English A: language and literature

Overall grade boundaries

Higher level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 13	14 - 27	28 - 41	42 - 54	55 - 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

Candidate numbers were up on last year, the first May session of the English A: language and literature programme: 13,300 at HL and 8,700 at SL, an increase of over 10%.

Overall performance was very similar to last year with improvement in some areas, no doubt due to more familiarity with the demands of the programme, though, as this report will show, there is still plenty of room for further improvement.

The G2 statistics show that the written examinations were generally perceived by teachers to be of a similar standard to those of last year. Impressions of the difficulty of specific questions will be dealt with in the appropriate sections of the report.

The senior examining team have identified the ways in which preparation of candidates for the external and internal assessments can be improved. Two particular observations have been made by examiners from all points of the English A: language and literature compass:

- Generally speaking candidates need to learn better how to analyze texts in a more detailed way than they do at present. One of the demands of the course is that candidates learn to discern how writers, speakers and producers of texts (in the comprehensive way that term is defined in the subject guide, p.16) shape meaning through a variety of approaches and techniques. They are also required to be able to identify and comment on the effects on the reader or viewer of the use of stylistic features.

- Across different parts of the course, students need to be taught to understand better the connection between a text and a context which is more than merely 'background'.

One of the guiding principles of the programme is that meaning in a text is shaped by culture and by the contexts both of its production and of its reception. It would appear that this is not being put into practice enough.

Higher level and 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

Introduction

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 guide*, the current *Handbook of Procedures*, and the *Language A: language and literature Teacher Support Material.* The guidelines in these documents must form the basis for all internal assessment work. Everything else, including this Subject Report, is commentary on and elaboration of the contents of these documents.

The range and suitability of the work submitted

When selecting works for Part 4, teachers should be aware of the demands of the oral commentary and not choose works that are not well suited for close analysis. This may not be the best time to take on the Middle English of Chaucer or the demands of a work with its own unique language such as *A Clockwork Orange,* as no footnotes or annotations are permitted on the extracts. Teachers also need to take into account the abilities of their own students and select works that are accessible to them. A writer such as Hemingway may be accessible on one level, but poses problems of how to discuss in depth his style of writing. The unique perspectives of some writers, such as Yeats and T.S. Eliot, may leave the candidate struggling simply to explain what is being said rather than being able to analyze how the writer has shaped meaning. On the other hand, there are candidatures that are quite capable of taking on these additional challenges.

Equal care needs to be taken when choosing extracts. By and large the moderators felt that the extracts chosen were suitable. Comments were made, as usual, that some extracts, particularly poems, were too short to offer the adequate candidate room to expand and that other extracts were so long that excellent candidates were racing for time to get in a full analysis and still falling short. Extracts should not exceed 40 lines (unless between 1 and 5 extra lines are needed to complete a thought or a structural component such as a stanza of a poem). Teachers should take care to avoid typographical errors and poor photocopying. Every fifth line should be numbered for ease of reference for both the candidate and the moderator. Extracts should not include the name of author, titles (except for poems), act, scene, chapter *etc.* as candidates get credit for their understanding of the significance of the

passage within its immediate context. Please remember that candidates with poems should recognize in some manner the relationship of the poem given to the other poems studied.

Extracts were taken from a variety of works, and all four genres offered in the PLA seemed suitable for this task. (Please note that no graphic novels are allowed in Part 4, as all works must be selected from the PLA.) Texts that were commonly seen were *1984*, *The Great Gatsby, Jane Eyre, The Handmaid's Tale*, *Macbeth*, *Othello*, *The Glass Menagerie, The Crucible*, *Death of a Salesman*, *Running in the Family*, and poems by Duffy, Heaney, Owen, and Hughes. One moderator suggested that teachers might consider expanding their range of choices, looking at African and Australian writers for example, and not forgetting the richness of many works of non-fiction such as travel writing.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A: Knowledge and understanding of the text or extract

More moderators than in the past have commented that they felt that several candidates were not very familiar with the works studied. Teachers need to be sure that ample time is given to the teaching of the Part 4 works and that the candidates have had multiple levels of exposure to their works so that they are comfortable with discussing them. If candidates are particularly hesitant to read the works, it may be because they are unsuitable to their needs or aptitudes, and, perhaps, in the future a different work might be used.

Moderators also commented that a number of candidates failed to situate their extracts, or to indicate the significance of the extract to the work as a whole. This was particularly true for candidates with poems. Some candidates simply made comments that indicated that they expected the listener to know these points. Candidates need to be reminded that their commentaries are addressed to moderators as well as the teacher, and that the moderator has not been in the classroom; thus context must be established in order for the moderator to award credit. This problem surfaces in marking as well, as the teacher assumes the candidate knows certain points because the candidate was aware of them in class, but the moderator only hears as much as the candidate states during the recording, and thus may mark the candidate lower.

