

## English A: Literature TZ1

### TZ 1 (IB Latin America and IB North America)

#### Time zone variants of examination papers

To protect the integrity of the examinations, increasing use is being made of time zone variants of examination papers. By using variants of the same examination paper candidates in part of the world will not always be taking the same examination paper as candidates in other parts of the world. A rigorous process is applied to ensure that the papers are comparable in terms of difficulty and syllabus coverage, and measures are taken to guarantee that the same grading standards are applied to candidates' scripts for the different versions of the examination papers. For the May 2103 examination session the IB has produced time zone variants of English A: Literature HL and SL paper 1 and paper 2.

#### Overall grade boundaries

##### Higher level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 17	18 - 32	33 - 43	44 - 55	56 - 68	69 - 79	80 - 100

##### Standard level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 16	17 - 30	31 - 42	43 - 55	56 - 67	68 - 79	80 - 100

#### Higher level internal assessment

#### Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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Mark range:        0 - 5        6 - 10        11 - 13        14 - 17        18 - 21        22 - 25        26 - 30

## The range and suitability of the work submitted

The majority of the poets which had featured in the previous syllabus continued to dominate school choices and they were put to very good use on the whole. Among the most popular were Robert Frost, Seamus Heaney, Wilfred Owen, William Blake, W.B. Yeats, Sylvia Plath, Margaret Atwood, Langston Hughes, Emily Dickinson and Carol Ann Duffy. For the Discussion, William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear* and *Macbeth* were the most popular plays. Prose fiction was dominated by novels like *The Great Gatsby*, *The Color Purple*, *Wuthering Heights*, and *The Handmaid's Tale*; short stories were comparatively fewer. Non-fiction, the least frequently used genre for the discussion, featured Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* and George Orwell's essays.

It was most pleasing to read so many thoughtfully-worded guiding questions for the poem. Such tasks were also true to the spirit of the new course requirements in several other ways. The poems, or extracts, were of the right length and each task had different guiding questions relevant to the specific poem instead of using generic questions. Very often, such samples also featured most helpful subsequent questions – the type that prodded the candidate into addressing features either glossed over or overlooked in the poem during the unaided commentary. Unfortunately, some schools used poems that were too short, like 'Sure' by Emily Dickinson, or too long, like 'Punishment' by Seamus Heaney. In both cases, the candidate was greatly disadvantaged. As in the previous syllabus, few candidates are able to talk about William Blake very meaningfully. To quote a senior examiner, they fail "to wrestle much depth from the (misleading) simplicity of the language" and are hampered by the poems' relative brevity. Furthermore, some candidates were uncomfortable discussing some of the poems selected for commentary work. According to another senior examiner, "The language of poems by Ginsburg, Plath and, in particular, one by Nikki Giovanni, was so graphic that the candidates were obviously embarrassed and skipped over them. There are other poems by these poets which cover similar themes, so it seems unnecessary to include ones with extreme language." Finally, some longer works like Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom*, seem to have been very challenging for candidates.

## Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A (Knowledge and understanding of the poem): The best candidates easily analyzed the thought and feeling expressed in the poem. The weakest responses relied on paraphrase, description and explication. Some schools had evidently advised candidates to pre-learn some kind of introduction to the poet in question, which normally centred on aspects of biographical, literary or even social context. Such generic introductions are almost always inappropriate because they remove focus from the extract and prevent the candidate from showing elements of personal response and independent critical thinking. Furthermore, whereas the old course required the analysis to address matters of context, this is no longer the case and candidates are advised to bring it to the commentary only when helpful or necessary. As mentioned above, candidates lost a lot of marks through paraphrase, description and explication. Candidates need to be reminded that the essence of commentary work is the close analysis of the content, form and style of the poem.

Another area is in regard to 'message'. Many candidates seem to have been taught to always identify some kind of message or lesson being expressed by the poem. Generally, this is an unhelpful approach to literary analysis; in part this is because such 'messages' are often not actually present

and yet also because the inclination often negates sensitivity to ambiguity and paradox, which are of course the hallmarks of good writing.

Criterion B (Appreciation of the writer's choices): Overall, this area was handled less successfully than A. Even though most schools seem conscious of this requirement, there were varying degrees to which candidates read the poem closely and demonstrated clearly how and with what effects the literary techniques have been used. These effects differ from poem to poem but will include the impact of the piece and how the elements of the poem's meaning have been communicated. In addition, some candidates seem to have prepared a list of things to look for in a poem; as a result, there were many incidences of 'feature spotting', with frequent statements like "there is no rhyming scheme" or "there is no regular rhythm."

Many moderators are concerned that candidates seem to be relying a lot on secondary material to study the texts, with the result that it is common to hear remarks like "As one critic says, this poem demonstrates the beauty of nature" and "This is one of the reasons why critics find the poet such a pessimist." Another main concern is the tendency to read symbolism in every poem. Statements like "Sylvia Plath's poems symbolize her hatred for men" or "Seamus Heaney's love for Ireland is evident in his poems" were common. It is very important that teachers guide candidates into examining each poem as a literary text instead of relying on the meaning suggested by the teacher and critics.

Criterion C (Organization and presentation of the commentary): Many candidates produced very effective structures. They provided meaningful introductions and proceeded to systematically develop the points (usually 2-3) they had planned to explore in the poem and then concluded their analysis. Some enriched their conclusion by saying something about the most important, or most significant, aspect that had emerged from their analysis. However, many others seemed to struggle. Most opted for a linear structure and this approach but often they lapsed into description and paraphrase. Of course, a linear analysis can be very effective especially if the poem seems to depend on a strong sense of development; but it is a presentation strategy that needs to be learnt and mastered. Overall, those who used the holistic approach fared better but many of such candidates also had problems sustaining a focused and well-developed analysis.

A concern regularly expressed by some moderators relates to the presentation of the commentary. As mentioned above, it seems that some candidates are memorizing generic introductions about the author and the poem, while others seem to read prepared speeches. The former practice is obviously a liability as it tends to shift focus away from the poem itself. The latter is even more worrying as it goes against the spirit of the whole exercise.

Criterion D (Knowledge and understanding of the work used in the discussion): Strong candidates were adept at illustrating their knowledge and understanding of the work; and this was evident by the informed quality of their responses to the implications of the work discussed. Weaker candidates based their answers on vague generalizations. Often, however, it was the teacher's performance that seemed to influence the quality of the candidate's performance in this criterion as well as in criterion E.

In some cases, teachers seemed to interpret 'discussion' to mean 'interview'; consequently, it was impossible for the candidate to provide enough depth to the exercise. In others, the teacher seemed to expect specific answers and so sounded impatient if these were not forthcoming. Often, this resulted in asking too many leading questions. Hopefully, the quality of the questioning will improve with practice in this, still new, syllabus. Teachers might want to embrace the implied advice in the words of a veteran moderator: "Questions that asked for elaboration or development of points already

made usually enabled candidates to demonstrate more detailed and perceptive understanding of the work.”

Criterion E (Response to the discussion questions): As stated above, this was heavily dependent on the nature of the teacher’s questions. Questions which asked reactive questions like ‘What can you tell me about this work?’, ‘What were your overall impressions of the play?’, ‘Which character/s did you like/dislike?’ or ‘Should Gertrude have married Claudius?’ or ‘Do you think this author deserved the Nobel Prize for Literature?’ were very hard to answer with much critical rigour either because they invited candidates to treat the characters as if they were real or because they were so vague as to be meaningless. Independent thinking is prompted by questions that ask candidates to think in a meaningful, purposeful, way and teachers who are not sure about the kinds of questions it is appropriate to ask should go back to the examples in the Subject Guide.

Criterion F (Language): The majority of candidates are able to speak in a clear way and quite a number with sufficient detail and cogency to merit a ‘4’ or ‘5’. Weaker candidates tend to interrupt their speech with a wide range of fillers such as the pervasive ‘like’ or lapse too easily into an informal, colloquial, register. It is not too difficult to achieve a reasonable mark in this criterion, provided that candidates are given enough scope for practice and feedback on the right kinds of language to use.

## Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

Most of these have been either stated or implied above. For emphasis, however, this report will highlight several reminders.

It is absolutely important for the teacher to be intimately familiar with the requirements of the English A Literature programme including – in this case – internal assessment. The Subject Guide, the Teacher Support Material and the Online Curriculum Centre are invaluable resources. Secondly, candidates need to be taught and then given regular practice in the skills of the two components of the oral examination. Thirdly, the role of the teacher cannot be stressed enough: the choice of candidate-accessible texts, the construction and quality of the oral commentary and discussion questions will affect the candidate’s performance considerably.

