

English A Language & 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 - 26	27 - 42	43 - 56	57 - 66	67 - 80	81 - 100

INTRODUCTION

The first November examination session of the Language and Literature programme saw some 1,100 candidates from over 80 schools entering at Higher Level and 700 from over 40 schools at Standard Level.

All the components were submitted for electronic marking or moderation except for the Written Task that, for technical reasons, was paper-based from candidate to examiner. In future 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 results indicate that, overall, SL candidates achieved better mean grades than HL candidates. As a whole, the latter performed better on Internal Assessment and Paper 1 than on Paper 2 and the Written Task. SL candidates performed well on IA, P1 and, particularly, the WT, less well on P2.

At HL, there were 19 G2 respondents for Paper 1, of whom 17 considered the Paper to have been set at an appropriate level of difficulty. The comments were generally very positive.

There were 19 G2 respondents for Paper 2 of whom 13 considered the difficulty level appropriate, 6 too difficult. The written comments raised some concerns about the clarity of the wording of some of the questions, but an equal number reported positively on the fairness of the paper.

At SL, there were 8 G2 respondents for Paper 1, of whom 7 considered the difficulty level appropriate. The comments were generally very positive.

There were 9 G2 respondents for Paper 2. 5 considered the difficulty level appropriate, 4 too difficult. The written comments raised some concerns about the clarity of the wording of some of the questions, but an equal number reported positively on the fairness of the paper

Before presenting detailed comments on the performance of candidates in each of the four components by the principal examiners responsible for them let us reiterate a couple of general observations made in the May report:

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 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.

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

There was comment on the part of the moderators that some schools are not following the instructions in the Language and Literature Subject Guide. There were several instances of schools using authors, such as Salinger and Golding, who are not on the English PLA. The Subject Guide clearly states that all works taught in Part 4 must be written by authors from the PLA. There were also schools, who were doing works in translation in Part 4 which is not permitted. On the other hand, moderators found that other schools offered well-chosen works that offered a good balance between poetry, drama and prose. One moderator commented that, "the range of texts submitted was pleasing with a move away from the more predictable texts. Though *Streetcar Named Desire*, *The Great Gatsby* and the poems of Owen were popular, it was good to see the work of DF Wallace and the poems of Atwood." Among prose writers, Ishiguro, Orwell, Achebe, Poe, Morrison, McEwan, and O'Brien were in evidence. Shakespeare was well represented, usually with *Macbeth*, *The Tempest*, *Hamlet* and *King Lear*, and other playwrights, such as Williams, Miller and Shaw, were also popular. Poets were wide-ranging as well; in evidence were contemporary poets such as Plath, Heaney, Duffy, and Langston Hughes as well as earlier poets such as Keats and Donne.

A few moderators were concerned that insufficient works were in evidence in the sampling from some schools. Though this may just be a result of the computer selection of samples, teachers should be sure that all Part 4 works are taught prior to beginning the orals, and that

passages from all the works are represented in the overall distribution of passages offered to the candidates.

Most moderators commented that the passages were well chosen and of suitable challenge; however, a few worried that there was some inequality of length and difficulty among the passages offered to a single group of candidates. Teachers should ensure, to the best of their ability, to offer passages of equal difficulty/length and of equal teaching to all candidates. For example, if an extended amount of time during class is spent on a particular soliloquy from *Hamlet*, that soliloquy should probably not then be offered as a passage for the oral. Likewise, if a passage is selected from a novel and that passage has not received any attention, the candidate receiving that passage will likely be at a disadvantage. Teachers should take care not to select passages that are overly long or dense; there was evidence of very good candidates having to talk much too quickly in order to cover all the material they wished to discuss.

Of a more clerical nature, teachers need to be sure that materials are uploaded properly and on time, and that the 1/L&LIA forms are properly and completely filled out and that comments are helpful to moderators for understanding why a particular mark was given. At times the comment did not match with the mark given, e.g. if there is "superficial" understanding, the mark awarded for criterion A should be in the 3/4 range and not the 5/6. Extracts that have been typed out need to be carefully proofread, and the lines of all extracts should be numbered by fives, beginning with one. Extraneous information such as authors, titles, dates, act and scene numbers, footnotes, indications such as "war poetry," etc. should not be included with the extract. Titles of poems, however, are considered part of the poem itself.

Guiding and subsequent questions

Numerous moderators commented that teachers were providing very generic guiding questions, sometimes using the same questions for all extracts. Please note that sample guiding questions offered in the Subject Guide and elsewhere were deliberately generic, intended only as a starting point for the actual shaping of a question. The guiding questions should be specific to the passage chosen, and are intended as prompts to help candidates begin to shape their overall response in the preparation room. As such, one question should direct the candidate to focus on the specific subject matter or content of the extract and one should provoke thinking about its literary features, i.e. how the extract has been constructed by the writer and to what effect. Guiding questions need not be addressed by the candidates, but if they have been well constructed, they will inevitably be discussed. One moderator noted that the guiding questions can also be too difficult, and, thus, instead of providing a springboard for preparation, they become stumbling blocks. Because the guiding questions are merely prompts to generate thinking, it may not be useful to encourage candidates to organize their responses solely around these two questions.

