

English A: Literature TZ2

TZ 2 (IB Africa, Europe & Middle East and IB Asia Pacific)

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 - 56	57 - 68	69 - 80	81 - 100

Standard level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 16	17 - 30	31 - 42	43 - 55	56 - 68	69 - 80	81 - 100

Higher level internal assessment

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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 students.

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 students 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. They 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 students 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 students 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 students 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 students 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 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 student-accessible texts, the construction and quality of the oral commentary and discussion questions will affect the candidates’ 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, students should be able to engage easily 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 them 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 students 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 students 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 candidates' 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-tried 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 about which only a few if any of their candidates can write well. 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 students 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 students 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 students 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.

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 student 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 the 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. Practice 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 they 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 - 11	12 - 13	14 - 16	17 - 20

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

This report highlights the negative and positive aspects found by examiners in this session's commentaries, and then goes on to suggest how centres might build upon the latter and avoid the former.

No apology is made for repeating selected generic passages from previous reports which focus on problems still endemic and still needing to be addressed in future sessions.

In the case of both the prose passage and the poem many candidates misread parts of the texts. For example, in the prose passage many candidates assumed the setting was in Ethiopia whereas close reading suggests the US. In the poem many did not follow the sequence of time or grasp the reverie of the speaker. Some identified the speaker as the poet without any supporting argument. Unsupported assertion is another challenge encountered over and over again. Examiners reported that some candidates plodded through a shopping list of devices without considering the overall effect of the poem on the reader, although this was less in evidence than in previous sessions.

A number of candidates claimed that it makes readers experience exactly what the characters are experiencing.

Many candidates claimed that the text conveyed 'the theme of memory' or 'the theme of cultural identity' or 'the theme of childhood' without going much further in explaining how that concept applied.

With both passages some candidates weakened their responses with general and mundane expressions that did not demonstrate clear understanding using words such as ‘This author uses great diction creating a good flow for the reader’ and ‘This was very simple to understand with easy to read language.’

A review under criteria headings

Criterion A (Understanding and Interpretation): Most commentaries were relevant and attempted engagement with the prose/poem. The best demonstrated detailed close readings and well supported comments, showing good, perceptive understanding and detailed analysis.

On the other hand, a lack of close reading of the whole passage was evident in many scripts with, as a result, candidates either misunderstanding or overlooking parts of both the poem and, especially, the prose. Examination of detail is essential if more than a superficial understanding is to be grasped. Candidates who did not read in depth struggled with the nuances and subtext, making the kind of unsupported assertions which dominated many answers and frequently impeded understanding.

There was some evidence of candidates gaining a greater confidence in putting forward a personal response in their commentaries, and thus scoring more highly under this criterion.

Criterion B (Appreciation of the writer’s choices): Many scripts demonstrated systematic, well integrated analysis of the effects of the literary features, with candidates in some centres in command of literary terms and able clearly to identify features and discuss their effects.

However, time and again examiners noted that candidates identified features, but could not go beyond general assertion and analyse their effects. Spotting literary devices and conventions, or quoting from the passage, is not in itself commentary. Candidates need to remember that any aspect of form is there because it has a function, and the moment that they begin to comment on the effect of a device is the moment that their analysis begins to become effective and score higher marks.

Candidates often scored only modestly under Criterion B because they failed to consider the poem as a poem, bearing in mind its form. A frequent examiner comment at the end of a commentary was words to the effect that there was ‘little sense of the text as a poem.’

With regard to the prose, few candidates seemed to appreciate that the writer’s presentation of a character is a part of literary technique.

There still seems to be a difficulty for candidates in differentiating between tone, atmosphere or mood.

Overall, examiners report that candidates have a wide knowledge of literary terms but do not always know what to do once they have recognized a device.

Criterion C (Organization and development):_Examiners noted evidence of more effective organisation of commentaries than in previous sessions, this having a beneficial impact on the scoring for Criterion C. There was evidence that candidates are improving at integrating references and quotations, but there is still room for improvement. Commentaries were usually well structured with an introduction, logical development and clear conclusions.

While many had spent time planning, and doubtless this helped to make for coherent commentaries, in some commentaries there was no evidence that any had been done before the candidate began to write. A single question, two-hour examination gives plenty of time for planning the commentary. It

does not matter if this is later modified, but an initial structure gives security and a sense of direction for the candidate as the commentary progresses.

