CHINESE A: LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

Overall grade boundaries

Higher level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 13	14 - 29	30 - 45	46 - 58	59 - 71	72 - 84	85 - 100

Standard level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 13	14 - 30	31 - 45	46 - 60	61 - 71	72 - 85	86 - 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

This year, the choice of material was wide-ranged, covering fiction, poetry, drama and essay from the classical, modern and contemporary periods. Candidates discussed poems by Li Bai (2) and Du Fu (1), parables by Liu Zongyuan (2) from the Tang dynasty, and lyrics by Su Shi (2) from the Song dynasty. From the modern period, Thunderstorm by Cao Yu (5) remained a favourite choice, followed by Lin Haiyin's Stories from Southern Beijing (3), and Qian Zhongshu's novel Besieged City (3). From the contemporary period, the most popular choice were Bai Xianyong's short stories from the Taipei People collection (6), followed by Ah Cheng's Chess Master (3) and Zhang Ailing's Golden Cangue and Red Rose and White Rose (2). The works were generally appropriate for the test.

However, it would be good to see more infrequently chosen works, in both the classical or contemporary categories. This would expand the repertoire of works covered in the IB program.

Candidate performance against each criterion

The candidates generally presented their analysis on the chosen excerpts fluently in either Mandarin or Cantonese. Most were competent in giving a focused presentation using their knowledge about the authors' lives and social backgrounds of the works, as well as the stylistic devices. Structurally, some used the chronological approach; some used the thematic and characterization approaches.

In the future, it would be good to see the use of more literary terms in the interpretation, and greater attention to the structure of the chosen text.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

There is room for improvement in both the classical and modern fiction analysis. First, some candidates spent too much time describing the biographical details or socio-historical backgrounds. Second, some candidates used terms such as "feudalism" and "the darkness of society" too loosely. It would be more fruitful to avoid the use of such jargon. More attention should be given to the actual stylistic analysis.

Further comments

In the analysis of classical poetry, it would be necessary for the candidates to show their knowledge about the form of the chosen poem, for instance, ballad (yuefu poetry), regular verse (lushi), truncated verse (jueju), short lyric (xiaoling), and long lyric (manci). The candidates should discuss the relevant poetic devices such as parallelism, allusions, rhyme patterns, etc.

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

A great variety of materials was chosen for this year's IB test. Works from the classical period included poems by Du Fu (4) and Bai Juyi (3) of the Tang dynasty, lyrics by Su Shi (8) of the Song dynasty, the Han dynasty folk ballad Peacock Flying Southeast (Kongque dongnanfei, 2) and Ming dynasty classical vernacular fiction Striking Stories from the Past and Present (Jingu qiguan, 2). The works from the first half of the twentieth century did not figure prominently as in previous years, except for Cao Yu's Thunderstorm (8) and Lu Xun's short stories (7). Contemporary fiction writers received greater attention, such as Yu Hua's To Live (7) and Bai Xianyong's short stories (6). Fiction by Hong Kong writers Li Bihua (3) and Xi Xi (3) was discussed, and the essays by Taiwan writer Long Yingtai (7). In terms of

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contemporary poets, Yu Guangzhong remained the most popular (8). It would be good to see the inclusion of works by other writers, classical or modern in the future.

Candidate performance against each criterion

As with HL, most students presented their analysis clearly and fluently, in either Cantonese or Mandarin. Many discussed the structure in the beginning of the presentation, while others used the chronological approach. Some began by giving information about the biographical and social backgrounds of the work. In the analysis of fiction, candidates were generally competent in deciphering the underlying meanings of the given text. In the analysis of classical poetry, the candidates were more inclined to discuss the theme (content) rather than the formal features such as length, meter, allusions, etc.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

Some schools chose one or two works for all the candidates. This makes it easier for the teachers to grade the candidates; however, it might mean a narrower range of material studied by the candidates.

Further comments

It also came to my attention that the lesser-known poems, classical or modern, particularly the abstract ones, were too difficult for certain candidates. Teachers might want to consider the level of difficulty when choosing the poems.
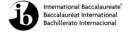
Higher level written tasks

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

Recommendations for IB procedures, instructions and forms

In this session, most schools met the deadline well ahead of time and submitted the right forms with their candidates' written tasks. Assistant examiners reported no delays in receiving the written tasks, while we continue with the traditional marking. The forms were correctly filled in with useful information about the selected texts and options of the programme run by the schools. Occasionally, teachers forgot to sign their names at the end of the form, but that did not affect marking and was further requested. In general, the regulations were observed and the instructions were followed closely and precisely. Only a few schools did not fully understand the regulations of word counting. Candidates were either writing more than the word limit allowed or less because they don't know Chinese allows an extra 20% by counting the number of characters. The right word count for Chinese is 360 characters for Rationale

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and 1,200 for either Written Tasks. Schools should advise their candidates to make the best use of the word limit.

In our overall observations, the marking team noticed the following unsuitable practices from some schools.

1. The majority of candidates provided valid rationales in Task 1 and feasible outlines in Task 2. However, some candidates or even a few schools failed to provide appropriate outlines in Task 2. Most of such candidates managed to do well in the rationale but not in the outline. Some candidates wrote a rationale instead of an outline in Task 2, or simply used a format close to a rationale.
2. Some schools failed to follow the rule that one task must be based on the literature parts of the programme and the other on the language parts. Some candidates submitted both tasks based on the works in Parts 3 and 4 literatures.
3. Candidates at some schools submitted very similar tasks. That means all the tasks in the same school were more or less about the same. For example, everyone wrote a diary for Task 1, based on a literature text and chose the same question for Task 2. It seems as if the teachers had given the same tasks to the class. This is not an advisable practice in assigning instead of choosing tasks. Individual candidates should be encouraged to make their own choices in consultation with the teachers.