Subsequent questions are an opportunity for the teacher to help the candidate to receive further points in knowledge and understanding of the extract and in the understanding of literary features. Thus it is important for teachers to use this time to take the candidate back to the extract to review points missed or unclear and to explore literary features in greater depth. This is not a time to discuss the literary work as a whole or to ask generic questions such as "Did you like this work?" Because of this opportunity to add to the candidate's overall

response, teachers should, as best as possible, make use of the full fifteen minutes allotted. On the other hand, teachers should not ask questions after the fifteen minutes; no information offered after that point can be credited to the response. It is important that every candidate be given some subsequent questions; to that end, some candidates may need to be gently interrupted when their commentaries have gone on too long. The candidate should speak for roughly ten minutes, but not more than twelve. Too rigid an enforcement of the ten minute rule can be hurtful to the better candidates who have a clear focus they hope to accomplish, but candidates who are rambling or repeating themselves might be better moved to the subsequent questioning as quickly as possible after the ten minute mark. Several moderators commented that, overall, time management of the orals has significantly improved.

Finally, if more than one teacher is responsible for the orals in a school, it is imperative that all the teachers standardize their marking. Inconsistent marking can make a school impossible to moderate. It might also be helpful for these teachers to standardize their formatting of extracts and the approach given to generating guiding questions and subsequent questions. It did happen that some teachers from a school were appropriately following instructions and others were not; this is certainly unfair to the candidates who found themselves in such a situation.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A: Knowledge and understanding of the text or extract

All the moderators agreed that this criterion was the most secure for the candidates. Almost all candidates were able to show an adequate understanding of their extracts. A couple of moderators commented that some candidates offered excessively lengthy introductions to their orals, giving general background on the work and biographical information on the author. This practice is not useful, as only points relevant to the specific extract are going to earn credit, and this time (sometimes in excess of three minutes) subtracts from time that could be spent on the analysis of the extract itself. In general, the more specific and the more detailed an analysis was, the more points it earned. Weaker candidates were characterized by offering paraphrase, explication, or simply ignoring sizable portions of the extract. The better candidates took the passage well in hand and were able to explore literal and figurative meanings, textual and sub textual implications, and to do so in a highly personal and intelligent manner.

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

The moderators were also in agreement that this was the criterion most in need of work and the criterion that teachers were most likely to over mark. Most candidates managed "some" understanding of the effects of literary features, thanks to a few comments on character and theme and perhaps noting some imagery or comparative devices. However, even the address of those features was often thin, with candidates discussing characters as actual entities, rather than constructs of a writer's imagination, and themes as topics or even motifs in a work rather than a point or points that a writer was trying to make. If a work is discussed in class around a series of topics such as appearance/reality, death, the American dream, etc., a useful concluding activity would be to have each candidate write out exactly what the author

accomplished by introducing each of these topics into the work and then explore how these topics rise to the level of a theme. Sometimes "theme" is demanded in a guiding question, when, in fact, no thematic element is evident in the extract, forcing the candidates to make some rather strained responses.

Genre is another aspect of analysis that is poorly addressed by many candidates. Each genre has its own particular set of literary features, and it is important for a candidate to be aware of the genre of the extract that he or she is being asked to discuss. Plays should not be discussed as novels; some sense of theatre should be in evidence, such as what is actually meant by "stage directions" and how they might be put to practice on a stage. Novels/short stories are strongly impacted by point of view and narrative voice, yet seldom do candidates mention these aspects of their extracts. Poems are, perhaps, handled more specifically as a genre, but elements such as rhyme, meter or structure are given only perfunctory mention, usually in the opening of the oral.

As always, candidates were prone to "spot" devices, but then failed to offer sufficient analysis of their effects. Some candidates offered complex literary terms such as asyndeton, anaphora, etc. but with seemingly little understanding of why the writer had used them. As one moderator put it, "literary terms should always be in the service of the analysis rather than to lead it."

Criterion C: Organization

Moderators felt that this criterion was handled reasonably well. Most candidates offered an introduction in which they situated their extract in the larger work and then indicated how they were going to approach their analysis. Those that held clearly to their original intent, keeping some transitional words in play to assist the listener, could show a good sense of organization. Some candidates organized around topics; others simply established what they felt the significance of the extract was (a thesis statement of sorts) and then proceeded to go through the extract analyzing what the writer was doing to establish that significance. Some candidates started out clearly but then lost their way. Weaker students fell into paraphrase or came up with topic points that weren't particularly suitable or logical for handling the extract effectively. Some candidates simply answered the guiding questions and ignored anything else in the extract that was of significance, showing an inadequate structure. The weakest candidates simply plunged into the extract in random fashion or ignored the extract and discussed the larger work instead. Responses that were very short showed lack of proper organization, offering insufficient points so as to provide a thorough analysis of the extract. The best candidates organized their material clearly and meaningfully, covered their projected points and drew to a firm conclusion, very close to the ten-minute mark.