In particular, candidates need to be trained to focus on the stylistic aspects of the poem, exploring how, where and with what impact on the text and reader these have been used. There are many strategies to achieve this goal, including the trusted colour coding, using visual symbols and diagrams. Gradually, candidates could be aided in responding to a text thoughtfully and independently and in a detailed, critical and persuasive manner. By the end of the first year in a two-year diploma course, candidates should be able to easily engage in a close analysis of a given text (in this case, a poem). The second and final year could be the time to refine these skills.

Among the skills to teach is how to structure a commentary. Candidates need much help with organizing and presenting their close analysis of the poem. Teachers can provide candidates with different kinds of models as a means to do so; and they should be encouraged to organize their points in a way that most suits the passage in front of them, as well as the arguments they intend to pursue. The more the candidates can demonstrate a degree of ‘ownership’ over the passage or text in this and other ways, the better.

Schools are advised to bring teachers together to discuss such things as good choices of poems or extracts as well as share good examples of effective questions. One suggestion might be to maintain a ‘bank’ of good examples for reference year by year. Equally, encouraging candidates to listen to

recordings and engage in peer and self-assessment, with the criteria in front of them is another way to bring about understanding of the skills being demanded. It is worth pointing out that regular attention to the specific details of language and content should inform the spirit of the whole course, not just internal assessment.

In the discussion part, some serious thought needs to be given to how accessible to candidates the work chosen is however much the teacher loves it. This part of the oral is also not the time for teachers to demonstrate their scholarly and erudite knowledge of the work. Similarly, the internal oral examination is not the time for the teacher to expect taught material; rather, it is the time to test the candidate's knowledge and understanding of the work and to demonstrate an effective response to it.

Candidates who see the assessment task as one that invites genuine individual exploration of a text, and can relate particular details to wider points of interpretation or significance are the ones who perform best. Formulaic approaches, or repetition of content that has obviously been rehearsed or explicitly 'taught' run somewhat counter to the purpose of the exercise.

## Standard level internal assessment

### Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 4	5 - 8	9 - 12	13 - 16	17 - 19	20 - 23	24 - 30

### The range and suitability of the work submitted

The majority of schools continue to use a relatively small number of familiar works and authors, although there were also some unusual and effective choices. Amongst the schools continuing to study Shakespeare in Part 2, *Macbeth*, *Othello* and *Hamlet* were most popular, and most extracts from such works were the standard choices. Little modern drama is used in Part 2, though several schools' choice of a Stoppard play was quite successful. Works by Heaney, Frost, Owen, Ted Hughes, Elizabeth Bishop and Carol Ann Duffy appeared often amongst the poetry. The first three poets, in particular, are more often than not each represented by the same two or three poems. *The Color Purple* and *The Handmaid's Tale* were chosen by a number of schools, though there was also fiction by Hemingway and Fitzgerald, and occasionally by older novelists. Non-fiction prose continues to appear relatively infrequently, and when it does, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* and Orwell essays are often chosen.

### Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A (Knowledge and understanding of the extract): One moderator characterised the changes he had seen in this year's session as "More knowledge, less understanding". In an increasing number of schools, there appears to be more emphasis on candidates learning *what to say* about each poem or extract than on learning *how to engage* with a text, to discover what is going on in a text, and to demonstrate how this is made to happen. As a result, there is a mechanical quality to many candidates' commentaries. Listening to these, one sometimes has the impression that much of

the content has been memorised. There is little evidence of *engagement* with the text, and sometimes candidates can be heard struggling, not so much to understand or express an idea, as to remember it, or worse, to remember certain ready-made phrases associated with it. Of course, the best commentaries continue to be a pleasure to hear. In these the process of personal discovery is evident, so that even ideas which may have been expressed numerous times before become interesting because they result from a process of critical reading and thought, rather than mechanical reproduction.

Criterion B (Appreciation of the writer's choices): The change in the name of criterion B has not, unfortunately, resulted in an improvement in most candidates' performance in this area. Understanding and being able to explain a writer's technique remains the most difficult aspect of the commentary for most candidates. Many candidates are able to name devices used in poems; fewer are able to express their understanding of how such devices are used to develop meaning or atmosphere. Relatively few candidates understand that "writer's choices" are every bit as important in prose or in drama as in verse.

Moderators have remarked on the problem of candidates offering "symbolic" readings without any reference to literal meaning. (Examples: Atwood's *Death of a Young Son by Drowning* seen solely as an allegory of Susanna Moody's arrival in Canada, with no hint of either a literal son or a literal drowning; Owen's *Dulce et Decorum Est* as a purely symbolic representation of the horrors of war, with no suggestion that the poem depicts the speaker's observation of the horrendous death of an individual soldier in a gas attack.) If such errors of approach derive from too great a dependence on the reading of critical studies, candidates and teachers would do better to devote the time available to their own close examination of the work itself, rather than to secondary material. Candidates must confront the poem as written, and not skip to the meaning as suggested by teachers and critics.

Teachers' desire to make the treatment of technique more accessible has, unfortunately, led to a proliferation of lengthy catalogues of metaphors, caesuras, and rhetorical questions, to name a few of the most favoured devices. Punctuation has inexplicably become a major focus this year. Perhaps because punctuation marks are small and unthreatening, or perhaps precisely because they are merely suggestive, punctuation (or the absence of it) has been made to serve every conceivable purpose in the commentaries of some candidates. "Othello's state of mind is reflected through his use of exclamation points" (or commas – the choice is generally random). Of course, such a statement is particularly absurd in the case of Shakespeare, as much of the punctuation has been added by later editors, and it is made worse by the implication that a fictional character is attending to the orthography of his speeches as he delivers them. Nevertheless, all candidates would be helped by the recognition that punctuation does not *cause* tone – that it is, at best, at times, a reflection of it, and one deserving less mention than it is now receiving. It is not the central technique.

Candidates would be well served by paying greater attention to details of texts and their effects, rather than offering a paraphrase of the text with occasional comments, an outline of the general situation, or a catalogue of unconnected literary devices with effects arbitrarily assigned. ("There are a lot of 's' sounds, which makes the tone threatening.")

Criterion C (Organisation and presentation): A disturbingly large number of candidates began their commentaries this year with what sounded like written or memorised brief introductory speeches about the work and/or the author. Too often, introductions provide information about the author, or about the work as a whole, which is irrelevant to the passage they have been given, rather than providing a meaningful context for the extract or poem (e.g., how the poem is like or unlike other poems by the same writer, how the extract reflects or contributes to significant themes, character

development, etc. in the work as a whole). Few candidates realise that an introduction should include some suggestion of the overall significance of the extract, or the dominant experience conveyed by the poem.

As candidates and teachers gradually develop a clearer sense of what they think is expected in the Oral Commentary, moderators have noted more mechanical fulfilment of these expectations. Candidates now routinely begin commentaries by offering a list of items they intend to discuss, which may include themes and figures of speech that appear in the extract, and sometimes they make claims about the author's intentions or the effects of the extract or poem on the reader. This can, of course, work if the points are then carefully developed. Increasingly, however, candidates are treating commentary as catalogue of devices. Unfortunately, while the inclusion of such items clearly suggests good intentions on the candidate's part, their mere inclusion does not guarantee a successful commentary. Promises of items to be covered in the commentary are not always fulfilled. Better candidates are able to explain how these work and thus achieve coherence and understanding of extract, but only the best candidates offer a close examination of the extract. Commentaries are often orderly, but too often the order is arbitrary, and there are no connections amongst the parts: "I'll now move on to . . ." often replaces any meaningful transition. In the best commentaries, the candidate constructs the commentary around an argument, his or her own reading of the extract or poem. Such a candidate, in a brief introduction, explains how and why the character in the extract finds himself in a moment of crisis, and follows this with a close examination of all details of the extract to show how the gradual change in every aspect of the speech – word choice, figures of speech, sentence construction – conveys the character's gradual alteration from anger to despair. The conclusion of such a commentary, ideally, would not merely summarise this argument, but might suggest how the movement just identified is characteristic of, or represents a striking departure from, other depictions of change in the work. This is a far cry from a catalogue of devices or a series of vague generalisations.

Criterion D (Language): Most candidates seem aware that the commentary requires a degree of formality and of specificity in their own language use. The vast majority of candidates use language that is at least mostly clear and appropriate. Unfortunately, there are increasing numbers of candidates at Standard Level whose acquisition of English is recent, or imperfect, enough to make the fluent articulation of their ideas not only difficult, but sometimes impossible. This is not a matter of accent, but of severe limitation in the ability to formulate and express complex ideas about complex subjects. While language use is only one of four marking criteria, inevitably, the candidate whose English vocabulary or mastery of syntactical structures is limited will necessarily be at a great disadvantage in criteria A and B, as well. Candidates without near native-speaker fluency in English should be counselled to consider studying their mother-tongue literature as a tutored or school-supported self-taught subject.

## Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

In addition to a careful perusal of the Language A Literature Guide and Teacher Support Materials, teachers should organise their courses to ensure that there is:

- a minimum of lecture (if any),
- a minimum of attention to secondary materials and text books,
- a maximum of time and attention devoted to
  - guiding candidates toward developing their own appreciation of the works studied,
  - developing candidates' ability to articulate this appreciation independently, both informally in

class discussion, and more formally in regular oral commentaries.

These do not have to be restricted to Part 2 texts. Just as candidates are expected to perform their own experiments in the sciences, so they ought to be undertaking their own analyses of what they read in literature class. While modelling (by the teacher, the critics, and the text book writers) has its place, it hurts the candidate if it becomes the core of a literature course. In the end, it is the candidate's *own* understanding, not the retention of the understandings of others that is being examined – not only in the oral commentary, but in all assessment components of the course.

## Higher level written assignment

### Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 6	7 - 9	10 - 12	13 - 15	16 - 18	19 - 20	21 - 25

### The range and suitability of the work submitted

Most of the literary works chosen for study and assessment in this part of the syllabus were appropriate to the task. Works both new and well-tryed comprised the appropriate selection of the three Part 1 works although in a few cases syllabuses have mistakenly included a work originally written in English. Generally the choices were valid and appropriate, and sometimes bold and provocative.

Some schools, however, are presenting their candidates with texts which can present difficulties. These may range widely given different school populations, but the attempts to write successfully about Camus's *The Outsider*, for example, often falter. Misdirected essays, such as the treatment of existentialism in 1500 words with some allusion to the literary work, are likely doomed to fail in terms of the criteria. This particular work along with others are often and rightfully fascinating to candidates at this level; they might be more usefully included in Part 4 where the emphasis is on oral work and where discussions and Individual Oral Presentations would provide ample opportunity for incrementally developed understanding and continual refinement.

Titles are crucially important to success in the assessment of Part 1, and some candidates produced strong Written Assignments, showing the effect of thoughtfully constructed Supervised Writing prompts. The point of inserting this step into the process leading to the essay was to provide candidates with precise direction in writing about literary aspects of the work, not examinations of underlying context or philosophy. When this step was well-handled, essays often succeeded. Titles such as "Symbolism, characterization and co-existence" or "To what extent did Creon and Antigone live up to the expectations of men and women at that time?" tended to divert the candidate's attention from close and well-grounded attention to the writer's choices and the effects of these into large and tenuous explorations. Other Written Assignments may well have originated with good prompts, but devolved too easily into re-descriptions of plot and character. Candidates need good models and practice to succeed in this exercise.



Finally, literary terms for critical features of texts and references to such movements as “realism” and “expressionism” seemed in the minds of candidates to stand for completely fixed and self-evident meanings. Definition of terms or other indications that references are completely understood need to appear in the essays as they allude to the particular text under discussion.

## Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A (Fulfilling the requirements of the reflective statement): The nature of this expectation seemed not to be understood entirely by teachers directing candidates in this activity. That should be remedied with experience and as more samples become available. However, there is a clearly pointed question in the Subject Guide that, if responded to, should produce Reflective Statements that can do well in this criterion: “how was your understanding of the cultural and contextual considerations of the work developed through the interactive oral?” Whether the candidate is a presenter of the particular Interactive Oral or a listener, it should be possible, in 300 to 400 words, for the candidate to describe in a straightforward and supported way an enhanced grasp of the context (the author’s biography, setting, place in a literary tradition, historical events, reception of the work) and the culture (linguistic and social background, ethnicity and the like, both of the author and the time and place of the work itself).

The Interactive Oral and Reflective Statement need to be seen as partners in grounding the candidate’s sense of the work in these matters, rather than as a preliminary critical study of the literary features or an abstract of the Written Assignment. Timing of these two preliminaries is up to the teacher, but they should precede the next two steps of Supervised Writing and the Written Assignment.

The examiner needs to see in the Reflective Statement evidence of a widened or deepened sense of matters of time and place touching on both author and text, even though these aspects may or may not appear explicitly in the subsequent work of the essay. In many cases, candidates offered superficial generalizations: “society was patriarchal,” “the play is grounded in realism and subtleties,” “people conversed in an informal way in that time.” Such assertions unsupported by any firm evidence or research are not useful. Retelling the plot, describing characters, pointing out symbols, expressing personal views of the texts or critiquing the work of classmates are not the proper material for the Reflective Statement, though much of this was included in the work submitted in this session.

Criterion B (Knowledge and understanding): Performance here ranged from superficial to perceptive, as is the case across all of the assessment components. With one work to explore, candidates were usually able to indicate some grasp of what content the plays, fiction or poetry included. ‘Understanding’ involves more: subtext, the nature of actions and interactions, the apparent and implied nature of characters and the like. Here, a certain number of candidates offered limited evidence that they had considered more than events, characters or “messages.” Paraphrase and plot summary tend to characterize these weaker offerings.

When particular titles are pursued, the candidate needs to evince some evolved or probing thinking about the subject. Teachers need to be sure that when candidates develop a potential Written Assignment from a particular writing prompt that they understand the topic. A candidate writing about music in *Death and the Maiden* without mentioning Schubert or the title of the play is not likely to achieve high marks.

Elements in *A Doll's House* asserted to be 'symbols' must be accompanied by a demonstration of why that judgment is made.

Criterion C (Appreciation of the writer's choices): Unlike the reasonably satisfactory performance on average in Criterion B, the candidate outcomes in C ranged from almost no address of authorial choice to some excellent work. In some ways, the very nature of the task, 'Written Assignment,' is defined by this criterion. The task is a critical and literary one in the narrowest sense, so examiners are looking for assessment of what choices a writer has made to deliver the material, how those are deployed and to what effect.

Here the weaker performances might indeed "mention" some literary strategies (choices in diction, pace, plot elaborated by subplots, techniques of characterization) but do not go on to show "appreciation" of how these worked and what they meant to the whole work. One examiner summarized the performance in this criterion as follows: *"In this process candidates had the most difficulty in determining how the writer's method related to the text's meaning. Often this aspect was virtually ignored; conversely, other candidates strained to show some relationship that was clearly superficial or simply misguided."*

Clearly candidates cannot do this sort of analysis without a good deal of guidance and practice throughout the course.

Finally, in this criterion, candidates often failed to make their chosen examples work to their advantage, simply citing their presence without exploring their use and significance.

Criterion D (Organization and Development): It should be carefully noted that there is a preliminary statement in this descriptor that addresses the word count. "The word limit for the essay is 1200-1500 words. If the word limit is exceeded, 2 marks will be deducted." Please note that the same rule applies to the Reflective Statement where the penalty is 1 mark. These penalties were applied by examiners this session. (The word count includes all quoted material from the original text[s]). Attempts to subvert the word limit by including the supporting text for assertions in footnotes is not permitted.

In terms of organizing the material candidates are presenting, examiners were on the whole satisfied that there was a least some plan for structuring the argument, although these patterns ranged from fairly basic and choppy to very coherent, fluent presentations that were easy to follow. Where candidates tend to fall down is in the use of cited materials, where overlong portions of the original text are included, where quotations are poorly embedded or inserted without any rationale or interpretation.

Additionally, candidates sometimes make very poor use of their introductory remarks, falling into formulas that merely state that a certain feature is found in the work and that it is important or fascinating. Paragraphing, too, -- or the lack thereof -- is a feature that makes delivery of ideas either effective or obscure, and a clear sense of the rhetorical value of this structural device is too often absent in these essays.

Criterion E (Language): On the whole, most candidates in this course are able to convey their ideas in a reasonably competent way. That said, there is often the implied expectation that examiners will overlook careless proofreading, imprecise diction and slips in register and style.

While on the one hand, evaluation does not tend in the direction of penalizing for occasional lapses in spelling, grammar or punctuation, frequent incorrect usage is, in fact, penalized and holds candidates back from higher marks when, with some care, they could gain marks in this descriptor.

## Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

Although many schools approached the new demands for assessment in this part of the syllabus with seamless success, there is a clear need for a review of the Subject Guide with careful attention to the nature of each step in this four-step process of writing the assignment.

The foundational stages (Interactive Oral and Reflective Statement) need to be seen as the first half of a process, providing candidates with a secure sense of the context in which the particular work has been generated and that it continues to reflect. Two additional suggestions for the Interactive Oral bear on the personal experience of the candidate, asking about difficulties and connections between the work and the candidate's experience. It is probably best to use the suggestion about literary technique as one related to literary history so as not to divert the focus from the central question of the Interactive Oral.

N.B. Understandably, the requirement to submit to the examiner the Reflective Statement on the same work as the focus text of the Written Assignment appears to imply that the second must exhibit obvious links to the first. Because the Reflective Statement addresses one area of knowing a work, and the Written Assignment another, there is no requirement that context and culture be explicitly discussed in the latter. What is hoped is that the solid grounding in the wider sense of the work will usefully inform the candidate's approach to the essay.