Just as the discussion of meaning should arise from a careful reading of the entire poem or passage, so too should the organisation of the commentary arise from the demands of the passage. There was less evidence in this session that candidates were using a previously taught or prepared pattern/template, which is encouraging. However, it is clear that some centres are still teaching a rigid 'one size fits all' approach.

Some commentaries were structured using a line by line approach. A stanza by stanza or, with prose, strictly sequential reading can work; but in general that means that the writer of the passage is in control rather than the candidate. Stronger candidates tended integrate textual evidence throughout the passage to support ideas.

Criterion D (Language): Candidates on the whole seemed quite well versed in the language of literary analysis and, whatever their powers of expression, were aware of the appropriate register for writing a piece of literary commentary. On the other hand, some misused basic literary terminology such as symbol, allusion, personification, simile or metaphor.

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

As indicated in the previous section, on the whole candidates presented well organised responses and wrote coherently, scoring relatively well under criteria C and D. Fewer were very weak in these respects than in previous years, and usually syntax was adequate even in answers where there were technical writing lapses.

Many candidates seemed to understand what was expected of them and the majority of candidates seemed well prepared for the exam. Whatever their ability, they were able to offer a thoughtful, planned response to their chosen text, deploying their critical skills to the best of their ability. The better candidates were able to display impressive insight and perceptiveness. With a few candidates there was an excellent blending of textual analysis and evaluative comment.

Most candidates at least attempted analysis as opposed to simply paraphrasing or summarising. Few students wrote too-brief commentaries.

It was pleasing to note that at last candidates have learnt to spell 'simile'.

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

Examiners report that both prose and poetry were accessible to the candidates enabling them to write engaging commentaries offering a range of viable interpretations; but some over-read and reached for interpretations beyond the text could sustain. A number assumed that the writer and persona were the same.

Prose

In the prose passage a generally sound understanding was demonstrated. Although there were excellent commentaries which focused on the details and subtleties of the passage, too many got

bogged down in peripheral aspects such as religion, ignoring details such as the use of dialogue and the role of the people at the eatery other than Tsigé and the narrator. Weaker candidates sometimes struggled to work out the precise connection between the narrator and Tsigé, and her being referred to as 'the Queen'.

On the other hand there was some evidence that the candidates enjoyed Tsigé's characterisation and appreciated the depth of her emotion, and all candidates had some understanding of the concept of a reunion. How they handled her rhetoric tended to be a good discriminator for examiners. The more insightful responses were able to discuss the narrator's background and why the meeting was also a significant moment for him. Some overlooked a consideration of the ending of the passage (see later about addressing the whole passage).

Those who considered the cultural context tended to deliver stronger commentaries than those who did not.

Poem

Most understood the poem as one of remembering, but not all appreciated the handling of time. Some responses tended to lose sight of the central metaphor and veered off into lengthy discussion of the perceived shortcomings of the persona's adulthood. There were some very detailed explorations of structure and imagery, with close referencing of the poet's use of diction and sensory imagery in stanzas 2 and 3. This approach provided ample opportunity for the better prepared to display their appreciation of poetic craft.

Some commented on the 'dream-like' quality and the 'stream of consciousness' manner in which the ideas were presented.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Candidates should be encouraged to:

- prepare as thoroughly for the prose and its conventions as for the poetry;
 - study carefully the Descriptors and their demands in preparation for the examination, and realize that all aspects covered by the criteria are important;
 - study a range of sample papers and have practice scoring Paper 1 commentaries from past years;
 - develop an overview of the passage before starting to write - read (re-reading time is never wasted) – think - plan;
 - read every line with care. Both options on Paper 1 are fairly short, and candidates who miss an important image or detail end up writing a weaker commentary. Absorb the whole passage before writing anything - the commentary must treat the entire passage or the entire poem;
 - think for longer and write less. Scripts of eleven, twelve and more pages are frequently poorly organized. A shorter paper can be just as effective and score highly on presentation when a well-developed argument lends an effective structure to the commentary.
 - avoid vague, general introductions - begin with an argument which is based on an analysis of the passage;
 - put down the pen and re-read the first paragraph after writing it - Is it a good overview of what the passage is saying and the means by which it is said?
 - address the form of the passage - that is, the prose as a piece of prose and the poem as a poem;
 - recognise ambiguity, and appreciate that there does not have to be a conclusive answer.
- Candidates tend to fare better who, rather than shooting for an absolute interpretation, recognise a