The weakest candidates struggled to make sense of any part of their extract or fell to discussing the work in general and ignoring what was in front of them; the weaker candidates offered paraphrases or summaries of the extract. Adequate candidates showed satisfactory understanding of most of the extract and were able to see the significance of that extract in the larger work, *e.g.* that this scene is early in the work and the writer is just beginning to introduce the characters or to establish the setting, *etc.* and is able to discuss the lines of the extract in that light. The good candidates showed a clear understanding of almost the entire extract and were able to make comments based on a clear knowledge of the work. The excellent candidates were fully comfortable in their understanding of the extract and often brought more than one interpretation to bear, showing their understanding and appreciation for ambiguities or subtleties of the extract and for the extract in relation to the larger work.
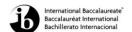
Criterion B: Understanding of the use and effects of literary features

As usual, moderators point to this criterion as the one least likely for the candidates to fulfill. A full array of responses occurred in this criterion, from no awareness of literary features at all, to incorrect spotting of devices or misinterpretation of them, to spotting of devices but failing to see their effects, to a full awareness of the presence of numerous authorial techniques and a discussion of their relevance in the shaping of meaning in the extract. It would seem that there was a larger gap than usual between the weaker candidates and the stronger this year. Hopefully as this course continues, teachers will be better prepared to integrate close textual analysis into all parts of the course so that candidates will be comfortable with the expectation that one of the demands of the course is to discern how writers, speakers, producers shape meaning through a variety of approaches and techniques. Some candidates seem to be taught a full gamut of literary devices which they want to discover everywhere in the extract, often focusing overly on features such as alliteration or onomatopoeia to the neglect of a full understanding of the manner in which a character is being shaped or truly understanding theme as a meaningful idea rather than just a topic or motif. As with all parts of this course, it is important for teachers to assess the abilities of their candidates well and not teach beyond or below their abilities. Better to have a firm grip of a set of standard devices than a superficial (or even incorrect) awareness of many. For a candidate to list a series of images or words with a certain connotation is usually meaningless. Each word, each image needs to be discussed in its own context to offer a valid discussion of its effect. If there is indeed a cumulative effect of some sort, that can be pointed out, again within the context of the extract.

Criterion C: Organization

Most moderators felt that the orals were better structured this year, that, at least, most candidates offered introductions, bodies, and conclusions. Some candidates were very clear in their introductions as to how they were going to approach the oral, offering three or four steps and then following that pattern. The choices as to what to cover and in what order varied in their effectiveness. Some decisions regarding topics led to the candidates failing to discuss several portions of the extract, thus impacting their knowledge and understanding mark. Some candidates clearly saw the key significance of the extract and developed their orals around ways in which this significance was borne out, offering a conclusion that effectively encapsulated the commentary. As always there were introductions that were much too long and offered too much information that was extraneous to the extract itself, such as irrelevant biographical or historical material. Fortunately, most candidates took this time to concisely situate the extract within the larger work, to establish why the extract was significant and to point out how they were going to address the extract. Conclusions, however, were more rare. Some teachers interrupted before the candidate could conclude; many candidates just stopped; and others offered a long repetition of what they had just said. In terms of the body of the response, many candidates simply chose to go through the extract line by line, which is acceptable and can even be effective, providing that the candidate ties the discussion to the significance of the extract and remains analytical. Unfortunately, too many candidates use this form of organization simply to paraphrase the extract. Almost all the moderators commented that careful signposting of topics or arguments during the body of the response was most helpful to the listener.

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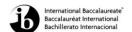
Criterion D: Language

Most moderators reported that the language was generally clear and the register appropriate. There was concern, however, that the language of literature has weakened. As this is a literary commentary, it is to be expected that the candidates have a vocabulary suited to the discussion of literature. A Shakespearian play should not be referred to as a novel, or stanzas as paragraphs. A firm understanding of terms such as irony, motif, symbol, image, metaphor, simile, theme, monologue, dialogue, soliloquy, rhyme, meter, *etc.* should be in place. Candidates might also be reminded that though their extract may be written in a casual register, their analysis of it should still be formal. Teachers as well need to maintain a formal register.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

Many recommendations for the teaching of future candidates have been embedded in this report. Following are some further suggestions:

- Before embarking on the Internal Assessment sections of the course, teachers should reread all relevant instructions from the *Language A: language and literature guide,* the *Handbook of Procedures* and the *Teacher Support Material*.
- Many candidates seem to show the need for further practice in delivering a timed commentary. Perhaps candidates could work in pairs to practice oral commentaries, record them and mark them. Letting them choose the extracts will help them see why a "key" extract needs to be chosen, and writing guiding questions will help them look for "ways into" an extract.
- Teachers need to help candidates with the organization of their commentaries so that they know how to make effective choices that enable them to show a full understanding of the extract and its literary features. Putting candidates into groups with sample extracts and letting them strategize on how to organize a response might be helpful.
- Teachers should implement a variety of strategies for the teaching of the Part 4 works, letting the candidates discover the works for themselves, drawing their own insights and conclusions, and thus have "ownership" of the material that will give them confidence when discussing it.
- Teachers should choose works, extracts, and guiding questions wisely, being sure to address the needs of their particular candidates. Furthermore, all extracts should be of equal challenge with lines numbered, clearly and cleanly presented with two guiding questions (one prompting discussion of the significance of the passage and one prompting discussion of the literary features). Check and double check for typographical errors; though *The Handmaid's Tail* might provide some humour in the preparation room, it should not be in evidence.
- Teachers need to make effective use of Subsequent Questions to help candidates explore the extract as thoroughly and completely as possible. This is another component that needs to be practiced in advance. Candidates need to learn how to provide full answers and teachers need to learn not to "teach," answer their own questions or to probe for some answer that must have been discussed in class.

Overall the candidates seemed well prepared for their oral commentaries, and, as always, moderators commented on some of the fine responses that they heard and how enjoyable

and uplifting they were to experience. Overall, the moderators were pleased with the processing of materials, the teaching, the preparation done by the candidates and the delivery of the IOCs. The many centres that have worked so hard on this component should feel their work has not gone unnoticed!

Further comments

Moderators report that centres did a much better job of keeping to the 15-minute time limit, and for that, they are to be commended. Candidates can be given a verbal warning (or the beep of a timer) about time so that they have a chance to form a conclusion. If necessary the teacher can then take the candidate back to a portion of the extract that was not covered. Ideally, candidates should have practice in delivering timed responses so that the IOC is not the first time they have to deal with issues of time. Teachers should also take note of the extracts that seem too complicated or too long to finish on time so that similar problems do not occur in the future.

