



English A: Language and Literature HL/SL

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Grade boundaries

Higher level overall

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0-13	14-29	30-45	46-58	59-68	69-82	83-100

Standard level overall

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0-12	13-28	29-44	45-58	59-69	70-83	84-100

Higher & Standard level internal assessment

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

Higher level written tasks

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 tasks

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

Higher level paper one

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

Standard level paper one

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

Higher level paper two

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0-3	4-7	8-12	13-15	16-17	18-20	21-25

Standard level paper two

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0-4	5-8	9-12	13-15	16-18	19-21	22-25

Higher and standard level internal assessment

The range and suitability of the work submitted

The extracts are generally well chosen to reflect key passages from the original work that are suitably challenging and that offer richness in language and other literary features on which the candidates can comment. Most extracts are clearly and accurately presented so as to reflect the formal nature of an IB assessment and contain no helps such as titles (with the exception of poetry), authors, chapter or page numbers or footnotes. The guiding questions are usually clear and concise, not reflecting too much information or bias regarding the extract, and which prompt the candidates in the preparation room to address both the content of the extract and how the writer shapes that content so as to impact the reader/audience.

Most orals are properly conducted in a quiet environment, fulfilling both the minimum/maximum 15-minute time limit, stopping candidates by at least 12 minutes to allow time for the required subsequent questions, and providing comments on how marks have been ascertained. Most recordings and extracts keep the assessment anonymous without any mention of teacher's name, school name, school code or candidate name or code.

Some candidates are being disadvantaged by teachers:

- selecting works by authors not on the Prescribed List of Authors (PLA) (and thus subjecting the candidates to penalties)
- choosing works not suitable for their candidates
- choosing extracts that are too thin, too dense or of unequal challenge
- offering poorly presented extracts and extracts with no line numbers for reference
- failing to ask suitable and sufficient subsequent questions that direct the candidate back to the extract for further exploration or clarification of both its content and its literary features.

Schools must ensure that the orals are uploaded correctly and that they do not send incomplete or poor-quality material.

Candidate performance against each criterion

The following comments address issues that moderators find problematic in the Individual Oral Commentaries (IOCs). This is not meant to ignore the fact that many candidates offered solid and even truly outstanding commentaries, showing their mastery of close reading and literary analysis.

Criterion A: Knowledge and understanding of the text or extract

Some issues that can affect marks are due to candidates:

- focusing on the larger work rather than the specific extract
- offering general information, usually about themes, critical theories, philosophical ideas that are not relevant to an analysis of the extract
- explicating or paraphrasing the lines, rather than offering an analysis
- offering contextual information about the writer or the time of publication that held little relevance to the extract
- offering incorrect biographical and contextual information for the extract

- reading out far too many lines, again taking away valuable time for analysis
- offering a broad understanding of what is occurring in the extract but being unable to successfully show understanding of individual lines
- failing to explore the majority of the extract
- focusing on secondary observations without relating them to the overall significance of the extract.

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

It is evident that teachers are working on this area and are encouraging their candidates to take a more analytical stance. Please remember that the discussion of literary features should go hand in hand with a discussion of the content.

Other issues include:

- identifying but not exploring how a literary feature works and what the effect might be
- showing little understanding or even consideration of the constraints/benefits of genre
- failing to have a sound grasp of imagery, figurative language, connotation, the art of characterization, narrative/poetic voice, tone, etc.
- using highly technical terms to little effect
- discussing their works as though the characters were real rather than literary constructs
- seeing themes as controlling the work rather than emanating from it
- confusing themes with topics and motifs.

Criterion C: Organization

Some problems that can affect the marks on this criterion are:

- giving poor introductions that have no thesis focusing directly on the key significance of the extract or a plan for defending that thesis
- giving long, rambling introductions offering extraneous material
- failing to concisely situate the extract
- using structures based on a list of points to be covered that have no coherent link, often leading to overlap, repetition and incoherent discussion of the extract
- offering plans with selective points that exclude the discussion of major portions of the extract
- offering a linear structure with weak introduction, a line-by-line commentary of the extract without relating the lines to its overall significance and an abrupt conclusion
- failing to use proper transitions
- failing to make appropriate use of time, coming in far too short or too long
- offering a weak conclusion or forgetting one altogether.