The third and fourth steps of the process aim, beginning with the Supervised Writing, to steer the candidate in a productive direction when producing the essay (the Written Assignment), which should treat in some depth a feature in one of the three studied texts.

The prompts provided by the teacher for Supervised Writing should be both sharply focused on literary features and wide enough to allow some latitude for individual approaches to the prompt. Beyond the Supervised Writing, the teacher needs to look at the first draft of the Written Assignment to be sure that the candidate is headed in a productive direction. Examiners will not be surprised to see topics such as "The effect of the narrative voice," or "The handling of stanzaic structure" or "The use of stage directions" treated in the same literary work but with an individually chosen critical angle and evidence in support of the particular candidate's argument.

Although the final editing of the submitted assignment is entirely in the candidate's own hands, every encouragement should be given to care in devising the structure of the argument and the use of the language, with a final proofreading before submission of the work.

## Further comments

A checklist follows that may help in solving the most common problems encountered this session; insuring that all of them are addressed may provide the assistance teachers have requested about the demands of the exercise.

1. Check and double check that the *works* chosen for study in Part 1 are (a) listed on the PLT and (b) are written originally in a language other than English.

2. Assess the reading skills and sophistication of your class groups and select works whose content and style are both accessible and engaging for the majority, not just the very talented.

3. Work with candidates to ensure that they have a solid working knowledge of literary terms such as 'exposition' or 'lexical field' or literary movements such as 'Romanticism' or 'Theatre of the Absurd.'

4. Make available to candidates and discuss the central question that must be addressed in the Reflective Statement:

"How my sense of the cultural and contextual considerations of the work has evolved through this Interactive Oral."

5. Practise writing reflective statements in response to other oral presentations such as those that might be delivered as IOPs in Part 4 work.

6. Assess when Interactive Orals are most fruitfully delivered to advantage candidates. Work on authorial biography as well as the author's geographical and historical position, including literary history, and events in the larger world can be useful in advance of reading the work. The process of reading the work may then be enhanced by discussions of aspects within the work such as linguistic and political culture, social norms and expectations, and other aspects of the work's setting.

7. Provide Supervised Writing prompts that point candidates in directions that encourage, not philosophical, sociological or anthropological studies, but explorations of how the writer has chosen to invent and present an artistic approach to human thoughts, feelings and behaviour. Only with this latter kind of focus can candidates do well in Criterion C.

8. Model for candidates the way a literary essay evolves from a prompt such as "Analyze the way the writer advances plot evolution with the use of a minor character," or "Show how the playwright uses one or more dramatic moments to produce comic relief in an otherwise serious play" or "Examine the recurring motif of weather change in the work of the poet."

9. Show candidates how paraphrase and re-description differ from critical analysis with examples of both, and with writing exercises that demand they construct examples of these in order to see the difference.

10. Ensure that candidates know the precise word limits on the Reflective Statement and the Written Assignment as designated in the *Subject Guide* and that there are penalties for exceeding them, even by one word.

## Standard level written assignment

### Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 6	7 - 9	10 - 12	13 - 15	16 - 18	19 - 20	21 - 25

## The range and suitability of the work submitted

A very small number of centres still submitted comparative assignments. The fact that the written assignment is only based on **one** Part 1 work is an advantage to candidates. All works studied in Part 1 must be taken from the prescribed literature in translation list (PLT). It was perhaps a little disappointing that many familiar works made frequent appearances, however, with a new assessment it is also understandable that teachers might have felt more confident in selecting 'tried and tested' works that were suitable for their cohort. It was also encouraging to see centres using works that have appeared on the PLT for the first time. Assignments that do not have a literary and analytical focus do not yield good results; for example, a written assignment whose title is on parallels between Zamyatin's *We* and contemporary society led to half the actual content not focusing on literary analysis at all. On the other hand, titles whose focus is along the lines of 'How does the author...' are usually heading in an appropriate (and rewarding) direction as candidates are showing awareness of works as literary constructions created by writers who have made choices about content. These candidates therefore tend not to write about characters as if they were real people. They do not waste valuable words speculating about what might have happened had the plot been different. They demonstrate appreciation of the author's choices appropriate to the genre (plays have audiences, not readers; it is worrying that plays are often termed novels in the assignments; it is disturbing to read that Levi's *If This Is A Man* [*Survival in Auschwitz*] is being called a novel). Although the supervised writing stage has led to more candidates having similar or the same titles, it is vital that each candidate develop an individual focus for the written assignment. This leads to a more independent and critically engaged approach. When a number of assignments make the same content points, employ the same examples and duplicate identical quotations, it clearly indicates that little independent thought has gone into the written assignment and that between the supervised writing and the creation of the essay no re-reading (even if partial) of the work has taken place. Please keep the supervised writing on file at the centre until after the issue of results; do not submit it to the examiner. Examiners are expected to have read the works they are examining, therefore paraphrase of content of the work does not produce good results. Perhaps the most significant complaint from examiners is that the approach is too often more descriptive than analytical. At times a concise clarification of a plot point is needed in order to contextualize an example or introduce a quotation, but this needs to be done briefly. A key distinction needs to be made between the content of the reflective statement and the written assignment. It was evident this session that many teachers and candidates clearly understood the difference between them, but many centres did not (see comments below on Criterion A).

## Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A (Fulfilling the requirements of the reflective statement): This was, unfortunately, a weak area for many centres and individual candidates, largely due to a misunderstanding of its function and perhaps a misguided approach in the actual interactive orals. The interactive oral must address the four questions stated in the guide (p.30). These questions are designed to allow candidates to explore the cultural and contextual elements that informed the creation of that particular work and these may be similar to or different from candidates' own experiences. This provides vital information that enables candidates to develop their own understanding and this is addressed in the question they must answer when writing their reflective statements ('How was your understanding of cultural and contextual considerations of the work developed through the interactive oral?'). This question should appear on the reflective statement submitted for assessment. When there are many candidates in the teaching group it may be wise to conduct more than one interactive oral on each work. Candidates should write their reflective statements soon after the interactive oral. The reflective statement should

be personal as it focuses on an individual's evolution of thought regarding these cultural and contextual elements (too often these were simply descriptive and gave no indication of individual perspective). The reflective statement should make explicit reference to some of the material covered in the interactive oral, but this must be done concisely; a number were simply summaries of the content of the IO. It was also clear that in a number of cases the interactive orals were literary presentations on the work and these led to reflective statements that addressed the content of the work rather than the cultural and contextual elements necessary for comprehending the work. Some candidates tried valiantly to address too many of these elements and this can lead to a superficial approach: encourage candidates to perhaps focus on the two or three ideas or pieces of information that struck them the most. The teacher also has a key role to play in the interactive oral, not least in intervening when information delivered by candidates is either inaccurate or dubious. It is impossible to define all the cultural and contextual elements that inform the creation of a literary work, but if candidates are encouraged to consider social mores, historical background, pertinent biographical information, prevailing attitudes and literary trends (any combination of these, where appropriate) then they are heading in the right direction. Connecting these to the relevant details of the work is the key to success, but the interactive oral's function is to focus on these elements. It ought to be relatively straightforward to gain full marks in this criterion if the content of the interactive oral is appropriate. Many candidates were able to achieve this. On the other hand, reflective statements that do not address the question at all and are focused on literary analysis of the work or exclusively duplicate the material of the written assignment are likely to score zero. Frustratingly, in a number of cases poor reflective statements then had some cultural/contextual content in the written assignment that would have scored some marks had it been included in the appropriate place. It was also interesting to note that occasionally teachers in the same centre appeared to have different understandings of the first two stages of the four part process. It would therefore be valuable to discuss these with colleagues in order to ensure common comprehension that will lead to greater consistency and guarantee more success for future candidates.

Criterion B (Knowledge and understanding): The majority of candidates know these works fairly well and marks in the 1-2 band were, thankfully, limited. Weaker performances resulted from topics with a limited literary focus and/or factual inaccuracy, often coupled with unconvincing claims that were inadequately supported by relevant examples. Stronger performances were driven by focused and appropriate topics that were strongly supported by detailed readings of the works, with all claims underpinned by precise references to the work. The best assignments were from candidates able to synthesize their understanding into insight, drawing together their knowledge of the work into a confident and convincing illumination of the concerns of the writer. Although candidates are marked on the content of what is presented, there are sometimes significant omissions (in an assignment on religion in *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* it is surprising to find no mention of Father Amador).

