

English A: Literature TZ2

Overall grade boundaries

Higher level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 17	18 - 32	33 - 43	44 - 56	57 - 67	68 - 79	80 - 100

Standard level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 16	17 - 30	31 - 41	42 - 54	55 - 66	67 - 78	79 - 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

Recommendations for IB procedures, instructions and forms

In this second year of the new course, it was encouraging to note that the majority of schools had got to grips with the procedural requirements of HL Internal Assessment and the manner in which the marking criteria should be applied. Nearly all schools have adhered to the 2-part nature of the assessment being split into commentary and discussion, each lasting no more than 10 minutes. This was not true of all centers, however; occasionally, students were allowed to talk beyond the 8 minute mark – leaving no room for subsequent questions, and in other instances, with teacher questions included, this first part of the assessment task continued for as much as 13 or 14 minutes. Once again, centers are reminded that nothing said after the 10-minute time allocation will be taken into account – and any intrusion into the 10 minutes allocated for the discussion will inevitably reduce the range of opportunity the candidates have to score well in that part. Furthermore, centers are reminded that the

transition from commentary to discussion should be smooth and continuous and there is absolutely no expectation that teachers link the poem with the discussion text.

Most schools conducted the orals in quiet environments; however, many moderators complained about unnecessary interruptions by endless phones ringing, intercom announcements, school bells and even distracting sounds of typing – presumably as the teacher writes comments on the student’s performance.

Other procedural matters that need to be remembered concern passage length. Centers should take note that 20-30 is the recommended number of lines. Anything longer will in all likelihood prevent the candidate from being able to do justice to the details of the passage and (with the exception of sonnets by Shakespeare or Donne) most passages that are significantly shorter often afford a dearth of material and result in the candidate simply running out of things to say, or delivering a rather superficial commentary. Notable examples of the latter include certain shorter poems by Emily Dickinson, William Blake or even T.S Eliot’s *Morning at the Window*, which comprises of only 9 lines. Centers are also reminded that all poems should have line numbers, beginning from 0, the titles should be included and there should be two Guiding Questions, one addressing aspects of content and the other style or technique.

Perhaps, because of its relatively recent introduction, some teachers still seem to find aspects of the discussion somewhat challenging. It is important to note that the spirit of this exercise is intended as a discussion, not an interview or a presentation. It is perfectly acceptable to devise questions prior to the examination but teachers must not stick to a pre-determined path; a more natural approach, wherein the response given by the student is addressed, nurtured or questioned further is far more likely to result in higher marks being awarded. Somewhat worryingly, some candidates seemed to know the questions they were likely to be asked beforehand, which resulted in a discussion that sounded somewhat ‘rehearsed’; others were allowed to talk at length without interruption, so that the discussion became more of a presentation, not unlike the kind of thing one would expect from an IOP. This is not the intention of the exercise and candidates will be disadvantaged if they are invited to regard it in this light. As with last year, the nature of the questions posed by teachers makes a very significant difference to their performance. Beginning the discussion with a question such as ‘So, tell me your thoughts on Hamlet’ or ‘What did you think of the novel?’ was a sadly not uncommon practice. As pointed out last year, questions that ask questions about the candidate’s personal feelings towards a particular character – whether they liked them or not, or ones that invited judgment about a character’s actions did not, inevitably, lead to perceptive analytical answers or the recollection of interesting or relevant detail from the work. Teachers are reminded that the distinction between Art and Life is one that should be borne in mind, and attention almost always focused on matters of literary craft and the *presentation* of events, character and themes rather than the extent to which they feel recognisable or otherwise to the student.

Although for the most part, I/LIA forms were filled out correctly and helpfully, some teachers omitted to include comments about how they had arrived at their marks. These comments are very helpful to moderators in making sense of whether the marks awarded were accurate and should always be undertaken. Lastly, it is very important that centers with more than one teacher engage in rigorous moderation; in a number of cases it was evident that marks were

being awarded in a rather uneven manner, as if the teachers had not undertaken any kind of collaborative marking. Obviously this is not in the students' interests.

The range and suitability of the work submitted

A staple of particular works that have proved popular choices over the years proved to do so again in 2014. Poetry by Carol Ann Duffy, T. S Eliot, Margaret Atwood, John Donne, Robert Frost, Seamus Heaney, Billy Collins, Emily Dickinson and Langston Hughes proved very common, and it was good to see writers such as EE Cummings and Lorna Crozier making an appearance. Walt Whitman was also the choice of many, although it has to be said that not many candidates find themselves able to do justice to his stylistic character and density. Centers are reminded that Chaucer in translation is not allowed. If chosen, he must be studied in his original language. The best works for the commentary section are of course ones that provide plenty of detailed stylistic interest, and the highest achieving candidates ones that engage meaningfully with elements of technical detail. As mentioned above, candidates are nearly always at a disadvantage when given a poem that is either too long or too short. For the discussion, Shakespeare dominated with Hamlet and Othello but there were interesting choices of prose including Timothy Findley's *The Wars*, Joyce's *Dubliners*, Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*, Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, and fairly frequent use of *Heart of Darkness*, *Wuthering Heights* and *The Great Gatsby*. 'Prose other than...' included essays by Virginia Woolf, Bruce Chatwin's *Songlines* and autobiographical work from Michael Ondaatje and Janet Frame.