Criterion D: Language

Some aspects that affect language in the commentaries are:

- inappropriate vocalizations (humming, mumbling, continual interjections, etc.)
- limited breadth of vocabulary, repetition, incomplete sentences
- grammatical errors
- slang and colloquialisms
- lack of fluency
- inaccurate or inadequate use of literary terminology
- inappropriate register for a formal assessment.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

- Review all pertinent material in the *Subject Guide*, the *Diploma Programme Assessment Procedures*, the *Teacher Support Material*, Subject Reports and IA Feedback (where applicable).
- Schools with more than one teacher involved in Internal Assessment must ensure that all the teachers have standardised their marking.
- Emphasise close reading throughout the course.
- Explore a variety of literary features throughout the course, stressing how they shape meaning.
- Practise timed oral responses, so that candidates have a sense for how to pace themselves.
- Practise organising strategies, perhaps encouraging candidates to work in groups to develop a thesis (overarching idea) for a range of extracts and to determine possible plans for establishing that thesis.
- Support the practice with self-assessment and peer assessment moments, based on the assessment criteria, in order to establish awareness of the expectations of this task amongst candidates.
- Be sure that the guiding questions, the candidate's analysis, and the subsequent questions all focus directly on the extract.
- Teachers should practise the art of giving subsequent questions: directing candidates back to the extract for further explanation and exploration of content and literary features without demanding specific responses or leading the candidate.

Higher and standard level written tasks

The range and suitability of the work submitted

Most candidates submitted very good and suitable work that demonstrated thorough research and preparation as well as proficiency of language and appropriate style.

There was a wide range of text types chosen including: diary, blog, opinion article, interview and speech, with varying degrees of success in the emulation of styles and conventions for Task 1. There was also a good range of questions and texts addressed for Task 2 with most of the candidates submitting responses that showed some critical engagement.

An unwelcome trend is the rather formulaic way in which some of the creative tasks are produced. Centres are reminded that: "Teachers may require students to complete a written task linked to a certain topic or text, but the students must be allowed to decide what the task will be, the approach they will take, and the text type they will produce" (*Language & Literature Teacher Support Material*).

Many of the less appropriate and successful Tasks 1s are those that appeared to have tenuous links to the programme objectives or are purely creative; neither clearly based on specific course content nor able to show any critical engagement with a relevant topic.

Some candidates could have done better at meeting the requirements if the teacher had given more guidance at the outset, perhaps directing them towards a task at which they were more likely to succeed. While it is clear from the guidance to teachers on page 27 of the *Subject Guide* that they must not be involved in the re-drafting process, their advice to students before and after first-draft stage should aim to help them avoid submitting work that is inappropriate, under-edited, or inaccurate. Examiners are still seeing too many tasks in which the choices of topic and text type make it difficult for the candidate to meet the requirements in the assessment descriptors adequately.

At HL, there are still too many candidates not submitting one task based on the literature parts of their programme and one on the language parts. Too often both tasks are on the literary texts studied for parts 3 and 4. Other unsuitable practices observed include incomplete cover sheets (that do not include all the topics and literary texts studied), exceeding the word limits, not including a rationale or an outline, using more than one text type for Task 1, not using the prescribed questions for Task 2, or writing an essay on more than one of the literary texts studied.

If the right guidance is given at an early stage and students are made fully aware of the formal and practical requirements as well as the expectations of the assessment descriptors (in the relevant sections of the *Subject Guide*), then benefits will surely accrue not just in the form of better marks but also in terms of more satisfactory achievement of learning outcomes.

Task 1

The written task should be confined to a single text type and relate clearly to an aspect of the taught course.

The word 'topic', as it appears in the assessment descriptors, should be understood to refer to a programme topic not to any topic the student may be interested in.

Task 2

Teachers are reminded of the importance of guiding students to focus their critical response on the prescribed questions in the *Subject Guide*. Responses that do not demonstrate an understanding of the expectations of the prescribed question are not likely to score highly in criterion B. When mass media articles are used as the basis of essays, it is too often the case that the focus tends to be on the events they describe or what is reported/discussed rather than on the way they have been presented to the audience and how language is used to shape meaning.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Task 1

Criterion A: Rationale

Rationales must cover the four bullet points set out in the *Subject Guide* (p. 31 & p.41).

A rationale should contain a precise identification of text type, show familiarity with its conventions and clearly identify audience and purpose. For example, 'narrative' is too vague a term if a short story is to be written, 'newspaper article' too general if the task is, say, a news report or a feature article.

Frequently in the rationale candidates do not link the task sufficiently clearly to the programme studied.

An effective Task 1 rationale places the task in the context of the taught course, explains the particular purpose, the audience aimed at, its context and the conventions of the text type followed.

Criterion B: Task and content

The imitation of text type conventions without specifically addressing and critically engaging with a language or literature topic studied will not result in a high mark for this criterion.

Candidates need to pay attention to layout, format and use of visuals. Tasks that show little or no awareness of these conventions, when they are appropriate to the text type, will not score highly on this aspect of the assessment descriptors. It should be quite clear from presentation, layout etc., what type of publication is being imitated.

As in previous sessions, a number of candidates submitted written tasks which had no clear link to Part 1 or Part 2 of the taught course. The content of the task was often political, historical or a topic taken from current affairs, or merely one that interested the candidate but had no clear language focus.