Once again some moderators have commented that they feel uneasy about some of the orals that they hear. Teachers need to make themselves fully aware of the rules of conduct for the IOC and to be sure they are met. Extracts are not to be rehearsed in advance; no candidate should know the extract he or she will comment on until that extract is randomly drawn in the preparation room**.** Practice orals need to be done on different passages than those used in the exam; practice orals can even be done on different works at different times in the course so that this process is something that is commonly done by the candidates. Such practice is particularly doable with poetry.

Centres with more than one teacher doing the IOCs need to be sure that the teachers standardize their marking to the same level as there will be only one moderation factor applied to a single centre.

All centres should provide a secure and quiet environment in which to conduct the orals. Far too many candidates were disrupted by extraneous noises: bells, phones, lawn mowers, voices in hallways, loud speakers, *etc.*

Higher level and standard level written tasks

Higher level 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 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

Introduction

Almost without exception the members of the examining team reported that centres appear to have become more familiar with the syllabus and the requirements and that the calibre of submissions was, on the whole, superior to that of last year. This was particularly noticeable in the more confident and imaginative handling of Task 1, as it was in the more ambitious and original treatment of media texts in Task 2. Many examiners reported that, on the whole, they found performance on Task 1 rather more impressive than on Task 2.

Many of the points made in the more detailed report from the May 2014 session are also relevant to this one and centres new to the programme are invited to consult it as well as this synthesis of the main points made by examiners about the performance of this session's candidates.

The range and suitability of the work submitted

Written Task 1

The comments below are also valid for Standard Level:

Overall there was an interesting range of tasks submitted and the vast majority of them were suitable in terms of choice of task and text type. It was encouraging to see many candidates finding imaginative and suitable ways of writing tasks inspired by either literary texts or by the work done in class for Parts 1 and 2 topics.

In some cases, however, the teacher should have advised candidates that a task was implausible or unsuitable. In far too many cases, the link between the task and a specific programme topic was not being made clearly enough and sometimes the examiner could not make a link at all, either because the candidate had introduced a topic that had not been studied, or because the programme summary did not mention the topic selected.

Here is a summary of the main points raised about the suitability of tasks:

- The topics or issues one would expect to find explored in the task must be to do with language and culture. The task should not merely serve as vehicle for imitating forms or styles, whether of a literary, non-literary or media type.
- The choice of type of text, its conventions, its purpose, audience and context need to be given a lot of attention by the candidate.
- Letters are being written (for example to Disney complaining about the stereotypes in the films they make) that would have been more successful as media opinion articles or blog posts. There are many blog posts that have little about their style or presentation to distinguish them from conventional media pieces or, at worst, essays.

- 'Article' is a word often used loosely. Here more attention needs to be paid by candidates to identifying type and publication context.
- It is not advisable to write texts that would not normally be written in English.
- Generally speaking, most tasks not based on literary texts involving invented characters or situations are unlikely to be appropriate. If language, identity, or culture is to be explored in the task, the candidate would do well to think twice before choosing to write autobiographical short stories or other texts such as diaries or letters. These types are usually more successfully used for tasks based on literary texts.

Written Task 2 (Higher Level only)

On the whole, candidates tended to perform less well on this task than on Task 1. Examiners reported that many of the essays on literary texts treated either the response question or the work superficially. The more impressive tasks were often on non-literary material; there was some excellent work done on advertising particularly.

Here is a summary of the main points raised about the suitability of candidates' responses:

- Pertinent essays on advertising were written in response to most of the questions, particularly the "Power and privilege" and the "Text and genre" ones. On the whole, contemporary advertisements were handled better than those whose social and cultural context may have been unfamiliar to the candidates.
- Responses to the question "Which social groups are marginalized, excluded or silenced within the text?" sometimes tended to summarize a text (such as an essay or a documentary) that deals with, for example, the marginalization of women, but does not itself marginalize them in any way.
- The question, "How and why is a social group represented in a particular way?" which was by far the most popular with candidates, so often dealt with women and, typically regarded all women in society as represented by one or more literary characters or photographic models. Women, in other words, were often regarded in very general terms as 'a social group'. In such essays, the dimension of context clearly requires more attention.

Answers that focused on more than one social group, for example the three main social groups in *The Great Gatsby* (by far the most popular literary text for this question) tended to be less successful than those that focused on one.

The question "How could the text be read and interpreted differently by two different readers?" can be used effectively to show how a text can be interpreted from two different critical perspectives. The question was included to encourage in candidates an exploration of approaches, perspectives, cultures or context with which they were unfamiliar. A good response will establish at the outset the two ways in which the text is to be approached before proceeding with a comparative analysis.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A: Rationale/Outline

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Rationale: While most candidates identified a link to the course and the text type, partial explanation of what was being investigated, of audience, purpose and context as well as of the conventions of the text type frequently contributed to losing the candidate a mark, though rarely two.

Outline: It was not always the longest and most detailed outlines (sometimes two or three-page essay plans) that necessarily earned the full 2 marks. What is required, apart from identification of the text on which the task is based and the part of the course it comes from, is a brief elucidation of how the terms of the question ("social group", "different readers", "conventions", *etc.*) are to be interpreted.

Criterion B: Task and content/Response to the question

It is sometimes difficult for the examiner to assess the candidate's understanding as well as the appropriateness/relevance of what has been written if the topic to which the task is linked, or the text to which it refers, is not clearly identified. This is of crucial importance when the examiner is required to become familiar with a written or visual text (for example: poem, speech, press article, advertisement, documentary or video). Therefore, source material must be clearly referenced.