Guiding questions were for the most part suitable – providing a constructive point of departure, particularly for weaker candidates. Some centers need to be reminded of the requirement that no information should be given to students in these questions that prevents them from gaining credit. To illustrate, the question 'How does the author use imagery to generate a foreboding atmosphere?' is better phrased as 'To what effect/s does the author make use of imagery?' Furthermore, no question should include more than one demand; sometimes questions comprised of 2 or more prompts and this is not allowed

Teachers should check the accuracy of the poem very carefully; in some instances it would appear that works had been found on the Internet that contained mistake in typography and/or lineation. Obviously, these mistakes can lead to inappropriate readings.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A Knowledge and Understanding

As mentioned last year, the tendency to see the exercise as one of description, paraphrase or explanation inevitably results in a low score for this criterion. Equally, candidates who fail to provide sufficient support from the text for their assertions cannot be rewarded very highly. There seem an increasing number of centers that advise students to provide a 'pre-learned' introduction, which quite often centers on matters of biographical, literary or social context. Teachers should note that whilst these remarks might help to provide some security for students as they make a start on their commentary, they seldom result in marks being awarded and as a result should be kept to an absolute minimum, or not said at all. The best

commentaries are ones in which key aspects of the poem's content are covered in a thoughtful, engaged manner – with continual and detailed support from the text.

Criterion B: Appreciation of the Writer's Choices

This strand of criteria nearly always proves a challenge and tends to be where teacher marks differ most from those of the moderator. Routinely, candidates either ignore features of language and style or see the exercise as a kind of literary treasure hunt only. There is usually little point simply identifying a particular literary feature without exploring its impact and/or the way it contributes to the meaning of the section of the work from which it comes, or the thematic concerns that permeate the whole. As one moderator said, "Listing of techniques, divorced from any appreciation of the effect or the writer's style, was too common." Furthermore a number of candidates omitted to talk very much at all about the writer's choices. At all times, candidates must keep in mind the 'art' of writing and remember that aspects of content are always presented in particular literary ways – they are not 'real life'.

Criterion C: Presentation

This is another strand in which candidates find it hard to score the highest marks. Some do not seem to think very much at all about some organisational principle to their commentary, and others find it hard to maintain. Many adopt a linear approach, which can often serve to ground ideas quite effectively – although this method can also make it difficult to provide a central focus. Centers are reminded of the adjective 'purposeful' as a part of the level 5 descriptor; examiners should seek to reward students who apply one kind of structure or another but particularly those who choose a particular approach because it supports their argument, or affords the most appropriate shape to the aspects of the poem they regard as the most significant. Providing a meaningful sense of introduction and conclusion is also important. Too many candidates begin in a somewhat arbitrary manner, and then end simply because they have run out of things to say.

Criterion D: Knowledge of the work used in the discussion

Most performances varied from 'adequate' to 'excellent'. Candidates seemed to have a good sense of plot and the characters and discussed these at length, although many needed to provide more detailed reference to particular moments or events in order to ground their points. 'Understanding' was more problematic, with many candidates unable to address the implications of the work.

N.B In some cases, teachers seemed to select the work used for discussion, or even worse – prompted the student to do so. Both these approaches are forbidden by the regulations. The second work must be chosen randomly e.g. by turning over a card with the name of the text printed. Some teachers are reported to have used a single short story, essay or novella for the discussion; this is wrong. Page 1 of the PLA defines 'a work' most clearly.

Criterion E: Response to the discussion questions

Almost all the moderators reported that the candidate's performance was often dependent on

the teacher's mode of questioning. Prompts like 'Who is your favourite character?' or 'Which part of the scene did you like best?' did not provoke very meaningful answers. Equally inappropriate were questions asking 'why' a character behaves in a particular way; such a prompt can only lead to closed, factual answers, or ones that were speculative and hard to justify in relation to the text. Even more unhelpful, as stated earlier, were the 'how did you relate to the character personally?' kind of prompt or discussions that began with the teacher asking 'What can you tell me about this book?'

Best practice would seem to be to prepare a list of questions in advance, but accommodate student answers and develop the discussion in a more spontaneous manner as time goes on.

Criterion F: Language

Most candidates and their teachers used an appropriate register. However, there were several schools that seemed unaware of the demands of this criterion. This is how one frustrated senior examiner commented: 'The language of some of the teachers would frankly not get beyond Level 3 (and some would be a Level 2!). I am not referring to non-native speakers either who are in any case often exemplary in the tenor of supportive formality.' A number of teachers were found to use fillers such as 'like' and 'sort of', which students are of course instructed to avoid.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

All schools, but particularly those who seem to find the procedural requirements of Internal Assessment a challenge, must read the official supporting documentation (Subject Guide, Prescribed List of Authors and Teacher Support Material) very carefully. It is very dispiriting for a moderator to hear a student in possession of strong skills having evidently been given unhelpful or completely inappropriate advice from his or her teacher. In addition, the timing of the exercise for some centers should be carefully thought through. 10 minutes per component and no more than 8 minutes individual commentary time, with 2 minutes of questions ought not to be difficult to implement.