Some students are submitting an essay for Task 1, or, more commonly, an essay masquerading as a mass communication text type. The essay is not an acceptable text type for Task 1.

A Task 1 has to have a clear and obvious reason to be written in the target language. For example, it would be inappropriate for an Argentinian politician to make a speech in French to voters in Buenos Aires.

It is apparent from the way some media tasks are carried out that the candidates are unfamiliar with the different purposes, conventions, styles and registers of articles that respond to current events or issues such as opinion columns, editorials, news reports and feature articles.

When writing a task on a literary work, the candidate must demonstrate understanding and critical engagement with the text. A task that relies heavily on summary of the narrative is unlikely to allow a candidate to achieve the upper mark range.

The following specific observations can be made:

- Some diary entries tend simply to summarise content, although other candidates are able to use the diary to reflect on the events, postulate alternative choices of action, consider lessons learned by the character or to offer fresh insights.
- A very popular choice is a blog, though the text type is not always successfully handled. At the bottom end, they tend to be either similar to an essay, or fail to engage critically with topics studied for the programme. In the upper range of marks students submit responses which have been formatted with convincing layouts, demonstrate a clear engagement with some aspect of the taught course, and often include comments with contrasting views in the response section at the end of the task, allowing students to demonstrate critical engagement with a topic and a genuine desire for interaction with readers.
- Candidates submitting poems often fail to link them clearly to the taught course, lack an understanding of the complexity of poetic form and language, and frequently tend to focus on rhyme scheme at the expense of meaning.
- Additional scenes or pastiches need to demonstrate understanding of the characters and themes of the text to which the task relates. Special care needs to be taken when trying to reproduce the language and style of an author in a pastiche.
- Short stories can sometimes fail to show any clear link to the taught course. However, candidates who are able to demonstrate a sophisticated grasp of poetic language, or genuine engagement with the stylistic features of their chosen text, produce some very effective work.

Criterion C: Organization

Candidates generally score well on this criterion except when the text type requires a specific organizational structure that the candidate does not successfully replicate. Once again, better understanding of the conventions of the text type chosen would improve scores on this criterion.

Media texts should be written with the style rules of the type of publication emulated and show awareness of a particular audience. Format, layout and images for media texts are very important too. However, care needs to be taken with the selection of appropriate images, with acknowledgement of their sources and with their judicious integration into the whole.

Criterion D: Language and style

Many students show a strong grasp of particular styles of writing, formal and informal.

Many tasks would benefit from closer proofreading to correct typing errors and other slips.

Task 2

Criterion A: Outline

Candidates do not always provide a clear and detailed enough outline following the 'three or four key points' guideline set out in the *Subject Guide* (p.43). The outline often takes the form of an over-detailed essay plan and fails to explain how all the key terms of the question are to be addressed.

Criterion B: Response to the question

In the weaker responses to both literary and non-literary texts, the candidate often imposes a reading on a text that it cannot bear, providing insufficient textual detail to support a convincing argument or even a relevant response.

Another characteristic of the weaker response is an over-reliance on secondary sources, often of the study-guide variety.

Criterion C: Organization and argument

Many responses provide arguments that are well supported by effectively-chosen and well-placed references to the texts, but the coherence of arguments is sometimes difficult to follow. Evident in some of the weaker responses are over-long introductory paragraphs that promise little in terms of development or explanation of how the key terms of the question are to be addressed.

Essays are generally clearly structured and developed, indicating a mostly confident use of the more academic style of writing. The weaker essays lack a clearly developed argument, are repetitive or lack paragraph control and effective transitions.

Criterion D: Language and style

In some cases, there are grammar lapses, ambiguous sentence constructions and spelling mistakes. Proofreading may eliminate errors that lose some candidates marks on accuracy.

Most essays are written in an appropriate style and register, some candidates achieving a high degree of sophistication and maturity of expression. Usually a correct formal register for the essay is in evidence, supporting the clarity and communication of the argument.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

In addition to consulting the relevant sections of the *Subject Guide*, teachers are invited to refer to the *Teacher Support Material* as well as the *Diploma Programme Assessment Procedures* and to the Subject Reports.

- While a very wide variety of possible literary texts is available from the PLA and the Prescribed Literature in Translation list (PLT), it is important to judge which are most suitable for each class from year to year. One important consideration for the teacher to think about prior to choosing any particular literary text, is how well it lends itself to exploitation along the lines of the prescribed questions.
- It must be made clear to students that one task must be a response to a Part 1 or 2 topic, the other to a literary text studied for Part 3 or 4. Basing both tasks on literary texts must be avoided.
- It is necessary for teachers to make sure that the task envisaged and planned will work in terms of the course requirements and the assessment criteria.
- Generally speaking, candidates could benefit greatly from more guidance and practice in the writing of the rationale and the outline.
- Rationales and outlines should precede tasks not follow them.
- Students could benefit from further instruction on textual referencing of works cited and acknowledgement of sources, including illustrations. The sources consulted should be listed and this includes online study notes.

