

English A: Language and Literature

Overall grade boundaries

Higher level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 13	14 - 29	30 - 42	43 - 55	56 - 66	67 - 79	80 - 100

Standard level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 11	12 - 25	26 - 41	42 - 54	55 - 66	67 - 80	81 - 100

INTRODUCTION

The first examination session of the Language and Literature programme saw some 12,000 candidates from over 600 schools entering at Higher Level and 7,500 from over 500 schools at Standard Level.

Not only was a new programme being examined, it was also the first time that Group One examination scripts were electronically marked and internal orals electronically submitted for moderation. Only the Written Task, for technical reasons, was paper-based from candidate to examiner. In future sessions this too will be marked electronically.

Many of the examiners whose comments are reflected here were struck by the exciting range and variety of language and literature texts and topics taught as well as by the sometimes imaginative and unconventional ways that teachers and candidates alike chose to explore them. There is a good deal that is positive in the latitude the programme gives to teachers and students, but there are also lessons to be learned and reminders of rules and regulations to be highlighted, which is what this lengthy first report will, above all, attempt to address.

The overall results of the candidates at both levels indicate that, generally speaking, they performed better on Paper 1 Textual Analysis and on Internal Assessment Oral than on Paper 2 and the Written Task. Detailed comments in this report on the performance of candidates in each of the four components by the principal examiners responsible for them will aim to provide teachers with enlightenment as to the reasons for this. Let us, however, make the following introductory observations:

One of the major things that is new about Language and Literature in comparison with the old Language A programme is the notion of context. It is particularly relevant to the work students do for Paper 1 and Paper 2 where it is taken into account in the assessment criteria and also an essential ingredient in the production of effective Written Tasks. While context is a strong feature of the texts for analysis in Paper 1 and thus difficult to ignore, in Paper 2 not enough candidates yet understand that context needs to be shown through analysis of the Part 3 works, not as superficial add-on of 'background' or 'biography'. In the Written Task, whether of the media type (HL Task 1 and SL Task) or the critical response type (HL Task 2), context is a significant feature of preparing for and producing tasks. Again here, not enough candidates have yet grasped the importance context has. The message is clear: teachers need to help students to understand better the connection between text and context and guide them to see the ways in which context shapes meaning. This topic will be dealt with throughout this report.

The second major observation made by the principal examiners in this report is that, as a whole, candidates need to develop their skills at analyzing and commenting on stylistic features, whether it be for the Individual Oral Commentary, the Textual Analysis on Paper 1, the Essay on Paper 2, or the HL Written Task 2. It is important to note that the definition of stylistic features is broad in the Language and Literature programme. It includes not only language, structure, tone, technique and style, but also what might more commonly be described as literary features such as characterization, setting, theme and narrative point of view. Examples of the relevance of this in the different components will be given in this report.

Finally, a last introductory remark: what is new about this programme is also the introduction of the study of language and of mass communication side by side with the study of literary works. Could the observations above about overall candidate performance be the result of teachers tending to invest more in preparing candidates for the new language parts of the programme than for the more familiar literary parts, perhaps forgetting that the approach to the study of the latter is not what it was before?

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

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

Guidelines for the proper preparation, conduct, and dispatch of the Oral Commentary and accompanying documentation are to be found in the **Language A: Language and Literature Subject Guide**, the current **Handbook of Procedures**, and the **Language and Literature Teacher Support Materials for Internal Assessment**. The guidelines in these documents *must* form the basis for all internal assessment work. Everything else, including this report on the component, is commentary on and elaboration of the contents of these documents.

The range and suitability of the work submitted

Almost to a person, the moderators reported that the electronic format of the oral commentary has eased many of the problems associated with Internal Assessment in the past. For the most part the recordings were clearly audible, the forms 1/L&L IA were complete, and passages with guiding questions were attached. There were a few problems which had to be resolved by individual schools. Teachers should double check that the appropriate extract has been attached (placing the candidate name and number on the extract would be helpful to both the teacher and the examiner) and that all recordings and files can be opened after they have been attached. A small minority of schools continued to send their orals manually by CD; hopefully all schools will upload their materials into the IBIS system next year. Most moderators reported that their schools submitted materials promptly and correctly. A special thank you needs to be given to schools that uploaded their materials early, enabling moderators to complete their internal assessment marking prior to the release of papers 1 and 2.

Selection of works and extracts

All genres seem to be suitable as sources for passages to be used for the oral commentary. Poetry works especially well as it seems to invoke the analytical skills that are called for in the commentary exercise. However, any passage that is rich in content and literary devices is suitable for the task. The moderators, by and large, found that the passages selected were suitable for the task. Shakespeare plays were particularly popular, but so were works such as *The Great Gatsby*, *The Handmaid's Tale*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *The Crucible* and poets such as Heaney, Frost, Atwood, Duffy and Cummings. Passages from essays and autobiographies were also in evidence. It is important to point out that the authors of the works chosen for Part 4 **must** be taken from the Prescribed List of Authors. A few moderators indicated schools that were doing inappropriate works. (Salinger, for example, is not on the PLA.)

Moderators frequently commented that the lines in the passages had not been numbered (as they should be, beginning with 1) and that this hindered both the candidate and the moderator in finding and noting examples. Some moderators were concerned that the passages in a given school were uneven, with some candidates having much more to handle than others, or something much harder to handle, or something too short or too shallow to allow for in-depth analysis. Teachers should, to the best of their ability, select passages of equal challenge and equal teaching for all their candidates, and the passages should be no more than 40 lines. Moderators note that while a very short poem might give ample room for analysis to a strong candidate, a weaker candidate is likely to be disadvantaged. Setting passages that give fair opportunity for all candidates is essential. One moderator was concerned that candidates had been given passages that contained material that seemed embarrassing for the candidates to discuss. Such issues should also be kept in mind when selecting passages.

Moderators were concerned that in some schools an insufficient number of works were in evidence in the overall sampling. Though the computer selects the samples, it is unlikely that only one work will be in evidence; teachers are to be reminded that all Part 4 works must be taught prior to beginning the orals and those passages must be selected from all the works.

Guiding and subsequent questions

While there is a range of possible approaches to guiding questions, teachers should be reminded that the questions should not direct the candidate to a particular reading of the passage ("Discuss how the author achieves an ironic tone in this passage") nor should they be so broad as to be useless ("Discuss the use of literary features in this passage"). The Subject Guide indicates that one question should direct the candidate to *what* is being discussed in the passage and one question should prompt the candidate to examine *how* the meaning is being shaped by the writer. The guiding questions should not be numbered, and while it is hoped that the candidates will use these questions as prompts to help them into a discussion of the passage, the questions do not have to be addressed. Guiding questions are a starting point and should not constitute the entirety of the candidate's response. And finally, guiding questions should always directly address the passage to be analyzed and should not direct the candidate into examining broader elements or concerns. A commentary, for the purposes of the oral component, is an analysis of the words on the page and is not a time for discussing the work as a whole or for considering background information.

Subsequent questions should also take candidates back to the passage to address any concerns the candidate's response might have raised, to discuss portions of the passage that were not addressed or to examine the effects of literary devices that were not covered or not covered well. The hope for the subsequent questions is that the teacher will be able to draw out the candidates and help them earn more credit for their understanding of the work or their analysis of the effects of literary features. All candidates are expected to address subsequent questions, and it is hoped that roughly the last five minutes of the fifteen minute oral will be dedicated to this activity. Moderators are understanding of a minute or two deviance due to the nature of any one particular oral, but as best as possible the time limits should be maintained. Candidates failing to talk for the full ten minutes should be offered subsequent questions for the remaining time. (Teachers may wish to have a list of questions at the ready that could be used in the eventuality that a candidate cannot sustain his or her response.) All orals must conclude at the fifteen minute mark; a candidate may complete a sentence, but

then the teacher must draw the exam to a close. Absolutely no credit must be given for any information offered after the fifteen minute mark. The use of audible timers is perfectly acceptable for helping candidate and teacher hold to the time restrictions. Subsequent questions should be as clear and concise as possible and not long involved questions that are difficult for the candidate to follow. Subsequent questions should not be used as a tool to "teach" points about the passage or to insist on a particular interpretation of the passage. Should the candidate have ignored the guiding questions, it would be perfectly acceptable to raise them again in the subsequent questioning.