Criterion D: Language

Most candidates were able to show at least an adequate use of language, with some offering concise and sophisticated control of their expression. Only a few candidates struggled to express themselves clearly. Register was a problem for several candidates who fell into expressions of "like...", "you know," "guys," "kids," etc. Some error was noted as well, especially in pronoun and verb agreement. Most teachers seemed to be accurate in their marking of this criterion, though a few were a bit generous and others overly harsh. It is

important that teachers also maintain a formal register while conducting this assessment so that casual language on their part does not mislead the candidates into reducing their register when answering the subsequent questions.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

- Encourage candidates to be confident in offering independent readings of their texts. (Too often candidates are struggling to shoehorn the extract into a framework of ideas apparently learned in class and neither owned nor fully understood by them.)
- Encourage the practice of allowing candidates to talk uninterrupted and unprompted and offer some "timed" speaking opportunities
- Share practice sessions among teachers where there are two or more teachers involved in giving orals
- Encourage the process of literary analysis throughout the course, discouraging the mere noting of literary features
- Encourage candidates to practise the organization of an oral commentary. (An overt structure and thesis early in the commentary will assist the producer and the receiver to have a clear idea of what is being undertaken.)
- Teachers need to familiarize themselves with all instructions for the preparation and delivery of the IOC
- Teachers need to insure that all materials are clearly formatted, presented and uploaded
- Teachers need to obtain access to a quiet location for the delivery of the IOCs and provide a stable, supportive environment for each candidate
- Standardizing of marking is imperative in schools where two or more teachers are responsible for the IOCs
- Teachers must assure that candidates do not have prior knowledge of the extracts or the guiding questions, nor should the commentary be done more than once
- Overall, the internal assessment for the November session of 2013 was successfully carried out. It was evident that the majority of the teachers had worked hard both in the teaching of Part 4 and in the conducting of the orals to see that their candidates were prepared for the task. The candidates, by and large, were a pleasure to hear.

Higher level written assignment

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 assignment

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

The range and suitability of the work submitted

Overall there was a good range of interesting and suitable submissions with many candidates responding successfully to the demands of the tasks and showing a genuine engagement with the spirit of the programme. The common ingredient that often made their 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.

If candidates were less successful, it was often because of the nature of their chosen material or because of an apparent lack of understanding of the demands of the tasks and the prescribed questions.

That the task should be – must be – clearly linked to the literary texts or language topics or aspects studied are a requirement that candidates were unwise to ignore. The function of both the rationale (for Task 1) and the outline (for Task 2) is not only to assist examiners in their evaluation of the tasks produced, but to help candidates focus on writing appropriate pieces of work.

It is particularly important that the programme summary be accurate and include references to texts and topics 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); choice of task must be left to the individual candidate in consultation with the teacher.
- HL tasks were submitted where both task 1 and 2 were based on the works in literature parts 3 and 4. The rule is that 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.
- It is not suitable to submit a short task 1 (for example, an advert) supplemented by an explanation or analysis as part of the task. The task needs to stand alone, the rationale offering a brief explanation of its objectives and the conventions used.
- It can be observed that the more inauthentic a task is, the more unsuitable it is. For example, a speech by the President of a South American country to voters about a national issue is not an authentic English-language task. One does not want to discourage students from casting the net wide in the search for interesting and relevant topics to write about but not if it means tasks based on media sources that cannot have been part of the candidate's programme.

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, a series of diary entries or of advertisements.)

Characteristics and conventions of certain text types:

It was evident that some 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. All examiners commented on the frequency with which candidates failed to show understanding of the conventions of the text type used.

All examiners also commented on the unsuitability of formal essays or of 'articles' which read like formal essays. It cannot be stressed enough that the formal essay – naked or disguised – is not an acceptable text type for the written task 1.

Here are some specific comments about certain types of text:

- '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.
- '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.
- 'log', 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 giving candidates a good opportunity to write on subjects they were passionate about. The most successful interactively engaged 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: 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: this can be a very satisfying way of dealing with a theme and, at the same time, emulating a writer's style. 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) for a significant number of candidates failed to explain how their piece met the demands of the course. It should explain:

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

Tasks were usually structured, with paragraphing in evidence, though coherence of the whole was more or less successful, conclusions proving an especial weakness for some.

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:

There was considerable range in the level of expression, with some candidates evidently unable to communicate effectively in a sustained piece of writing. Register proved difficult for some, whilst a smaller number were hesitant in their control of grammar and punctuation, sometimes impeding communication.