Commentary skills should be developed throughout the course, and students encouraged to develop sensitivity throughout to the way in which elements of literary craft carry meaning and create impact. Students must be taught the difference between description and/or paraphrase, analysis, interpretation and evaluation and understand that marks for the commentary are to be gained by thinking more in terms of the latter than the former approach. Practising these skills, and approaches to the particular demands of Internal Assessment, must happen as much as possible. Teachers should, however, resist any temptation to teach a prescriptive or formulaic approach, for example advising students that they must begin their commentary with a dose of biographical detail. Frameworks for organising and presenting material are of course useful, but as a means for students to develop confidence and exert some degree of independent control over the structure of their commentary.

Questions put to the student must be meaningful. It is likely that those asked after the commentary will focus on particular details from the poem, whereas those asked in the subsequent discussion will be more varied – some drawing attention, perhaps, to

particularities of character, moments, scenes or events and others asking for response to the work as a whole. Sometimes questions are asked that do not make sense, are too vague or unhelpfully 'closed' in nature. Teachers and departments might do well to 'bank' a list of questions that work well in connection with particular works for future years. The nature of the discussion as something that is more spontaneous, however, needs attention in some centers. Teachers should of course pose meaningful questions, but then have the confidence to develop students' responses in a supportive, nurturing manner. When it is clear that a student is not going to provide the expected or 'correct' answer, there is often no point pursuing the line of inquiry to the point that they become anxious or deflated. In addition, candidates must be encouraged to refer to the text – not necessarily in the form of quotations, but certainly particular details that provide justification for their assertions.

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

Recommendations for IB procedures, instructions and forms

Many centres followed procedural guidelines with care. This is essential, as it assists the moderation process and consequently serves the interests of all candidates. A few procedural problems, however, were more than occasional:

- Standardisation of marking is the most serious task that needs to be addressed by the many centres with more than one teacher of standard level candidates. In some centres, it is evident that standardisation is either ineffective, or else is not attempted at all. It is crucial for teachers in these centres to understand that only one moderation factor is assigned to each centre. If candidates in a centre are marked at two (or more) different standards, some candidates will unfairly suffer the consequences of the single moderation factor assigned to that centre. Proper standardisation eliminates this problem.
- Centres that permit candidates to read from previously prepared notes should be aware that they are violating the oral commentary guidelines and therefore putting their candidates at risk of not receiving credit for their Internal Assessment work.
- A number of centres evidently do not check the quality of recordings before submitting them. Barely audible samples were not uncommon; less often, recordings had significant technical problems that rendered the candidate more or less incomprehensible. A number of free programs are available to edit audio files. While all other manipulation of the recording after the examination is not permitted, there is no objection to boosting the volume of very quiet recordings. Centres should do this if the orals have not recorded at a suitable volume.

- Efforts should be made to ensure ambient noise does not disturb examinations. Care should be taken to avoid the possibility of telephones ringing or loud, persistent buzzers and bells interfering with the candidate's thoughts, words or audibility.
- Please use only the forms issued by the IB during the current examination year. Centres that complete one or more parts of the Internal Assessment in the first year of study should record marks and comments, but not enter these on the 1/LIA until the form for the correct examination session becomes available.
- The 1/LIA forms should be completed electronically. It is unhelpful for teachers to print forms, hand write responses and scan documents. When using image files for extracts, please check the image quality; photos of book pages are usually poor in quality.
- Teachers' comments on the 1/LIA are more helpful if they address the different criteria separately.
- Although the recommended extract length is 20-30 lines, shorter extracts (particularly denser poems, such as sonnets) may be perfectly appropriate. More important than length is suitability. The extract should offer the candidate significant aspects of content as well as technique to treat. Extracts of more than a line or two over 30 are not suitable, because they have proven almost impossible for candidates to treat in sufficient depth in the eight minutes allotted to the commentary.
- When candidates are permitted to speak beyond eight minutes, they are being unfairly advantaged (or, in some cases, disadvantaged). Time limits for oral exams need to be treated as seriously as for written examinations. Teachers should keep in mind that at least two minutes of subsequent questions are expected, and that moderators will not consider anything said after ten minutes in their marking.
- Some guiding and subsequent questions were very helpful to candidates without being too directive. Teachers must avoid guiding questions that suggest a certain approach or interpretation, because in such cases candidates can receive no credit for taking up the suggestion. Thus, for example, the guiding question "How does the writer create tension in this passage?" offers far too much guidance, because it tells the candidate how the extract is to be read. This was a problem in a number of samples. More appropriate would be the question, "What mood is created in this passage?"
- Subsequent questions are most helpful if they return the candidate to a point that would benefit from clarification, further elaboration, a specific example, etc. Subsequent questions preceded by the teacher's own commentary, and desperate efforts to evoke comments that the teacher may have expected but the candidate did not make, are seldom if ever helpful to the candidate.