For HL candidates, Written Task 2 is a formal essay to answer one of the six prescribed generic questions. There were only some schools which used format correctly, but many did not. There were two problems in WT2. The first was that many candidates did not clearly state which questions they had chosen to answer. The second was some candidates simply used the questions in English and some translated into Chinese and then answered them.

The range and suitability of the work submitted

The written tasks of this session showed some very good creations. For example, different characters from different literature works were presented together in new fictional stories, diaries or plays to compare or contrast their ideologies. In many cases, this worked better than adding a chapter to a classic work, because the candidates had freedom to use their own styles of writing instead of imitating the original author, which is usually difficult to do. Another good approach was to interview actors or actresses and to ask them to comment on how to perform certain drama characters. This writing is obviously easier to manage than interviewing the original fictional characters and can avoid forcing characters into speaking with a wrong language register. Blogs were very popular among the candidates too, but the quality of such writing varied enormously. If blogs were used to treat topics with serious ideas, they worked as opinion columns with freedom in style. A blog should be well organised with high quality language. Candidates should understand they are not expected to lower the standards with the excuse of writing a blog. Marks are usually awarded, not because the blog uses loose language and casual structure; but it is because the blog presents valuable ideas and contributes to the genre with its experimental and appropriate language.

The marking team also found that many candidates chose to extend the original story of the literary work. In some cases, most of the tasks often ended up as a simple repetition of the original story. Not many candidates were able to create a literary writing as an additional part

of the original work of a very good standard. Some candidates chose to present the language and culture of a particular region, which is certainly feasible. But sometimes they did not consider the audience that they were trying to persuade and as a result they simply said what they knew about the topic.

Half of the candidates chose to base Task 1 on the literary works studied and overall there was a good range of interesting and suitable tasks. There was a variety of text types, such as a series of diary entries, newspaper articles, scripts, debates, speeches, dialogues, letters, blogs, etc. It was satisfying to come across outstanding examples of creative tasks. The ingredients for such excellence are surely to be found in a candidate's preliminary work on purpose, audience and context combined with research into the characteristics and conventions of a type of text that had been judiciously chosen to suit the objectives of the task. Most of the candidates chose the suitable tasks to show their understanding of the text or topic. However, some candidates forgot which audience was being targeted and the importance of establishing clearly who the speaker is, his or her qualifications for speaking on a subject and in what particular context.

The most serious problem with 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 and totally ignored the requirement. Half of the candidates chose to base task 2 on the Language parts. Many of them only responded to the question in the first and last paragraphs. They had some problems with the essay style and language register; they often use personal feelings instead of approaching the questions critically and analytically. One serious problem was that the translation for six questions is very different in different schools. Some candidates didn't write the English questions in the form, and it is difficult for examiner to know which questions they were responding and some even rewrote the questions according to the texts they referred to.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Many candidates could achieve full marks in Criteria A and D. This showed they had indeed understood what the rationale was expected to present and most candidates were able to spend time in polishing their language. Many of them made sure that their language was effectively chosen and respected the word limit. Nearly all the good pieces of writing used a number of words closer to the upper limit, 1,200 Chinese characters. It is recommended that candidates are not be satisfied with reaching the lower limit of 960 Chinese characters, but try to use all the allowed space to raise the quality of their writing.

For Criterion C, most candidates could achieve 3 or 4. They were obviously aware that they should keep a structure, which they did. However, most candidates lost a mark or two because the structure was not satisfactorily coherent. They are advised to consider how their sentences and paragraphs are linked by conjunctional devices and connected logically and consequentially in ideas.

Most candidates lost more marks in Criterion B, because their tasks were not properly designed. They need to think of the relevance of their writing as something that may be accepted by a publication outlet or a specific audience. They need to consider whether they

are able to write in a style used by a certain author or a high-rank government official in a formal diplomatic setting. For example, it might be too ambitious for our young candidates to write a government report as a Prime Minister.

Here are some detailed comments by the marking team:

Task 1:

Criteria A- Rationale

Some candidates lost marks because they either they forgot to mention the nature of the task chosen or about the audience, purpose and context of the task.

Criteria B- Task and Content

Students who got 7-8 marks were fully aware of their text type chosen, showed a creative use of contents and demonstrated an excellent understanding of the topics/ text. Most students who got 5-6 marks submitted a task which showed relevant and sufficient content and used the conventions of the text type chosen. They re-use of some contents from the original work appropriately. When the content was not appropriate to the text type chosen, candidates got 3-4 marks. Those students who got 1-2 points failed to present appropriate content in the text type and ignored the audience and purpose of the task.

Criterion D - Language and Style

Register proved difficult for some. A smaller number of candidates did not use appropriate vocabulary, sometimes impeding communication.

Task 2

Criteria A - Outline

Outlines came in all shapes and sizes, from few sentences to two-page long detailed essay plan. Long essay outlines are strongly discouraged. Too many points and details in an outline could blur the particular focus of the task.

Criteria B - Response to the Question

Most candidates lost marks in this criterion as they simply repeat the content from the original work, losing the focus in response to the question. Some candidates did not fully understand the question.