- It is very important for candidates to develop independence and creativity so that they do not need to rely on ready-made judgements from secondary sources.
- For Task 1, teachers should try to cover as many text types as possible so that students can understand the different conventions, formats and styles and then practice their writing skills on as many of them as possible. This could usefully go together with proofreading and peer-review within the classroom.
- Some candidates submit work with some or all of these: their name, the school name, teacher name and candidate number. Please ensure that the current forms are downloaded each exam session and that students submit their tasks anonymously.

Higher level paper one

General comments

The majority of candidates chose the first question: the pair of texts on cycling. There were, however, excellent responses to both questions. In general, candidates appeared to be comfortable with the component, understanding what was required even if the results met with varying levels of success.

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

In discussing context, too many candidates made speculative, general and unfounded comments: for instance, assumptions about characteristics of the Philippines and of Filipinos or statements that cycling or obesity became more important in 2012. Candidates also had some difficulty with audience. Although anyone who can read English and has internet access could find the texts, availability and access was sometimes confused with the actual audience for which a text was written. Some candidates are not clear about on-line text types, especially the definition of a blog. The text types of Texts A and C posed the greatest difficulty.

Many candidates did not deal adequately with the effects of stylistic features. Although some discussions were supported by appropriate references to the text, this was not always the case.

Some responses were rambling and unnecessarily lengthy. Some relied heavily on summary. Others were repetitive, making the same point several times. Candidates have obviously been taught to use transitional words and phrases, but these are sometimes scattered into the commentary with no attention paid to their meaning. The logic of the response is therefore lost.

There were many errors in sentence construction, grammar, spelling, vocabulary and, to a lesser extent, paragraphing. Sometimes these errors seemed to be a result of carelessness as even words quoted from the text were misspelled. Pronouns, especially “it” and “they” were used with unclear reference, sometimes making the candidate’s point difficult to decipher.

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

Nearly all candidates understood the basic content of the texts and were able to find grounds for comparison. Most were able to identify the text types and were familiar with the usual format and characteristics of these text types. Most also demonstrated some understanding of the purpose of the texts. Most candidates made some comment on stylistic features and on context, although with varying success. Organization was generally at least adequate. There seemed to be fewer formulaic responses based on a rigid template than were seen in previous sessions.

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

Question 1

There were many lively responses. Candidates seemed to be engaged by these texts and were able to make pertinent comments on each and to identify similarities and differences. Although there was some confusion about audience, and some candidates insisted that it was identical in both A and B, most responses dealt well with this aspect of the texts. A number of responses misidentified Text A as a blog. Responses included mostly appropriate comments on graphic elements in Text B; however quite a few candidates did not comment on the photograph presented in Text A.

A number of responses presented more summary than analysis. Although most candidates dealt at least adequately with Text B, there was some tendency to list its stylistic features rather than analyse their effects. Very few responses dealt fully with the wealth of stylistic features in A; however, they often commented quite well on the tone, as well as the narrative and persuasive elements of the text.

Question 2

Many candidates were able to identify similarities and differences; however, some tried to see the two texts as more similar in purpose than they are. A few even saw them as the same text type. As well, the persuasive aim of Text D was sometimes missed. Audience was also an occasional problem, especially in Text C, which was sometimes identified as being for children. A number of candidates failed to comment on the conventions of a legend and saw Text C either as a short story or, in fewer cases, a true one. There was also an occasional misunderstanding of the relationship between a legend and a contemporary web publication. Some candidates did not comment on the image in Text D; in other cases, the commentary was perfunctory, although the image was quite complex.

Excellent responses included perceptive comments on gender roles and on the stylistic features and narrative conventions of a legend in Text C, a good discussion of methods of persuasion and an awareness of the integration of elements of legend in Text D.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Even if young people are very familiar with the internet, they cannot always identify and do not always understand the various text types that can appear on a website. Teachers cannot assume that their students are familiar, for example, with the definition of a blog.

Flashy but obscure terminology is no substitute for a considered analysis of stylistic features and their effects.

The meaning attached to transitional words and phrases needs to be better understood. Candidates need to see them as tools in presenting a logical analysis.

More work could be done on introductory and concluding paragraphs, which too often are either very abrupt or too long, rehearsing or revisiting the entire argument of the response.

Accuracy needs to be emphasized: correct grammar and punctuation, precise vocabulary. Such accuracy is crucial to a logical analysis.

Candidates should be taught how to integrate quotations into their work.