The range and suitability of the work submitted

Perhaps under the influence of the higher level requirement, more standard level commentaries than ever seemed to be on poems this year. Carol Ann Duffy was very popular, but Owen, Frost, Heaney and Plath still appear in many samples, with forays into preceding

centuries (Donne and Wordsworth in particular) significantly less usual, though frequently quite successful. More often than not, it is the expected poems that are offered (“Mid-Term Break”, “Digging”, or “Death of a Naturalist” in the case of Heaney, for example).

Shakespeare, though much reduced in frequency of appearance from the previous programme, was still present, and still represented most often by *Othello*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Merchant of Venice*. Very little other drama was in evidence, although there was a fair amount of prose, in particular Orwell’s non-fiction, Ondaatje, *The Great Gatsby*, and *Things Fall Apart*. Although many prose extracts from these works offer fruitful material for commentary, prose in particular, more than poetry or Shakespeare, tends to lead average and weaker candidates to focus on nothing but content. However, it is not the extract itself, but the approach taken, that is the problem in such cases.

Candidate performance against each criterion

The arguments against using very predictable extracts (Hamlet’s or Macbeth’s soliloquies, certain interchanges between Iago and Othello) have been made many times before. In reality, the quality of a candidate’s commentary seems to have much less to do with the particular extract chosen than with the candidate’s previous preparation, control of English, and general abilities as a critic.

Some candidates still do not seem to realise that they are judged on their comments on the passage, and not on the ability to introduce extraneous information. Biographical data and other potted introductions add nothing to the value of the commentary and detract from the overall impression made. Stronger candidates demonstrated that they were well prepared and could analyse the extract in a way that effectively revealed their knowledge and understanding of the passage and the work.

Criterion A: Knowledge and understanding of the extract

Nearly all candidates demonstrated familiarity with, and the vast majority some degree of understanding, of their extracts. Most candidates could provide some context for the extract, at least in a general fashion, and virtually all candidates could demonstrate some degree of understanding of content. Some with poems failed to consider them in the context of other works by the poet, or if they were treating an extract, the context of the rest of the poem. Many candidates failed to distinguish in any way between the poet and the speaker, so that every statement in a poem, and every sensation, became autobiographical in their comments. The best candidates noted and could articulate subtleties of meaning, although only a small minority were able to communicate an appreciation of the poem or prose passage as a literary experience.

Criterion B: Appreciation of the writer’s choices

Many moderators found the greatest diversity in the quality of commentaries in criterion B, the appreciation of the writer’s choices. While the majority of candidates proved capable of pointing out an alliteration here or a personification there, few could distinguish the dominant techniques at work in the extract, and very few indeed could articulate what effect was

achieved by a writer's particular choice or pattern of choices, or why such a choice was significant. There was very little sense of how meaning was being created and shaped by the writer. Many efforts to link a stylistic device to meaning were arbitrary: "The style has a naïve character, as we can recognise through his short sentences", or absurd: "The words 'Deep, deep' give the feeling of emotional depth". Too many candidates became so obsessed with identifying techniques that they focused very little on what was at work in the extract as a result of these techniques. Weaker candidates tended to substitute paraphrase for analysis. Several moderators noted the general absence of any consideration being given to the structure of extracts (drama and prose as well poetry). Questions of tone – as well as the very concept – continue to cause difficulties and confusion.

Criterion C: Organization and presentation

Most of the commentaries were focused, if not always fully planned. A very brief outline at the beginning of the commentary, while not necessary, can be helpful, but only if the candidate's commentary actually follows it. Some candidates evidently felt that mentioning what is happening in the poem or passage constituted a plan. A few candidates offered inordinately long introductions before turning to an analysis of the extract. The majority of candidates use a line-by-line approach in their commentaries, particularly in the case of poetry and Shakespeare plays, and this, though not always the most effective approach, at least provides a structure, and may force some analysis of particular sections. Stronger candidates provided a clear thesis and used this as a basis for organising their points, while still taking care to treat all significant details in the extract. The weakest candidates offered only very general comments, randomly selecting details to address, or ignoring details completely, in favour of unsubstantiated generalisations.

Some candidates were incorrectly allowed to continue beyond eight minutes – some beyond nine – before they were stopped and subsequent questions were put to them. Many commentaries ran beyond ten and even eleven minutes for this reason.

Moderators commended the commentaries that demonstrated not only understanding and analytical ability, but also displayed a genuine appreciation of the author's accomplishment in the extract. Such commentaries confirmed that candidates can be guided to analyse texts closely.

Criterion D: Language

Using appropriate and effective language consistently now appears to be the least difficult requirement for candidates. The vast majority of candidates were able to reach at least the 3 level in criterion D, and there were many more above average marks in Language than in any other criterion. Even those who, to judge by their pronunciation, had been studying in English for a relatively brief time, could usually manage satisfactory marks for this criterion. Fewer candidates now slip into inappropriate levels of language, except in cases of colloquial expressions and/or dead metaphors they use when speaking to friends ("Hamlet realises that he just has to move on").