The Individual Oral Commentary is meant to be a spontaneous activity. Though the candidates have studied the works from Part 4 in depth, the candidates should not be aware of which portions of the works might be selected for the commentaries, nor should they be given the passages in advance. Both the passage and the guiding questions should be unknown to the candidate prior to beginning the twenty minute preparation period, and this preparation should be under supervision. During the preparation the candidates should have only the passage, the guiding questions, and writing materials. Thus, the students should not have time to write out a prepared response and moderators should not sense that a candidate's oral is being read. Notes have been taken on schools whose candidature seem to be reading prepared responses and checks will be made next year to see if a future moderator has the same impression. It is important that teachers act with utmost integrity in the handling of the IOCs.

Only one moderation factor is offered per school; thus it is absolutely crucial that if there is more than one teacher involved in the giving of the IOCs that those teachers have taken the time to standardize their marks. Marking blindly the orals in the Teacher Support Material offers a perfect opportunity for these teachers to standardize their marks against the official IB standard.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A: Knowledge and understanding of the text or extract

Most moderators noted that textual knowledge was generally sound, and that this criterion is where candidates were able to show a close study of their works. Some candidates fell into the mode of explication, paraphrase or summary, which prevented them from rising into the higher descriptors where "knowledge" must be supported by a depth of analysis that reveals an understanding of elements such as subtext or implication. Some students were distracted by background information, discussion of the work as a whole, and other elements that took time away from their analysis of the forty lines. While situating the passage is important to show a clear understanding of the relevance of the passage itself, lengthy discussions of the work as a whole tended to take time away from a close look at the lines themselves. Most candidates were able to support their ideas with suitable examples from the passage.

Criterion B: Understanding of the use and effects of literary features

Virtually every moderator pointed to this criterion as the one that needs the most work in future sessions. Many moderators commented that the analysis of literary features was

superficial at best, and that frequently candidates merely named or noted the presence of literary features but failed to offer an analysis of how they were used by the writer to shape meaning. Some moderators felt that the guiding questions could have been better used to encourage students to examine literary features with greater depth. Candidates were generally aware of character development, though some seemed to feel that characters actually "exist" rather than being purposefully shaped by the writer. Plot and tension were sometimes explored effectively, as were elements such as irony and juxtaposition. Imagery was seldom successfully discussed; candidates tended to assert that images were present and, perhaps, that they were visual or audible, but seldom did they take the time to look at specific examples and explore what effects they created within a particular context. The spotting of lexical fields also tended to be generic rather than a specific analysis of what such word choices evoked. Candidates were lax about examining point of view and narrative voice, again, "naming" rather than examining what effects were evident in the passage. Passages from drama were rarely examined as being theatrical, with aspects such as stage directions being discussed as part of a written text with no sense of how such "directions" are actually put to use. Few candidates were able to discuss the writing style of their prose writers or the structure of the passage effectively. Many candidates lacked the specific terminology that would have assisted their discussions. The term "theme" was particularly misused, with most candidates citing "topics" or "motifs" rather than true thematic elements within the texts. Even teachers referred to terms such as tragedy, or topics such as appearance versus reality or the American Dream, as themes, not demanding clarification as to what a writer was trying to convey about such topics.

Criterion C: Organization

Although the moderators felt that the orals were largely coherent and offered introductions and conclusions, most felt that there could have been a better handling of the organization of material. A clear introduction that identifies the passage, situates it correctly in the larger work, establishes the overall significance of that passage and then briefly indicates how the oral will go about supporting that claim is crucial to a good response. Most candidates seem to prefer a linear approach, which is fine as long as the response does not drift into paraphrase, but stays clearly focused on the significance of the passage. Most passages can be divided into logical segments that can be explored in depth and related to the overall aim of the passage. Just as stanzas of a poem each add a part to the overall meaning of the poem, so too do paragraphs or patterns of dialogue to a particular passage. Perhaps having candidates consider their commentaries in the light of a written response would allow them more readily to see the need for a clear statement of thesis, a series of supporting arguments based on ideas, tonal shifts, structure, or whatever, and the need for clear transitions which keep a close focus on the original intent. And finally, the candidate needs to offer a clear and concise conclusion which effectively ties together the key points of the analysis, underscoring how the writer of the passage effectively shaped meaning. Responses that are very short, not only may be lacking in sufficient analysis and discussion of the passage, but may also show poor planning in terms of an effective organizational plan. A candidate who simply answers the two guiding questions is unlikely to have given a full analysis of the passage and the overall structure may lack coherence.

Criterion D: Language

Almost all candidates understood the formality of the oral commentary and offered an appropriate register for the task. A few nervous repetitions (um, like, so) were in evidence but usually did not seriously impact the response. Expression was largely clear and appropriate, though, at times, errors were evident. The moderators felt that, by and large, the candidates were correctly placed in this course, and that teachers were fairly solid in their marking of this criterion. Some candidates were entirely confident in this area and were a true pleasure to hear.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

- Before embarking on the orals, teachers need to make sure that they are familiar with all the instructions as laid out in the Subject Guide, the Handbook of Procedures, and the Teacher Support Material.
- Teachers are recommended to work on the analysis of literary features and to help candidates fully explore the specific effects of such features, e.g. why did the writer choose that particular metaphor? Why did such a comparison have an impact on the reader? Why were those particular words chosen? What are their denotations? Connotations? Sound effects? Rhythmical patterns? etc.
- Teachers are recommended to help future candidates with the organization of their commentaries, offering them practice in the art of oral commentary, backed, perhaps, by written commentary.
- Teachers need to be careful in their choice of passages and in the writing of the guiding questions.
- Teachers need to see that the focus of the commentary must be on the passage itself and not direct candidates away from the passage either in the guiding or subsequent questions (Many candidates in the current session could have earned further points if their teachers had directed them to the words in front of them and asked for further understanding or analysis.)
- Teachers must assure that candidates do not have prior knowledge of the passages or the guiding questions, nor should the commentary be done more than once.
- Teachers need to present all materials for the IOC in a readable and understandable format: care should be taken to assure all passages are accurately copied and that the lines are numbered; documents should be properly uploaded onto IBIS and not upside-down or sideways; the oral should be audible and free of miscellaneous noises; written comments about the candidate's marks should address the four criteria.
- As best as possible the teacher should attempt to use the full fifteen minutes to draw out information from the candidate.

- Teachers should guide their students in the study of the Part 4 works but encourage independent thinking and analysis.

The moderators were genuinely impressed with the overall quality of the internal assessment work in this, the first session of the Language and Literature course. It was evident that most teachers tried very hard to follow directions and to teach their candidates in a manner that led them through the study of literature thoroughly and effectively and that the candidates came away with a meaningful appreciation of literature.

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

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

Written Task 1 (Common to both Standard and Higher Level)

The range and suitability of the work submitted

Overall there was a good range of interesting and suitable tasks. Examiners found it very gratifying to come across outstanding examples of creative tasks, for example in the form of brilliant pastiches or of highly imaginative extra scenes or chapters to literary works. They were equally delighted by very plausible and authentic journalistic or media tasks.

The common ingredient that often made these productions so successful was 'emulation'; of a writer's sensibility and style, whether literary, journalistic or promotional. 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.