Written Task 2 (HIGHER LEVEL only)

The range and suitability of the work submitted

A good range of work was submitted, mostly on the literary works studied, but also on 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 questions which drew more than half of the responses were 'How could the text be read and interpreted differently by two different readers?' and 'How and why is a social group' represented in a particular way?'

The first of these seemed to cause problems for some candidates. The guidance in the question seems clear but sometimes two texts were offered and often the notion of 'reader' was not well understood. Far too many candidates fell into the trap of discussing two different possible interpretations of the text rather than two different readers.

In the latter, 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' or 'the people of a nation' was the social group chosen. Obviously the better answers would use contextual factors to identify the particular group of women or people under discussion. If an individual is taken as representative of a social group, for example Shylock or Rita, it needs to be explained in what way s/he is representative of a social group.

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 one social group rather than several and also deal with the reason(s) for marginalization etc., that, ideally, the question should perhaps have

asked for in the first place.

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. Its present phrasing permits too wide a range of responses, some unhelpful for candidates, so here it is particularly important for future candidates to seek advice from their teachers.

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 very good submissions by candidates based on advertising and other media sources.

Also not very popular was 'How does the text conform to or deviate from the conventions of a particular genre, and for what purpose?' though there were some very good responses to this. It was important to identify the conventions of the genre being discussed. The weaker answers failed to do this.

For the purposes of these questions, what constitutes 'a text'? The Subject Guide says 'it could be a shorter text or texts such as a newspaper article or a sports blog' (p.43). Some candidates were writing about a series of TV programmes, or a collection of headlines, or other texts whose sources (often) were not cited. Since the critical response is to be based on 'material studied in the course', it is for the teacher to decide what constitutes the 'text' studied, and it is for the candidate to include it in the programme summary.

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. An outline should clearly communicate to the examiner the focus of the response. It is not merely the candidate's sketch 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

Many responses were not as critical as they should have been. 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. Candidates often failed to support their responses. References to the texts analysed need to be carefully chosen, succinct, accurate and, if necessary, referenced or footnoted (footnotes and bibliographies 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

- 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 and that can be carried out effectively within the word limit, the next step should be to familiarize her/himself with the characteristics and conventions of the type. 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 that 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.

- Students should be strongly 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 one to precede task 2. One would expect a rationale or an outline to precede the task not follow it. Candidates should check that they have assembled their work in the right order: rationale, WT1, outline, WT2. They should also make sure that their work is securely clipped together, preferably with treasury tags. Loose papers in polythene envelopes are not helpful to the examiner.

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

Candidates should realize that it is not adequate merely to find, identify and list the stylistic features of a text; rather, an understanding of the effects of these features must be demonstrated. Candidates in the Language and Literature program are expected to show insight about how language works

Most candidates made few, if any, comments about the visual aspect of Text 2. It is to be hoped that, as we settle into the new course, more candidates will gradually feel more comfortable in this area.

The second pair of texts may have appeared to be more difficult, perhaps because of the poem, perhaps because of the subject matter. Far fewer candidates chose Section B.

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

Candidates were generally able to write a well-organized analysis, demonstrating an understanding of the similarities and differences between the texts. Clearly they had been prepared to structure the comparative textual analysis in a balanced and effective way.

Many were also prepared to discuss stylistic features, although sometimes in a superficial way, with little demonstrated understanding of the effects of these features.

There was some good discussion of audience and good attempts to comment on context.

Most responses were characterized by language that was relatively clear and carefully chosen.

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

By far the majority of candidates chose to write about the first pair: the letter from John Steinbeck to his son and the comic strip. The theme of love was identified quite easily, as was the fact that both texts are presented as responses to a request for advice. However, some discussions remained quite superficial, with inappropriate conclusions drawn about, for instance, Steinbeck's first marriage, and without a full understanding of the irony in the comic strip. Discussion about stylistic features was sometimes minimal in Text 1, as was a detailed discussion of the drawings in Text 2.

Although far fewer candidates chose the second pair, the poem and the on-line posting, there were some excellent responses, perhaps reflecting some self-selection, with stronger candidates picking this pair. There were some problems with the metaphor in Text 3, with some candidates missing the point that a landscape is being described. There were, however, some good discussions of individual stylistic features. Most candidates who chose this pair had very good comments on genre and audience in Text 4.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

- It should be emphasized to future candidates that the effects of stylistic features must be addressed. There is sometimes a tendency for the discussion of these features to be quite mechanical.
- Candidates should be taught to read the texts carefully before choosing one of the pairs. Sometimes a pair that looks easier may in fact be more difficult. For instance, candidates may find it challenging to write on a graphic novel or comic strip, even though the genre is familiar and appealing. On the other hand, a poem can offer very fertile ground for discussion. Similarly, candidates may write very successfully on a subject that is unfamiliar to them.
- Candidates need some practice in commenting on context. It is important that they do so, but they must learn not to imagine or infer contextual information that is not present. Dates of publication can certainly offer some clues about context; however, candidates must proceed cautiously. It is hard to see what the Cold War has to do with the texts in Section A, for instance, as one candidate claimed. This kind of contextual interpretation would really need to be proven with explicit evidence from the texts.