Notice particularly that one of the descriptors of this criterion for Task 1 is an evaluation of how well the candidate has understood the conventions of the text type chosen. Far too many candidates are losing marks here for inadequate familiarity with conventions. In Task 2, candidates are often losing marks firstly for making general and assertive comments when what is required is being analytical and critical, and secondly for neglecting to provide well-chosen references to the text to support their arguments.

Criterion C: Organization/Organization and argument

On the whole, organization was handled satisfactorily by the vast majority of candidates. The main difficulty for many appeared to be constructing an argument in the Task 2 essay.

Criterion D: Language /Language and style

There was a lot of very confident and effective writing, especially noticeable in Task 1 submissions. Expression was seldom found to be lacking in general clarity but many candidates would have scored at a higher level if only they had proofread their work and corrected typos and basic grammatical errors.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

Teachers are reminded that it is not acceptable for candidates to submit two tasks on the literature parts or two tasks on the language parts of the programme.

If a Part 1 or 2 topic includes the study of a literary text, candidates should be discouraged from basing both tasks on literary texts so that the work they submit better reflects the variety of programme content for this component.

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It is evident from explanations provided by candidates in their rationales that some teachers are being prescriptive. Such practice does not conform to the guidelines on pp.27-28 of the Subject Guide. Variety in the types of tasks written and in the texts on which they are based should be encouraged. For Task 2, it would be nice to see fewer essays dealing with the social groups in some of the more popular texts such as *The Great Gatsby* or with women in *A Doll's House.*

Teachers should remind their students of the importance of providing accurate source material or links to web pages to enable examiners rapidly to access short texts or visual material with which they may well be unfamiliar.

The word count requirements should be made clear to candidates. Rationales and Tasks over the limit by even one world will incur a penalty. Sometimes the word count stated by the candidate has proved to be incorrect. Please note that quotations are included in the word count but that cover pages, footnotes, acknowledgements and other references, annotated illustrations and tables, *etc.* are not. Hyphenated compound nouns or adjectives count for one word.

Candidates need to be reminded to proofread so as to correct typos, spelling and grammatical errors.

In addition to consulting the relevant sections in the Subject Guide (pp.30-32 for SL and pp. 40-46 for HL) as well as the assessment criteria for this component, teachers are invited to refer to the relevant sections on the Written Tasks in both the *Teacher Support Material* and the *Handbook of Procedures.*

Further comments

It would be helpful if teachers could remind their candidates to staple their pages together in the logical order, rationales preceding Tasks 1, outlines preceding Tasks 2 and Task 1 placed before Task 2 and preferably not encased in a plastic sleeve or held together with paper clips.

Centres are reminded to arrange candidate submissions in register order to avoid the examiner having to sort them out.

Higher 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

Introduction

In this second May session of the language and literature course, candidates seemed to have grown more accustomed to the demands of the Paper 1 examination. Clearly, most have

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been taught to consider the context of a text and there were some good treatments of it in responses to both pairs. More candidates this year seemed comfortable writing about illustration and format in commentaries on the Section 2 texts; however, many candidates are still not addressing the graphic aspects of the texts.

Based on their responses, the themes of the pairs – racial discrimination in the first pair; father-daughter relationships in the second – seemed to be of interest to candidates. Specific comments on responses to the two pairs follow.

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

Section 1

The first pair was chosen by far fewer candidates than the second pair. It is unfortunate, as there was a good deal to analyze here and many of the best papers dealt with this pair. Candidates may still have a reluctance to choose a pair that includes a poem – even a quite accessible one like "Shipmates" – or perhaps were attracted by certain aspects of the second pair, discussed below.

Good candidates dealt in a satisfactory manner with the different perspectives on racism described in each text, whether on a social or an individual basis. They noticed the motif of travelling in the two texts and were able to comment on the difference in the relationship between the two travellers in each. Context was generally analyzed appropriately. Both texts are rich in stylistic features and many candidates were able to comment quite successfully on these. Excellent responses dealt in more depth with language and often commented on the title of the poem and on the central notions of wandering and wondering. They also were able to discuss the contrasts between and within the texts. Some weaker candidates did not understand the situation in the poem and a few assumed that the train was in a particular country and detoured into comments on the racial situation in that country. In Text B as well, a few candidates wandered from the text itself with general comments about apartheid, including some misinformation. All in all, however, most candidates who wrote on Section 1 seemed to find the texts quite accessible and did a good job.

Section 2

The second pair was more difficult than may have first appeared to some candidates. Given the number of candidates who wrote on Section 2, there were relatively few really excellent papers. Candidates may have chosen this pair, as indicated above, to avoid writing on a poem. They may also have been attracted by the graphic elements and the apparent accessibility of the two genres represented: a newspaper article and a web page. Nevertheless, many candidates did not comment on the visuals: the photographs illustrating Text C, the logo of Text D, the format, headlines, *etc.* of both texts. Weaker students did not comment adequately on the genres, despite the richness of possibilities for analysis, with the journalist's interventions in Text C and the dialogue in Text D. Some seemed to think that Ecclestone was the writer of Text C or that it was an interview, rather than an article based on an interview. As well, too many candidates failed to address stylistic issues in any depth at all.

However, the most striking problem was the number of candidates who misunderstood the central metaphor of banking. A surprising number of candidates thought that this was a text about the importance of parents' making financial investments for their children.

Senior examiners took the apparent difficulty of this pair into consideration during the grade award process.