Candidates must practice legible handwriting. Marks will be lost if the examiner cannot read the response.

Standard level paper one

General comments

Both texts were accessible and provided good opportunities for analysis. The texts originated from two different Anglophone countries, thus allowing for candidates to tap into a variety of their contextual knowledge databases. While candidates achieved the full range of marks, the majority of candidates seemed to be well-prepared for the expectations of the examination. There seemed to be a fairly even distribution between candidates who chose Text 1 and those who chose Text 2, with perhaps a few more choosing Text 1.

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

Criterion B remains the most challenging aspect of Paper 1. Although almost all candidates were able to recognise stylistic features, some found it harder to evaluate their effects and offer insightful comments on them. Instead of explicit and precise commentary, many candidates tended to offer vague or implicit explanation of ideas. Candidates should be encouraged to avoid vague evaluation and focus on how features create meaning for the reader, analysing why certain devices have been used rather than merely listing them.

Some candidates struggled to realize the importance of context in their understanding of the texts. Candidates also struggled with their depth of understanding of the texts, as well as the ability to analyse the structure of texts, with many attempts floundering in generalisations.

There is a lack of consistency with the organisation of responses. Often responses had a clear introduction, but the order and content of paragraphs in between the introduction and the conclusion was often arbitrary.

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

There was clear improvement in organising the commentaries as usually there was a clear thread of thought. Most candidates were able to write a coherently structured response; they seemed well-prepared to organise their writing in a logical, effective manner.

The candidates also displayed understanding of implicit ideas with the texts. The majority were good at spotting audience, purpose, and stylistic features. Most candidates used the guiding questions well if they struggled with the text and context.

The register and language were generally of an adequate to good level. Most students seemed very comfortable and confident in the style of writing expected from them in this assessment and employed a formal register.

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

Text 1

Criterion A: Understanding of the text

Text 1 seemed to be very accessible for most candidates, as many chose Text 1 and were adequately able to identify the audience, purpose, and context. Perhaps due to the seeming simplicity of the text, however, not many candidates reached beyond the 'adequate' descriptors for Criterion A. There was often a reliance on the 'parallels' between the two sets of sisters, as mentioned in the guiding questions on the examination paper, without candidates forming their own thesis or argument. While most candidates identified the wider target audience beyond the Obama girls, most did not elaborate on the more subtle purpose of public relations in the midst of a transition of presidential power. The best answers appreciated the contextual aspects and used this to elevate their understanding of purpose.

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

Perhaps also due to the seeming simplicity of the text, not many candidates reached beyond the 'adequate' descriptors for Criterion B. The image was neglected more than might have been expected. Perhaps this is because of the amount of words, which most candidates found accessible with plenty to analyse - anecdote, pronouns, and imperatives being the most popular. Often candidates failed to identify the more subtle stylistic features, and some were even unable to accurately identify the more obvious ones such as anecdote. Some candidates mistakenly identified 'parallels' as a stylistic feature rather than subtly noted how parallel structure highlights the parallels between the sisters.

Criterion C: Organization and development

Many candidates employed a chronological approach to analysing the extract. Although this sometimes led to paraphrase, many were able to display good understanding nonetheless. The weakest answers, however, took a paragraph-by-paragraph approach and neglected to explore stylistic specifics.

Criterion D: Language

Meaning was rarely in doubt in these commentaries, and candidates usually employed a mostly appropriate register and style for the task. The level of accuracy was usually adequate.

Text 2

Criterion A: Understanding of the text

Candidates who chose Text 2 seemed less reliant on the guiding questions, but they often struggled with going beyond an adequate understanding of purpose and audience. A surprising number of candidates saw colour and pictures and went for a knee-jerk verdict of a childish audience. Some candidates failed to fully understand the implications of the text, particularly in terms of assuming that the primary audience was children. However, the majority seemed to understand the purpose and how this was achieved. Though the responses were much improved upon the November 2015 political cartoon commentaries, the teaching of political cartoons still might need to be re-emphasised.

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

Candidates who chose Text 2 generally seemed to perform better in Criterion B. Many were able to display a good understanding of the satire, irony, and humour employed throughout the extract. However, the

majority of candidates who chose this paper neglected to comment on the anthropomorphism or explore the details of Marlton's 'First Dog on The Moon' alter-ego. Few candidates used terminology specific to the cartoon text type.

Criterion C: Organization and development

Surprisingly few candidates provided a descriptive summary of the political cartoon, which has been a pattern in previous sessions when a text is predominantly visual in nature. Most commentaries were at least adequately organized with some development of an argument.

Criterion D: Language

The level of accuracy was often good. Candidates usually employed an appropriate style and register for the task.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Candidates should be encouraged to read widely in order to have the kind of general knowledge required in order to understand the contexts associated with texts. They need to be familiar with conventions of text types; for example, a cartoon (particularly a political cartoon) does not automatically mean it is meant for children. Candidates should be instructed to look at the contextual details given on the paper and use these to their advantage.