Criterion C - Organisation

Responses were often organised but not always sufficiently; development of the argument was often organised by the repetition of content not by critically responding to the questions.

Criterion D - Language and Style

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Language was very often found to be 'generally clear and accurate'. Essays also needed to be written in an appropriate style and register. Informality was frequently observed which was not appropriate to this task.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

Some schools have provided very good guidance to their candidates, even when they had a large number of candidates. In these cases, candidates presented each a different idea with different text types. It was noticeable that candidates must have been given the right guidance and obtained the right ideas of how to create their own written tasks. For these schools, the written tasks of their candidates were well designed, properly linked to the options and texts they had studied, thoughtfully prepared and carefully presented. The quality only varied according to candidates' abilities. The success of such schools came from their teachers' guidance, which helped candidates understand what they should be doing and what quality they needed to maintain.

There were also a couple of poor examples, in which most of the candidates were writing about the same topics or nearly the same topics. Schools should certainly pass on successful ideas and experiences to future candidates, since understanding what is behind a successful task can cause candidates to produce awkward duplicates and consequently receive lower marks.

Most candidates had trouble when generalising ideas or situations. They usually try to do this by starting their written tasks with some topic statements. However, their concepts and vocabulary sometimes failed them. They may have claimed 'we all agree with something', which is logically untrue because they were actually referring to a specific case. Practices like this may need to be better implemented in the future teaching.

Many candidates had problems with Task 2 in HL. Some were still writing rationales instead of the newly required outline. The understanding of the set questions was a problem too. Typical example occurs when candidates chose to comment on 'how a text is interpreted differently'. They were not aware that a text is a cultural legacy and therefore different interpretations of such a legacy should contribute to the legacy and add new significances. Some candidates talked about the readers' disagreements not on the text itself, but about the facts it presents. That usually turned into two texts which disagree with each other, instead of one text interpreted by different readers.

Further recommendations are made by the marking team.

1. It is very important for teachers to draw their candidates' attention to the understanding of the expectations of the rationale and the outline. Candidates frequently lost 1 or 2 marks in HL as a result of not following the instructions properly.
2. Some schools provided a form for candidates to complete for both the task 1 rationale and the outline for task 2. This seemed quite a good idea, if only to try and make sure their students gave examiners all the required information.
3. Some candidates use hand-writing form for the outline. This is a problem when the hand-writing is very difficult to read and the examiner needs to guess the Chinese words.

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4. For task 2, candidates need to learn how to get to the point quickly and provide a focused argument supported by well-chosen details from the texts analysed.
5. Students should be made aware of the penalties which apply as soon as the word limits are exceeded.
6. Students should be encouraged to proofread their work to avoid being penalized on Criterion D for lack of accuracy.
7. It is very helpful and even essential to provide the examiner with stimulus material responded to in the task.
8. Teachers should ensure that their students are following the regulations and requirements to avoid submitting two literary or two culture written tasks.

Standard level written task

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

Recommendations for IB procedures, instructions and forms

This session, most schools met the deadline well ahead of time and submitted the right forms with their candidates' written tasks. Assistant examiners reported no delays in receiving the written tasks, while we continue with the traditional marking. The forms were correctly filled in with useful information about the selected texts and options of the programme run by the schools. Occasionally, teachers forgot to sign their names at the end of the form, but that did not affect marking. In general, the regulations were observed and the instructions were followed closely and precisely. Only a few schools did not fully understand the regulations of word counting. Candidates were either writing more than the word limit allowed or less because they don't know Chinese allows an extra 20% by counting the number of characters. The right word count for Chinese is 360 characters for Rationale and 1,200 for either Written Tasks. Schools should advise their candidates to make the best use of the word limit.

The marking team reported some clerical and format errors. For example, sometimes the actual number of pages submitted for some written tasks did not match the number indicated on the cover sheet by the students. Some schools did not state the topics studied correctly, while some did not demonstrate that they had learnt enough topics as required by the syllabus. For instance, some schools only recorded one topic out of the four required in Part 1 and Part 2, or listed one short story or a long poem instead of a full-length literature work. All the schools are able to provide a checklist of candidates' information, yet only a couple of schools were able to provide the total number of students' works enclosed, with which it is easier for the examiner to cross-check with the official IB allocation.

The range and suitability of the work submitted

The written tasks of this session showed some very good creations. For example, different characters from different literature works were presented together in new fictional stories,

diaries or plays to compare or conflict their ideologies. This invention is certainly better than adding a chapter to a classic work, because the candidates will have freedom to use their own styles of writing instead of imitating the original author, which is usually difficult to do. Another good approach was to interview actors or actresses and to ask them to comment on how to perform certain drama characters. This writing is obviously easier to manage than interviewing the original fictional characters and can avoid forcing characters into speaking with a wrong language register. Blogs were very popular among the candidates too, but the quality of such writing varied enormously. If blogs were used to treat topics with serious ideas, they worked as good opinion columns with freedom in style. A blog should be well organised with language of high quality. Candidates should understand they are not expected to lower the standards in an excuse of writing a blog. Marks are usually awarded, not because the blog uses loose language and casual structure; but it is because the blog presents valuable ideas and contributes to the genre with its experimental and appropriate language.