Nevertheless, many candidates did produce very good commentaries, perceptively analyzing the relationships between fathers and their daughters, dealing well with the genres of the texts, their stylistic features and the effects on the reader. Such papers included very insightful comments about the interchange between Ecclestone and the writer and between the writer and the reader in Text C and about the context of the website and the choice of dialogue as a way to make a point about father-daughter relationships in Text D.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

The following were some of the more frequent problems pertaining to both sections:

- Incorrect use of literary terms.
- Analysis of each text rather than actual comparison.
- Inadequate references to the texts.
- Difficulties in discussing the effect of stylistic features on the reader.
- Overgeneralization about context based on genre or dates.
- Poor handwriting is even more difficult to read on a scanned paper. If the examiner cannot read what the candidate has written, marks are likely to suffer.

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

Text 1 "OK! Caught up with Big Brother winner Ben!" appeared to be favoured by the candidates and the stronger candidates were able to provide detailed, analytical responses while the weaker candidates struggled to provide a critical reading. Text 2, an extract from William Morris' lecture on *The Decorative Arts, Their Relation to Modern Life and Progress*, also produced a range of answers but there was a sense that candidates with historical knowledge were perhaps at a slight advantage when discussing context.

Examiners felt that the content and text type of the two texts were very different but that candidates provided a range of responses for each text. Both texts had depth of material for candidates of all levels and were generally dealt with effectively although the subtleties of both were not always understood.

Criterion A: Understanding of the text

The whole range of marks was evident here on both texts- from "little" and "not supported" where candidates did not understand the purpose and content of Big Brother or did not understand Morris' argument to "very good" and "perceptive" where contextual comment linked seamlessly with conceptualized overview.

While most candidates responded to the content of the two texts some candidates read both texts at a superficial, literal level and did not provide a depth of analysis. Candidates still seem to struggle to understand fully the significance of the context of their selected text to its meaning. Some candidates commented on somewhat irrelevant aspects of context and were superficial in looking at context in relation to how it works and creates meaning. Some candidates used supporting material inappropriately and provided textual reference to complete a sentence and not to support an idea. In weaker scripts there was a lot of generalization and candidates need to take care to be detailed and specific in their analysis. Weaker scripts tended to contain summary, paraphrase and generalizations.

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

Weaker candidates tended to "spot" and list features without really detailing their purposes and effects in this particular context. Some candidates mentioned very few literary elements and did not seem to have a full grasp on how to discuss the use of stylistic features to create meaning.

Criterion C: Organization and development

Generally speaking candidates seemed better prepared this session to structure their commentaries in an effective manner. The majority of candidates were able to write with adequate organization but, not always, with a developed argument. The weaker commentaries, however, were structured in a list-like manner and examiners noted a tendency to paraphrase or summarize rather than analyze. Quotations were often used but not always integrated or explained and therefore failed to support a point. It is important to look at the descriptors for this criterion as they refer 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

There was generally good register and style that was appropriate to the task. However, some candidates struggled with punctuation use in the exam setting as well as incorrect word choice and vocabulary. Some candidates continue to use informal expressions and need to

be instructed on the appropriate register for this task as this certainly causes the weaker candidates to fall to lose marks.

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

Criterion A: Understanding of the text

Most candidates engaged well with the two texts 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. Many examiners commented on the sophistication of some scripts and the level of perceptive, original comments that were presented. Some candidates did write insightful comments on the contexts of the texts but, on a whole, this is an area that does need to be addressed.

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

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 analyzed in depth at the upper end of the mark range.

Criterion C: Organization and development

The majority of candidates adequately organized their commentaries well with regards to structure and organization. At the upper end candidates did structure an argument and therefore presented a cohesive response, scoring in the good to very good range.

Criterion D: Language

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: "OK! Caught up with Big Brother winner Ben!"

Text 1 was selected by the majority of candidates with most candidates being able to adequately identify and comment on the text type of the online interview, and some did so with significant depth. Candidates often used a framework for approach covering significance of context, audience, purpose and formal and stylistic features as in the rubric requirements – and fared well.

This text really served to distinguish the higher-achieving candidates, as they were able to read the text on a critical level. Many candidates related to the context from their own

experience of watching Big Brother or reading "OK!" magazine. Most were able to comment on the presentation of Ben and on the attitudes and values expressed with respect to celebrities. Most noted that Ben represented the aspirations of his readers while the best responses addressed the guiding questions whilst also analyzing the context, audience, purpose and features in detail.

Many candidates seemed well prepared to identify stylistic features. Most were able to identify the text type and at least comment generally on context. Candidates cited Ben's fragmented speech and excitement; most commented on the tone change and some on the attitudes and values expressed in the latter part of the interview. The best responses discussed in detail the effects of the features; the nuances of specific word choices and their effects were often analyzed in depth.

The biggest weakness in responses was the tendency to focus on the idea of Ben's personality and not deal with context in any real depth. There was some misinterpretation of aspects of the text and far too many generalizations offered. Few candidates actually analyzed the questions and answers in depth with many using the question and answer structure as a way to organize their own commentaries and this lead to summary and paraphrasing.

Identification of stylistic features was at the obvious level for most candidates; many just gave a descriptive summary of the layout of the webpage. Often when techniques were identified, a generic effect was given to every technique and this basically focused on showing Ben's excitement. The idioms in this text also confused a few candidates.

The guiding questions were largely addressed in candidate responses although some candidates failed to interpret fully how the question and answer structure worked and tended to structure their commentaries around explaining what each question was asking and how Ben responded to it. Attitudes and values were largely dealt with in respect to celebrities but many candidates missed the subtleties in this text. The better candidates ensured they included responses to the guiding questions as well as other material and gave the commentary a well-developed argument.
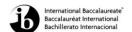
The footnotes confused some candidates and they discussed them as if they were part of the text.