That the task should be – must be – clearly linked to the literary texts or language topics or aspects studied is a requirement that, unfortunately, far too many candidates ignored.

It is particularly important from the examiner's point of view that the programme summary be

accurate and includes references to texts studied, especially in relation to Parts 1 and 2. Tasks must be based on material studied in the Language and Literature class. Examiners should not have to guess what a candidate has studied. If the topic or the work on which a task is based does not appear in the programme summary, the mark for criterion B is going to be negatively affected.

Further unsuitable practices were observed:

- Candidates at some centres submitted very similar tasks, suggesting that tasks had been assigned to the class. This is not appropriate (see Subject Guide 27-28).
- (*Higher Level only*) A fair number of HL tasks were submitted where both task 1 and task 2 were based on the works in literature parts 3 and 4. One task must be based on the literature parts of the programme, the other on the language parts.

Clarification: Short literary texts may be used to complement the study of a topic in parts 1 and 2. Thus a written task exploring an aspect studied in those parts may also include some reference to these short literary texts, but they should not form the basis of the candidate's investigation.

- It is unsuitable to base a written task on stylistic imitation alone. An editorial, a speech or an advertisement, for example, is not a topic, it is a text type. An editorial – or any other type of text chosen by the candidate – needs to deal with a language and culture topic not just be used as a vehicle to show the candidate's ability to use that particular form. A candidate may produce a highly accomplished advertisement, the content of which may be consistently appropriate to the task chosen and demonstrate excellent understanding of the conventions, but absolutely cannot be awarded high marks for understanding of an appropriate topic or text if it is an advert, say, for a shampoo.
- Some media tasks, advertisements, DVD covers or graphic novels, for example, were very short. While there is of course no penalty for this, they are not always easy for the examiner to assess. Some candidates are compensating for short tasks by including an additional explanation or analysis as part of the task. This is not appropriate; the task itself needs to stand alone, the rationale offering a brief explanation of its objectives.
- It can be observed that the more inauthentic a task is, the more unsuitable it is. A speech by Osama Bin Laden in English to members of Al-Qaeda on prime-time television should have struck even the candidate as being highly implausible and thus an inappropriate choice. One does not want to discourage students from casting the net wide in the search for interesting and relevant topics to write about but there were a fair number of examples of tasks based on media sources that cannot have been part of the candidate's programme, for they were not in English. Some candidates wrote articles or letters aimed at non-English speaking audiences, yet in English.

Tasks made up of more than one text:

Please note that candidates must present no more than one text type. However, it is acceptable to produce more than one text, as long as the text type is the same (for example, an exchange of letters, and a series of diary entries or of advertisements.)

Characteristics and conventions of certain text types:

It was evident that many candidates were not very familiar with the form, style or conventions of the text types they had chosen. It is essential once choice of task and text type have been made (in agreement with the teacher) for the candidate to find examples to emulate.

Candidates frequently lost marks as a result not only of choosing an unsuitable text type to fulfil their objectives (for example a private diary entry is hardly the best way of drawing the attention of the world to burning issues) but also because they assumed they were familiar with the conventions of a type when, actually, they were not.

Here are some specific comments about certain text types:

- ‘newspaper article’ or ‘magazine article’: this is not precise enough. What kind of article: news, opinion, feature, editorial? Each of these has its particular characteristics and purposes.

Note that many candidates submitted ‘articles’ that were to all intents and purposes formal essays that, typically, demonstrated little more than superficial familiarity with media styles. It cannot be stressed enough that the formal essay – naked or disguised – is not an acceptable text type for the Written Task 1.

- ‘editorial’, ‘letter to the editor’: the conventions of these two are quite distinct as should be evident to the candidate who has read and studied examples of both forms.
- ‘blog’, the blog was quite a common choice of text type. When done well it proved an effective alternative to writing a more conventional media task. There were those candidates who interactively tried to engage a target audience, laying out the blog as it would appear on a screen. The more a task takes on the layout features of the type of text emulated, the more the candidate shows an awareness of the full range of the text type’s conventions.

If the conventions of the text type cannot be reproduced for technical reasons, significant aspects of those conventions should be referred to in the rationale.

At the other end of the scale, there were blogs that distinguished themselves little, or not at all, from similar forms, such as opinion or feature articles and where format and layout had been given little thought.

- ‘speech’: there was often a problem of authenticity here. To write an effective one as a task, it is very important to establish clearly who the speaker is, what his or her qualifications for speaking on a subject are, which audience is being targeted and in what particular context. Once again, the topic of the speech must be linked to a topic

or aspect studied.

- diaries, letters, memoirs, etc. were usually more suitable and effective when done in relation to literary works – as long as they did not confine themselves merely to summarizing plot.

A word about the diary: as mentioned above, it is not a very suitable format for dealing with issues that would normally be aired in the media. Diaries are sometimes written with publication in mind but, for the most part, and in the first instance at least, they are not written for the eyes of others. Thus they are most appropriate to reveal events that others do not know about or unspoken thoughts and feelings of a more or less intimate nature. A diary entry has a date, usually refers principally to what has happened that particular day and does not bother to tell the diarist things s/he already knows about her/himself or others. Furthermore, a diary is not a letter. Candidates should be aware that while some adolescents adopt the 'Dear diary' form of address, the vast majority of adults do not. The candidate who chooses to write the diary entry of an adult should be encouraged to read some diaries or at least an anthology of diary entries rather than make assumptions about this type of text.

- pastiche: a popular choice and done brilliantly in certain cases. Some outstandingly imaginative examples that come to mind are pastiches of Carol Ann Duffy's 'world's wife' poems, an introductory pamphlet for new recruits in the employ of a European company operating in the Congo (*Heart of Darkness*) and the voice of The Fish from Elizabeth Bishop's poem. The possibilities are legion.

However, candidates should be discouraged from taking on stylistic or poetic forms and language that are hard to master. Shakespeare was a predictable stumbling block for many.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A – Rationale

It is worth drawing attention to what is required of a rationale (Subject Guide 41). It should explain:

- which part of the course (text or topic) the task is linked to.

Surprisingly, this requirement was entirely or partly ignored by many candidates, leaving the examiner to scrutinize the programme summary in search of illumination.

- how the task intends to explore particular aspects of what has been studied.

These are the candidate's objectives – explained more or less coherently by most.

The nature of the task chosen

Here it is a question of showing the suitability of the choice of text type as a means of meeting the candidate's objectives. The formal conventions of the text type should be referred to and how they relate to the aims of the task. On the whole, this requirement was not thoroughly done.

Information about audience, purpose and context

Particularly important for media tasks, these aspects were frequently ignored by candidates despite being the ABC of effective communication.

Criterion B – Task and Content

Obviously the task carried out should now correspond to what has been explained in the rationale. If there is no deviation from this plan, there can be few reasons to lose marks on this, the weightiest of the criteria in terms of points awarded. Both content and ability to replicate the text type are being assessed here. The candidate needs to do both well in order to score high marks.

Criterion C – Organization

Most of the written tasks submitted were at least ‘organized’, often ‘well organized’, so candidates often scored good marks on this criterion.

2 marks are taken off the score for this criterion if the task exceeds the 1000 word limit, even by one word.

Criterion D – Language and Style

Language was generally clear and effective, often with a good or very good degree of accuracy. Register and style were often generally appropriate or appropriate. ‘Confident and effective’ often went hand-in-hand with manifest familiarity with the characteristics and conventions of the text type chosen.

Written Task 2 (Higher Level only)

The range and suitability of the work submitted

The range went from an excellent understanding of the chosen question to making up a personal question to respond to. Between those extremes were many responses that addressed questions from the prescribed list though misguidedly, partially, or uncritically – sometimes all three.

The 1,000 word limit calls for a concise introduction, a tight focus and well-selected examples or quotations.