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

Candidates should be encouraged to look carefully at the text before them, rather than simply trying to recall what they have been taught about it (or worse, seen on internet review sites). For poems, this means considering the overall experience of the poem, and not merely individual images or particular figures of speech and other stylistic choices. The author's choices must be examined in the context of how they contribute to the overall meaning or experience of the poem. Candidates should examine how the speaker's voice and point of view are developed, and not simply equate poet with speaker. Prose extracts, too, should not be approached as mere vehicles for the conveyance of information. Rather, they must be examined in the same detail as poems: a focus on narrative voice is absolutely crucial, as well as a consideration of how structure, diction and syntax contribute to overall meaning.

At the same time, the extensive use of critical studies of the texts is probably unhelpful, as it discourages candidates from having, developing and articulating their own responses to the works they are studying. Candidates need to be aware that the study of literature is not a matter of learning what statements are to be parroted back about a text, but rather learning how to articulate and defend their own readings, whether or not these correspond to those of published studies.

As has been noted before, candidates need to have had regular practice in oral commentary throughout the course if they are to do well in the Internal Assessment. Oral commentary can be usefully practised in all parts of the course; it does not have to be limited to Part 2 texts.

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

As has been the case in the past there was a good selection of works, some familiar and much used, and others freshly added. The latter do seem at times to generate a more interesting range of topics, but given that even the most commonly used works are new to the students who are introduced to them, fresh and closely argued responses happen with these as well.

Some works proved problematic this year. Only some schools have really thought through the difference between writing about a conventional play or novel and writing about a graphic novel.

Many have chosen *Persepolis* as a choice for Part 1, but dealing with only the events of the narrative, or failing to understand both the cultural and historical aspects of the work hampered a number of students in writing well about it.

The Reflective Statement continues to present problems. The Written Assignments that are truly directed to literary matters are successful. Those that move the focus of the Interactive Oral and the Reflective Statement, writing about culture and context, into the essay or that focus on sociological or theological concerns are not; it's really that simple. Titles are sometimes helpful, and sometimes give no clear indication ('True romance or not' or 'Family as salvation') of the text explored or the literary angle chosen.

With the use of Supervised Writing prompts larger angles on the texts will be repeated. If these prompts are broad enough and clearly directed to literary analysis, ('How does the writer present the conflict between oppositional characters?' or 'What effect does the writer achieve by recurrent references to weather?'), there should be ample opportunity for individual candidates to choose both their argument and their references so that the diversity foregrounds their personal encounter with the work. Schools where all the candidates chose one text, one prompt, and the same set of references are not likely to produce highly rewarded Written Assignments.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A: Fulfilling the requirements of the reflective statement

In this criterion, a good deal of responsibility lies first with the teacher discerning what is wanted and that is "understanding of the cultural and contextual elements through the interactive oral." Candidates are often losing 3 points that should be quite easy to earn, but they need to know what these two elements are and are not.

Schools are clearly variable in what they are requesting that students prepare if they are nominated to deliver the Interactive Oral. The Interactive Oral is not a close investigation of the text as a literary construct; it is a research project that examines the cultural and contextual 'soup' in which the literary work has been constructed. So it includes giving fellow students a rounded idea of who the person is who wrote the text: where, when did (do) they live? What are the social, geographical, political elements of their context? What other things have they written? How does their work relate to or contradict the national and literary traditions in which they have worked? What about the context and cultural elements within the work itself, especially if they are different to those of the authors? Some schools have successfully addressed these elements. It is highly likely that teachers of these groups have been quite directive in guiding students in the correct direction.

Unfortunate permutations of the Interactive Oral then become the material of the unsuccessful Reflective Statements. The Reflective Statement is **not** any of the following: a plot outline or overview of the text; a pre-writing exercise for the Written Assignment; a response to multiple texts or Interactive Orals; a survey of literary features in the text; an evaluation of the way peers have presented the material. It is also not even one word over 400. It is a reflection on

the text under discussion. When the Written Assignment is submitted, that Reflective Statement should accompany the submission.

There has certainly been some positive evolution in handling the Reflective Statements, but too many students are losing marks here because they have not been guided to articulate how the Interactive Oral has in some way enlarged or developed their understanding of the work.

Criterion B: Knowledge and understanding of the text

This is the criterion where almost every candidate was able to earn some marks. Surely if the text has been discussed in class and closely scrutinized, almost every candidate can meet

levels 3-4 in this descriptor. That said, faltering by not having insight into the complex Nora that Ibsen presents or overlaying the portrayal of Meursault with half-understood notions of existentialism, will not earn marks in this descriptor. Explicit address of culture and context are the material of the preceding stages; they are not the business of the Written Assignment, except implicitly, but some schools are leading their students in that misconceived direction.

Criterion C: Appreciation of the writer's choices

Once again there was a clear dividing line between the majority of candidates who could identify some of the writer's choices, and the minority who were able to show *appreciation* of the ways in which these choices created meaning. Sometimes, unfortunately, that appreciation was implied rather than made explicit. The majority of papers tended to concentrate on theme or character: However, the focus on how techniques established these was not revealed. Only a minority attempted to discuss how other features generate meaning. Some ignored this element of the task completely; in some essays techniques were implied rather than clearly stated; in a few there was focus on language at the expense of argument. There is some confusion over what is meant by 'imagery' - and the term is used very broadly. However, there were also some thoughtful analyses: candidates who select a thesis with a clear literary focus are likely to score well here.