Many candidates did fall into the trap of providing a summary of the interview for Text 1 and this lowered their mark for organization.

Text 2: William Morris "The Decorative Arts …" extract

Fewer candidates selected this text but many wrote strong responses dealing effectively with content and context, while some candidates missed the context completely.

The better candidates managed to address the purpose of the speech and followed the argument presented by Morris. All candidates were able to recognize the text as a speech and many seemed well prepared to identify stylistic features related to this text type. One strength here, for the better candidates, was the attention paid to the effects of punctuation

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and rhetoric of a scripted "spoken" speech, for example, the dash as pause in the first line, the rhetorical question and the emphasis provided by the rule of three ideas in the concluding line. The best responses discussed in detail the effects of the features; the nuances of specific word choices and their effects were often analyzed in depth at the upper end of the mark range. The better candidates understood the use of personification and the effect this had on the audience.

Many candidates were not aware of the implications of its 1877 historical context but were able to reiterate the introductory explanation and cite that as context. Some candidates did not understand the purpose of the speech and tended to read the text at a superficial, literal level. At times, some candidates contradicted their argument saying art was important but then saying Morris did not want art to survive.

Most candidates were able to analyze the stylistic features of the speech but many just provided an overview and got trapped with understanding some aspects but not all.

Text 2 also seemed to have responses that were better organized although the weaker candidates seemed to organize it by paraphrasing the two arguments (science and art).

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 candidates to understand the context of a text and so they can discuss context in relation to contributing to the meaning of the text. Candidates 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.
- Refer closely to the assessment criteria in class so candidates know exactly what they are expected to do to score well in a paper one.
- Encourage candidates to annotate the text and plan their commentary structure.
- Work on analyzing rather than paraphrasing or summarizing.
- Prepare candidates to analyze a wide variety of text types and provide them with the terminology to discuss a variety of text types.
- Teach candidates to use the guiding questions appropriately. Candidates need to assert understanding of questions and use them as "guiding" questions.
- Assist candidates in the development of a strategy and a framework for writing a commentary.
- Attention to technical accuracy with particular emphasis on 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 candidates to look closely at the source of each text.
- Discuss the format of paper one including the use of footnotes.

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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.

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 convey 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

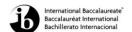## The areas of the programme and examination which appeared difficult for the candidates

Candidates either seemed to know the works fairly well or they were not at all comfortable discussing them. Generalizations, assumptions, and narrative retelling were often a substitute for analysis. "Statements without evidence" was a common concern for candidates who were not prepared for the task.

For the weaker candidates there was a general lack of detail. Knowledge of the works for some candidates could not rise above superficial generalizations—on the American Dream "everyone wants to succeed"; on making Movies "Everyone likes action and romance"; on different cultures "people of different religions are different" *etc.*

For some Criterion C was a list of terms without analysis—"Macbeth was a play in which the reader was told"; "Nora and John Proctor were the protagonists"; "the writer used symbols" (without discussing any). If stylistic devices were specifically mentioned, often the effects they produced were ignored.

There was also some assumptive misreading of the questions which affected the results for some candidates. In addition, some candidates had difficulties paying close and consistent attention to the question asked, and did not know how much and what type of context to include. Some candidates tried to twist questions to suit a generic topic, or a topic which they felt more comfortable writing about and in the process did not answer the question they had chosen.

A number of candidates did not consider context at all in their answers, or made very superficial and broad statements about assumptions they had concerning particular time periods or societies ("In the current times we no longer have 'racism', 'sexism', 'class divisions', *etc.*).

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There were some candidates who wrote about graphic novels or plays as if they were traditional novels, and did not recognize the specifics of those genres.

There are still some candidates who are struggling with the English language and have difficulty with vocabulary, spelling, syntax, grammar *etc.* In addition there were candidates who struggled to adopt an appropriate academic register when writing their responses.

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

Candidates did a fair job of organizing their responses. Generally clear introductions and a basic conclusion helped to give candidates a structure to work with. There were also many essays that had sound introductions, thesis statements that said more than which texts would be discussed, and conclusions that rounded off all the points made. It was clear from the many essays that included rough notes that effort was taken with planning responses.

Some candidates had obviously prepared and studied for their exam and knew the works in a detailed and sophisticated way. Quotations were often used very appropriately and referred to very specific and appropriate parts of their texts. This allowed candidates to show perceptive understanding: "Gatsby was an example of how the corruption of the American Dream would look, with Tom and Daisy epitomizing that corruption."

Many candidates were able to discuss various stylistic features succinctly with references to the texts--the use of the semi-detached narrator in *The Great Gatsby*; the development of the first person narration in *The Handmaid's Tale*; the symbolism of the Yam as a source of pride and food in *Things Fall Apart*.

It was impressive to see the many candidates who wrote with an effective register which was suitable to the task.

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

Q1. Not that many candidates chose this question on implied meaning. The question is somewhat difficult to approach since candidates often appear to think that everything in a text is intentional, and therefore there is nothing implied. There were some very good papers in which the candidates looked at literary features (metaphors, symbolism, allusions which help change the meaning from what is overtly stated to what is implied). There were also papers which referred to events which were being dealt with in the works but which were not specifically addressed in the texts—*Animal Farm* and Stalin's Soviet Union, and *The Crucible* reflecting the McCarthy trials. There were also some very good responses on works that were operating under some sort of censorship, where the need to imply rather than state was most evident (*Persepolis, The Crucible, etc.*).

For some candidates an issue was failing to define the concept of "implied" and without a definition these candidates tended to drift without a sense of purpose.