The marking team also reported that some candidates intended to choose a task based on Parts 1 or 2, but the topics did not show a clear relationship with the topics included in the syllabus. For example, some candidates explored the relationship between parents and children, and some explored how to take part in charity activities. Some candidate intended to explore modern media functions, such as "人肉搜索", which were good ideas, but they failed to explore the relevant linguistic features. They did not show how the media or the way of communication affects audiences through language elements. Some written tasks based on literature works were trying to extend the original story as a literary creation. But such creations often ended up as a simple repetition of the original story. Some candidates tried to rewrite the story from another person's point of view or in another text type, but they ended up repeating the original plot, without showing a deep understanding of the characters or the themes.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Many candidates were able to achieve full marks in Criteria A and D. This showed they had indeed understood what the rationale was expected to present and most candidates were able to polish their language. As the written tasks were prepared in their own time and pace, they must have spent a lot of time to make sure that their language were effectively chosen and appropriately applied to the word limit.

Nearly all the good works used a number of words closer to the upper limit of 1,200 Chinese characters. It is recommended that candidates try to go beyond the lower limit of 960 Chinese characters and make use of as many characters as possible; this will help raise the quality of their writing. For Criterion C, most candidates were able to achieve 3 or 4. They were aware that they should keep a structure; however, most candidates lost a mark or two because the structure was not satisfactorily coherent. They are advised to consider how their sentences and paragraphs are linked by conjunctional devices and connected logically and consequentially in ideas.

Most candidates lost more marks in Criterion B, because their written tasks were not properly designed. They need to think the relevance of their writing and the specific audience. They need to consider whether they are able to write in a style used by a certain author or a high-

rank government official in a formal diplomatic setting. For example, it might be too ambitious for our young candidates to write a government report as a Prime Minister.

The marking team also reported that some candidates lost marks for the rationale because they did not clearly state how the contents of the task were linked to any particular parts of their studies. Some rationales did not state the particular aspects which the task intended to explore. Most candidates lost more marks in Criterion B. Some tasks based on Part 1 or 2 did not show correct understanding of the topics and neglected the relationship between their topics and style of language. Some tasks based on literature did not show sufficient understanding of the works but were only simply repetitions of the original plots. A few candidates did not have sufficient content to meet the requirements of their tasks. In some tasks, the conventions of the text types were not maintained consistently, showing lapses in structure, format or language.
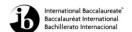
In several cases, marks had to be deducted for exceeding the word count limit. Some students lost one or two marks because they didn't provide enough information in the rationale, especially on the audience they were writing to and the text type chosen. Some candidates, when trying to extend the stories from the characters' points of view in the original stories, deviated from the original stories, and did not conform to the original characters' personalities or use of language. The examiners also noticed that some students got their ideas from TV dramas instead of the original books, which resulted in their losing marks in Criterion B.

Almost all candidates were able to explain the choice of themes, formats and target audience in the rationale. A few students lost points because they forgot to mention why a certain format is chosen in their writing. Undoubtedly, most candidates found the hardest to meet the requirements of Criterion B, because consistency in contents was vital to the success of writing. For Criteria C and D, it is encouraging to see that some candidates really did a great job in presenting their writing in the format they choose.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

Some schools provided very good guidance to their candidates, even though they had a large number of candidates. Each candidate presented a different idea with different text types and showed they have been given the right guidance and obtained the right ideas of how to create their own written tasks. For such schools, the written tasks of their candidates were well designed, properly linked to the options and texts they had studied, thoughtfully prepared and carefully presented. The quality only varied according to candidates' abilities. The success of such schools came from their teachers' guidance, which made the candidates understand what they should be doing and what quality they needed to maintain.

There were also a couple of opposite examples, in which most of the candidates from the same schools wrote on the same or nearly the same thing. Schools should certainly pass on successful ideas and experiences to the future candidates, but encourage them to create new ones of their own instead of just copying such ideas or patterns. It is good to see examples of a successful piece of work.

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Most candidates had difficulties in generalising ideas or situations. They usually try to do this by starting their written tasks with some topic statements but in most cases their concepts and vocabulary sometimes failed them. They may have claimed 'we all agree with something', which is logically untrue because they were actually referring to a specific case. Future teaching should address this.

Further recommendations are made by the marking team.

The very fact that this course is called 'Language & Literature' means language is the key aspect. It is imperative that students can demonstrate awareness of how language and meaning are shaped by culture, context or media, and how the language or text informs, persuades or entertains the audience. Every text type has their idiosyncratic format, structure and register, which should be taught in detail.

Some candidates chose a task to present how language embodied culture. However, they often put too much emphasis on introducing culture instead of the relationship between language and culture. Some students' purposes of writing were neither clear nor stable, and even changed their audience several times in their writing. Some students' understanding of text types was not adequate and sometimes they lost marks on the format as well. Teachers are advised to enhance their supervision in such aspects.

It was unfortunate to find quite a number of students from the same school chose to write the same topic, which really limits the creativity of writing. Teachers need to expose their future candidates to more themes, genres, formats and structures of the writing, so that they can appreciate varieties and open up their choices of written tasks. WT should be an opportunity for students to think, argue and express their ideas through writing. Therefore, teachers and candidates in the future should experiment on more forms of critical thinking and analysis on resources materials, so as to encourage students to think on their own and find their own voices.

Higher level paper one

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 3	4 - 6	7 - 10	11 - 12	13 - 15	16 - 17	18 - 20

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

In general, according to the statistics on the average marks, candidates are doing better this year than last year. However, candidates are having difficulty when reading texts written half a century ago. This year, in the first pair of texts, there was a science fiction one from 1961. Many candidates seemed unable to understand the author's limited perspectives during his era and took all his words for granted instead of criticising them from the contemporary points

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of view. As a result of this, the candidates entered different levels of discussion with their understanding of the theme in different depths.