While the majority of the candidates chose to base task 2 on the literary works studied, there was also a lot of solid evidence of critical approaches to language and style, particularly in the media. The work produced demonstrated that it is possible to write very effective critical responses to, for example, advertising images and copy, the visual, layout and language features of magazine covers, or about famous speeches.

The most popular set question was ‘How and why is a social group’ represented in a particular way?’ In many cases the ‘how’ was given more attention than the ‘why’. It was

essential here for candidates to define how they understood 'a social group' (not, as was often the case, two or three groups) and to establish, if they were dealing with one or more characters from a literary work, in what way those characters constituted a social group or were representative of one. Frequently 'women' was the social group chosen. Obviously the better answers would use contextual factors to identify more specifically the group of women under discussion.

The other question in the 'power and privilege' group, 'Which social groups are marginalized, excluded or silenced within the text?' needed a similar level of care as regards definition, but it was better for the candidate to choose just one social group and also deal with the reason(s) for marginalization etc., that, ideally, the question should perhaps have asked for in the first place.

The least popular question was 'How has the text borrowed from other texts, and with what effects?' Interestingly however, it was a question that elicited some of the more effectively focused responses, for example showing how advertisements borrow from works in other genres or how literary works borrow from myth.

While the examples of topics given in the Subject Guide (p.46) refer to literary works and speeches, there were a number of remarkable submissions by candidates based on advertising and other media sources.

The 'Reader, culture and text' questions were often not very well done. 'How could the text be read and interpreted differently by two different readers?' worked very well for the candidate who, for example, showed how a Chinese mother and a Western mother in the USA would respond to an article in the press by a Chinese woman about how to bring up and educate children. However, comparisons of two different interpretations of a text, irrespective of the context of the two readings failed to achieve what the question was aiming at.

The question 'If the text had been written in a different time and place or language or for a different audience, how and why might it differ?' did not pose a problem for candidates if they treated it as the hypothetical proposition that it is. To write about modern adaptations of older plays, for example, as a fair number of candidates did, is to miss the point. This question proved the trickiest of the six to interpret effectively suggesting that future candidates would do well to seek advice from their teachers.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A – Outline

Outlines came in all shapes and sizes, from the telegraphic to the two-page long detailed essay plan. What was required (Subject Guide 43) was that the candidate indicate, in addition to the question chosen and the title of the text(s) for analysis, the part of the course to which the task refers and three or four key points to explain the focus briefly. This latter requirement was often presented – appropriately – in bullet points. However, even then, explanation of focus was all too frequently neglected. For example, if a 'social group' is to be the focus or the task, then that group needs to be clearly identified. If different readers, times or places etc. are to be discussed they need to be explicitly and succinctly referred to in the outline. Long

essay outlines are to be strongly discouraged.

Thus many outlines lost a point for not clearly highlighting the particular focus of the task.

Criterion B – Response to the question

Focus again is a key feature. The candidate has not got a lot of words to play with so the response should not try and take on too much and get straight to the point. References to the texts analysed need to be carefully chosen, succinct, accurate and, if necessary, footnoted (footnotes are not included in the word count.)

Criterion C

Responses were often ‘organized’, or ‘well-organized’, but that was not enough; development of the argument is an equally important aspect of the assessment.

Essays that exceeded the word limit, even by one mark, incurred a 2-point penalty.

Criterion D

Language was very often found to be ‘generally clear and accurate’ or better but accuracy is not everything. Essays also need to be written in an appropriate style and register. Informality was frequently observed but is not appropriate to this task.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates (SL and HL)

- It is very important for teachers to draw their candidates’ attention to the relevant Written Task pages of the Subject Guide (30-32 for SL, 40-46 for HL), and to make sure they understand the expectations of the rationale and the outline. Candidates frequently lost 1, or 2 marks at HL, as a result of not following the instructions properly.
Some schools had 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.
- When a candidate has chosen (in agreement with the teacher) a text type to suit a task 1 based on material studied for the course, the next step should be to familiarize her/him with the characteristics and conventions of the type. The evidence from this session shows that it is risky for candidates to assume that they understand the conventions of texts that they are acquainted with merely as readers of them.
- For task 2, candidates need to be trained how to get to the point quickly, provide a focused argument supported by well-chosen detail from the texts analysed.
- Word counts need to be accurate and adhered to. Students should be made aware of the penalties which apply as soon as the limits are exceeded. When a candidate states the word count as say, 1002, it suggests that s/he is not aware of the penalty. Candidates should also be made aware that while very short task 1s are not

penalized on length, they can be difficult for the examiner to assess.

- Students should be encouraged to proofread their work to avoid being penalized on criterion D for lack of accuracy.
- Sources. It is very helpful – sometimes even essential – to provide the examiner with stimulus material responded to in the task (e.g., an article in the press being reacted to, a poem used as inspiration for a pastiche, an advertisement being analyzed for task 2).

The candidate should at least provide a well-referenced link to a site where the stimulus in question can be consulted online. The examiner is unlikely to appreciate having to check out poorly acknowledged sources, or to hunt for them when no sources are given at all.

- Acknowledgment of sources: it is good academic practice to acknowledge sources, which include images or other graphics that candidates make use of in their work. It is a convention that, on the whole, was slackly followed by candidates from many centres.
- Some candidates need to take more care with the presentation of their task(s) as a whole. At HL one would expect task 1 to precede task 2. One would expect a rationale or an outline to precede the task not follow it.

In addition to consulting the relevant sections of the Subject Guide, teachers are invited to refer to the **Teacher Support Materials for the Written Task** as well as the **Handbook of Procedures**.

Further comments

Selection of texts particularly for the language parts of the programme needs to be made carefully and sensitively by teachers. There were several examples of offensive material, both written and pictorial being used as the basis of responses in both task 1 and 2.

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 - 13	14 - 16	17 - 20

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

In general, candidates did not seem to have too much difficulty with this component and were able to address the task of textual analysis appropriately and submit thoughtful responses. Most responses were balanced, with both texts addressed in a fairly equal way. 80% of teachers found the level of difficulty appropriate.

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

Marks were sometimes lost because the candidate did not support the argument or because each individual text was addressed but without adequate discussion of similarities and differences. There was noticeable weakness in the treatment of stylistic features; some candidates lost marks on criterion B (understanding of the use and effects of stylistic features) for inadequate attention to this aspect of the task. Another common flaw was to mention stylistic features, but with little attention to their effects on the reader.

However, organization of the answers was generally quite good; there were few that could be characterized as very poorly organized. Examiners saw a range of language ability. A minority of candidates clearly had difficulty expressing themselves in English, even if they had something to say. In extreme cases, poor language obscured meaning. At the other end of the scale were papers characterized by sophisticated and varied sentence structure and an excellent range of vocabulary. Occasionally, candidates lost themselves in language that was impressive but essentially did not convey much content.

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

Paper 1 offered two choices to candidates: first an online review of the Imperial War Museum and an article from the London periodical, *Time Out*, laying out a plan for visiting the Imperial War Museum during lunch hour; second, an excerpt from the novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, paired with a speech by the former British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook. The majority of candidates – perhaps between two-third and three-quarter – chose the first pair.

Section A

The first pair offered an immediate accessibility: provenances that seemed recognizable and familiar. A substantial number of candidates, however, described Text 2 as an advertisement; some seemed unaware of the type of article exemplified. Candidates' understanding of the provenance and genre of Text 1 was more secure. Most were cognizant of the conventions of a website, although a few laboured under the misunderstanding that the author of the Text 1 review was also responsible for the formatting of the Trip Advisor website. In general, however, candidates were able to see how the text and the format worked together, with the website's titles, rating systems and other conventions providing a context for the review.