Candidates should link comments on online features to the purpose and audience rather than offer general comments about tabs and interactivity.

There needs to be a focus on the effects of stylistic devices, in terms of highlighting meaning in extracts. There also needs to be a focus on why - why have some specific device been used by the author. An emphasis on the memorisation of a variety of stylistic features for both literature and language texts is key, as is practice of identification of these features in a wide range of texts. However, the most difficult skill for candidates is always commenting on the effects of these, so focus should be placed on modelling this skill for candidates and giving them ample opportunities to practice. Additionally, encouraging critical and insightful thinking by providing learning experiences that stress this is imperative.

Overly rigid essay structures should be avoided, as this can lead to poorly organised essays, with reductively structured paragraphs. Teach candidates to flexibly appraise the purpose, audience, and context, and then analyse the stylistic features they can actually see in the text, not a pre-ordained roster. Similarly, there should not be an excessive focus on the idea of a hook opening. They add nothing to the development or style of the commentary and must waste some precious examination time trying to create. If a wider contextual point is to be made, perhaps save it for the conclusion. Topic sentences should not be neglected.

Please focus on improving candidates' handwriting. For those with excellent and legible language, please ensure they focus on clarity and precision of expression. Top marks were sometimes missed because a capable candidate opted for verbosity over clarity.

Higher level paper two

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

In spite of the openness of the questions, some candidates chose questions which were not really applicable to their chosen works (*A Doll's House* or *A Streetcar Named Desire* being forced into a response for Question 6 dealing with childhood; *The Importance of Being Earnest* or *Midsummer Night's Dream* for question 4 dealing with death or dying). As a result of these choices some candidates were not fully prepared to substantiate the generalizations and assumptions making up the bulk of their papers. Other candidates chose works they knew, and questions which could have been developed around the question's thesis, but only included random bits of generalized information without any clear sense of purpose or aim. In these cases, there was too much summarizing without much connection to the question. One common issue raised by examiners was the number of students who have a difficult time expressing themselves in an articulate manner on the exam. These candidates struggled to complete sentences, maintain verb-noun agreements or organize their paragraphs. This made it difficult to structure a coherent, logical argument which could be supported by appropriate textual references. Some candidates continue to have difficulty in discussing stylistic features and their effects. While many were able to identify features, they had a more difficult time providing relevant examples (imagery was often listed but not developed) or an awareness of their purpose.

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

The paper itself was found to be quite accessible with half of the questions applicable to almost any text (Questions 1, 2, and 3) and some questions which may not be applicable every work but would be fairly typical of many works (Questions 4, 5 and 6). The wording of the questions was clear and there were no questions where interpretation of the question led to problems for candidates.

Many candidates clearly knew the texts well and had been coached to write appropriately about them. While Criterion E on language impacted some candidates as their level of language affected their ability to construct arguments, many others did a much better job of editing and their papers were often a pleasure to read.

Most candidates showed an awareness of contextual elements and many went beyond simply identifying symbols, metaphors, images etc. They included these terms and examples as support illustrating their understanding of the texts and enhancing their response to the question.

There were some "stock" responses where it was obvious candidates had prepared terms, phrases and even organizational features which they used. In many cases, these were still used well, and students were able to add their own flair in their responses to individual questions (The American Dream; Realism; graphic novels etc.)

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

Question 1

This question on moral and/or ethical issues was the most popular choice made by candidates. Most candidates had no problem identifying moral and/or ethical issues although some candidates did not rise above identification and failed to discuss their exploration.

Still there were some excellent responses regarding the moral/ethical issues found in texts, and illustrated appropriately through a discussion of character (*Gatsby*, *Disgrace*, *The Stranger*) and a few through setting (1984, *Persepolis*, *Master Harold and the Boys*). Those that had a more difficult time with this question often discussed examples from the texts with only an implied moral/ethical issue. The better responses clearly defined morals/ethics in their introductions and used that opening as a template for the organization of their papers.

Question 2

This question on the significance of a “pivotal moment, shift or turning point” was interpreted by many to mean the climax of the text (when Winston gets caught in 1984, for example, or Blanche's rape in *Streetcar*) and while this generally worked, at times it led to somewhat limited responses which often felt like they were rehearsed (the danger of trying to repeat a practice question on the exam).

Question 3

This question on the role of minor characters in the development of major characters seemed open to most texts. Often the better responses discussed how the protagonist changed/developed as a result of actions or behaviour from a minor character due to something like setting or context (Okonkwo's development due to the presence of Ikemefuna in *Things Fall Apart*, or Montag's development due to Clarisse influence in *Fahrenheit 451*).