- possible plurality of approach with words such as 'it is possible that...', 'the writer may indicate...' or 'one way of reading this is that...'.
 • ensure that they understand the meaning of the words 'theme' and 'tone', both of which are frequently misused. Not every idea is a 'theme';
 • use clear language and avoid technical naming of parts unless totally in command of nomenclature;
 • always support comments by reference to the text, preferably citing the line(s);
 • give line numbers when quoting anything of substance from the text;
 • learn how to integrate quotations, and how to cite verse - if quoting more than one line of continuous verse, insert slash marks at the end of lines to indicate an awareness of the verse form;
 • if the gender of a narrator/persona is unclear, decide on the gender and stick to it, using the appropriate pronoun thereafter and thus avoiding the inappropriate use of 'their' as a singular
 • do more work on how to write a good conclusion - sometimes candidates ran out of ideas or repeated previous observations, without a sense of drawing ideas together into an overview;
 • write legibly - that which cannot be read, cannot be credited;
 • dot 'i's and cross 't's - lack of this can make the work of some candidates difficult to read - try deciphering the word 'inimical' when the dots are missing - the dots on the 'i's are there for a reason;
 • read the poem aloud in their heads, so that they can 'hear' its sounds. Visits to poetry readings, or being frequently exposed to poets reading their work through the use of CD or DVD, might help in this regard.

Candidates should be encouraged not to:

- decide which task they are going to do (prose or verse) before the examination;
- guess or try to impose a "meaning" which cannot be evidenced;
- paraphrase - it is not the same as interpretation, and repetition of content is a waste of time;
- speculate upon the aim of the writer (an intentional fallacy – we cannot be sure of a writer's intentions - we can only know what a narrator/persona or characters think/say/do);
- use the passage as a springboard to personal or general philosophical reflection - the commentary is a close reading exercise in literary analysis and appreciation, not a sociological exploration;
- write their conclusion in the first paragraph of the commentary, i.e. stating from the outset that they know what the poem is about or means. They may start with first impressions, but the conclusions should be left until a thorough exploration of the poem has taken place. This will make the argument stronger and the interpretation more persuasive;
- make obvious comments such as 'This passage conveys its meaning through language and diction' (How else? – but it is notable how often candidates make such comments) or 'This passage uses punctuation'. (While on rare occasions particular uses of punctuation may be deemed to be a literary device and worthy of comment, far too many students seem to feel that this is *the* major literary device.);
- use the abbreviation 'quote' as a noun in formal writing;
- write that enjambment / rhyme / etc. help the poem 'flow', which is almost meaningless;
- use 'symbolic of' when 'suggests' is meant;
- use 'incredibly' unless 'beyond belief' really is meant;
- say 'an example would be' for 'an example is';
- Make assertions which are not underwritten by close analysis of the text
- treat lines of poetry as if they were prose syntax

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 - 14	15 - 17	18 - 20

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

Seventy percent of candidates wrote about the poem. There may be several reasons for this. One is that the prose non-fiction proved unfamiliar and therefore daunting. Certainly many candidates failed to comment on the use of rhetorical devices, such as the long complex sentences in the first paragraph. Others treated it as fiction, identifying characters (Hitler) and setting, and writing about war in general.

It is possible that the poem appeared to be the easier option and additionally, had the advantage of being humorous. However, a number of examiners noted that candidates failed to identify its irony; that they confused the narrator with the poet himself; that they did not recognise tone and that they did not write convincingly about the sources of humour. It was also noted that a significant number of candidates listed literary features but failed to analyze them effectively. Satire proved difficult for some candidates to identify; the subject of any critique – here the close-mindedness of the tourist to other cultures, and the materialism of western tourists – needed to be stated.

Keegan's writing attracted historical evidence outside the text. This did not favour candidates in any way.

It was felt that candidates needed to be more aware that their work is assessed under the four paper 1 assessment criteria. Some candidates failed to write integrated responses but answered the guiding questions in two discrete sections.

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

Most examiners commented on the candidates' ability to write well and to organise and structure their responses well. Many recognised literary conventions. Candidates seemed particularly well-prepared to write about poetry as a genre and were aware of the features of a guided literary analysis. Some examiners commented on the maturity of the candidates and the ability of some to analyze the effects of literary features.