Some candidates commented on the advantages of education only and others discussed on the advantages and disadvantages of modern technology for learning. Only a minority of candidates were able to emphasise on how technology could affect our learning behaviour, environment and even way of living. Many candidates seem to accept what the author said without thinking critically that the story contains some out-dated ideas that we see clearly as wrong things to do today.
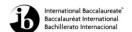
The second pair of text is not necessarily easier than the first, as a few key words and ideas need to be well linked in the arguments to reveal how 'respect of living creatures' could lead to 'dignity of human beings' in order to create 'social and global harmony'. Many candidates talked about these ideas separately by referring to individual incidents narrated in the texts. Some managed to demonstrate a satisfactory understanding of such ideas and possible connections to explain or reiterate the meanings of the authors. Only a minority of candidates were able to work out a shared common attitude to life from both Buddhist philosophies and practical doctrines of a philanthropist and reveal its significance and relevance to contemporary life.

From the candidates' comparisons of the pairs this year, we can tell that they were able to read texts and various styles of writing with sufficient understanding, but they have difficulties in reading and comprehending the contexts. What we read today is not only for knowledge of the past or for passing an exam. We are reading to process information and to deal with our contemporary issues.

The above problems prevented candidates from achieving higher marks in Criterion A, and they also showed some difficulty in Criterion B. As a result of good training, they generally endeavoured to incorporate stylistic features in their commentaries, but most of the time the points they made were quite generic or superficial. Many candidates could only explain the effects of stylistic devices in a very general manner without adapting them to the specific texts or themes. In answers with such problems, some candidates often made a very short statement about the theme of the texts, which was often not enough to reveal the depth of the authors' intended meanings.

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

Many candidates performed well in organising the paragraphs and using a clear language. Sometimes, the structure and language were well presented with no obvious errors, except for a bit of rigidness which may have come from strict training. Most of the candidates had been well trained in reading unseen texts of various styles and had demonstrated skill in paraphrasing and commenting on the ideas. They were able to identify various linguistic approaches and expressions that are used to serve the theme in the writings. They were all capable of revealing to the examiner what they understood by using a writing style which was appropriate for an effective commentary. Some of them were able to apply the linguistic

knowledge acquired during their studies and the understanding of some rhetorical devices used by the authors.

Some very good candidates were able to maintain an appropriate language register throughout the commentary while presenting their ideas. The vocabulary they applied was suitable for an academic essay, unlike some colloquial expressions used by other weak candidates. However, technical terms were not always used correctly or relevantly and some were used without considering the context. Other candidates also used their own terms and expressions in their commentaries. This was a good approach when it was supported by some accurate and powerful verbs and adverbs. Only a small number of candidates were able to maintain a well-framed structure with a highly logic development of arguments. This is certainly not easy to plan in a time-limited sit-in exam, but some candidates succeeded by writing very good introductions and conclusions in a reasonable length.

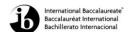## The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions

Most candidates who chose to write their commentaries on Question 1 with Texts A and B may have found Text B is easy to understand. However, this was not the case for some of the candidates since they showed difficulty to fully comprehend a text written 53 years ago. They were not able to use their knowledge as a contemporary to overview the expectations of the past and were unable to judge the value of a writing of the past. Fundamentally, this shows lack of critical thinking.

Candidates who chose to write their commentaries on Question 2 with Texts C and D faced a different challenge. They usually had no problem in comprehending the texts and could discuss the themes and purposes clearly. Many candidates were weak at linking the different layers of ideas to the contexts of our contemporary life. The problem tells us that our candidates may have been tied up to the text and forgotten (or never been reminded) that they are reading for understanding their own life and its problems.

As for the skills of their writing, most candidates focused their commentaries on the merits of the texts by pointing out the achievements of the authors in the applications of rhetorical devices. Some candidates were awarded higher marks because they were able not only to identify the authors' use of rhetorical devices, but also to comment on whether the authors had achieved their purposes. Many candidates were trained to draw up an outline before starting to write the essay. Some of these efforts paid off and resulted in solid qualities of writing. We have noticed that some candidates were able to write more formally than in a conversational way. But weak candidates still tend to tell a story instead of commenting. Some candidates hesitated to decide the genre of the texts. They usually ended up without clearly identifying the features of the authors' writings.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

There is still a strong feeling and equally strong evidences that the teachers of the schools have been doing the right things to promote the abilities of these young students. There is

therefore very little that the examiners could recommend adding. However, from what has been mentioned in the above report so far, we can see the importance of critical thinking, which is usually a weak point in Chinese teaching. Based on the marking experiences of this session, it seems that some choices of different texts may enhance this aspect of education. From what the candidates have written about, the examiner has the impression that the students are usually reading contemporary texts in culture options and classical texts in literature options. The students, therefore, have little opportunities to challenge the authors' views from a higher level of humanity across eras and continents. The culture is often learnt or compared, but not approached from a critical perspective.

On the teaching of writing skills, the following recommendations are made by the marking team. 1) Students not only need to learn how to present their points of view on the theme in depth and understand who is the audience the author refers to, but also must be able to tell the author's intention, especially when it is hidden behind the text. This can only be done if they have a lot of practice. 2) Commentaries can only be persuasive if concrete and appropriate references from the text are provided. However, candidates should be reminded not to quote long phrases and sentences without analysis. 3) Practising writing introductions and conclusions should be specially emphasised in teaching.