Question 4

This question on the effect of death or dying produced a few interesting responses. The weaker responses just listed deaths in the texts and summarised the action of the work; the better responses discussed how characters viewed death through setting or characterisation (*The Outsider* was a good example of this). A few students discussed how death was treated or viewed in the context of the text (in *Death and the Maiden* the truth commission choosing to only investigate cases that ended in death; or how some people were vaporised in 1984 but not Winston; or how the death of Gatsby did not seem to matter due to the 1920s culture of consumerism).

Question 5

The question on how a physical journey contributes to a text, while relatively common in literature was not chosen by very many candidates.

Question 6

Again, this question on childhood would seem to fit with the number of bildungsroman texts being referred to, but only a few chose this question. Some of those just identified childhood moments and gave summaries rather than an exploration. *Persepolis* was a popular choice for this question, and there were some interesting discussions on how her childhood perspective of the Iranian Revolution affected certain

aspects such as her voice shifts and the illustrations included in the novel. On a side note there were some strange inclusions such as *The Awakening* and *Death and the Maiden*.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

One recommendation would be for teachers to emphasize the scaffolding of authorial techniques, and to have candidates practice using this technique in their responses. This may allow them to recognize and analyse these techniques/features in other texts.

Candidates should be encouraged to focus closely on the question. The question should not be implied but rather explicitly stated. The introduction should include the key terms and ideas from the prompt.

Practice dealing with the interplay between the texts and their contexts. Too often the discussion of context is merely on the life of the author with little connection to the question or even the central aspects of the works.

Candidates should be cautioned not to attempt to create an academic register through the use of a vocabulary which is not in line with their ability. Candidates were at times using specific terms that were not well expressed (bildungsroman; existentialism etc). If a less common literary term is used, teachers need to ensure that students not only know the meaning of the term, but how to use it properly in a sentence.

In organizing their papers candidates need to have a sense of direction. Crafting good introductions using the terms found in the question can be a very effective way of structuring their paper. (It was interesting that some candidates would list the texts they are going to use in their paper and then begin their discussion not following the order laid out in the introduction.) Practice editing and proofreading and checking to see if the candidate's penmanship is decipherable.

Standard level paper two

General comments

It was quite clear that teachers have been working hard and doing much good work with students, the majority of whom knew their texts well and were able to write substantial responses in this examination. It remains the case however that a balance between teaching and facilitating is not always being fully achieved. This is evident primarily in the concern shown by almost all examiners with the fact that far too many responses were frontloaded with learnt information or used rigid, formulaic structures for organising their essay that were used regardless of their relevance or value. One examiner noted that there was a lack of “deep engagement with the themes of the texts” and that this was substituted by rote learnt quotation and the regurgitation, it appeared, of essays that were “prepared in advance”. The discussion of context also suffered here with students at times treating this as a discrete area and delivering large accounts of historical and occasionally biographical context that was not integrated into the argument of the essay and often of limited relevance.

There seems to be a tendency for students to reproduce responses that they have practised previously in class, bending them to the question they have selected, rather than using the skills they have learnt to analyse the texts and to adapt their knowledge in the light of the specific demands of the question. It is important therefore to focus on skills development in class and to use the resources of the *Learner Profile* and Approaches to Teaching and Learning, particularly the promotion of reflection in students and the development of “process-oriented instruction” in the classroom. Time spent developing the resources and ideas that support this way of working will be very valuable.

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

Examiners raised a number of concerns here and many were associated with the issues discussed above in that they often arose when students privileged description, essentially information about the texts and their context above the application of analysis. This manifested itself in a number of different ways including the use of formulaic patterns that prevented clear address of the question, lengthy and complex introductions that often included extensive plot summary and contextual information that were divorced from the argument being presented. Examiners also commented on the fact that many students did not approach the texts as literature, this led to lower marks than might have been expected in criterion C where even strong candidates rarely moved beyond the analysis of character and theme. It was observed that this was a specific area of weakness in the exploration of graphic novels. Despite the frequent selection of texts such as *Persepolis* and *Maus*, detailed discussion of the significance of even basic features such as graphic weight was rare. It may be helpful for both teachers and students to refer to resources that specialise in the power of visual communication and analysis of graphic novels, such as the work of Scott McCloud.

There were a number of comments from examiners on the failure of students to structure their responses effectively with few having a clear thesis; this seemed often to lead to a failure to develop an argument. Associated with this is the importance of carefully reading the questions and defining its terms clearly. A number of thoughtful responses seemed to ignore the question, instead favouring another area that the student knew well from their work in class.