Criterion C (Appreciation of the writer's choices): In order to achieve success in this criterion it is clear that many examples must be used, but in a meaningful and integrated manner. The best candidates state a claim, provide specific textual detail to support the idea (this can be either directly quoted or cited) and then analyse the deliberate choices the writer has made in order to affect our reading/interpretation. Although it does not automatically guarantee success, using the writer's name tends to suggest that the candidate is aware that the work is a deliberate construction. When the writer's choices are only implicitly dealt with examiners have to work harder to give candidates credit here. Many examiners reported this criterion as the weakest area for most candidates. Making candidates aware of the 'constructedness' of works during analysis in class ought to be fundamental to almost every lesson and encouraging candidates to approach literary analysis in this manner will strengthen performance in every assessment component of this course, not just the written assignment.

Criterion D (Organization and development): This tends to be an area in which most candidates are able to perform to at least an adequate level. Introductions which are far too general and lengthy/repetitive conclusions are two weaker areas. Most candidates have a fairly sound grasp of paragraphing, but there are still those whose paragraphs are either far too short or far too long. Transitions between paragraphs are evident in most cases, but sometimes they are either far too basic or missing or are inaccurate (in the sense that they are not truly linking the preceding idea to the subsequent one at all). Candidates lose marks here if they go off topic and teacher comments on the first draft should point this out. In order to award the higher marks there must be a strong sense of a developing argument, coherently connected and cogently argued. The very best assignments deliver a strong sense of a justified conclusion, *Q.E.D.* (but unless the topic is a valid literary one, with a relatively tight focus, this is unlikely to happen). Assignments under 1200 words are considered to be self-penalizing as they are unable to provide satisfactory development of ideas. Conclusions should not contain new analysis and must be justified by the preceding points. Please teach the necessary skills required to integrate quotations properly and how to modify these (using square brackets) when needed.

Criterion E (Language): This is another criterion in which most candidates do relatively well. The conditions in which this component is produced work in the candidates' favour. However, poor proofreading is evident in far too many cases. Some candidates also appear to try too hard to 'enhance' their vocabulary through the computer thesaurus, often resulting in contextually inappropriate word choices. This is a formal written assignment and contractions are not appropriate. For many candidates there is too prevalent a tendency to employ colloquialisms and use an inappropriate register. Weak punctuation, leading to sentence fragments and run-on sentences, is clearly an area that needs attention in many cases. It is also important to praise the many candidates who write with clarity, sophistication and precision and whose assignments are a pleasure to read.

## Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

Several areas for improvement are evident in this report, but the following points bear repeating:

- Ensure that the reflective statement submitted for assessment is based on the same Part 1 work used for the written assignment
- Make candidates aware of the required focus for the interactive oral (and intervene where necessary)
- Devise supervised writing prompts with a suitable literary focus
- Encourage candidates to develop independent approaches to their topics
- Remind candidates of the importance of substantiating claims made through the use of precise examples and analysis based on an appreciation of the writer's choices
- Review the nature of introductions and conclusions so that these become both more effective and appropriate
- Help candidates to understand that there needs to be a through-line of argument
- Teach the integration and modification of quotations
- Develop a common understanding in class of appropriate register in formal written work.

## Higher level paper one

### Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 3	4 - 6	7 - 8	9 - 10	11 - 13	14 - 15	16 - 20

### General comments

Upon examination of a substantial and varied body of commentaries, it is a great positive to report that the majority of candidates have a clear grasp of the requirements of the commentary and can be reasonably successful with the assessment task. This May session included many good to excellent commentaries overall and evidence that clearly attention is being given to literary devices within texts as well as to structuring an overall commentary response. Many candidates displayed quite personal engagement with the works and demonstrated openness to working through texts that would have taken a couple of read-throughs. The very great majority of candidates revealed little trouble in at least gleaning a reasonable level of understanding with both the prose and the poetry options and most appeared both comfortable and confident in moving beyond literal events to engage the texts toward further ends.

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

In general, sustained close reading *as literature* is sometimes a struggle. Candidates often tend to focus on personal associations with isolated terms or phrases and develop entirely new constructs that are out of context from literary purpose and literary intention. These tend to result in “over-readings,” finding far more than, if reinserted, would be sustained by the original texts.

There continue to be issues with appropriate integration of a consideration of literary features. Literary features were noted by the very great majority of candidates who have clearly been taught to look for them. Unfortunately, they were often noting these devices as more of an aside that as an integrated component of a sophisticated reading. This would create a kind of “disconnect” between an interpretation of the text and an awareness of the use of many literary devices. At its weakest, this resulted in a listing or noting of devices only, the result of which is something masquerading as analysis only.

By extension, it is important to treat significant features only. Candidates can spend too much time and energy on marginal devices that really do not have much significance. Examiners are always forgiving and accepting of features that candidates highlight but spending time and energy discussing questionable devices does take candidates away from richer readings with a more effectively integrated appreciation of features. This tendency suggests, once more, that candidates can be searching out features as an add-on or “at all costs” rather than as part of the analytical work required with commentary.

Finally, though clearly related, is the problem of using literary features as the organizing principal for structuring responses. It can be helpful for candidates to have approaches in mind for structuring responses but when commentaries are organized around identifying literary features, work tends to



be mechanistic and misses the more authentically engaged readings asked of candidates in this assessment task. In such cases, for instance, a candidate may well have spent a paragraph on setting, another on character, a third on action, etc. but still failed to provide a compelling interpretation or evidence of a developed argument.

Unsupported assertion and not considering the significance of points, however, is the big challenge encountered over and over.

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

Despite what is mentioned above with regard to template-like papers, most candidates did convey an ability to construct a response and convey ideas with appropriate language. Candidates were clearly competent and comfortable with writing about literature using an appropriate register and a sense of organization and logic. Many examiners commented on the high level of both language and organization.

Candidates also demonstrated awareness of commentary as an assessment task. There was a sense of familiarity with approaching the assignment and attempting to develop a response suitably appropriate in detailed focus.

Most candidates were able to glean a reasonable level of overall understanding of both the prose passage and the poem. There seemed to be quite strong engagement with both options and candidates did well exploring the texts and even trying to extend their thinking. Though occasionally problematic with regard to integration, literary devices are overtly considered by the great majority of candidates.

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

### Prose commentary

Most candidates who selected the prose passage were able to glean the basic scenario in the ice cream shop with accuracy and then to extend the memory toward a musing on a more tragic family conflict/dysfunction. The rich use of metaphor made for accessible consideration of literary features for many candidates and the first 20 lines were handled generally well. The role of memory was frequently considered to a candidate's advantage and most candidates were able to at least make some argument with the more ambiguous final ten lines.

The biggest distinction between candidates who more successfully treated the prose passage from those who were less successful was the awareness and exploration of family conflict. Less successful candidates tended to focus almost exclusively on the positive connotations around the consideration of ice cream flavours—and these responses were also generally very overview-like rather than more deeply analytical—and failed to take up the tensions between child and parents even when they may have noted them briefly. More successful candidates were able to find a balance between the more metaphorically playful treatment of ice creams and the more tense dysfunction in their analysis.

Perhaps surprisingly, the prose passage seemed to inspire mixed treatment of literary features. Despite very layered metaphors and very obvious play with and through language, some candidates resorted to summary of action rather than a consideration of how language created effect or meaning. Perspective and point of view were treated rather well on the whole but more precise consideration of the detail in the passage was often missing.

While examiners were open to a wide range of interpretations, some candidates ran into trouble with very personal and/or isolated associations. The rainbow (“Rainbow”) ice cream flavour solicited several associations with gay/lesbian rights which, while understandable in isolation, simply failed to make much sense in the larger passage. Again, where candidates tended to expand this association as the cause of the tension between parents and child, it tended to work well enough but where this took over from the focus on the tensions, interpretations tended to go astray.

Candidates demonstrated good work with their attempts at treating the references to crows and desire that were the backbone of the end of the passage. While challenging, it was nice to see candidates work through these lines rather than omit them. Most candidates did recognize the subtle sarcasm of the final line. Some stronger analyses were even able to extend their work to the larger consideration of memory, language and knowledge abilities of the speaker as boy versus grown man and the independent flair of the speaker.

### Poetry commentary

The poetry commentary received quite mixed response from candidates. On the one hand, there were some excellent commentaries that demonstrated with sophisticated engagement with the poem and willingness to be open to reading new works. On the other hand, there was also evidence of real struggle to treat the poem as a poem rather than as a piece of prose.

Certainly the poem contains ambiguity and the level of comfort with this seemed to play a large role in the success of a candidate. Candidates who wanted to read the poem as prose—a story with an ordered plot and a moral or theme—had a generally more difficult time moving through the piece. As a generally accessible “contemporary” poet, Jacobsen may well include these elements but some candidates were clearly looking for more obvious markers and seemed unable to independently and flexibly engage with the poem. Intellectual agility, then, was a great distinguishing factor amongst candidates.