One area of weakness was in understanding and commenting on the humour in Text 1. The tone of the text was difficult for a large number of candidates. Another weakness, somewhat surprising to examiners, was the lack of commentary on the illustrations. A third was an inability to find stylistic features in Text 1.

Section B

The second pair was less popular but gave rise to some excellent responses. There was some confusion about audience, with candidates referring only to the external reader and forgetting that there are quite specific audiences in each text: the 'American' in Text 3 and the Social Market Foundation in Text 4. Most candidates took note of the focus on food and were able to understand it as a metaphor. The best responses grappled with its different meanings in the two texts. To one extent or another, candidates commented on the different manifestations of patriotism and pride in the texts and noted the contrast between exclusivity and inclusivity. Candidates were able to discuss the fact that Text 3, as well as Text 4, is in a sense a speech. Fewer commented extensively on the rhetorical strategies used by the two speakers. Although Cook's purpose was relatively clear to most candidates, that of the speaker in Text 3 was less evident – as might be expected, given that this is a short excerpt from a novel. Some candidates ran into trouble by going beyond this very brief passage to make unfounded assumptions about the larger text. A few candidates had interesting comparisons between the views of the United States presented in the two texts. A discussion of the stylistic features of Text 4 was sometimes lacking and some candidates limited their discussion of stylistic features in Text 3 to the simile of the lion.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Candidates should learn to be aware of provenance and to understand how the genre of a text informs and affects its content. In this new course, paper-setting teams are endeavouring to provide an authentic presentation, insofar as possible in an examination situation. Candidates should, then, be aware of format and comment on formal aspects of the texts. As some texts may consist of both written and graphic components, candidates should certainly include in their analysis comment on any graphics accompanying the written text. While examiners were somewhat lenient in this respect on this first examination, it will generally be expected that good responses should take both into account.

The notion of context is a new one in this course and this component of the examination; it is taken into account in the marking criteria. Although some wrong-headed remarks were expressed and simplistic assumptions made about context, many candidates seemed to know that this was expected and were able to find something pertinent to say. The historical and political contexts of the texts in Section B are quite accessible and students who performed well with this pair certainly made appropriate reference to them. In good responses to Section A, candidates were able to discuss the passages in terms of various contexts: for instance, attitudes toward war, interest in military history, the tourist industry, family dynamics, contemporary attitudes to work, the pace of the contemporary world, the influence of popular culture.

Standard level paper one

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 2	3 - 4	5 - 7	8 - 10	11 - 13	14 - 16	17 - 20

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

The two texts offered a wealth of features for commentary and both texts were accessible to candidates. Overall candidates seemed well prepared for the change in curriculum and generally dealt well with the demands of the paper. Most candidates were able to complete their commentary in the given time although it appeared as if many students did not take the time to unpack their selected text carefully before they started writing the commentary and this caused problems in the development of their argument.

While 76% of teachers found the level of difficulty appropriate, some teachers indicated in their feedback that the length of text 1 was too long and there was too much of a British aspect in both texts. Examiners did not report this as a difficulty and felt that the subject fields were topical and within the candidates' experience. Both texts had depth of material for candidates of all levels and both texts were generally dealt with effectively although the subtleties of text 2 were not always understood.

Criterion A – Understanding of the text

While most candidates responded in some way to the context of the texts, not all students seemed completely prepared to do so. Some commented on somewhat irrelevant aspects of context and were superficial in looking at context in relation to how context works and creates meaning. There does need to be a balance between context and literary elements. In weaker scripts there was a lot of generalisation and candidates need to take care to be detailed and specific in their analysis. Weaker scripts tended to contain summary and generalisations but many had nuggets of good analysis but, unfortunately, were not sustained.

Criterion B – Understanding of the use and effects of stylistic features

Some candidates mentioned very few literary elements and did not seem to have a full grasp on how to discuss the use of visuals and layout design. Many candidates noted literary elements but were very general in explaining how these techniques worked in order to convey meaning. There was a tendency for candidates to write that visuals and layout were to “gain the reader’s attention” and seldom move beyond this in their analysis.

Criterion C – Organization and development

Candidates did not always structure their commentaries well. Many commentaries were

structured in a list-like manner and examiners noted a tendency to paraphrase or summarize rather than analysis. Quotations were often used but not always integrated or explained and therefore failed to support a point. It is important to look at the rubric for this criterion as it refers to the development of an argument throughout the commentary which was missing from many commentaries. Candidates should attempt to have a thread throughout their commentary in order to integrate their points and provide a developed argument.

Criterion D – Language

Generally sound although common errors were with sentence structure, incorrect use of punctuation, spelling errors and confused syntax. There were some candidates who clearly did not have a sufficient grasp of the language to be participating in Group 1 English. Some candidates still use informal expressions and need to be instructed on the appropriate register for this task.

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

Criterion A

Most candidates engaged well with the advertisement and the autobiography although there were a few misinterpretations. Knowledge and understanding ranged from "some" to "very good" with the best candidates taking care to support their statements with textual evidence. Generally candidates did address layout but often only at an "adequate" level and there was a tendency to discuss the content of each section and not always offer an analysis. Some candidates did write insightful comments on the contexts of the texts but, on the whole, this is an area that does need to be addressed. Many failed to really focus on time and place and offered very generic responses. Unfortunately, a lot of paraphrase and descriptive summary was evident.

Criterion B

Candidates were aware of a variety of stylistic features and could comment on them appropriately although more depth was needed for the higher mark bands. The better responses discussed in detail the effects of the features; the nuances of specific word choices and their effects were often analysed in depth at the upper end of the mark range. Only some candidates could discuss layout and visuals at a higher level. Most candidates could identify techniques but many did not offer explanations of the effects. Often structure consisted of a list of techniques being identified and little else. For text 1 there was a tendency to just explain the content and not deal with literary techniques. For text 2 candidates were generally able to write about the significance of the handwritten note and most understood the conscious use of questions, time, lists and sentence structure for effect.

Criterion C

The majority of candidates adequately organized their commentary with regards to structure and organization. Some used the task instruction to "comment on the significance of context, audience, purpose and formal and stylistic features" as a way of structuring their writing. Most

candidates however, took a linear approach but did well here if they included an overview and made links so that the response was coherent and the argument was well developed; such an argument could only arise from good knowledge and understanding of the passage. For text 1 some candidates did organize their commentary around the three different parts of the text and as a result several candidates merely explained the content of each part. At the upper end candidates did structure an argument and therefore presented a cohesive response, scoring in the good and very good range.

Criterion D

Expression was generally clear and most candidates took care to assume an appropriate register for a commentary. There were some candidates with excellent language skills and there were certainly well written scripts to read.

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

Text 1: “Crisis at Christmas”

“Crisis at Christmas” was selected by the majority of candidates with most candidates being able to identify and comment on the language and the visuals, and some did so with significant depth. The biggest weakness in responses was the tendency to comment on the text sequentially, which often led to a summary of content rather than an analysis. There was some misinterpretation of aspects of the text and far too many generalizations offered.

Some candidates wrote about the appeal as if it was a literary text and used such terminology as “foreshadowing” and “the author” which does not apply to this media text. At the same time many referred to the advertisement as an article; also not accurate. Some recognized the *Guardian* newspaper and spent time discussing the target audience as *Guardian* readers. This was not accurate as it was stated that this advertisement was published in the British Press - a much wider target audience than just *Guardian* readers.

Candidates had clearly studied advertising and this led to some of them writing about what was not included in this advertisement and this had no relevance - the focus must remain on the text being analyzed.

The guiding questions were largely addressed in candidate responses although some used the guiding questions to structure their commentaries and purely addressed these points, which was limiting. In the better answers, these items were included as well as other material and gave the commentary a well-developed argument.