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Q2. This was a fairly popular question with candidates referring to either works written in a different language (Marquez) or situated in a different part of the world (*Woman at Point Zero*) or taking place at a different time (*The Great Gatsby*; *Huckleberry Finn*) to show how readers are challenged by these different contexts. The weaker candidates focused on describing the different cultures while the stronger candidates developed the ways that certain texts challenged the readers/audience to look at our current political realities (*1984* or *The Handmaid's Tale*). There was a tendency for some candidates to focus on what about the work was revolutionary or new for an audience without taking into consideration the cultural differences between the author/text and audience. For some this "cultural" difference was actually a time period difference.

Q3. While not a popular choice, this question worked for those candidates who focused on the "appeal to the audience's eyes and ears". These candidates focused on the visual and auditory imagery (music in *A Streetcar Named Desire* or linguistics in *Translations*). The biggest problems came from candidates who chose to ignore the requirement to write about auditory and visual imagery. Some wrote about why certain themes would make for good movie versions and did not really consider the stylistic aspect of the question. Some candidates interpreted this question as turning a novel into a film or discussing a film already based on the text. "Appeal" was also interpreted as "something the audience would like to see", thus stories about teenagers would "appeal to" teens. Finally some candidates ignored the wording of the question and just gave a discussion about why the work could be successfully made into a movie.
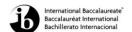
Q4. While few candidates chose this question, those who did seemed to find very good texts to use, either from a philosophical or stereotypical approach (*Heart of Darkness*, *The Visit*, or *The Reader*).

A surprising number of candidates were apparently unfamiliar with the expression "the ends justify the means"; consequently they presented convoluted and confused arguments in an attempt to maintain relevance to a prompt they did not fully understand. This led to candidates writing about the ending of works, and some very loose interpretations of what is meant by 'means'.

Q5. This may have been the least chosen question but some candidates recognized the way that "other stories" formed a backdrop to the story they were discussing, such as *Heart of Darkness* for *Things Fall Apart*.

Allusions, antecedents, plays within plays (*Hamlet*, and *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*), found narratives, *etc.* that were also used to bring "myths, legends and other stories" into play as opening doors for candidate understanding.

Q6. By far, this was the most popular question. Almost any work could be used to find examples of "weakness and strength" however not all candidates discussed the relationship between the two. The most common relationship found was "strength out of weakness" or the opposite. Nora in *A Doll's House* was often pointed to as an example of a character who grew in strength through the journey of the play and conversely Torvald grew weaker through this same action.

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Concrete examples (as opposed to generalizations) were often given and the arguments were often very convincing.

Weaker candidates were prone to just list strengths and weaknesses.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

- Teachers need to study carefully with their candidates the assessment criteria to ensure that they are fully aware of what examiners are primed to reward.
- Candidates need to be prepared to deal with stylistic features, and if the treatment of these features is not embedded in the prompt, they need to bring it into their response.
- Candidates need practice on thesis development using the question/topic as a prompt to get them started, while at the same time making sure that they answer the question that was given.
- Where a genre is studied that involves more than reading (i.e., visuals, or live performance) then candidates need to be prepared to discuss those elements which are specific to the genre (graphic novels, poetry, plays, *etc.*).
- Grammar and spelling are important and handwriting also needs to be improved— bad handwriting is not a way to hide spelling and syntax errors.

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

It was clear that candidates have been conscientiously taught in the preparation for this examination and that almost always candidates were working hard and attempting to give their best. There was a general perception that these were an accessible range of questions and that generally this was a very good paper. It was clear, however, that there remained significant difficulties for many candidates and that they were not always able to engage directly with the question selected and relate it to the texts studied. As with last year's performance the difficulties candidates encountered can be categorized as firstly those relating to the understanding of the concepts of this part of the course, in particular the nature of context and its role in shaping the meaning of a text and secondly the facility with which candidates were able to deploy language, structure and knowledge of the texts to shape a fluent answer that was able to give a reading of the texts in the light of the question selected.

Criterion A: Knowledge and understanding

To look first at context: while examiners felt that there was some improvement over the two previous sessions (May and November 2013) in the way candidates approached context, they often appeared to have a limited understanding of this key concept, tending, at times, to see it simply as "background". Candidates frequently seemed to feel that simply mentioning the background of a text or the differing attitudes to its central theme was sufficient to cover this area and often showed a very limited understanding of how the changing contexts of reception, for example, impact the meaning of a text. There was a tendency then, to simply assert that what was a received idea in the culture and time the text was written has now changed and is no longer relevant. Texts from non-Western sources such as Nawal El Saadawi's *Woman at Point Zero,* which were frequently effectively analyzed in terms of character and development, for instance, but the account given in the novel was mistakenly seen as either historical and no longer existent or to be unfavourably compared with the candidate's own experience of a more liberal environment. This was a pity as candidates often showed very good knowledge of the texts and clearly understood the key issues but displayed little awareness of context and of the cultural production of meaning. Often simply identifying elements of context but neglecting to explore their significance. Encouraging candidates to keep in mind the ways in which a text can be seen as both a cultural and literary artefact will help to guide them in this area.

Knowledge and understanding of the texts apart from context, which is dealt with above, was generally quite strong but a number of examiners were surprised that candidates did not always explore the texts in enough detail, sometimes spending more time on a set idea of what the texts meant rather than using their knowledge as evidence to present in their answer to the question. Weaker candidates still tended to content themselves with lengthy paraphrase and summary and even strong candidates did on occasion mistake summary for a careful account of the relevant evidence from the text to support their argument.