Standard level paper one

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 3	4 - 7	8 - 10	11 - 13	14 - 15	16 - 18	19 - 20

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

Generally speaking, there is a slight performing difference between task 1 and task 2. In addition, criteria B and D proved to be more difficult for the candidates than criteria A and C. For criterion B, most of the candidates have shown some awareness of the stylistic features used by the authors; however some of their analyses were often limited on the level of correctly identifying the terms of rhetorical devices, downplaying or ignoring their effective use. There were also problems in understanding the interplay between form and content, which prevented the candidates from making well-developed analyses of the stylistic features. For example, some candidates were able to analyze the use of words and phrases, but not able to deal with more complicated structures such as echoing, contrast, fragmentation or delay. Candidates are expected to fully develop the discussion they have raised about the selected text but they are not supposed to cover all the stylistic features. Some candidates were confused about the register which made their analyses closer to a description of their personal feelings. This usually would result in no more than a mark of 3.

For criterion D, the most noticeable weakness was the linguistic aspect, including the correct use of syntactic structures, terminology, and language register, examples of this: incomplete

sentences, wrong words, and collocation. Wrong use of Chinese characters was also a problem.

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

By comparing the performance in the 4 assessment criteria, candidates seem to have a better understanding of themes than their understanding of text style. They also have performed better in organization despite the fact that some analyses were sometimes hampered by the wrong use of words, incorrect grammar and incorrect terms. Examiners could usually identify a clear structure in candidates' analyses, which proved that the candidates have been trained in writing this kind of commentaries.

Many candidates made good attempts to absorb and digest the useful terms and expressions from the selected text and integrated them into their own meaningful patterns and structures. For example, examiners often mark a script with an organised introduction, points of views, supporting examples and conclusion, but only a minority of the candidates were able to synthesize the form and the content of the selected text and give an independent analysis. Many candidates were able to grasp the main ideas of the texts and showed their understanding of the text using their own language.

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

There are two texts in the examination paper; one is a blog and the other one is a short story. The general meaning of text 1 was straightforward and the themes are clearly supported by the examples from history, current social events and a comparison between the east and the west. The argument in text 1 was organized by adopting a progressive method which is easy to be recognized by the candidates. The candidates choosing text 1 were quite good at spotting these stylistic features and identified the tone of argument and the persuasion from the author.

On the other hand, the writing style of text 2 was totally different from text 1. The author developed his story by using literary and more implicit methods, in other words, in text 2 candidates were supposed to recognize the distinct writing style and analyze its literary features. However, some candidates mistook the fabricated story as a true event. Some candidates were not able to identify the literary features and gave further comments though they got the general message which the author conveyed in text. Candidates were familiar with the argumentative or criticising style of writing, but not sufficiently equipped with literary style of writing.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Although the candidates' performance in text 1 was slightly better than in text 2, the examiners marked some excellent scripts of the latter. Candidates were well trained and the

rubrics were followed. This means teachers have been working hard and giving the appropriate guidance to improve their students' skills in commentary writing. Based on this general impression of this exam paper, my suggestion is to become more familiar with the assessment criteria of this paper, teachers need to introduce diversified writing styles to their students. Teachers should demonstrate the choices of appropriate references that can effectively support the opinions and arguments in writing. Students should learn to think independently and critically and adjust their commentaries to various the writing styles. Teachers should help students correct their language and grammar errors. It is important to write the Chinese characters correctly.

Higher level paper two

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 3	4 - 7	8 - 11	12 - 15	16 - 18	19 - 22	23 - 25

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

Generally speaking, the candidates performed better in Paper 2 this year than last year. The average mark is higher according to the statistics. In spite of this, the candidates' main difficulty still appears in comments on stylistic features of the literary works they have studied. Some of them are not certain what format they should use to organise the comments. Instead of focusing their discussions on stylistic features, they re-tell the story or the plots. This approach often led them away from answering the question. It is an impossible task to test whether a candidate knows the two literary works thoroughly in detail. What we are testing is the candidates' ability to focus on certain stylistic features and their in-depth understanding on one or two characteristics of the authors' writing. In other words, the candidates need to show they are able to appreciate certain outstanding features of the two literary works instead of summarising the works into an essay. Their understanding of the works only needs to be referred to in a few sentences related to the features in the question.

The second difficulty was observed when answering the question. Candidates often did not focus on the question they chose to write about. Some candidates did well by copying the whole wordings of the question at the beginning of the essay, which more or less helped them to keep track. In quite a number of cases, examiners found the essay had lost the connection with the question and had to check back to find out which question was being discussed. It is therefore recommended that candidates write down the question in order to avoid being lost under the exam's time pressure. Copying down the question is of course not compulsory, so there was no mark deducted for not doing it. But if candidates did this, it may enable them to maintain the focus on the question without losing the track of relevant issues.

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

All the candidates appeared well prepared for the examination. They all understood that they should refer to two of the literary works they have studied and use them to answer one of the six set questions. Most candidates must have practised on the questions of the previous papers. This could be confirmed when some phrases from previous questions jumped out abruptly and irrelevantly in their writing. However, this kind of practice must have also helped the candidates in acquiring a proper writing style and language register for the essay. Some candidates had a clear idea of what they had to do, but they struggled to find relevant words. This preparation gave them some confidence in writing and some candidates indeed managed to write several pages in 120 minutes. But this sometimes also distracted them from answering the new question.