The first few stanzas were, on the whole, treated well by candidates. Many candidates wanted to see an evolutionary growth in the sophistication of beings and language (from insect to mammal to human) and there was wide ranging interpretation on what language might be but most candidates recognized the literal situation and the speaker’s feelings about her inability to fully understand.

The final two stanzas presented more challenge. Most candidates offered viable ideas around the reference to Babel but it was the confusion around “love” and “hush” that could challenge some candidates. Generally, candidates wanted to read love as positive and see this as a form (in fact, a higher form) of communication. While examiners were open to such interpretations, this could create confusion for candidates who then faced “silence” and “evil” just a few lines later. Strong candidates were able to reconcile this conflict with the very best realizing that even physical love, whatever its pleasure, remained “illiterate” and that the poem was always circling around an irreconcilable desire for a language that can never exist.

The majority of candidates did focus on the very significant title and used this as an anchor for their readings. This approach was certainly to a candidate's advantage.

The treatment of features was more effectively considered with the poem despite the writer's choices arguably more challenging than in the prose piece. Structure was very frequently considered though there was a significant range of interpretations here. However, with the poem in particular, there was a tendency toward a template-like approach with regard to the use of the same literary devices to a common organization that includes an introduction which highlights, for instance, three literary devices found in the passage. Candidates were making rather "thin" work of structure and commonly-noted features with a sense of being pushed to find something (anything?) in places that felt unnatural—or at least exterior—to the larger readings. In all of these cases, candidates tend to be handcuffed rather than given free rein to explore readings and distinguish themselves. As mentioned already, candidates who were open to engaging the poem rather than "knowing" definitively seemed better able to manage the work.

## Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

- Commentary is meant to be an authentic engagement with literature that provides opportunities for candidates to demonstrate their intellectual agility with reading texts. Being taught to produce products that sound like commentary or criticism is rarely effective. Better commentaries always make sense and convey interpretations of the works that are heart-felt rather than forced. In some cases, this can be enhanced for focusing initially on the literal events/plot aspects before trying to extend to more figurative intentions. The best advice for teachers to help facilitate this skill is to expose candidates to a wide variety of texts and to work with more authentic experiences in working through unknown texts independently.
- Good commentaries incorporate a consideration of literary features as part of their larger reading/interpretation rather than as additional, supplementary material or as the organizing principal for a response. Good commentaries include personal voice. Structure is something we all teach, but candidates should be encouraged to explore this independently.
- Terms and phrases should be meaningful to candidates. The use of features like tone, symbol and motif, especially, need to be treated precisely. Candidates need to understand what it actually means to "symbolize" or "be a theme" and this needs to be demonstrated in commentary.
- Fluent, good quality writing does make a difference. Even candidates who were not able to extend the quality of their analysis were, with at least some level of general understanding, able to earn solid marks overall with good work in both organization and the use of language. With the new rubrics especially, this makes a considerable difference.
- Purpose/effect/significance always needs to be considered.
- Analysis needs to be precise. Support needs careful and considered elaboration. Even ideas assumed to be self-evident should not be treated as such and need to be "proven" with specific textual referencing and elaborate explanation as to both how and why it is used.
- Larger interpretations need to be supported by the larger text. Candidates should be encouraged to "plug their interpretations back into the text" in order to verify that they are still reasonable and not merely associative. An interpretation based on a single word, line or element/aspect will likely not reinsert very easily and might then be re-examined. Avoid considering possibilities of what might have been or what might later be (i.e. avoid hypothetical considerations outside of the context of the work).

- Avoid narration.
- Teach candidates to plan responses. Candidates who seek to write as much as possible and think via their writing are not always successful with their responses. Strong introductions and conclusions are very helpful and effective elements in a commentary.

## 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

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

Considerably more candidates chose the poem, and although the responses ranged from excellent to very poor, there were more lower standard responses, while the better candidates seemed to opt for the prose extract. The weaker candidates had problems understanding the most important aspects of the extracts, and often their interpretation was invalid or not substantiated by close references to the texts. Perhaps these areas have often been difficult for the weaker candidates and teachers should spend more time in the practice of how a candidate should approach an unseen text in order to come up with a justifiable interpretation of it. For example, a candidate needs to be able to recognize that claiming that the saucepan in which the soup is cooked is the narrator, or that the narrator is a politician or the coach of a sports team in the poem, or that Betsy becomes the spider or that Conrad is an artist working on cave paintings in the prose cannot in any way be substantiated. One examiner suggested that the candidates could be taught to establish narrative voice right at the beginning of their reading to help them get the right angle of interpretation from the start.

While more candidates this year appeared to be aware of the importance of focusing on literary features and techniques, too many of the weaker ones tended to just mention them without analyzing their effects in detail or how they contributed to the meaning of the text. For example, in the poem, most candidates could name the personification used by the persona when she includes the ingredients of her soup in her speech, but failed to take this further by connecting it with how it produces humour or parodies acceptance speeches. Similarly, in the prose extract, while mention was made of aspects such as the imagery or tone changes, only the better candidates analysed the techniques used to produce these. Candidates should be reminded that merely naming a technique does not show appreciation of the writer's choices and their effect. It has been suggested that candidates could be taught to identify purpose and link their analysis of literary features to that.

Candidates should be made aware of the format of the exam. For example, several candidates misunderstood the instructions and wrote commentaries on both the prose extract and the poem. Some candidates failed to respond to the questions at all and should be reminded that in this new Literature course, they are mandatory. Others focused too closely on the questions to the exclusion of

all else. They must be taught that although the rubric states that they “must address both questions”, this does not mean ignoring everything else in the extract that is worthy of analysis. In a similar vein, candidates should not divide their essay into two parts in order to parallel the a. and b. questions, but write a coherent, well-organised single essay in which the answers to these questions are incorporated in the analysis. Indeed, candidates need to be aware of the importance of the organization of their analysis in which the paragraphing and general sequence of ideas should lead to the coherence of the essay as a whole. A surprising number of candidates failed to use paragraphs at all. In addition, although generally the quality and accuracy of the candidates’ language have improved, as well as a general awareness of register, there is still some work to be done in the areas of vocabulary choice, sentence syntax, grammar and punctuation.

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

Most examiners felt that both extracts were accessible to average candidates and open to in-depth analysis by the better candidates. The better candidates showed a real engagement with the texts and good answers showed clear evidence of point/evidence/analysis. Quotations were carefully integrated into the writing and commented on in some detail. An understanding of how the structure contributed to meaning was also evident in the better answers. The treatment of personification and metaphor in the poem and the imagery and tone switches in the prose was sound in many answers, and the better candidates could develop this into an understanding of how these features shape meaning.

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

### The poem

It is possible that more candidates chose the poem because they thought it was the easier option, and perhaps this reflects the fact that centres are practising unseen poetry analysis more than in previous years, when more candidates tended to choose the prose passage.

The better candidates understood the situation, setting and changing tone of the narrator. These candidates identified the parody made of acceptance speeches, the irony and humour, and some focused well on the play on words and puns used, noting how the structure and diction mimicked these speeches. They also discussed in detail literary features such as narrative voice and the use of personification and their effects. The stylistic devices were analysed in detail and were substantiated with well chosen, and well integrated, references. These candidates also focused on all parts of the poem.

As mentioned previously, some of the less able candidates focused too specifically on the questions and, while they discussed the opening and closing stanzas, failed to include the middle stanzas at all. Many of the weaker candidates failed to recognize the basic situation of the narrator, the irony in tone, the parody of the speech, while some failed to mention the speech at all or took the poem literally, claiming that the narrator was actually at an awards ceremony. Many missed the humour completely. Too often, weaker candidates just named or listed stylistic features, such as personification, without making any attempt to analyse their impact on meaning.

## The prose extract

The better candidates showed a good understanding of the dream/awaking sequence and the contrasts involved, as well as Conrad's changing and mixed feelings and the importance of the contrasting settings, offering valid and well-substantiated interpretations. For example, they focused on how Conrad's actions and the setting convey his state of mind, the importance of the imagery of the spiders, Betsy's sleeping form, the dog, the fridge, the attic and its pictures and its "mere gloom". Some offered valid interpretations for Conrad's fear, for example, that he has bitter memories that he is unable to suppress and which constantly haunt him in recurring dreams. Some of the better candidates also gave a valid analysis of the structure and organization of the passage, and noted the repetition of imagery.

Weaker candidates tended to misinterpret the ideas and feelings in the text. For example, that Conrad is working on a cave painting, or that both he and Betsy are children, or that Betsy is evil and causing the nightmare, or simply retold the events of the story. A surprising number of candidates either completely ignored the final paragraph, or even the middle part, which could have been due to their exclusively focusing on the questions.

## Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

For both the prose extract and the poem, candidates need to be taught to write a balanced response that addresses both Criterion A and Criterion B equally. Too many responses relied almost entirely on interpretation and did not focus on literary devices and how they shaped meaning, or emphasized the literary features without developing the interpretation.