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

Poem

Candidates failed to recognise the ironic tone of the poem, also the tourist's materialism, shown through references to money and cost. Some failed to respond to the "image of the tourist" prompt, simply describing him. Many realised that they could laugh at the tourist but were not always sure why. Some

candidates offered a checklist of devices, basing their responses and understanding on these. The result was often an "artificial response". Some confused the narrator with the poet himself, which sometimes led to misinterpretation. The poem was not about "society as a whole" and candidates should have been wary of looking for "the big idea". Conversely, examiners found that a significant number of candidates did pick up on the use of satire, the object of which was the Tourist as a product of western society. There were valid interpretations of the lack of punctuation and short line length; also the use of colour as a means of revealing the tourist's basic and limited visual response to what he saw, almost in imitation of his video camera.

Prose

A weakness detected was a tendency to bring in additional historical evidence, though the ability to do this could be construed as an intelligent use of information. However, it was an historical text with particular genre features as well as those of any literary text: the use of contrasting hard fact and emotive language; historical evidence and personal interpretation – which should be treated accordingly. Examiners identified little understanding of rhetoric; also of the importance of the two-paragraph structure.

A strength was the ability to recognise Keegan's persuasive techniques and his sadness at the horror of (avoidable) war.

Many examiners commented that the prose appeared to be problematic for some candidates and "more difficult than the poem". Responses tended to be polarised, some being excellent and others struggling to identify Keegan's purpose and techniques.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Many examiners commented on the excellent teaching apparent through well-structured and perceptive responses. "Keep teaching as you do" was one; "great teaching" another. A significant number also made comments such as "You (the candidates) are not required to recognise a number of literary devices nor to stretch these into extraneous interpretation" but to analyze their effectiveness through a study of connotation and inference.

- Continue to provide candidates with various approaches to the analysis of literature.
- Revise non-fiction textual study.
- Ensure that candidates find evidence for their points.
- Tell candidates that first person narrative does not (necessarily) reflect the view of the writer.
- Look at the conventions of rhetoric and polemic.
- Pay attention to the technique of embedding quotes and the sequencing of ideas.
- Make candidates aware of the four criteria by which their work is assessed.
- Teach effective paragraph structure and the correct use of the apostrophe.
- Finally help candidates make an informed choice of question. Which offers the more to comment on for the individual candidate?

Higher level paper two

Component grade boundaries

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

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

Though paper 2 exhibits perhaps the fewest changes both in syllabus and assessment from the old syllabus, there are differences: these include a new prescribed list of authors and guidelines for the choice of texts; the form of the examination paper, which now contains three questions on each genre and no general questions; a specific requirement to compare and contrast the two or more texts used; and a more deliberate focus on the literary conventions of the chosen genre. Schools and candidates have responded to these changes with varying success.

First of all, a significant number of centres have clearly not consulted carefully enough the new regulations on choice of texts and the prescribed list of authors. A number of answers included discussion of a text which was no longer on the prescribed list, including in some instances a work in translation.

Some answers failed because of a poor choice of question for the chosen texts or (what amounts to the same thing) a poor choice of texts for a particular question. There were, for example, poems discussed in response to question 4 which were very short on 'non-visual imagery', while some of the characters discussed in question 9 would hardly be thought of by the reader as 'unpleasant people'. One is tempted to conjecture that many such candidates entered the examination with knowledge of only two or three (rather than four) of their texts, or with a determination to write about particular texts (or, with poetry, particular poems from a selection), the question notwithstanding. Many answers were also unbalanced in their treatment of two texts – so in effect showed satisfactory knowledge and understanding of just one text out of four.

With regard to the focus on literary conventions, both in the printed syllabus and in assessment criterion C, this does not seem to have produced an appreciable change in candidates' practice from previous years. That is, there was a minority of candidates with a sound grasp of the relevant conventions, there were some candidates who wrote about their texts with little or no regard for their character as literary constructs, and there was once again a significant number who recited a number of literary features, usually in the introduction, and then professed to show how these would answer the question. Such an answer in response to question 3, for example, would set out to show how 'symbolism, setting, dialogue and theme are used to show contrasts in characters'. Such answers usually lost sight of the text as something which conveys meaning through the use of specific conventions.

Many candidates continue to concentrate on displaying their knowledge of the text rather than carefully responding to the question. Even though the general level of textual knowledge was quite sound, however, more candidates were able to cite textual detail than to show appreciation of the broader structural features of a text. This was particularly noticeable in responses to those questions (notably question 1 on the role of action in drama, or question 7 on the selection and arrangement of

events in fiction) which look for an appreciation of how an entire text is organised.