Nearly all the candidates were fully aware of the structure of their essay. Some candidate had some crossed-out outlines they prepared during the exam. Introductions were usually the best part of the essay for most candidates. Many were able to maintain the focus of each paragraph, which occasionally divert from the question and reveal some features of the prepared practice. Most candidates started well but just wrote a few simple sentences repeating what has been said as a conclusion. A minority of candidates were able to give the points discussed a higher significance. It seems that some training in writing a conclusion was given, but what to write in a conclusion remains a problem.

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

Many candidates attempted Question 1. They were able to link the characters of the literary works to certain social problems, but they could not clearly define why the characters represent the younger generation of the time and how fate affects the progressive trend of the time. They need some knowledge of historical background of the literary works they studied in order to define the nature of the social problems. Some could only give superficial or very conceptual answers without real understanding supported with examples.

Question 2 focused on styles and techniques of writing, but related to violence and victims. This was a less attempted question, but those who did choose it generally scored well because they must have had special concerns about the issue. Those who did not score well in this question usually did not define what they meant by violence..

Question 3 required candidates to comment on the author's approach to depict the hero's or heroine's struggle against the conventional social concepts. Candidates who chose to answer this question were usually not short of evidences to support this link. Anything about characters is usually more accessible to our candidates because they are familiar with characters and plots. With this question, some candidates had a problem to organise the logical steps of the authors' approach to stylistic techniques to validate the discussion and eventually deepen the theme.

Question 4 was probably the most attempted question of the six. It is about characterisation. Nevertheless, this was not necessarily an easy question because it specifically asks the candidates to comment on the techniques used to make characters unforgettable. In literature, unforgettable characters could influence social or literary contexts in the future.

Question 5 was another less attempted question. It emphasises a life time decision rather than some simple choices. Candidates were able to narrate the story of different characters in a chronological order to reveal what they have been doing in the plots. But some of the decisions discussed were not crucial enough for a life time decision. Sometimes, the characters are simply led by fate without being able to make a decision. Good and bad answers to the question could usually be told whether the candidates chose some reasonable decisions to write about.

Question 6 was a question about social values in the two literary works studied in the programme. These issues must have appeared in many Chinese writings chosen by schools. The focus is on how the authors criticise them and is not necessarily related to the characters. Candidates usually managed this well, but had difficulty in specifying how the authors directly or indirectly did it.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Some candidates obviously have had a lot of training on writing about the background of the works studied. They seemed to know a lot about defined political backgrounds of the works. But Paper 2 examination focuses on language in literature, which could be understood as stylistic features and writing techniques. For this reason, the questions often ask how the authors achieved what effects and expect the candidates to answer them in an analytical way. Future teaching and writing practice should focus on analysis of stylistic features instead of reiterating backgrounds, because the latter is most likely based on simple facts and standard statements.

Chinese characters are often badly written in the essays. Some were vaguely understood, misleadingly or mistaken because of poor handwriting. Examiners do not deduct marks according to the number of miswritten characters, but when the written characters are not eligible, they will have to reach a conclusion that the candidate has failed a proper and smooth communication with certain sentences. As the exam papers are continuously to be answered by handwriting in the future, some traditionally character writing practice needs to be implemented in teaching. Good handwritings should be encouraged. Schools could hold prize winning activities for Chinese calligraphy to promote the long tradition of Chinese character writing.

Standard level paper two

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 3	4 - 7	8 - 11	12 - 15	16 - 18	19 - 22	23 - 25

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

Criteria B appeared to be the most difficult for candidates. Most of them did not show a good understanding of the expectations of the question. Some responses had no relevance to the question and some did not show enough critical analysis. Students were simply not aware of the importance of explaining the key words in the questions, especially for 1, 3 and 4. These questions have several levels or layers and contained some key words which require clarification before any argument is posed.

For Criteria D, the argument of the essays of some candidates is not very logical or well developed. In addition, the formal structure of the essays of some candidates was not coherent or effective. Students were not aware of how a thesis should be developed when presenting a valid argument.

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

Question 4 and 6 were the most popular questions to answer. The questions were straightforward and students found them easy to respond.

Most of the candidates demonstrated quite well knowledge and understanding of the literary works and many could relate the context to the literary work when answering the question.

The use of language in general was clear and accurate. Many candidates were able to correctly use literary terminology like tone, setting, characterization, narrative point of view, etc. Some successfully analyzed the literary effects on readers and showed a thorough understanding of the literary style of the author.

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

Strengths

Criteria A: Like last year, most candidates seemed to have a good knowledge of literary works studied, and commented on the themes, content and characterization. In general, they were able to quote the details of the story and provided some analysis on the textual details.

Many candidates were aware of the background of the author and were able to discuss the relationship between the context and the text. Some offered a very good analysis on how context is imposed on the meaning of a text and had shown independent crtical thinking as a reader.

Criteria B: Many candidates understood the expectations of the questions if the questions were straightforward. For example, most candidates were able to respond to *Question 5* and provided a broad analysis on the "characters' psychological struggles". Again, most of the candidates were able to focus on how the authors directly or indirectly criticized the social issues like "discrimination" and "prejudice" when responding to *Question 6.*

Criteria C: Most students had successfully mentioned some of the literary terms and some had shown a good knowledge of a wide range of literary devices. Some were able to analyse and discuss the impact of the literary effects on readers of the past and nowadays.

