended by a majority of the candidates and their writing illustrated the requirements of the commentaries. The rubrics were followed and the guiding questions were wisely used. This is a general impression of the examination session and the performance of most candidates. That also means the teachers have been doing the right things to help their students with their skills of commentary writing. Therefore, if there are some suggestions to make for future candidates, this does not mean the need to bring any

dramatic changes to the current teaching approaches. Teachers could bear the following in mind in their normal practice.

Teachers need to encourage their students to read more critically. Instead of identifying clichés and superficial formalities in their analyses, students should learn to think independently and adjust their approaches. Teachers should try to extend students' readings to as many genres as possible in and after class and help them with the appreciation of different purposes and styles of writing. Students should be encouraged to use their own language to express their understanding of the features of different genres, especially in a written style. Teachers should comment on students' writing styles as well as correct their language and grammatical errors. Teachers should demonstrate the choices of appropriate references that can effectively support the opinions and arguments in writing. Some candidates were unable to write Chinese characters correctly. Teachers should ask students to submit more hand-written assignments during the course throughout the years, so that they do not rely on computers to process their writing. Also, many candidates were struggling when the texts contained some very common classical Chinese elements, so teachers should put more efforts in this area by teaching Chinese idioms as well as classical sayings.

Higher level paper two

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 3	4 - 6	7 - 9	10 - 13	14 - 18	19 - 22	23 - 25

The areas of the programme and examination which appeared difficult for the candidates

Some candidates were not able to focus on the question they chose to write on. Sometimes they were found to shift their answers to a different question and come back later. That is because either they did not read the question carefully enough or they did not understand the complete meaning of the question. All the questions are designed to ask candidates to link more than one element they have learnt. They should scrutinize the question for its focus and analyse it with reference to their chosen texts. Some candidates, unfortunately, manage one or two elements by giving separate, instead of linked, answers. This is also shown in their essays when candidates gave a prepared response about the two (or more) literary works, one that had a different focus to that of the actual question itself. Most of the candidates were certainly aware of answering the question, especially when they started and concluded the essay. But those were often empty introductions and conclusions, not supported by the central paragraphs or statements. For this reason, such essays could only struggle to achieve a mark of 2 or 3 in criterion B.

Two more criteria were also affected by the unfocused responses to the question. For example, criterion A is not about the knowledge and understanding of the whole works studied, but about the knowledge of understanding of those parts of the literary works related to the question. It is therefore about: how to read and interpret the aspects of the works, who read it and in what time and space. These are referred to as contexts in the criteria and the word 'context' should not be understood in a narrow linguistic sense. Some candidates had difficulty in writing a proper essay because they were trying to duplicate some ready-made answers from textbooks and classroom introductions. To duplicate what teachers taught in class that helped students to understand the whole works and their backgrounds is not the right approach to the essay writing. Candidates are expected to focus their answers on the question and prove they are able to write a response, not a memorised chunk of stereotyped literary statements.

The same is true of criterion C, which asks candidates to explain how the author achieved what the question asks. This 'how' is the author's particular approach, which may or may not be his or her general or even typical style. This proves that if the question has not been carefully read and comprehended, the essay will suffer not only in criterion B, but also in criteria A and C. To connect the three aspects of these criteria is certainly a challenge for candidates in general.

The areas of the programme and examination in which candidates appeared well prepared

A majority of the candidates seemed to be familiar with the literary works they had studied. They were ready to retell the plots, characters, stories, contents and imageries. They were very capable of answering factual questions, had they been asked to do so, because their essays sounded much like such answers. They were able to reiterate the standard comprehensions, generate the standard feelings and present the standard comments. They all attempted in some ways to answer the question and some of their revised answers did get close to, or hit, the target. They all knew which literary works they were going to refer to as they had been very familiar with their contents.

Nearly all the candidates knew what structures they were expected to produce for such an essay. Most of them started off very well with very clear purposes focused on the question. The writing plan successfully presented in a good introduction did not always materialise in the following paragraphs. These paragraphs might have been focused on one aspect of the literary features, but did not always work together with either the introduction or the conclusion. Many candidates were fully aware that a conclusion was an essential format of the essay, so they made a great effort to produce one even if they had nothing to say at the end. The conclusion as a format always stood there, but its contents were usually too short, repetitive or non-summative. This could be a personal conclusion, but candidates need to be careful because it could be over-done. Anyway, structures and organisations were obviously a good legacy the candidates had learnt to inherit. Teachers should feel greatly relieved that some of the candidates were using them properly and variedly in their essays.

The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions

The new paper contains six literary questions nearly identical between HL and SL. Each HL question asks the candidates to answer with the support of at least two literary works they have studied in part 3 of the programme. These three works studied in part 3 must include a work in translation. For HL candidates, the minimum requirement could mean in effect basing their answer on two Chinese works. A majority of the candidates did choose the literary works as required, but some erroneously chose one short story as a work from a collection of short stories.