As mentioned above, candidates need to be taught how to deal with the questions. They have to be focused on in the body of the essay, together with other important aspects that may not be addressed in the questions. Similarly, they need to be reminded that the commentary needs to be a single, cohesive essay and that it should not be divided into two parts to correspond with the questions.

Candidates should be encouraged to focus more on understanding the text, rather than listing literary features out of context. Perhaps they should be taught to spend more time annotating the texts and planning the essays, so that they can come to a greater understanding of and engage in the texts more fully. Additionally, centres should spend equal time on practising the two genres.

Finally, on a practical level, centres should instruct candidates to write clearly and have good pens that produce a deep blue or black and have a consistent flow of ink. After being scanned, some of the scripts become difficult to read and this was often not so much due to the handwriting as to the fact that the ink did not flow evenly.

## Higher level paper two

### Component grade boundaries

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

## General comments

Teacher response to the first paper two examination for the current curriculum was overwhelmingly positive. Most teachers suggested that the examination was clear, fair, and offered interesting opportunities for their candidates to demonstrate that they have met the objectives of the Literature course. These comments correlated with examiner comments that suggested that the candidates did not have difficulties with the new format or, more importantly, the new focus of the examination on generic conventions. While there were some concerns from teachers about particular questions, examiners noted that candidates seemed to be comfortable working with a choice of three questions and that they wrote well about the works studied. Generally speaking, the candidates were well prepared in relation to the works they studied and also understood the demands of essay writing. While this has been noticed in past years, examiners also suggested that candidates were better prepared during this session to both discuss literary conventions and to write more purposeful and evaluative comparison. While there were some weaknesses in performance, the general impression of candidate responses in this session was positive. This is especially heartening considering that a new curriculum has the potential to cause difficulties.

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

Perhaps the biggest difficulty for candidates remains, as in the past, focusing on the question at hand. While candidates were well versed in literary conventions and in important ideas in their works studied, candidates also struggled to respond to the particular focus of the question. There is always a limit to possible topics for exam questions. It is easy enough for teachers to narrow down possible topics for exam questions to terms such as “imagery,” or “structure.” The purpose of exam questions, though, is to ask candidates not to produce a rote, general response in relation to a particular feature, but to ask candidates to demonstrate their deep, flexible and personal understanding of their works and various elements of literature. While some candidates struggled because it seemed as if they were unfamiliar with the works studied, others struggled because though they knew their works, or had at least studied them, they were unable to focus on the particular demands of the question.

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

In this session candidates had a renewed and pointed focus on literary conventions. Examiners noted that candidates performed better in this category and went beyond simply “noticing” conventions and instead discussed their effect on meaning.

Examiners also noticed a clear attempt to compare and evaluate. While at times this led to awkward or forced ideas, in general it led to stronger essays. In past years, though comparison was not specifically demanded, many essays were weak in presentation and in terms of general discussion because ideas were not balanced by careful comparison. Evaluation, though, did seem to be a slippery term in the minds of some of the candidates (and perhaps in the minds of teachers as well). Some candidates made very explicit evaluative comments that clearly addressed the demands of the question in a helpful way (suggesting, perhaps, that one author offered a clearer view of the “hearts”

of a character than another author did). Others, however, were explicit but somewhat banal in their evaluations. Overall, though, evaluation can be somewhat implicit and can be tied to the extent an author employs a convention, the importance of that convention to a given work or to the differing means of employing a convention. Evaluation need not be simplified to “good” and “bad” but is best tied to the idea of “evaluative interpretation” or a reading of a text that goes beyond summary and then beyond the basic implications of a text to discussion, a discussion of how various elements work together to create an aesthetic work with particular meanings and effects. In other words, an evaluation often simply pushes to the “so what.” Evaluation, then, can be both global (what does a text ultimately mean? How has the text fit, or not fit, into the traditions of a genre?) and analytic (how do various elements function to create meaning?).

As usual, candidates seemed well prepared in terms of their chosen texts, often giving detailed responses. Candidates and teachers are clearly aware that detail and depth is necessary to demonstrate understanding in relation to the task.

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

Q.1: While this wasn't a particularly popular question, candidates responded well to it. Though there were problems with candidates who had only a fuzzy notion of reasonable meanings of tempo, there tended to be good responses where the term was understood. Many candidates found a wide variety of techniques that could influence the tempo of a play. Weak responses often referred vaguely to exciting tone, conflict or scene change without explaining how these elements may affect tempo.

Q.2: Most candidates focused on the theatrical emotions of characters and had some problems bringing generic conventions to bear in this question. Some candidates, however, clearly linked various types of exuberance or exaggeration to the nature of theatre and its conventions.

Q.3: Some responses to this question became a re-telling of the plot of the plays without close attention to the idea that drama is created because the character is ordinary and because this ordinary character has a crisis. A re-telling of the story often only gave an implied response to the question. At the same time, many candidates wrote well about plays such as *Death of a Salesman*, *Master Harold and the Boys*, and *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Some candidates made interesting cases for the ordinariness of characters such as Hamlet and handled the question well.

Q.4: Many candidates wrote engaging essays about the ways in which poems are meant to be pleasurable. Some candidates, however, were confused in relation to the question and wrote, instead, about how pleasure may be the actual subject of a poem. This was not always, however, a fatal flaw, as these candidates may have come around to the idea that a poem whose subject is pleasure may be trying to please at the same time.

Q.5: As in many poetry questions, attention to details of a work was key in answering this question. Many candidates clearly have a strong memory and understanding of their chosen poems. Candidates who did not get to “how” attention was drawn had some difficulties.

Q.6: This was a popular question in the poetry section. Many candidates had a good handle on voice in general and also were able to write about some distinctive voices as they defined this term themselves. Most candidates were also able to use specific detail to discuss how voice might be created and pointed to conventions such as rhyme, imagery, and rhythm, but also to other general features such as tone or mood. While responses in the G-2 suggested that this question was



problematic because it asked candidates to talk about conventions that create a convention, the candidates themselves didn't seem to have a problem. In many ways, any question asking about a convention (say "conflict" in prose) asks for other conventions that are used to create this larger feature.

Q.7: Overall this was a popular question, though it was not the most popular in the "Prose: Novel and Short Story" section. Many candidates had studied works such as *Slaughterhouse Five* where disruption is clearly part of the narrative structure, and thus were able to write interesting responses. Many other candidates had success writing about elements such as digression or flashback in works ranging from *Heart of Darkness* to *The Handmaid's Tale*. While the G-2 mentioned, in a couple of places, that these are not "terms" used in the discussion of literature in the U.S., the intention wasn't to suggest that these are specific literary terms. In a discussion of the structure of prose fiction it seems reasonable to assume that a candidate could also write about how a specific narrative movement is thwarted. The candidates, in fact, proved quite able with this question.

Q.8: Many candidates wrote strong essays about methods of characterization. This was also somewhat of a shortfall for some in that essays focused on many broad means of characterization rather on specific means that might "get us to the heart" of a character. This term itself was problematic at times as candidates strayed to varying degrees with "relatability" and how the reader might take a character to heart.

Q.9: There was mixed success on this question. Many candidates were able to clearly show how a given work was obviously set up to contain a moral or lesson. Other candidates stayed general and simply suggested that there were life lessons in a work rather than showing how this was a clear authorial choice. Some candidates also ran into problems as they wanted to say a work was moral (rather than that a work would *have* a moral) which could be relevant, but often proved tangential to the question.

Q.10: While the contrast with fiction may have been somewhat problematic for some candidates, the direct demands of the question were certainly within reach. Candidates produced strong responses to this question in relation to "authentic" details in texts. Some candidates extended the discussion to considerations of the meaning of authenticity in works of prose other than fiction.

Q.11: This was a popular question for prose: other than the novel and short story. Many candidates had a good store of dark memories to draw from in the works. Some candidates ran into trouble when they broadened their scope to all memories, negative and positive.

Q.12: On the surface, this question may seem difficult but it elicited interesting responses about the ways in which works of prose other than the novel and short story can be crafted.

## Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Much of the advice for the future can be taken from suggestions above, but there are a few main points to consider:

- With the demands of looking at the conventions of a genre it is important for teachers to choose works with care, looking for both similarities and differences (in style, ideas, across time periods, etc.)
- Once again it is important to stress that variety in text choices often helps candidates engage more authentically with a work. This is not a suggestion to move away from classic works but to consider

why a text is chosen and how a candidate can engage with the text in a fresh way. Too many responses in relation to *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Death of a Salesman*, *The Awakening*, and other popular choices discussed well-worn notions and features without getting at a response that was relevant to the question at hand. Rather than knowing a text it seemed that the candidates knew *about* the text. Many schools made interesting choices that gave candidates a range of conventions and resources with which to work. Some schools balanced a text such as *Pride and Prejudice* with a more recent work by someone like Chimamanda Adichie or Cormac McCarthy. It is important to think not only about teaching a work but to lean towards teaching how to approach works in general, how to engage with authentic interpretive problems and how to generate responses independently.