Criteria D: Most of the essays were satisfactorily structured, with an introduction, a main body and a conclusion. Good essays offered a clear connection among paragraphs and the ideas were clearly and logically expressed within the paragraphs. Some essays had a very good development of a thesis with a very focused argument and adequate supporting evidence.

Criteria E: The use of language was basically fluent, with adequate clarity and accuracy. Register and style were appropriate on the whole with the adoption of literary terms for analysis.

Weaknesses

Criteria A: Some candidates only recited the background of the author or the literary work without any discussion on how the context affected the meaning of the text or the literary styles. Some candidates just enumerated the textual details or used quotations from the work without demonstrating their understanding. For these essays, the analysis and discussion was rather weak. Some candidates gave incorrect details of the work.

Criteria B: Some candidates found it difficult to identify the key words of some questions and hence didn't know what was expected from the question. This usually happened in *Question 1 and 3.* Students didn't notice that these questions had several depths or layers. They need to define the key words and understand the implication of the question before posing their argument. Some answers were too general without a precise analysis. Sometimes, the response was rather inconsistent and irrelevant.

For Question 1, most candidates did not get the meaning of "**how the author expressed their concern"**. Some just ignored the key word "**the fate of youth**". Therefore, instead of responding to the question, the discussion was mainly on the plot.

For *Question 2*, some students simply omitted one part of the question, which should include both discussion on "**condemnation on the violence**" and "**sympathy on the victim**".

From all the questions, *Question 3* appeared to be the most challenging one. This question had several layers and students were required to be aware of them. Firstly, students had to

present their interpretation of "**social norms/belief**". Secondly, they had to comment on how the theme was disclosed "**gradually**" and how effective the presentation was. Thirdly, they had to emphasize on how "**vigorous**" the struggle was. Candidates who answered this question were expected to present their ideas in a coherent and consistent way with relevant textual details.

For *Question 4*, some candidates narrowed the scope of the question by discussing only the characterization instead of giving a more broadened comment on the effect of different literary devices. Besides, the candidates needed to define key words like "**successful",**" **"impressive**" when evaluating on the effect of literary devices.

For *Question 5*, though most candidates offered a relevant discussion in general, they neglected the fact that the discussion on "**psychological struggles**" should be focused on the "**critical moment in making important life decision**". Otherwise, the response might not be relevant enough.

Criteria C: Many candidates simply mentioned the literary devices used in the work without an in-depth analysis. Candidates should comment on the effects of stylistic features and the meaning of the choice of these strategies. The stylistic features discussed could be of a wide range instead of just the characterization and narrative point of view.

Criteria D: Most candidates gave an empty introduction and conclusion as well as an incoherent presentation of the argument. These essays often had a loose structure without a focus. There should be thesis development instead of repetitive narration of the story. Besides, some students focus too much on one literary work without a balanced discussion on the other work.

Criteria E: Some students struggled in writing correct the characters, using the right vocabulary and accurate grammar. Some essays' register appeared to a little bit casual. The essay should be written in the appropriate register and style.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

- A wide range of appropriate literary works to prepare students to answer as many questions as possible. Don't just use one short story from the collection of short stories for analysis. Otherwise, candidates may not have enough details to respond to the question. There should be one work from PLT included for analysis.
- Some of the handwriting was not readable at all. Some characters were too small and too tightly packed. There should be enough space between characters and lines of sentences.
- Candidates need more practice on how to construct an essay with an appropriate structure and thesis development. There should be a clear argument and relevant supporting evidence. The introduction and conclusion should be related to the question and not just an empty generalization.
- More analysis should be given to the close relationship between context, text and readers. There should be more critical thinking activities in class to raise such awareness. Candidates should not just recite textual details or quotations without

showing real understanding of their meaning. Students need to develop personal perspectives in understanding the literary work. Indeed, personal engagement and opinions are important in constructing the new knowledge of the literary work.

- Candidates need more training on how to understand the question and how to respond to it, especially questions which have different parts. Candidates should not just give a standard answer without seeing the expectation of the question.

Further Comments

- The level of difficulty of Paper 2 this year is similar to that of last year. Question 4 and 6 were quite straightforward and hence the most popular questions to answer. In case of the other questions, which appeared to be more complex, it was hard to understand the expectation of the questions. Some students failed to interpret correctly the key words of the questions while some simply just answered part of the questions. In such case, Question 3 and 5 seem to be the most challenging questions to answer.

- Students need to understand that context needs to become visible throughout analysis of the literary works, not as superficial mention of the "biography" of the author or the "background" of the literary work. They should be aware of how context shapes meaning in analyzing the literary works. Some students still do not understand how to construct an essay. Empty openings and invalid conclusions are frequent in many essays. Moreover, there should be more analysis instead of a mere narration of the story. The argument has to be clear enough throughout the essay. Students should also be aware of the importance of relevant and sufficient textual evidence in supporting a valid argument. When analyzing literary features, students can include more variety for literary analysis like choice of word, tone, setting, structure, not limiting the essay to one or two stylistic features.

- It has been noticed that the selection of literary works is sometimes inappropriate, which makes it difficult for students to answer any of the 6 questions. Some schools did not choose any work from PLT while some simply chose two short stories for answering the question. It is important that two works in part 3 must include a work in translation and one Chinese literary work. When the work is chosen from a collection of short stories, more than one short story must be used for analysis.

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