Among the six individual questions, question 4 was probably the one most attempted. All the candidates clearly knew they should talk about and comment on the characters. They all did so accordingly. Some candidates gave details about how the characters were created in relation to other characters as well as to the era. Further to these basic components of discussion, the candidates were expected to analyse the author's ways of creating such characters and how successful they were in impressing the readers of different eras, especially the candidates' own. There were a certain number of candidates capable of making successful analyses in this aspect. But many candidates had difficulty with the bewilderment and helplessness faced by the characters. The deliberate design of the question is to link characters, their formation and their situation into one discussion. Some candidates could not go this far because they did not define what the bewilderment and helplessness were in the characters' situation. Without a clear definition, the discussion and analyses could not refer clearly to the significant points the candidates attempted to make.

The other five questions posed similar problems as the candidates could not answer the whole question coherently. But they did manage to give clear answers to part of the question and achieve a certain level of marks. All the six questions were attempted by a certain number of the candidates. Although question 4 was the most popular, no question seemed to bring advantages or disadvantages to candidates in general. All the strengths were similar and so too the weaknesses. The candidates were good at the literary works they learnt, but their abilities of re-organising learnt materials under new topics still needed training. Their language was either rigidly reproduced from the learnt materials or lacked precision and power. Their vocabulary for such comparative commentary sounded insufficient or irresponsive under examination pressure. To form a whole plan and write consistently and coherently for 120 minutes without diversion really requires skills as well as talents. But teachers should be proud that a certain number of their students were capable of achieving the target and obtaining high or even full marks.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Very little needs to be said about recommendations for teaching as the teachers have obviously done a very good job and brought their candidates to this level. Some suggestions could come out of the above comments on all the above categories, but these must have already been applied to teaching by the teachers. The problems are perhaps remaining with a certain number of students who are not very adaptable to such writing. Therefore, the general

recommendations are to focus on analysing the specific characteristics of the works rather than making standard and general introductions. Students are taught to understand the characteristics with a holistic perspective. Teachers should spend more time in training students to acquire the skills and knowledge to interpret the designated questions, and encourage them to structure well-rounded essays to support their own thinking. Students should also learn to write a balanced essay in a limited time. The presentation is also important as it could seriously affect the examiners' reading and marking. Some candidates were unable to write Chinese characters correctly. Teachers should ask students to submit more hand-written assignments during the course throughout the years, so that they do not rely on computers to process their writing.

Standard level paper two

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 3	4 - 6	7 - 10	11 - 14	15 - 17	18 - 21	22 - 25

The areas of the programme and examination which appeared difficult for the candidates

Some candidates were not able to focus on the question they chose to write on. Sometimes they were found to shift their answers to a different question and come back later. That is because either they did not read the question carefully enough or they did not understand the complete meaning of the question. All the questions are designed to ask candidates to link more than one element they have learnt. They should scrutinize the question for its focus and analyse it with reference to their chosen texts. Some candidates, unfortunately, manage one or two elements by giving separate, instead of linked, answers. This is also shown in their essays when candidates gave a prepared response about the two literary works, one that had a different focus to that of the actual question itself. Most of the candidates were certainly aware of answering the question, especially when they started and concluded the essay. But those were often empty introductions and conclusions, not supported by the central paragraphs or statements. For this reason, such essays could only struggle to achieve a mark of 2 or 3 in criterion B.

Two more criteria were also affected by the unfocused responses to the question. For example, criterion A is not about the knowledge and understanding of the whole works studied, but about the knowledge of understanding of those parts of the literary works related to the question. It is therefore about: how to read and interpret the aspects of the works, who read it and in what time and space. These are referred to as contexts in the criteria and the word 'context' should not be understood in a narrow linguistic sense. Some candidates had difficulty in writing a proper essay because they were trying to duplicate some ready-made answers from textbooks and classroom introductions. To duplicate what teachers taught in class that helped students to understand the whole works and their backgrounds is not the

right approach to the essay writing. Candidates are expected to focus their answers on the question and prove they are able to write a response, not a memorised chunk of stereotyped literary statements.

The same is true of criterion C, which asks candidates to explain how the author achieved what the question asks. This 'how' is the author's particular approach, which may or may not be his or her general or even typical style. This proves that if the question has not been carefully read and comprehended, the essay will suffer not only in criterion B, but also in criteria A and C. To connect the three aspects of these criteria is certainly a challenge for candidates in general.

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The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions

The new paper contains six literary questions nearly identical between HL and SL. Each SL question asks the candidates to answer with the support of two literary works they have studied in part 3 of the programme. These two works in part 3 must include a work in translation or in other words, one Chinese work and one work in translation. A majority of the candidates did choose the literary works as required, but some candidates avoided a work in translation or erroneously chose one short story as a work from a collection of short stories.

Among the six individual questions, question 4 was probably the one most attempted. All the candidates clearly knew they should talk about and comment on the characters. They all did so accordingly. Some candidates gave details about how the characters were created in relation to other characters as well as to the era. Further to these basic components of discussion, the candidates were expected to analyse the author's ways of creating such characters and how successful they were in impressing the readers of different eras, especially the candidates' own. There were a certain number of candidates capable of making successful analyses in this aspect. But many candidates had difficulty with the bewilderment and helplessness faced by the characters. The deliberate design of the question is to link characters, their formation and their situation into one discussion. Some candidates could not go this far because they did not define what the bewilderment and helplessness were in the characters' situation. Without a clear definition, the discussion and analyses could not refer clearly to the significant points the candidates attempted to make.

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