Text 2: Keith Richards, “Life” extract

Fewer students selected this text but many wrote strong responses, although there were some very weak responses as well. This seemed to be a more difficult text for students to grasp fully, but some did grasp it in great depth. Most candidates commented on the prison metaphor, the handwritten note, and the register. Fewer candidates commented on other aspects of figurative language and the historical time period.

Not all candidates grasped the fact that Richards is not inherently criticizing classical music but rather the elitism and inaccessibility of written sheet music. There were a variety of interpretations of the “tablets of stone”: Biblical allegory, allusions to the beginning of something like caveman days, and an allusion to the Rolling Stones. For some students the subtleties in this text proved too difficult to comprehend. Several missed the didactic nature of the text, not always interpreting his point about the reading of music and failing to fully understand what Richards wanted to teach the reader. Some candidates did not understand the complement of the metaphor in the written text and the visual image of the handwritten note.

Few candidates appeared to understand the concept of an autobiography and even fewer suggested that a ghost-writer might have been involved in the writing of it. Candidates had some difficulty dealing with the mood and tone of this extract and may have taken it too seriously and missed key elements. Candidates need to know they can take a critical stance to discuss the extracts.

Richards’ values and assumptions were not fully explored and many students did not address the guiding questions for this text. Some students did not address the handwritten note let alone how it complemented the rest of the extract. The guiding questions are there as keys and, for this text at least, they seemed to be ignored by many students.

The source of this text also confused some candidates as many noted it was an extract from a magazine article published in the magazine *Life*.

There was a tendency for students to finish their analysis without addressing the final paragraph of the text.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

- Keep close focus on the text by being specific and detailed; all comments should be applicable to the text being discussed and should not be general in nature.
- Focus on teaching students to understand the context of a text so that they can discuss how context contributes to the meaning of the text. Students need to look at hints and clues in a text and think about what is implied. Be sure to discuss social context and context of reception and production.
- Ensure that students analyze the entire text including visuals and language; there must be a balance.
- Use the rubric so students know exactly what they are expected to do to score well in a Paper 1.
- Encourage students to annotate the text and plan their commentary structure.
- Work on analyzing rather than paraphrasing or summarizing.

- Prepare students to analyze a wide variety of text types and provide them with the terminology to discuss a variety of text types.
- Teach students to use the guiding questions appropriately. Students need to assert understanding of questions and use them as “guiding” questions.
- Assist students in development of a strategy and framework for approach to writing a commentary.
- Attention to technical accuracy with particular attention to correct sentence structure, syntax, punctuation and register.
- Teach candidates to proofread work for errors before submission - this is linked with efficient use of time in the examination.
- Remind students to look closely at the source of each text.

Further comments

- Focus on teaching students the connection between context, content and literary techniques in order to understand how the text has been constructed in order to achieve its purpose.
- In this new Language and Literature course it is imperative to introduce a wide variety of text types to students and provide them with the vocabulary to discuss the techniques used to impart meaning.

Higher level paper two

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 4	5 - 8	9 - 10	11 - 13	14 - 16	17 - 19	20 - 25

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

The importance of the criteria and knowing your chosen works:

Criterion A: Knowledge and Understanding requires illustration for candidates to score high marks; Criterion B: Response to the question demands more than unsubstantiated generalizations; the effects of stylistic features (Criterion C) cannot be shown without specific examples. For all three of these criteria, candidates need to illustrate their ideas with specific references to their chosen texts. In order to respond to any question, candidates need to know the works well and recognize that this is a literature paper and respond accordingly. Some candidates write around the works, giving detailed information about the times and the

author, but are not connecting this information to the works themselves. Responses from these candidates are often filled with generalities and information that could be easily memorized without reading the texts.

Context

While 'context' is the core emphasis for the Language and Literature curriculum, not all candidates understand that context needs to be shown through analysis of the texts. It was not uncommon for biographical details about authors to replace this analysis. Context was handled by some in a very superficial way, with some candidates speculating about what "might" have influenced a particular work or how it "might" have been received rather than illustrating a careful study of the text, including the study of its contextual elements. This led to such simple assertions as "Orwell lived in the 1940s when everybody in the world was criticizing dictatorships, so *1984* ipso facto is a criticism of dictatorships." Other candidates, in attempting to address context, failed to show appropriate knowledge and understanding of the texts themselves. At times candidates engaged in irrelevant and wild speculation about what might happen if the text they were writing about were read by someone in Zambia or Canada or Germany. This generally came across as 'guesswork'. Whole sections of essays were given over to how this text might have been received in another context, with the circumstances of reception made up completely out of the candidate's fictional understanding of the age. This led to wild and unverifiable speculation about, for example, the society of the 1920s being like this or that. In discussing *The Great Gatsby*, for example, the 1920s were described as "everyone was rich and wanted to party after the war"; or, "women weren't valued and were just playthings" (particularly in *A Doll's House*). So complexities of plot, character, and theme were reduced to vague generalizations.

Stylistic Features

Another challenge for candidates was integrating both stylistic features and context into the response while still answering the question. This is an extremely challenging exam that requires candidates to synthesize numerous elements into a coherent response. Integration of criterion C was particularly problematic, and often mentioned briefly or ignored. Question 3 (about what features made texts "literary") provided some opportunity for candidates to deal with stylistic features, but in answering other prompts candidates at times seemed to forget that Criterion C was something they needed to address. In general, not all candidates seemed to understand the requirement to identify and analyse the effects of specific stylistic features. For some the knowledge of the different genres was superficial and as a result there were many missed opportunities to explore poetic, dramatic and narrative devices (there were many references to 'the reader' even when the text was a play). The use of technical terminology was also somewhat limited, tending to be confined to the more obvious techniques of metaphor and simile.

Structure

Generally students were able to shape their papers around an introduction, body and a conclusion. The shape of a response should be seen as intentional, focused and balanced between the various texts being used. Weaker candidates tended to retell the life and times of the author or focus on the literary movements as the basis for their argument. They were

also more likely to use only a few examples to answer the question instead of the whole text. Some candidates gave partial biographies of authors that really had nothing to do with the question they had chosen and then relied a good deal on narrative summary to fill in the rest of the paper. Better scores were given to those who chose contrasting texts, which led to a stronger discussion in the conclusion.

Written Expression

Even though this was a Higher Level paper, some students had a difficult time expressing themselves in clear and concise ways. Some handwriting made their papers very difficult for examiners to read and distinguish between lack of skill in spelling and handwriting issues.

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

Preparation and Content

Students seemed prepared for the questions even though this was the first examination for this course. Those that came prepared knew their texts well enough to use them effectively in their responses. In spite of the apprehension of some teachers, many students did not seem confused by the questions and responded well to them. 77% of teachers found the paper to be of an appropriate level of difficulty.

Since there is not just one right answer or approach to a question, candidates chose different interpretations and argued for them convincingly. Many candidates were well aware of the criteria on which they would be evaluated and were quite informed as to context, stylistic features, organizational methods, and proper register. In other words, they knew the demands of the task and responded accordingly. Many had a good grasp of the 'facts' of the texts and they could marshal their information to argue character, conflict, context and theme very well. Many in fact supported their responses with appropriate quotations and very specific detail.

Context

There were certainly many candidates who had obviously studied their texts in depth, including the contextual ramifications, and who were able to write directed and meaningful responses, showing a full awareness of the various elements that shape meaning in a literary work. Some of the candidates appeared generally to have been given useful guidance about the importance of references to context, and for the most part addressed this issue explicitly. Those who took into account the context in which a work is received as well as the way they were written and set tended to do better. They showed a mature understanding of the differences between the contexts of production and reception.

Organization

Many candidates were able to fashion an argument, and use a recognizable essay structure. The best candidates were able to integrate context in ways that truly helped bring new understanding to the authors/texts.