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

Many candidates, on the other hand, did make an attempt to respond to the requirement to compare and contrast their chosen texts. Some answers attempted a direct comparison only at the close, and sometimes at the start of the answer; or comparison might be limited to a sentence or two at the transition from one text to another. However, though many schools might do more to develop the skills needed to fulfil this requirement, there was a significant number of answers which moved easily between two or three texts in such a way that the entire answer was in effect comparative. In some cases, candidates' efforts to compare texts were hampered by the choice of two highly disparate texts to answer the question. While one recognises centres' wishes to include a variety of texts in their syllabus, it is questionable whether much can be gained by comparison of (for example) *Death of a Salesman* and *The Importance of Being Earnest*, or *Top Girls* and *Hamlet*, beyond a recognition of their very different qualities.

There was also a noticeable attempt to respond to the requirement (for the top levels of criterion B) to include an evaluative element in the comparison, though as a whole this was less successful. Many candidates limited themselves simply to expressing a personal preference or stating that one text was 'better' than the other in a given respect. A significant number of good answers, through the quality of their analysis, contained an implicit evaluation for which they could be given credit, even when no explicitly evaluative terms were employed.

Despite what was said above concerning those candidates more anxious to display knowledge of the text than respond to the question, a number of examiners came away from this session's marking with the impression that there were fewer than usual formulaic responses, that more candidates than usual were prepared to make an attempt to respond to the question rather than bend the question to fit their pre-packaged answer. Although such impressions concerning the broad features of candidates' responses from one session to the next can never be conclusively demonstrated, it may be that the demise of general questions has encouraged an increased focus on the question, since it was most often general questions which attracted the kind of response that took little heed of what the question was asking.

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

Drama continues to be the most popular genre, followed by Prose: novel and short story, though there was probably a slightly higher proportion than usual of answers on Poetry. There were once again too few answers on Prose other than fiction to make any confident generalisations concerning questions 10 to 12 – except to say that several examiners who marked responses to these questions commented on their generally high quality. Schools should seriously consider this genre equally with the others in their choice of genre for paper 2.

In Drama, question 3 was the most popular and produced mainly sound answers. Although a few candidates interpreted the question as referring to contrasts between characters in different plays rather than within the same play, the only other loose reading of the question which occasionally appeared was a focus on *conflict* between characters (rather than *contrasting* characters). Many average answers asserted that contrasting characters did indeed contribute to the play's impact, but

were unable to specify clearly the nature of that impact. There were, however, a good many answers which showed how contrasts in character fed a dramatic conflict leading to a crisis: old favourites such as *A Streetcar Named Desire* or *The Crucible* lent themselves well to this question.

Question 1 was also popular, but much less well done. While most answers made some reference to an action or actions in the plays, and there were some effective answers on the lack of action in plays such as *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* or *Waiting for Godot*, few candidates were able to step back and consider the nature of the action (or lack of it) in plays as a whole. There were indeed answers which revealed some careful thinking about the conventions of dramatic action – for example one contrasting the action in Friel’s *Philadelphia, Here I Come* as representing the central character’s mental struggle with the more physical action of *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *A View from the Bridge* - but these were comparatively rare.

There were relatively few answers on question 2, and the success of these partly depended on how convincingly the candidate identified the relevant climaxes and dénouements. There were good answers, for example, based on the Requiem in *Death of a Salesman* and the final scene of *A Streetcar Named Desire*; but where, in discussing the latter play, candidates attempted to locate the climax earlier than scene 10, they were driven into a very loose and unconvincing discussion of the dénouement.

The three questions on poetry attracted a roughly equal number of candidates. Question 4 was one for which a successful answer clearly depended on an appropriate choice of poems, and poor answers were often so because of an unconvincing attempt to identify non-visual imagery which was simply not there. The best answers often linked the use of auditory imagery with the poet’s use of sound, for example in one masterful discussion of ‘The Rime of the Ancient Mariner’ together with ‘The Love Song of J Alfred Prufrock’.

Answers to question 5 were in almost equal numbers impressive or very disappointing. The disappointing answers usually exhibited a weak grasp of the concept of ‘voice’: rather than identifying the nature of the voice or voices, they simply recounted what the poem says. Such answers might discuss different poems, one with an impersonal speaker, others with a first person speaker who functioned (perhaps) as a participant in the poem or as a simple observer, without drawing attention to this most basic distinction in the nature of the voices. The best answers made a careful choice of poems to distinguish different uses of voice and their effects.