Standard 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

General comments

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

The two texts with their wealth of graphical, structural and linguistic features were accessible to all candidates; the subject fields were topical and within candidate experience.

Some candidates found it difficult to present a holistic analysis of the texts, often concentrating on one or two areas while omitting others, for example context but not culture, or omission of reference to text type in text 1. In text 2 some candidates identified the date and context, but made incorrect assumptions about historical events at the time, leading to confusion for the reader. In both cases, the result was an imbalanced argument with candidates struggling to develop their ideas and analysis that resulted in poorly organised scripts and thus a lower mark.

Candidates continue to have a problem with discussing cultural context in terms of the publication of the texts. For Text 1, candidates did little other than identify the year it was published. Text 2 was better addressed in this area but most candidates were only able to identify that it was older and therefore women were the ones who cooked. Candidates also had trouble developing comments about text type features of Text 1. Many were able to identify them and listed features but few were able to link the text type to their analysis. Most candidates missed the humour in Text 1.

Criterion A:

While most candidates responded in some way to the context of the texts, not all candidates seemed completely prepared to do so. In Text 1, the online article, many candidates failed to understand the significance of “wild spin” and many wrote in general about the rules of table tennis. There was some confusion between the Tsunami (a dream) and the actual earthquake. Some wrote that the Tsunami happened “an hour ago”. In Text 2, Campbell’s Soup, most candidates wrote about the soup being personified in “Campbell’s Soups approach...unafraid” but very few candidates interpreted this phrase as meaning the Campbell’s company. Weaker scripts tended to contain summary and generalisations with a lack of supporting material or analysis.

Criterion B:

Many candidates noted literary elements but were very general in explaining how these techniques worked in order to convey meaning. Candidates seemed to be better able to discuss stylistic features of the advertisement than the online article. Generally this section was adequately done with a few candidates still just providing summary with some still identifying and not explaining.

Criterion C:

Candidates seemed to be prepared to structure their commentaries with an introduction and a conclusion and ideas slotted into paragraphs – what kept many candidates out of the higher marks was the lack of development of an argument. Candidates should attempt to have a thread throughout their commentary in order to integrate their points and provide a developed argument. Supporting evidence was generally used but quotations were not always well integrated, or explained, and therefore failed to support a point.

Criterion D:

Generally sound language skills. Some candidates still use informal expressions and need to be instructed on the appropriate register for this task. Language and grammar continue to be difficult for many candidates where English is not their first language. A few candidates used an informal tone or were very general in approach so that the style was only to some extent appropriate and the mark limited to 2. Sentence structure was a weak point as well as the incorrect use or lack of apostrophe was evident. Candidates could be encouraged to proofread their work before submission as often the errors are slips in spelling and omissions of words in sentences. Much omission of the definite and indefinite article was evident leading to a stilted, fragmented style.

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

Overall candidates seemed well prepared for the change in curriculum and generally dealt well with the demands of the paper (although they will have seen the May 2013 papers this was the first session for the November cohorts). Most candidates were able to complete their commentary in the given time.

Candidates used terminology related to literary analysis appropriately and identified examples of features discussed with good integration of evidence. Good candidates would then continue with further analysis and explanation, whereas weaker candidates would not.

Language usage, punctuation and organization seemed good, with a lot more 4s in criteria C and D rather than 3s.

Both texts had depth of material for candidates of all levels and both texts were largely dealt with effectively, although candidates seemed better prepared to analyse and comment on an advertisement than an online article. Most candidates knew the terminology for persuasive techniques, and could comment intelligently on both visual and linguistic stylistic features. The features of the online article were not discussed with such depth of understanding.

Criterion A:

Most candidates engaged well with the online article and the advertisement. Knowledge and understanding was generally solid with the majority of marks being 3s and 4s and a good number 5s. There was a general understanding of context and text type but not always fully developed or supported.

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. 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. The whole assessment criterion descriptor range from "little" to "very good" was evident here.

Criterion C:

The majority of candidates wrote well-organized commentaries. The structure was varied although the linear approach seemed popular. For text two, the advertisement, some candidates effectively used the guiding questions of persuasive techniques and the text-image parallels as a way to structure.

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 well-written scripts to read.

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

In both texts, candidates were able to discuss many of the linguistic stylistic features and were able to comment on them in an analytical way. There was sufficient material that was accessible to all candidates with an almost equal balance of commentaries for each text.

Candidates did seem less prepared to comment on features of a website article than on features of an advertisement. They generally understood the texts well but did not always demonstrate a strong understanding of the contexts.

Text 1: Travel Tales: Indonesia's Wild Spin on Ping Pong

Candidates generally demonstrated good understanding of the text but some lacked the holistic approach with many not understanding the text type or purpose of it being a travel article and dealt with it as autobiographical piece. There was competence in identifying linguistic strategies used with good candidates being able to comment on the war imagery, locals' non-standard English and the features of an online magazine article. There were some perceptive comments about the cultural context and the distance between the foreign writer and the locals. (Candidates who live overseas and travel frequently could probably relate well to the article.)