Voice

Many students seemed genuinely engaged with the material about which they were writing. Even in some of the more poorly written papers, you could hear the engaged voice of candidates who truly enjoyed their literary texts.

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

Question 1

Candidates were often at a loss to know 'what was originally intended' and this led to very general, speculative statements about what 'I thought the author intended, but here's a little secret that he/she didn't intend but I've found out.' This was problematic as candidates at times wrote only about what writers did intend. There was some good critical discussion of the use of satire and allegory but it was clearly often difficult for candidates to find unintended meanings. One who answered this question successfully was able to write about the ideas that the author's audience might have received versus the ideas garnered by today's audiences (texts that could easily teach modern readers lessons such as *Frankenstein* and *1984*). Another argued successfully that the premise was wrong and that everything in the text was intended. Another successfully argued this question from the point of view of the reader who could clearly receive something that they had not expected prior to reading it.

Question 2

The results were varied and depended largely on how clearly the candidate defined "belief" and/or "faith" and how well that focus was maintained. There was a tendency here for some candidates to discuss "religion" and show how it was treated in a particular work. This often became a discussion of the satire or criticism of a particular religion (*Candide*; *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*; *The Kite Runner*, etc.), rather than an exploration of how belief was presented. The issue of "different historical ... contexts" was usually handled in a speculative and not always helpful manner unless the work was one in which two different contexts were embedded within the work itself (*The Handmaid's Tale*). Some saw this question, however, as an invitation to the three-part essay and insisted on giving instances of historical, cultural, and social contexts, but not truly distinguishing between them. This question also led to some futile speculation as to how randomly chosen audiences might respond to the texts. Nevertheless, students who were well versed in the works' contexts answered this fairly well. Stronger candidates chose texts with contrasting examples of beliefs. Weaker candidates tended to choose texts with completely different sets of beliefs and so their paper could have been divided into two separate essays (e.g., *Antigone* and *The Stranger*).

Question 3

The responses were generally fine, but depended on how well the candidate defined the term "literary". The best responses saw that there was some "universal" or "timeless" quality in the work which was brought out effectively and meaningfully by a careful use of various literary features. The weaker responses had no set definition for "literary" and drifted into plot

narration or just cited a list of authorial techniques with the assumptive conclusion, 'see, this is literary'. There were missed opportunities for analysing stylistic techniques and for some there was a general lack of an effective lexicon for discussing literary texts.

Question 4

There were several excellent examples on this question. Stronger candidates chose texts in which the protagonist made moral choices which would offend even today such as Sethe in *Beloved*. This popular question produced some of the most intriguing responses. The best saw a synthesis of how both literary techniques/approaches could seduce/comfort the reader or challenge/alienate the reader in the conveyance of ideas as well as the ideas themselves. There were some very close looks at individual works and the manner in which writers approached readers with their ideas. One particularly good answer on *The Reader* identified the sudden shift in the novel from seduction to alienation. Various ideas as to what seduces and what challenges led to critical responses regarding works as varied as *Equus*, *Rhinoceros*, *The Stranger*, *The Visit*, *Frankenstein* and *Chronicle of the Death Foretold*.

Question 5

This was a popular but challenging question, as it posed so many variables: historical, cultural, social, the writing and the reception. The candidates were much better prepared to discuss the influence of context on the writing of the work than on its reception and it seems only a few candidates had studied the various receptions their texts had received on the world stage. (Some candidates only restated background information that had little or no relevance to the work itself or engaged in speculation such as if *Hamlet* had been written for a French audience.) Other candidates, however, were able to explore specific details from their texts and relate those details to the various contexts. Some candidates attempted to take on all the variables of the question, which led to some responses that were very general in nature. Better responses limited their explorations to either the context of writing or reception, and to only meaningful elements of historical/cultural/social ramifications rather than trying to do it all. Stronger candidates were able to use the author's involvement in a literary movement in order to analyze the plot, characters, setting, etc. (Camus' *The Stranger*). Stronger candidates also used contrasting texts such as *Heart of Darkness* and *Things Fall Apart* in order to demonstrate a similar setting, but at different time periods.

Question 6

Perhaps this was the safest and most popular question of all (no doubt because any choice of text would be suitable). Students had no trouble understanding the demands of the question and writing about it in a critical way. However, this question for some led to plot summary rather than analysis. This telling of the story, replaced the close look at the nature of the "struggle" that was being presented. Some stronger candidates moved into a clear definition of what was meant by a struggle and the significance of why such struggles are characteristic of so many works of literature. Even weaker candidates were, however, able to offer some meaningful observations of the struggles in the works they had studied and could discuss the nuances of failure and success. Better answers identified the need for conflict as the basis of any text to create action and to entice the audience. Weaker candidates tended to state the obvious, "Okonkwo was unsuccessful because he committed suicide" or "Kurtz was

unsuccessful because he died". Stronger candidates used the context as the cause for failure such as the class divisions in 19th century England in *Jude, the Obscure*. Many students read the question as the struggle between "men and women" and argued their point quite successfully (*The Handmaid's Tale, Jane Eyre* or *Wide Sargasso Sea*)

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

- Concentrate on context, as this is the focus of this section of the course. Teachers need to look at the various contexts of the works they are teaching in a formal manner. Candidates need to examine the specific moments in their texts that are influenced by particular contexts and then to go further into examining some examples of how the works have been received in other times and places. Students need to have a clear awareness of what context is, and how it is related to the texts in an informative manner, not just a coincidental manner. This will help them to appreciate the nuances and complexities of their works.
- Teachers need to help students avoid falling into generalization and speculation. Comments such as "I can't really understand a war novel because I've never been in a war" or "if this had been written at a different time the story would have been different" are not very insightful. Every general statement needs support/proof. There needs to be a much more rigorous attention to supporting general statements with specific textual details. Candidates should realize that they are trying to fashion a convincing argument and that such an argument needs proof, not just, "It's correct because I think it is."
- Teachers need to select works that are rich in context, are literary in nature and offer a challenge to the candidates to work at a higher level. Teachers need to take into consideration the demands of Paper 2 assessment when choosing the texts for the course. Combining sizably different genres can make this task even harder. Two works referred to in detail tend to be more successful than three works treated in a more superficial manner.
- Candidates will need to practise writing responses to general questions, remembering that content, context, and literary analysis all need to be addressed in each and every response, regardless of the question. There needs to be an appropriate focus through the course on criterion C. Ensure that, in the substantiation of the argument, attention is paid to how the writers achieve their effects.
- Teachers should prepare candidates to produce a clear introductory paragraph, use subsequent paragraphs effectively to construct their argument point by point leading to a logical conclusion. Less successful responses lacked that sense of planning and organization, often summarizing text 1 followed by text 2. The essay is an argument in response to a prompt, not a paraphrase or narration. As such, it needs to be convincing and persuasive. The most appropriate evidence/support needs to be selected from the texts and integrated into the argument. Remind candidates of the criteria so they can structure their responses to include all that is required.

- Candidates should be made aware of the variety of literary and linguistic features at their disposal in exploring their texts. They do need to be provided with suitable technical terminology to improve the succinctness and fluency of their arguments. Understanding of genre, conventions and the specific techniques employed by the authors of their texts should be given more prominence.

Standard level paper two

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 3	4 - 6	7 - 10	11 - 13	14 - 16	17 - 19	20 - 25

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

While in almost every case it was clear candidates were working hard to give of their best in this examination there were a number of areas where their performance suggested that real difficulties were being encountered. These difficulties can be divided into those found in the conceptual and intellectual aspects of the course and those in what might be described as the mechanics of the response. To deal first with the latter this can be further divided to look at organization and development, language and to some degree response to the question.