Criterion D: Organization and Development

Often candidates had some pattern or formula for arranging their ideas; when they did so they could reach criterion 2 or sometimes 3, given that their points were pursued and exemplified. However, development often falls short and that seems to be the point of differentiation between student performance. Some show they have had sufficient practice in developing their points through well-selected details from the text and the assessment of the effect of these details and how they further the line of argument. Other students fail to do any or all of these.

Happily, overlong quotations have become less frequent. However, many examiners comment on the clumsy incorporation of quotations into the body of the essays. Embedding is a skill that must be taught in this discipline, and without it the arrangement and delivery of the argument is weak, a fault of a good number of essays. One does not expect, however, to see the exact same set of references deployed in every essay in a given centre, something

that happens on occasion. Introduction and conclusions, too, are variable in quality and impact the work in this criterion.

Criterion E: Language

Similarly to the work for Criterion B, there is a good deal of competent prose evident in the essays. Still, clumsy sentence construction, lack of paragraphing and really poor proofreading tend appear much too often.

Many students employed excessively complex vocabulary that they didn't understand, creating convoluted sentence structures. At times, the register used was informal, and technical errors (split infinitives, run-on sentences, incorrect apostrophe use, singular/plural agreement errors, misspelling) were often in evidence. This essay is a formal writing situation and both the register used and the care exercised in expressing ideas should reflect the candidate's informed understanding of those factors and how they impact the marking.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

- Give the students clear directions and models for the Interactive Oral and the Reflective Statement. Make use of the Teacher Support Material, the forum and the Teacher Resource Exchange on the OCC to refine your own understanding.
- It is often useful to practise all the elements of this component with works from another part of the syllabus, particularly since many schools start the program with Part 4. Then the students can bring some level of understanding to the four stages of this assessment and teachers can help by providing ample feedback and awarding grades.
- If handwriting is used for the Reflective Statement, and there are understandable reasons for doing this, be sure that candidates give at least as much attention and care to it as they do in Papers 1 and 2. It is also helpful if every student writes the Reflective Statement question (in the criterion) at the top of the statement.
- Put some extra focus, but particularly modeling and practice, on the features of Criterion C.
- Reports of the word count should be real and not imagined. '1499' raises some red flags with examiners, and one word over the limit in both the Reflective Statement and the Written Assignment will incur a penalty.
- Rules for citation should be followed consistently within the school's submissions and should be based on some recognized system.
- Within the restrictions of your school system it would be good all around to try to move toward some new inclusions of texts; often this can be done incrementally.
- Warn students against the biographical interpretation of their texts; turning Gregor into a cockroach is not necessarily a consequence of Kafka's relation to his own father. Inclinations in this direction are common at this level, but candidates should be told how

shaky their arguments in this vein are likely to be without the substantial research such an approach requires.

- Do address the issue of translation, and which elements in a work are likely to be less convincing when they are matters, such as aural features, very much affected by this reality.

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

Recommendations for IB procedures, instructions and forms

Most centres handled procedural elements well. Compared to the May 2013 session, there were fewer cases of the reflective statement not being submitted with the written assignment or the reflective statement not being on the same work as the written assignment. Diploma coordinators must include the candidate checklist with the mailing and indicate clearly if there are candidates who are not submitting a written assignment. Assignments should be ordered by candidate session number. The candidate session number should appear on every page that is submitted for assessment and pages should be numbered. Candidates must include full bibliographical details of the work being written about (normally in a bibliography or works cited; the examiner needs to know which translation has been used).

Too many candidates are still losing marks in criteria A and D as they have submitted work which exceeds the word counts (the reflective statement must be a maximum of 400 words; the written assignment must not exceed 1500 words). As stated in the assessment criteria, marking penalties apply to work which exceeds these limits and it is a great shame for candidates to lose valuable marks which could easily have been rectified by careful editing. Reflective statement and written assignments which fall below the word counts (300 and 1200 words respectively) are considered to be self-penalizing in that they are not likely to score the higher marks; however, there were relatively few submissions that did not meet the minimum word counts. In some cases candidates with written assignments of just over 1200 words might usefully have been encouraged to extend their analysis a little further in the drafting process.

Please note that from the May 2015 session marking penalties will apply if the Part 1 works are not selected from the Prescribed Literature in Translation list (PLT). If an incorrect work has been chosen the maximum mark available in Criterion B is three. Most schools are already correctly choosing Part1 works from the PLT, but not all.