Criterion B: Response to the question

In general performance against criterion B, Response to the question, was mixed. Too rarely did candidates clearly define the question in relation to their thesis and often appeared to almost ignore it or drag it into the last paragraph in an attempt to build a conclusion. A great shame when a response was in other ways well organized and showed insight and understanding of the texts. This was also manifest in responses with often very weak development and with little sense of an argument or thesis being advanced in the response. There were also problems with reading and understanding the questions as they were written and more training could be undertaken perhaps to help candidates on the best choice of question for the works studied. Several candidates were attracted to questions that were very ill suited for the works they had studied. Candidates would be well advised to be sure they address the key words of the question in a meaningful fashion in the introduction, integrate those key words throughout the body of the response, and then to use them again in the conclusion.

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Criterion C: Understanding of the use and effects of stylistic features

There was a great deal of good work in criterion C, but few candidates attempted to explore their effects on the reader. There is still a tendency for candidates to "name drop" terminology, Greek terms being especially popular in this respect, without always considering if they contribute to the analysis or argument.

Criterion D: Organization and development

Organization and development frequently let candidates down. Some responses were very long and lacked a unifying thesis and at times the impression was given that candidates felt the need to deliver all they knew about a text rather than looking at the question and building a response that used textual knowledge as evidence with which to defend a thesis.

A number of candidates also seemed to have difficulties in integrating their discussion of the texts fully and at times introduced a text or a reference to a section of it with no sense of its place in the response or how that might need to be contextualized if it were to make sense to the reader. Overall while textual reference was often seen to be more extensive than in previous sessions using it to support the thesis being advanced was less well done, even where it was clear that the candidate knew the content of the text well. Candidates often also appeared to be over dependent on poorly digested ideas that they had been taught. Some responses, for instance, appeared determined to go through a range of theoretical positions with little regard to their relevance to the question or the texts being discussed. This was evident also in the way candidates continue to "spot" stylistic features regardless of their significance to the argument they were presenting.

Criterion E: Language

Language was also rather mixed with a number of inappropriate uses of register and a good deal of carelessness. There was less evidence of L1 interference but candidates need practice in writing formal essays and integrating quotation and ideas effectively.

Overall then candidates are not always taking ownership of the ideas they are being taught and at times this appears to undermine their engagement with the complex process of producing a reading of a text that is developed from the analysis of the text itself in conjunction with an understanding of the way the contexts of production and reception inflect its meaning. Too often candidates are delivering poorly digested material that appears to have been taught unconnected to the close reading of the text or a study of its varying contexts. Applying a Marxist reading, for example, to some texts is simply anachronistic or uncritical.

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

Candidates appeared to have a solid grasp of the content and meaning of the texts and some examiners felt that context was brought in more effectively than was the case in last year's examination. There was also better understanding of stylistic features and they were used more effectively to support the arguments being made.

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

Q1. Candidates who answered this did not often show that they understood the difference between implicit and explicit meaning though some were able to run with the idea of the way themes were presented, producing lively and well-documented responses.

Q2. This was either done very well or very badly. In the latter case little awareness was shown of the question's attempt to get candidates to look at the context of reception and many found it difficult to show how readers might be challenged. This often led to rather banal statements that "women are not treated unequally now" in relation to the "shock" of Nora's treatment in *A Doll's House* or in the case of the analysis of texts like *The Kite Runner* rather crude generalizations about the way Muslims see the world vis-a-vis the West.

Q3. This was often done well with candidates showing a vivid sense of the way texts can appeal to the reader's auditory and visual senses. When badly done, by a significant minority, candidates most often discussed why the texts would make good films, often in somewhat limited terms, simply asserting that if a text had action and well-drawn characters it would make a good movie. Occasionally strong candidates appear to have been mistakenly given the information that writing about films as texts was valid in this examination and the following should be noted:

Film is not an appropriate choice of text for paper 2. Although the definition of "text" is very broad across the language and literature course as a whole, the guide clearly states that students are required to study two *literary* texts in part 3. At Standard Level, they are also required to cover two literary genres in this part of the course, which they have not done if they have selected a film.

Q4. Too many candidates simply did not understand what to many is a familiar argument related to ethical philosophy, and some even saw it as about the endings of the text which made means hard to determine. This was only well handled when the means/ends argument was fully understood. In these cases some very good answers looking at characters and their choices, for example, were produced.

Q5. This appears to have been the least popular question and was often poorly handled with few candidates being able to show how a text referenced a myth, legend or story. Some responses showed good awareness of the way the source material was used effectively by a writer, for example in essays on *The Crucible* but too often candidates identified the myth or story but did not show how the writer made use of it.

Q6. This was the most popular question and was accessible to almost all candidates with a wide range of responses but few that seemed completely off the question as happened with Q3 at times, for example. The best candidates could see the relationship and define it clearly often able to explore contextual elements and the way strength and weakness might be seen in a more complex way beyond the typical binary of two opposed characters.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

- Candidates need to support their arguments by detailed reference to the text with relevant quotation.
- Candidates need to practice defining questions in their own terms and how they might be answered in relation to their texts.
- Context needs to be examined, explored and liberated from background, and instead linked to reception and production and the way it is influenced by culturally specific reading practices.
- The effects of stylistic features are rarely considered and this is an important aspect of the way texts are understood. Considering these features more closely for the specific effects they have in a work, perhaps phrasing the discussion as "how does this device help to shape the meaning of this point in the text?"

Further comments

There were frequently combinations of texts that seemed very hard for candidates to link in a meaningful way.

A few candidates answered a question with reference to three texts. There is no specific penalty for this, but the marks awarded will probably be affected as it is unlikely that the candidate will have been able to cover each work in depth. It is important that candidates are given clear guidance as to what is expected from them in the examination.

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