While candidates clearly had ideas they did not always engage directly with the question. It is important they are able to define its terms, and establish how they understand it before going on to state clearly the thesis they wish to defend. This should then drive their response and allow them to show understanding of the implications of the question. Opening paragraphs typically simply restated the question without any clear direction being indicated or a position taken. In these cases organization and development were lacking because of the failure to establish a clear thesis and, therefore, an argument which evidence drawn from the texts could be used to support. On occasion paragraphs were almost randomly inserted with the sense that the candidates had good knowledge and ideas which they wished to display but were unsure of their place in the structure of the essay. While some credit could be given in these cases in criteria A, C and E, few if any marks could be awarded in criteria B and D.

Language was very mixed and while clearly some candidates were challenged by the demands of the examination cases of second language interference or incorrect student placement seemed to be relatively rare. Instead candidates frequently showed some carelessness, not all of which could be laid at the door of exam conditions and there was a poor grasp of register shown both in inappropriately casual language for a formal assessment or conversely the overuse of sometimes poorly understood technical terms. These were often drawn from the technical register of writing about Greek tragedy. Hamartia and anaphora were common, and while these are useful terms, too often they were used to show the student knew them rather than to contribute to argument and analysis. Generally, in fact,

terms denoting stylistic features were used rather loosely, 'motif' tended to be used for almost any figure of speech and 'theme' was poorly defined. It is important that candidates define their terms clearly when using them to support their analysis.

While good knowledge was often shown of the works being studied, it frequently, even though often impressively detailed, drifted into lengthy summary or paraphrase rather than being used as evidence to support whatever reading the student was trying to advance. Context was in general poorly handled with candidates only rarely showing clear understanding of what it was and its role in their analysis of the texts. Most striking was the failure to deploy context to show greater understanding of the text and its range of possible meanings. Often it was used in the most basic sense "Ibsen wrote *A Doll's House* in the 1870s" or by imposing present day values and cultural practices with no further comment on the way they affect the reception of the text. As, for example, claiming that if *Antigone* was written now Antigone would have been listened to as women are no longer inferior as they were in Ancient Greek society. Teachers need to help students to understand the connection between text and context relating it to theme and authorial intent. Furthermore this needs to be linked to the argument they have formed in response to the question. Asking students to look at texts from different critical positions is one enjoyable and productive way of helping them to develop awareness of the way various contexts can shape the meaning of the text being studied. Looking at texts like *Antigone* and discussing the shift in meaning between Sophocles and Anouilh or the way re-readings of texts like *Mansfield Park* in the light of post-colonial discourse are shaping their reception all alert students to the way context shapes meaning in accessible and interesting ways.

The frequent lack of attention to stylistic features was surprising and often discussion of them was displaced by lengthy recounting of background presented as context but not linked to an argument about the text. Candidates need to be reminded that awareness of stylistic features and their role in the construction of the text's meaning needs always to be shown, not only when there is a prompt in the question. Too often claims were made about the texts and their language with very little analysis to support them even where, as was often the case, candidates showed an impressive ability to recall quotation or give brief accounts of relevant parts of the texts.

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

Candidates had a good knowledge on the whole of the content of the texts they were writing about and could often recount it in some detail and include a number of useful quotations. Generally candidates showed impressive engagement with the texts and wrote at some length and in detail. Discussion of broad stylistic features such as characterization and structure was often sound and the candidates generally had a grasp of the central concerns of the texts they were studying. 76% of teachers found the paper to be at an appropriate level of difficulty.

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

The questions were felt to be of very good challenge and variety and gave candidates many opportunities to meet the demands of the assessment criteria. The subject pairings in some of the questions with “faith and belief” linked and “comforted and seduced” balanced against “challenged and alienated”, for example, did not, as one might expect, offer students some clarity in how they might approach the question but for weaker candidates especially led to them vacillating about their choice and producing responses that lacked focus.

Question 1

This was not generally answered successfully with many candidates failing to define, or unsuccessfully speculating about authorial intent or taking the opportunity to look at how the context of reception may shape the work’s meaning. A close look at page 21 of the Subject Guide which sets out the way different social and cultural contexts can change the meaning of the text would have allowed candidates to argue for different possible interpretations some of which may have been against the grain and therefore “unintended”; in a postcolonial interpretation of *Jane Eyre*, for example. A number of candidates, however, were able to challenge the question in an interesting way arguing that texts like *1984* successfully addressed exactly what they intended. Some of these answers were able to deal with the integrity of the text rather than speculating about authorial intention.

Question 2

While a number of candidates were successfully able to discuss the way texts like *The Crucible* discussed “belief or faith” and its interpretation in different contexts. A number of candidates did not seem to understand the terms beyond their generic use and argued narrowly about belief as in “Othello believed that Desdemona cheated on him.”

Question 3

This was a challenging question. Where it was answered well candidates were able to argue for the significance of certain features and against making the use of the term “literary” essential, seeing literary texts as indeterminate and shaped by a dialogue with their various contexts. Where it was less successfully answered, candidates tended to isolate the “literary” qualities of texts to specific features arguing, for example that the text was “literary” insofar as it used literary features.

Question 4

The best answers here were able to use the contrary nature of the two pairs of terms (“seduced or comforted”/“challenged or alienated”) to produce an effectively structured response or to choose one pair and argue for the way the reader was affected by this part of the texts to good effect.

Question 5

This was the most popular question and generated a range of answers. The context of production tended to be dealt with more effectively than that of reception and historical setting tended to be overstressed. Nevertheless some well thought out responses were produced showing an effective understanding and awareness of the way context can shape the meaning of a text.

Question 6

This was also a popular question and candidates were generally able to identify the struggle and the best answers showed the way the protagonist struggled within a social context such as Nora, in *A Doll's House* against the expectations of nineteenth century Norway, or Blanche in *A Streetcar Named Desire* failing to come to terms with her place in the shifting values of mid-20th Century USA. The thematic significance of the struggle was not always recognized however.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

- The connection between text and context needs to be more fully addressed. It is a challenging idea and too few candidates understood it clearly enough to allow it to be seen as part of an argument about the way the meaning of the texts they were discussing had been shaped. Helping students to see the way texts are embedded in context is important. It is an area students are readily able to understand and gives them opportunities to see the ways different readings of a text reveal the cultural reading practices of different groups. This need not be presented in the arcane language of literary theory and beginning, for example, with a “neutral” reading such as that embraced by ‘New Criticism’ and challenging that by giving students opportunities to explore, for example, more political readings of texts or to highlight contemporary re-readings such as those made recently of *Mansfield Park* and *The Taming of the Shrew* is an accessible and interesting way of introducing how context affects meaning. The text needs to be seen as the product of a specific historical and cultural moment the meaning of which is reshaped by the impact of different contexts.
- Working with students to define the terms of the question in the light of their argument and working with them to develop a clear thesis before embarking on their response is crucial. Too many essays began by repeating the question as if that was sufficient introduction and then telling the reader everything they knew about the texts with too little shape to the response meaning that much good material did not get the credit it deserved in all cases and that candidates scored poorly in criteria B and D.
- Candidates did not always seem to be aware of the descriptors against which their responses would be assessed and it is important that these are shared with and explained to students early in the course so that they can develop the knowledge and understanding of the texts and stylistic features they need and also that they are able to develop the writing skills that allow them to organize and develop their response.

Further comments

There were many examples of surprising pairings of texts that candidates found difficult to link in any meaningful way in their responses. How far a discussion of *Antigone* and *Maus* or *Kite Runner* and *Hedda Gabler* can be sustained is questionable and often texts like *Macbeth* and *The Great Gatsby* or *Death of a Salesman* appeared to be based on outward resemblances instead of shared themes. It is a pity to see candidates' chances reduced before they even begin the examination in this way. Some texts were not suitable such as Alice Hoffman's *The Foretelling* which is more applicable to a younger age range.