The success or otherwise of answers to question 6 was largely dependent on how fully a candidate was able to cite details from poems and comment on their use, since a number of answers were actually very short on detail. Most answers to this question made some attempt to deal with ‘realistic or unrealistic representation of the world’ though comparatively few were able to cite and comment on detail in such a way as to give real substance to their argument.

In the Novel and Short Story section there was no question which stood out as being answered by many more or fewer candidates than the others. Answers to question 7 were on the whole disappointing, for reasons which are comparable to the source of weakness in many answers to question 1. Few candidates seemed able to look at the choice and succession of events in an entire narrative, preferring instead to concentrate either on one or two critical events, or on narrative technique in broad terms, such the narrative point of view and the relation of the narrative to strict chronology. While such answers often included material relevant to this question, they would be unlikely to attract the highest marks on the first three criteria.

There were some good answers to question 8, all of which would be accompanied by a clear indication of the specific fictional conventions employed to create mood and atmosphere at different parts of a text. This was, however, another question which suggested the failure of some centres to teach literary conventions, since a number of candidates had a limited grasp of the concepts of mood and atmosphere, and would discuss instead related topics such as feeling or the tone of dialogue.

Many effective answers to question 9 were based on a clear identification of the specific conventions of characterisation used to make unpleasant people acceptable (such as narrative point of view, authorial intervention, or the use of other characters as foils). A surprising number of candidates made things difficult for themselves by selecting unlikely candidates as ‘unpleasant people’. Though this phrase was convincingly enough used to describe Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart* or even Winston in *1984*, it is hard to see how it can be applied to Offred in *The Handmaid’s Tale* or Edna in *The Awakening* (though there was more than one good answer on the last of these texts focusing not on Edna but on Mademoiselle Reisz). This again highlighted the importance of a wise choice of question among the three alternatives in each genre.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Many of the weaker answers which failed through an unwise choice of texts (or question) highlighted the simple fact that part 3 of the syllabus requires the study of *four* texts, of which only *two* need be used in the examination. Indeed, a number of examiners commented on the fact that many candidates who attempted to cover three or even four texts might have performed better by treating just two in greater depth and detail. However, if students enter the exam room determined – either through literary preference or lack of knowledge – to write off one or two of their texts, they inevitably reduce the likelihood of finding a good match between texts and questions.

Of the particular emphases in the new syllabus, it is the importance of the conventions of whatever genre they have studied which students found most challenging. Many candidates evidently did not have a sufficient grasp, either of the nature of literary conventions or the vocabulary to deal with them, which would enable them to achieve a more than very modest response to questions which for the most part are framed according to specific literary conventions. Above all, however, the emphasis in teaching must be on conventions as *a way of conveying meaning*, not as things which can be discussed in isolation.

Centres should also increasingly focus on the skills needed for comparing and contrasting texts. This is something which could enter into teaching in all parts of the syllabus, even though it is now only in paper 2 that this is a specific requirement, and which might begin with a consideration of basic principles such as the following: what increase of pleasure and insight can we gain by the comparison of two or more texts? What degree of similarity or difference should texts have in order for them to be usefully compared? What kinds of comparisons is it helpful – or unhelpful – to make? Perhaps a careful consideration of the nature and purpose of literary comparison may reduce the incidence of choices of texts for paper 2 which (as noted above) make fruitful comparison difficult.

Teaching the skills of comparison might well be linked with helping candidates to grasp texts as an imaginative whole and to appreciate their broad structural principles. Even though a lack of such appreciation was particularly noticeable in answers to questions such as 1 and 7, many answers on poetry also concentrated on detail at the expense of the entire poem, and thus neglected (in answers to question 4, for example) to show how non-visual imagery functions in the poems as a whole and contributes to their meaning.

The final recommendation appears in one form or another in just about every examiners report. It is that candidates should approach paper 2 with openness. It may indeed be a temptation for many candidates, after the encounter with unknown territory in paper 1, to approach paper 2 with the apparent security of knowing two (or perhaps three) texts very well and having rehearsed a number of possible answers using them. This may work – but it is just as likely to lead to a poor performance which fails to address the specific demands of the question. Candidates who approach paper 2 with a sound knowledge of all four of their texts, and with a willingness to weigh up the merits of the three available questions against their texts, and to think carefully about the question they finally choose before rushing to set pen to paper, are more likely to embark on their answer with the freshness and individuality which makes for writing that it is a pleasure for the examiner to read.