Candidates struggled with the concept of the ping pong game as an example of normality continuing after a natural disaster and an activity giving joy while other candidates made quite perceptive comments connecting the game to the geography but neglected to identify some more basic elements like audience and purpose. Likewise, many candidates were aware of basic elements like audience and purpose but did not make the connection between the game and the geography of the region.

Many candidates failed to understand the significance of "wild spin" and many wrote in general about the rules of table tennis. There was some confusion between the Tsunami (a dream) and the actual earthquake. Some wrote that the Tsunami happened "an hour ago". Little comment was made on the time references or the author's dream.

Some candidates struggled to identify the visual features of the text associated with the text type, which resulted in a weak commentary. The final paragraphs were often misread so candidates missed the humour.

The best candidates took care to support their statements with textual evidence and understood the manifold purpose of the text: to inform, persuade and entertain. In the lower ranges there was much generalisation that could have applied to any article. Candidates are advised to take care to be detailed and specific in their commentaries. The best 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.

Text 2: Campbell's Soup Advertisement

Candidates responding to Text 2 generally tended to fare better with regard to understanding of content, context and purpose as the inference of author purpose seemed less complex. Candidates appeared to feel very comfortable with elements of advertising and persuasive appeals and were able to organize effectively and provide a developed argument.

Candidates were well prepared, in most cases, for interpreting the images in relation to the text, especially the picture of the hostess and its implications. Many candidates were able to write about the features and their persuasive effects and most explained the conscious use of word choice, imagery, lists and sentence structures for effect. Most candidates were aware of the majority of the visual features and could comment on their effects although closer reference to the overall page was needed as there was little reference to such things as the candelabra, the background picture for instance.

Some candidates struggled with the context of this advertisement and had some difficulty in identifying the time frame of the text. Although some identified 1934 as being after the Great Depression, reference was made to the emancipation of women, working outside the home etc., rather than to the economy of the soup to save money even for wealthy housewives. If candidates were unfamiliar with the historical time period, they could not comment perceptively enough to merit a 5 in Criterion A.

Most candidates wrote about the soup being personified in "Campbell's Soups approach ... unafraid" but very few candidates interpreted this phrase as meaning the Campbell's company.

There was a tendency for some candidates to drift into jargon or to identify every technique they feel should be in an advertisement and the weaker candidates tried to force a technique into the text. Candidates should be reminded that they should engage with a text without overdoing it: soup ads are likely to be neither "exhilarating" nor "spectacular." Candidates also need to be warned about feeling the need to find examples of all of their favourite stylistic devices: not all texts have "cacophonous" words.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

- Candidates should be familiar with major historical/cultural issues in English-speaking countries.
- Teachers should make sure to provide a wide-range of text types from a wide range of time periods/cultures.
- Candidates need to be taught to "open their minds" and think about the text from different angles before attempting any writing at all.

- Be sure that candidates understand the importance of addressing the basics of a text: audience, purpose, and text type.
- 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.
- Ensure that candidates analyze the entire text including visuals and language; there must be a balance.
- Use the rubric so candidates know exactly what they are expected to do to score well in a Paper 1.
- 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.
- Assist candidates to 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 candidates to look closely at the source of each text.

Further comments

- Focus on teaching candidates 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 candidates 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 in which candidates appeared well prepared

Most students could fashion an acceptable essay, with an introduction, body and conclusion. As well, many students copied the prompt as a way to keep their argument focused on a response to the prompt, not just a 'tell-all-you-know' about the texts.

Many students seemed genuinely engaged with the material about which they were writing. Even in some of the more poorly written essays, I was able to hear a student voice who was engaged with the issues of the material.

As well, some students were able to integrate concepts from the 'language' part of the course, which demonstrated that they were integrating their learning. This is quite a feat as often the language and literature components of the course can seem quite separate. This was particularly noticeable in discussions about *Persepolis*, where the best candidates were able to intelligently discuss the codes of the graphic novel in a way that was extremely complimentary to their literary exegesis. Teachers should consider texts for Part 3 that do offer opportunities to link the various parts of the course. The candidates who were able to do this often wrote superb essays which lived up to the spirit of the course.

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

5 was a very popular prompt and many students wrote about it. The trouble was that at times students wrote all they knew about certain texts, and tried to shoehorn the idea of money into their response when it didn't really fit, or help explicate the text.

3 was a very difficult question, yet the students who did tackle it often did very well. I think this prompt attracted some of the more able students.

6 was also quite popular, and often provided an effective and supportive lens for students to interpret their work.

2 was also quite popular, although many students failed to define what the terms meant, and this resulted in quite general essays. It was also difficult to integrate the 'cultural context' into the response at times.