The range and suitability of the work submitted

Most centres appear to be choosing Part 1 works that are appropriate to their candidates in terms of intellectual challenge, however, in many cases these choices are limited to a relatively small range of works (Süskind, Camus, García Márquez and Ibsen dominate here). Poetry and prose other than fiction only make occasional appearances. Candidates choosing to write on drama are best advised to pay attention to theatrical/performance elements (they often write about ‘readers’ of plays and, disappointingly, sometimes even refer to the play as a ‘novel’). The most suitable assignments continue to be those that have a literary focus that is well-defined and appropriate for treatment in an essay of this length (assignments with topics that are more philosophical or sociological rarely do well). In addition, teachers need to remind candidates that the development of their argument is conditional on actually having something to prove in the first place: too many assignments focus more on approaches best considered descriptive rather than analytical.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A: Fulfilling the requirements of the reflective statement

It is positive to note that, this session, far fewer of these were missing or on the other Part 1 work. The fact remains, however, that there is not uniform understanding of the objectives of the interactive oral and the reflective statement produced in response. The interactive oral needs to address the key elements of culture and context that are necessary to understand the actual work. These may cover a range of relevant elements: historical details, political culture, social and ethical mores, biographical facts, geographical location, dominant ideologies, literary movements (this list is not exhaustive). What do candidates need to know in order to have a more comprehensive understanding of the work itself? It would be advantageous for teachers to check, at the planning stage, that candidates are headed in the right direction so that the interactive oral will deliver what it needs to. In addition, the teacher also has a key role to play during the interactive oral, intervening, when necessary, to ensure that the discussion is focused on where it needs to be and that inaccurate cultural/contextual information is not disseminated.

Although reflective statements need to make reference to the content of the interactive oral and the literary work itself, these must be concise, as the main focus must be on relevant elements of culture and context. Reflective statements which are simply summaries of what was presented in the interactive oral will not do well, as they are neither personal nor reflective. Reflective statements which focus almost exclusively on the content of the work are also unlikely to be successful, as they do not demonstrate awareness of and reflection on the relevant elements of culture and context which underpin the work. When a candidate identifies points raised in the interactive oral regarding these cultural/contextual elements, relates them to specific details of the work and is able to reflect on how his/her understanding of the work has developed (or possibly not) as a result of this discussion, then the correct approach is being delivered and rewarding the candidate is relatively straightforward.

There are still too many candidates submitting reflective statements over 400 words and therefore losing one mark in criterion A. Reflective statements under 300 words are unlikely to

cover enough material to be able to gain full marks in this criterion. Statements which make no reference to any interactive oral are troubling. Too much personal reflection on a candidate's own life/circumstances is not illuminating understanding of the work culture and context of the work (a little of this may indeed be useful, but a judicious balance must be maintained). It must also be noted that there are a significant number of centres where this crucial process is clearly understood and delivered well, with almost every candidate gaining two or three marks in Criterion A.

Criterion B: Knowledge and understanding

Almost all examiners reported that most candidates knew their works well. Topics that are too wide or unfocused make it difficult to show detailed knowledge and understanding. Candidates need to be able to develop their understanding of the details into a coherent and convincing interpretation; this then constitutes 'insight' into the work. When candidates from the same centre repetitively employ the same examples and make the same points, it suggests that the approach is not individual enough. Individual guidance to candidates following the supervised writing may help to rectify this. In addition, encouraging candidates to re-read the works (or parts of them) in preparation for drafting the assignments may help to take them beyond examples covered in class discussion. Many examiners lament the absence of precise textual detail required to substantiate claims made. Assignments which consist of unsupported interpretation are unlikely to do well, particularly when candidates' claims are dubious or simply incorrect. The majority of candidates fall into the 3-4 mark band in this criterion. It is pleasing to see that most candidates do know their works well enough, but paraphrase, at times, prevails over analysis and prevents them from reaching the higher marks. Examples need to be effectively contextualized if they are to be successful; this is not an invitation to provide extensive plot summary: the best candidates are able to do this concisely.

Criterion C: Appreciation of the writer's choices

This does remain a challenge to many candidates, but an appropriate choice of topic is clearly the key to success. When the topic is literary and the approach analytical the candidate can be rewarded. The analysis needs to be explicit: the writer has made conscious choices in constructing the text. When the approach is implicit (for example, writing about a character, but not explicitly addressing the choices the writer has made, this is dangerous, as examiners are reluctant to award marks here). Frequent use of the writer's name suggests that the candidate is on the right track, although this is certainly not an automatic indicator of success, nor the only way to perform strongly in this criterion. The approach here should be more than simply a listing of techniques: a meaningful and integrated analysis that supports the interpretative claims being made is what is required. Well-framed questions for the supervised writing and teacher support following this, and after the draft stage, should help candidates do better here. It is clear that a number of centres are preparing candidates well for this; in other centres it does seem that candidates are not familiar enough with the assessment criteria. Daily class discussion should be reinforcing this approach all the time: What do you understand of this piece of text? How has the writer chosen to construct the text in this way to lead you to that interpretation?