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

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

By and large candidates showed more than a superficial knowledge and understanding of the works used in the responses. Many were able to refer to details in support of the argument. Even in cases where the essay consisted largely of unsupported assertions, those claims were relevant. Most candidates produced responses with a balanced attention to the texts discussed, a quality that suggests planning and time management. There is a lot to accomplish in this ninety-minute exercise. Candidates need to make the statements of knowledge relevant to the question, support those statements with specific evidence, discuss the contributions of related literary conventions and then show how this knowledge contributes to the central ideas of each work. Some of this was going on in almost all the responses. However, all of it was happening in only a few.

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

Q.1: Some works that are often difficult to treat (those by Beckett, Pinter or Stoppard, for example) lent themselves very well to the 'lack of action' element of the question. Candidates presenting works where the 'role of action' was significant had perhaps a wider choice of works to choose from but did not always produce a sounder argument. Some candidates, seemingly overwhelmed by the abundance of choice, did not focus on selected, specific actions. Some could not decide if dialogue was action or not. Others simply retold the plot.

Q.2: The question offered both a definition of dénouement and a description of its function. In spite of these helpful elements, many candidates produced unsatisfying essays because neither the 'climax'

nor the 'threads' were identified with assurance or used to explore the details of the dénouement itself.

Q.3: As the most popular question on the exam, it is not surprising that the responses reflected a wide variety of approaches and levels of accomplishment. Candidates who incorporated all three operative elements ('how', 'contrasting characters' and 'impact') into their responses produced perceptive and informed essays. However, in many cases, one or more of these elements was either ignored or mishandled. Showing characters in conflict is a sign that there probably are differences in their characters. However, before conflict is shown, it was helpful to name the traits and give examples of those traits in the behaviour of the character. It is also necessary to set up, in the same way, at least one other character with 'contrasting' traits. Where candidates went after this determined the extent to which they also addressed the 'how' and 'impact' elements; but at least, with this done, the basis had been laid. Many candidate responses jumped into conflict without this base but were still given the appropriate mark when character traits were named during the exposition of conflict. Attempts to contrast characters across plays (Blanche with Willy, for example) were not very effective.

Q.4: Candidates who were able to quote (or even paraphrase in some detail) from their works and who were not, for some reason, drawn into visual imagery in spite of everything generally produced solid responses. Sound elements such as alliteration and rhyme were often presented as images. The presentation of a series of (even valid) non-visual images (and the word 'image' also needs to be distinguished in its use from 'imagery') drawn from a number of poems without going into any poem in detail did not normally produce as mature and effective a response as did the exploration of two or three poems in detail.

Q.5: Many candidate chose apt poems: i.e. those with direct dialogue or with multiple distinct speakers. However, candidates often faltered on actual analysis. Few candidates addressed variations in voice in the same speaker. The matters of how the voice was created and the effect on the reader were frequently ignored.

Q.6: A popular but difficult question. Many candidates had trouble doing justice to both aspects of the question: 'detail' and 'realistic/unrealistic representation'. The lack of detail is an element which can become a problem in every question. The approach to the second element was often simplistic with a realistic approach being shown, for example, by the idea that 'love is complicated' or an unrealistic one by the observation that 'the poet exaggerates'.

Q.7: When candidates made a point of the actual sequence of the events addressed, the response was generally one that showed some focus and development. However, in too many cases, this focus was not achieved and instead the response consisted largely of a retold plot with little sense of the effects achieved by having event A precede event B. The best responses also addressed the effect of this sequence on the reader's understanding of the text as a whole.

Q.8: The stronger responses recognized the presence of a range of moods and atmospheres in a particular work as shown in particular scenes. The less strong responses attempted to identify the overall mood and atmosphere of a work, often producing such vague terms as 'sad' or 'depressing'. Mood was sometimes associated with a character's mood, a relevant enough approach especially when expanded into the means by which the writer established this mood and when linked to the central impact of the text.

Q.9: A number of examiners commented on the fact that they had expected this question to be chosen by more candidates than actually did so and had also expected sounder responses from

those who did choose it. The crux of the matter seemed to lie in the extent to which the candidate wrote about the characters as 'literary creations with carefully crafted motivations and experiences' rather than as 'real people with difficult backgrounds and thus worthy of sympathy'.