In general, candidates need to be reminded to read the entire prompt. For instance, in Q.5, many students missed the 'how is it represented' section of the prompt. Also with Q.1, many candidates failed to respond to the 'in what ways is time used effectively' section of the prompt.

Candidates need to be aware that when quotations or short statements form a part of the overall prompt, at times they must be used in the response, and at times they are just there for reference or to spur thinking on the topic.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Some relevant comments from the May 13 session that still apply:

- Clear awareness of what context is, and how it is related to the texts in an informative manner, not just a coincidental manner.
- Every general statement needs support/proof.
- 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.
- 'The way context affects meaning' needs to be glossed, and models of best practice in this area need to be developed so teachers and students can see what this is.
- Appreciate the nuances and complexities of context. The word 'society' should be banned! Perhaps some phrases such as "...In these circumstances", "In light of this evidence", "because the author clearly constructs the text in this manner, these conclusions can be drawn".
- Just to add, so many students don't seem to understand the difference between an opinion stated as a claim, and an assertion that is supported with specific textual evidence as part of a persuasive argument about the texts. There needs to be quite specific teaching in this area, with clear models show that demonstrate the difference.

Further comments

It is very pleasing to see a range of texts being taught. I do want to emphasize once again that the possibilities offered by good text choices to link aspects of this course are rewarding and can lead to excellent responses. Teachers are encouraged to select works (such as the graphic novel) that will allow students to demonstrate the breadth of their learning in the entire course.

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

The examining team for this component was unanimous that student responses for this paper showed evidence of committed teaching and enjoyment of the texts. Candidates for the most part were well prepared and in general knew the texts well. There were however clear areas where candidates often experienced a good deal of difficulty, these are noted below.

While the examination environment is challenging for students there were many occasions when students seemed determined to deliver a reading of the texts regardless of whether they fully understood it or if it was directly relevant to the question. This was particularly so for weaker candidates who tended to neglect analysis of the texts in the light of the question instead focusing on issues such as “Absurdism” in *The Stranger*, for example, which, even if they could define clearly, did not always contribute to a coherent reading of the text. This was also apparent in the use of literary terms such as “asyndeton” and “anaphora”, which, even where the general meaning appeared to be understood, were dropped into the discussion for the sake of using them rather than because they were significant to the question or the ideas being advanced. There is no suggestion here that these topics were inappropriate or not taught well but teachers should perhaps shift emphasis from teaching a reading of the text to equipping students with the means to negotiate a reading in the light of the question. Different critical approaches can be taught accessibly and successfully and enable students to develop flexible ways of responding to texts that keep focus firmly on the text and its language.

Understanding of context remains an issue for many candidates and teachers. The main issue here is one of integration; many students clearly know a great deal about the varying contexts of the work but tend to write about them as discrete elements, failing to integrate them with their knowledge of the work itself, its literary features and the question. It is clear that teachers need to spend a lot of time on this area of the course but there were many examples where students used context in a thoughtful and informed way enriching their reading of the texts and their response to the question.

A surprising number of candidates found it hard to provide a sustained, detailed and developed response offering only a very surface discussion of the texts and not producing enough material to achieve an adequate level of understanding of the texts and their contexts. It is very important students are able and have the confidence to present and support an argument about the texts and their reading of them in the light of the question. Similarly students often showed a surprisingly limited awareness of the role of the stylistic features and

their effects in constructing meaning frequently missing the opportunity to use them in support of their analysis beyond a general mention of character and theme.

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

In general candidates appeared to be well prepared for the examination and to have made a careful study of their texts supported by good teaching. Almost all the candidates offered a well-planned answer and in general performance under criterion D “Organisation and Development” was one of the strongest areas in this examination, students would, however, benefit from being taught to define the terms of the question and develop a clear thesis they are able to defend. The best responses offered detailed and insightful understanding of the texts and their contexts and were able to present their findings in a clear and convincing way in the light of the selected question. The examiner team in general felt that teachers have clearly understood the key intellectual concerns of the Language and literature syllabus and embraced the broadened approach to literature it offers which can be exploited in paper 2.

The selection of texts was generally good although, as noted above, some students seemed constrained by a narrow and poorly understood reading or a challenging combination of texts. Linking *the Great Gatsby* with *The Stranger*, for example, is an interesting idea that stronger candidates handled well, weaker candidates, however, found it very difficult to develop a defensible thesis for this combination. Similarly the pairing of *Never Let Me Go* with Murakami’s stories, was not always successful, often they were only linked by a poorly understood idea of existentialism or generalisations about the polarity between East and West.

There were, however, some excellent responses on texts like *Heart of Darkness*, showing very good understanding of the way its context has changed over time. Overall a variety of genres were used with a few excellent responses on poetry though Drama and the Novel and Short Story dominated. Apart from a tendency to treat dramas as novels, with little reference to their dramatic qualities, students appeared well prepared to discuss genres and their features where it was appropriate.