- Teachers should continue to focus on essay writing skills and the general skills of comparison.
- Teachers should be sure to review the PLA. There were many schools that still taught authors who are no longer on the PLA.

## Standard 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 - 17	18 - 20	21 - 25

### General comments

The paper was found to be accessible and set at an appropriate level of difficulty, allowing candidates to demonstrate their understanding. Most candidates showed secure knowledge of the content of their chosen texts, making some appropriate selection of evidence. Successful candidates showed precision in quotation and were better able to explore the question, with more subtle sense of nuance. A smaller but significant number showed poor knowledge of texts, with basic plot and context confusion, so that one response placed Master Harold in Australia and another believed *1984* was Orwell's autobiography. Responses were well presented, with a good understanding of what constitutes appropriate diction and an attempt to organise the material within an accepted format. Marks in Criterion E were generally adequate or higher and in upper range responses there were some notably succinct and well-crafted turns of phrase that captured a particular idea sharply.

Centres preparing candidates for this examination in future should ensure that candidates understand that they are to answer using at least two Part 3 works, and *only* Part 3 works. In addition, question selection must relate to the genre studied. Although no penalties were applied in this first May session, candidates should not be trying to answer a Drama question by using examples from a novel, or a prose fiction question by using a prose non-fiction text. Martin Luther King is not an imagined character. Such mismatching of text to question was frequently self-penalising.

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

Candidates showed general awareness of literary conventions, appropriate to the chosen genre. However, they were much less secure in the use of this knowledge to address the question and, unfortunately, many responses appeared to be prepared all-purpose essays, offering only set-piece comment on literary techniques. The ability to focus on the demands of the task and think through the implications of the selected question proved to be the most significant factor in determination of achievement. Certainly, future candidates would benefit from increased opportunities to learn how to decode questions and identify the key terms. This would support more precise engagement with the task by giving sharper direction, based on a defined understanding of the concepts.

In many cases, candidates seemed to lack a plan of action before writing. This was notable in the many essays that began with a level of generality which was not helpful in directing the response. At times, the real point of the essay emerged only in the conclusion, which would have been better suited as an opening paragraph. Poor focus and lack of planning was frequently to the detriment of the comparative element of the response. Candidates will be asked to compare how two different writers employ the stated convention; finding basic points of plot and character similarities is unlikely to suffice.

Despite the cautionary notes given above, examiners were very positive about the ways candidates had responded to the given prompts. Centres would be well advised to encourage the view that these essay topics are an opportunity for candidates to re-evaluate their understanding of texts in the light of a new idea. Criteria A, B and C all require that the response offered should be judged 'in relation to the demands of the question'. The very best responses were those that really tried to take the question to the text and to explore what either the given definitions, or stated ideas might add to the appreciation of a work.

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

Q.1: Not a popular question, despite its clear focus, and this suggested that candidates may not have known *tempo* as a term. Indeed those candidates who did offer a response frequently opted to explore changes in mood or to discuss a change in plot direction. *Tempo* may well have been an element in the response, but it was seldom the prime focus.

Q.2: It was evident that the favoured texts for study had given candidates ample material and this proved popular. Examiners saw many successful explorations of Blanche's exaggerated responses to her new surroundings and Eddie's reactions to Catherine's new relationship. Such obviously intense scenes were often usefully set alongside exploration of how much significance can be drawn from the exaggerated mannerisms of characters taking afternoon tea in Wilde's drama. Less successful responses wanted to offer alternative definitions of 'theatrical' and gave prepared pieces on setting and stage directions. Much formulaic comment blighted these answers. Good responses examined the ways in which the devices of leitmotif, music, and lighting are used to provide an extension of the emotional state of the character, such as in the use of music and light imagery in *Streetcar*.

Q.3: A popular choice, and again success here depended on how fully the candidate engaged with the terms of the question. While there were many strong responses that explored the highly charged dialogue from 'larger than life' characters in extreme circumstances, the question was often distorted by candidates who did little to establish the 'ordinariness' of their selected character and often failed to identify the crisis they were placed in. A general sense that everybody on stage was 'having a

tough time' sometimes replaced more thoughtful consideration of text within the terms of the question but, despite this tendency, there were many sensitive studies, for example, looking at Hally as an ordinary teenager moving into maturity, noting that his crisis emerges out of the 'extraordinary' privilege he holds, through race, in apartheid South Africa. One candidate noted that while King Lear may not appear 'ordinary', he is an elderly man facing personal crisis as he realises his own mortality and his refusal to accept it fuels the drama.

Q.4: Very few responses were seen. Examiners did express the hope that this did not indicate candidates had failed to find pleasure in poetry, although this was a less popular genre choice.

Q.5: Performance here was very mixed, producing some of the very best and the very worst answers seen. Frequently, although candidates offered a close examination of their selected poems, this was not in relation to the question. Rather, candidates offered up an analysis of poems in a format reminiscent of Paper 1 commentary where alignment to the question was at best implicit. The given prompt, inviting focus on the 'strange, singular or different' aspects of poetry, sometimes featured only in the opening and closing sentences, framing a prepared essay on point of view, diction and tone. Selection of poem was crucial here. The chosen work did need to contain something that the candidate could identify as 'strange, singular or different'. A striking example used was *An Arundel Tomb*, exploring Philip Larkin's response to the surprising detail of the effigies' clasped hands.

Q.6: This was the most popular of the poetry questions. Many candidates knew, and knew in detail, works that involved monologues from created characters (poems by Duffy and Browning) and /or works that involved direct speech or dialogue between more than one voice (*O What is that Sound* and *Miss Gee*, Auden). The best answers not only described the characteristics of the voice, but also paid careful attention to how the chosen diction and metre creates the effects and how the placing of the voice(s) enhances the work as a whole. Weaker responses often made a poor choice of poem, simply asserting that the whole poem was the poet's own voice and reverting to prepared comment.

Q.7: The question directs candidates into an exploration of narrative disruption, suggesting a range of possibilities. Movement between the past and present in the form of flashback or revealed memories was a popular choice and the best responses considered how this often underscores the stark realities portrayed in the texts' present time. Less successful responses seemed to ignore the question focus on 'disruption' and to simply home in on 'narrative', distorting the task to deliver comment on narrative point of view. There was some validity in this choice - as with the shift in narrative voice at the end of *A Handmaid's Tale*, where the change creates disruption and re-directs the action. However, many candidates chose simply to describe how the choice of narrator shapes presentation of character or plot and this often had little relevance.

Q.8: The question required candidates to consider how writers construct complex characters in ways which make them understandable to us. Okonkwo was a popular choice here, as a character who gives very little away to those around him, but whose inner life is known and understood by the reader. There were many ways into this question, depending on choice of text. It was possible to identify and explore the ways in which writers developed their characters through, for example, responses to adversity (Hester Prynne) or showing how misunderstanding followed by revelation, contributes to maturity and transformation (Elizabeth Bennet). Less successful responses were offered by candidates who distorted the question, considering how characters found a place in the reader's heart; or who understood the question to merely imply that we had to 'like' or 'personally relate' to the character. Much unfocussed sympathy for a character's plight intruded here.

Q.9: Candidates successful with this question were able to engage with the dominant issues/themes within the texts studied, rather than getting caught up in the events or situations within the texts. The dystopian novels of Orwell and Atwood provoked thought on the necessary conditions for freedom and the power of language to shape what we know, offering exploration of how devices such as symbols and setting underscore and emphasize the warning.

Q.10: Very few responses to this question were seen and those that were offered tended to lack any examples of 'authentic detail' and merely asserted that it certainly was present and had helped enormously. This was a question which seemed to reveal that candidates frequently do not carry with them a sufficient store of 'details'. Where a candidate could provide examples, the question proved straightforward, provided the brief of 'how' and 'to what effect' was given consideration.

Q.11: As with Q10, success here depended on the ability to select an appropriate example and consider how the chosen memory is presented to the reader. 'Function' was a key term and the better responses offered thoughtful comment about what such dark or negative episodes had brought to the text, often in terms of shaping the writer's attitudes and viewpoint.

Q.12: Very few attempted this question and some that tried had misunderstood 'communal effort' and thought it required consideration of the writer's efforts for his community. There were a few thoughtful explorations of Ondaatje's use of family anecdotes and memories. A response to *Letter from Birmingham Jail* offered some interesting comment on quotation and cross referencing of other writers and began to suggest the idea that the work drew on the thinking of a 'community' of activists throughout history.