Q. 10, 11 and 12: No comments were offered by any of the examiners on these questions.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Candidates and teachers can expect that the questions on the exam will involve literary convention. Not only do the operative terms of the question need to be addressed, but the discussion also needs to lead to the inclusion of related literary conventions. Just as linking specific knowledge to broader understanding is a goal for criterion A, linking the convention of the question to other devices is a goal of criterion C. Moreover, successful achievement with regard to criteria A and C bolsters the accomplishment factor of Criterion B. Criterion B specifically calls for a comparison of the works addressed. Although the element of comparison was something valued in the previous course, it was not specified as an element as it is now. Therefore, it is useful to raise the profile of the need for comparison in future teaching.

Additional suggestions for improvement

Criterion D: Although most candidates produce a reasonably structured paper with an introduction, body and conclusion, few candidates consistently produce expository paragraphs. Many candidates hardly note paragraphs at all. Many others retell parts of the narrative which show some knowledge but do not contain a point of argument. An effective expository paragraph makes a claim, the claim is supported by evidence, and the paragraph concludes with some analysis of the evidence with reference to the claim. An effectively constructed argument also presents not automatic but, truly functional transitions. Some of the most common, generally non-functional transitions are the following: 'similarly', 'completely opposite to ____ is', 'as noted above', 'on the other hand', 'interestingly' and 'moving on to _____'.

Criterion E: Most candidates demonstrate a level of English suitable for the task at hand. However, too many candidates present essays replete with mechanical and usage errors. Criterion E is judged, of course, on much more than mechanical accuracy; but a response showing error after error is not likely to be rewarded with top marks. Among the most common problems are the following:

- Subject/verb agreement. This error seems to become more and more prevalent, year after year – so much so that one begins to notice when agreement does occur, especially when the verb is somewhat distant from the subject. It seems as if the verb is made to agree with whatever noun comes closest before it. It would help many candidates to go right back to the grammar book exercises on this point.
- it's and its ... and the difference;
- all possessives;
- spelling of frequently used words – thorough/through/though, separate, receive, referred... I am sure that teachers see these misspelled words, and too many others to list here, on their candidates' in-house work;
- sentence fragments and run-on sentences;
- suicide is not a verb ('...he suicided...');
- underlining or using quotation marks to note the titles of works addressed. This also applies to those titles when they are repeated in the essay, even when the title is shorted as in *Streetcar* for *A Streetcar Named Desire* or even ASND (note also the use of capital letters here).

- the misuse of the term ‘symbolism’. This term is too often used to represent anything that carries with it additional meaning besides the literal.
- the use of asterisks or long pointy arrows to show material that needs insertion in the essay. This is, of course, not a reason for withholding credit. However, in the current marking system it is increasingly difficult for the examiner to find the insertion and keep the argument in mind when once found.
- examples from the text are more likely to be ‘evidence’, not ‘proof’.
- the need for some context for each work used. Candidates must supply all the information needed to create a sound response. They should not unconsciously rely on the examiner’s knowledge of a work. So an essay involving “All My Sons”, for example, should probably give a brief relevant summary of the situation (as one would do in an oral commentary when presented with a particular passage from a longer work) and also quickly identify each new character that is mentioned.
- the use of detail. Perhaps this should have been nearer the top of the list as the importance of supporting assertions may be lost in this list. Although examiners aim not to double or triple advantage or disadvantage a candidate by repeated strengths and weakness across more than one criterion, it is fair to say that the use of detail can affect judgment in Criteria A, B, C and D. A claim is not yet a detail. It is the contextual umbrella under which subsequent details can be presented.
- the attempt to cover too many works in the essay. Addressing two works (in detail) generally produces a more effective essay than the attempt to address three works. This suggestion is especially applicable to **poetry** where a candidate is allowed to address only two poems, each by a different poet. It is recommended that candidates presenting poetry as the chosen genre commit some poems to memory. The problem arises when the candidate attempts to include too many poems. This may happen because the candidate does not know any well enough to draw upon more than one or two details or because she/he thinks that the more poems touched upon the greater the reward for ‘knowledge’. This is not usually the case, and also not for ‘understanding’.

Final Note: Many candidates addressed works that are no longer valid. A number of frequently chosen works are no longer available. Additionally, it would appear that some schools do not realize that works in translation cannot be used on Paper 2. Candidates beginning the English A: Literature course in September 2013 will be subjected to penalties if such infractions occur in the May 2015 examination session. Schools and teachers are reminded to consult the *Language A: Literature guide*, the Prescribed Literature in Translation list (PLT) and the English A: Literature Prescribed List of Authors (PLA).