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

In general students seemed to enjoy and take advantage of the openness and challenge of the questions often responding in original and creative ways and apparently able to prepare an argument and integrate their knowledge and understanding more naturally. Details for each question are below:

1. This was a popular question and often handled well. It was a good example, however, of the importance of reminding candidates to read the question carefully and clearly set out in the opening to their response how they intend to interpret it. Many were able to show that time could be used symbolically to create atmosphere and mood and to show how character developed. Occasionally however time was simply seen as historical context leading to lengthy discussions of McCarthyism, the Cultural Revolution in China or apartheid, depending

on the texts, and did not always answer the question. Furthermore some candidates confused time with setting, particularly weather, with the sun at the moment of the Arab's murder by Meursault often being a victim of this, or moved between different definitions of time in a confusing way.

2. Again this was a popular question and generally candidates were able to link the contrasting behaviours of standing alone or as a group to cultural context effectively with good responses, on Lao She's *Teahouse*, for example. The ideas were not always fully understood, however, with a number of responses misunderstanding the figure of speech and seeing it as an opportunity to discuss the alienation and isolation of a central character.

3. This question often appeared to pose a good deal of difficulty for a number of candidates mainly because instead of taking the prompt and looking at the way form delivers and shapes content, exploring the rich and complex ways in which texts like *The Crucible* and *Heart of Darkness*, for example, combine story and character with complex ideas, a number of students ignored the separation suggested in the prompt conflating both form and content to give a general discussion of the quality of the authors' writing and how stylistic features portray the theme. Moreover at times "craft" was used as a verb, against the prompt. That being said a large proportion of the examining team found that the best responses of their allocation were those dealing with this question. Where students were able to produce nuanced analyses of elements of plot, the structuring of time, character development and the use of narrative voice among other stylistic and structural features and relate these to the content of the texts while at the same time being aware that at times the distinction between form and content can be a false one.

4. This question again posed a number of challenges and brought out the difficulty of writing about cultural context for many students. Too often the response over-simplified the question and failed to look at the varying contexts of reception, often commenting at the level where a text would be condemned or acclaimed simply because its ideas were different from the context of its reception. This led to some responses that saw the question as an opportunity to shoehorn the texts into a particular ideology, with feminist and Marxist approaches often being used. When this happened, analysis of the texts themselves was frequently neglected. As one examiner put it: "It is crucial that the response privileges the works, not simply the student's own reading practices."

5. This was not often selected by students, despite many of this session's cohort studying *The Great Gatsby*, *Death of a Salesman* and *A Doll's House*. The best responses were able to explore money-driven conflicts in the works in an effective way with some good ideas about the representation of society and the context of the works' reception.

6. This was a popular question and was one that students appeared to feel comfortable with, showing a good understanding of the idea of tension. Too many, however, struggled to relate this effectively to the "new/old" dichotomy either seeing it too literally, for example, seeing the move from Hailsham in *Never Let Me Go* as an example of illustrating old and new, without exploring the tension it might generate or if it was as significant as it appeared. Generally, however, responses to this question were strong.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Work on teaching candidates how to write a sustained response, giving candidates more practice in setting up a response and writing an argument for an hour and a half. Candidates should be able to write a minimum of four or five sides in an examination situation.

Focus on giving students the ability to develop their own readings of a text rather than teaching “set-piece” readings that weaker students especially use as a crutch, often leading to a lack of relevance in their responses. This is not an easy task and it is important to help students understand the difference between producing an ideologically-driven response (i.e. Marxist) and an analytical one. Acknowledging a particular approach is important and using one can be helpful, but should return the reader to the text not become the main object of interest. Useful resources here suggested by examiners are:

How Literature Works, John Sutherland, 2011, *How to Read Literature*, Terry Eagleton, 2013 and *In Search of Authority*, Stephen Bonnycastle, 2007.

Work on all aspects of context with each work, including the context of reception and the context of literary genre. Students need to be able to embed cultural context into textual analysis and when teaching it is important to integrate cultural elements into all aspects of the work studied.

Attention needs to be carefully paid to stylistic and literary features, being sure that basics such as how a writer constructs a character, or how a plot is laid out, or how narrative voice impacts understanding are well understood. Theme, in particular, needs to move from a mere stating of a topic to a clear understanding of how that topic is treated by the writer and to what end. What, for example, is the writer saying about “death” in the work? Is “death” truly a theme or is it just a motif? Students need to be taught to use analysis of stylistic features in the service of their argument showing that they understand how these elements of the texts support and illustrate its ideas.

Old chestnut though it is it cannot be stressed enough that candidates need to read the question carefully and define its terms in the light of their thesis. Getting students to make up their own questions and write an opening paragraph including a thesis that can be peer assessed is an excellent way of doing this in class.

Place focus on the literary nature of works being studied; students easily see them as political or social tracts and make a false distinction between form and content. This is an important issue that can be illuminated through students’ work in TOK.