Finally, register and formal language were not effectively used by some students, and that it is important to stress the formal nature of this assessment. Unfortunately, a significant number of students did not have the language facility to undertake this assessment successfully. There is not always an easy answer to this as the Group 1 courses are also about language development and the decision as to whether one gives a student the opportunity to undertake the course in the hope that they will gain enough language development to achieve their potential in the final assessment is difficult to predict and schools need to carefully assess the student's potential and commitment if choosing this option instead of English B.

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

Students were clearly conscientiously taught and knew their texts very well indeed with top ability students able to refer in detail to the texts and write fluent and complex sentences in which they were able to accurately and effectively embed quotations. Despite the concerns about the approach to the presentation of context noted, it was generally felt that context had been handled to greater effect than has been evident in previous sessions and that discussions of this area were more convincingly integrated into the argument being presented.

There was a general sense that responses were generally well-structured and developed, though time management appeared to be an issue with the result that conclusions that were often thin and undeveloped doing little more than restating the question with a brief summary of the main ideas in the response.

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

This was seen as a very well balanced and accessible paper. Ironically however this did not always translate into better outcomes for students who were frequently hampered by their desire to deliver material practised in class, regardless of its relevance to the question.

Question 1

This was a very popular question and most candidates could offer a reasonable discussion of the moral or ethical issues raised in the works they had studied. More sophisticated responses however were less common, with many students failing to define moral and ethical or to identify the different sides of these issues. One examiner noted this manifesting itself in the fact that students appeared to believe "that certain events in texts were *prima facie* moral or ethical without troubling to define what standards of morality or ethics were being addressed."

Question 2

This was fairly frequently attempted and where students clearly identified and discussed the "pivotal moment" often handled very well. Weaker responses tended simply to list a number of events that occurred in their texts without substantiating the claim that they had any significance as pivotal events.

Question 3

This was not that commonly attempted, but was generally well done with many responses showing considerable knowledge of minor characters and giving a thoughtful and well substantiated account of how they impacted the development of the major characters. Weaker candidates had at times difficulties differentiating a minor character from a major one and focused on plot rather than character development.

Question 4

This was probably second in popularity to Question 1 and was generally well handled with students able to explore how writers have used death and dying in their texts. Candidates who looked at actual deaths in the works studied were able to see a variety of effects on characterization, mood, setting, thematic elements, etc. Some students also looked at the way death was used metaphorically in works. This had more mixed results with the best responses showing how this worked in parallel with actual deaths, but at other times ideas were not clearly thought through and almost any incident in the text was seen as having the status of a symbolic death, such as the American Dream in *Of Mice and Men* or *Death of a Salesman*.

Question 5

Very few examiners saw more than one or two examples of a response to this question and these were not generally successful with the idea of a “physical journey” at times being ignored or stretched to a metaphorical journey such as “coming of age”.

Question 6

This question generally fell into two groups: those that selected it thoughtfully in the light of their texts, and those, that were generally weaker, which used childhood as a supplementary consideration in responses that simply delivered the bulk of their knowledge of the texts without using it as evidence to support an argument related to the question.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Subject Reports by their nature focus on how improvements and development can be made in the process of teaching and learning in relation to this assessment and it is important to stress that it was clear to examiners in this session that teachers are working hard and trying to allow students to give of their best. There are nevertheless ideas for the teaching and guidance of future candidates that will both improve outcomes and shift the approach to the assessment from one of perhaps over preparedness to a situation where students can put their skills as opposed to their content knowledge at the centre of their responses to the questions.

The main theme of these recommendations is to move then from supplying students with knowledge of the texts to supporting them in developing their own readings. This means encouraging students to generate their own ideas from their reading of the texts and then, providing supportive evidence from their readings, draw out for themselves the ideas that the writers seem to be putting forward. This can then be linked to group work where students work together to test thesis statements and their evidential support giving them an opportunity to get feedback and also promoting ownership of their understanding of the texts. This avoids what one examiner described as a situation where “again and again candidates are discussing topics that they refer to as themes, which end simply with a recital of all the references to such topics with no conclusory statements as to what the writer is attempting to say about the topic.”

Candidates should get more practice on adapting their knowledge of the texts to the demands of the question, and to consider clearly how context shapes both the production and reception of these texts in relation to the question.

Moving to the more practical areas of presentation and essay writing skills candidates should also be taught how to construct paragraphs that lead with the topic point and use evidence from the text to develop their

argument, rather than leaving the general point, often asserted, at the end of long paragraphs that rehash details of plot and character. Analysis of literary features should be made relevant to the argument.

Finally, it has to be acknowledged that handwriting seems to be deteriorating. However understandable this is given that most student work in school may well be produced electronically, the fact remains that a very large number of scripts were noted this session as very difficult to read. Examiners work very hard to do all they can to read scripts but can only assess what is there and students need to be reminded of and prepared for the fact that the high stakes nature of this assessment is based on a handwritten response that has to be produced in 90 minutes.