Criterion D: Organization and development

Most candidates are aware of the need for a focused and appropriate introduction, a series of effectively connected main body paragraphs and a justified, logical conclusion. Most candidates can achieve a three in this criterion; focused and effective topics often lead candidates to getting a four. The argument needs to be narrowly focused and sequencing of ideas logical and convincing to describe it as 'persuasive' and warrant the awarding of the top mark. There are still a number of submissions that exceed 1500 words (and thus lose two marks in criterion D), but fewer than the May 2013 session. Useful work could still be done on helping candidates connect paragraphs more effectively. A tight and controlled sequence of coherently connected ideas leads to success. Vague and general introductions waste valuable words and do not presage success. If an examiner has to ask what the topic is at the end of the introduction, the introductory paragraph has clearly failed in delivering what it needed to. Some assignments end rather abruptly. This suggests that either there has been poor management of the developing argument or that the topic itself needs revision, with reformulation of the actual focus. It is to be hoped that these structural weaknesses would be picked up on at the draft stage and thus candidates might be able to perform better on the final version. Conclusions should not introduce new ideas and ought to be logically justified by the preceding argument. Many candidates still struggle with the appropriate punctuation needed to integrate quotations smoothly. This, along with the grammatical modification of quotations where necessary, is a skill that needs to be taught; it is clear that in some centres this is done effectively.

Criterion E: Language

Poor proofreading, weak punctuation and informal register were the most frequent causes for awarding a lower mark here. Many candidates do perform well in this criterion and, given the circumstances in which this assessment is produced and the help given by word-processed work, this is not surprising. At the same time, it is clear that too many candidates are not re-reading their own work effectively and picking up on obvious errors (perhaps even caused by auto-correction on the computer; re-visiting the work after some time has elapsed might help improve performance here). Random use of commas, sentence fragments and run-on sentences, lack of understanding of what a semi-colon does: these are the most frequent punctuation weaknesses. Contractions should be avoided in formal academic writing. Colloquial expressions and language that is not informed by an appropriate cultural/contextual sensibility cause disruption in terms of effective communication. Confusing language, where the examiner needs to re-read sentences in order to comprehend the meaning, is not normally capable of gaining a mark of three; this may happen when the candidate has chosen a course of study beyond his or her linguistic capability. Occasional mechanical weaknesses can, of course, be balanced by style and diction choices that impress the reader. Teachers must emphasise that mistakes in the title of a work, the author or character name (including diacritical marks), or, indeed, the country the work is set in, will not impress any examiner ('Gabriel Marquez's novel *Chronicles of a death foretold* is set in Columbia and Santiago Nasser is a main character' may be an exaggeration of the case in point, but not by very much, according to the writing of many candidates). The very best are truly a pleasure to read, not just in terms of compelling academic content, but because these candidates write with confidence, clarity and sophistication.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

- Teachers and candidates must be aware of the required focus for the interactive oral and the reflective statement
- Devise supervised writing prompts with a suitable literary focus
- Encourage candidates to develop independent approaches to their topics
- Ensure that the topic has a suitably narrow focus
- Make candidates aware of the word limits for both the written assignment and the reflective statement
- Remind candidates of the importance of substantiating claims made through the use of precise examples and analysis based on 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 coherent and convincing line of argument (aided by appropriate transitions/connecting phrases)
- Teach the integration and modification of quotations
- Develop a common understanding in class of appropriate register in formal written work
- Encourage candidates to check their work carefully before final submission.

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.

Many candidates need to have a better grasp of the specific qualities and features of the two

genres on this paper. Knowing the name of the device is no substitute for exploring and appreciating its effect. Considerations of form and structure are sometimes marginalised or entirely ignored, in both prose and poetry. Some candidates spend so long on the various points of detail that they actually lose sight of an over-arching interpretation. Despite the inevitable pressure of a two hour examination, precise and detailed close reading is essential and was sometimes lacking.

In the case of both the prose passage and the poem many candidates misread parts of the texts. For example, in the poem many candidates missed the speaker's specific reference to a brief period at the age of seventeen and discussed 'early childhood' and/or 'teenage years'. Again suggesting superficial reading, many saw the speaker as an old man and the moments depicted in stanzas 7 – 9 as occurring late in his life despite the words 'muddy seedtime of early manhood' and the placing of this time as 'a part of the past not so deep or far away'. A significant number took the reference to heaven in the last line to suggest that the speaker is actually dead. In the prose passage there was less inaccuracy but some missed the time shifts in the narration and weaker candidates tended to lump the parents together as similar in their treatment of Janey. There is some mention of the dialogue paired with a flashback, but not many candidates dug into what the structure means in the context of the extract.

Very few candidates are able to use an organization pattern that does not echo the time flow of the extract; while a linear reading can work well, such an approach means that the extract is controlling the candidate rather than the other way round.

On the whole students better understood the general meaning of the prose than they did of the poem. However, they were more adept at commenting on style in the poem than the prose. Some schools need to recognise that the craft of commenting on prose needs to be taught as explicitly as that of commenting upon poetry.

Candidates need to be encouraged to be confident if they see more than one possible way of reading a text. Plurality is at the heart of reader-response and, rather than shying away from suggesting variant readings candidates because they might fix on the 'wrong' one, candidates should see this as an opportunity to demonstrate their ability to see into possibilities.

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

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 wrote too-brief commentaries.

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. Examiners noted that fewer were very weak in these respects than in previous years, and usually syntax

was adequate and communication clear even in answers where there were technical writing lapses.

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 which offered a range of viable interpretations; but some over-read and reached for interpretations beyond that which the text could sustain. A number assumed that the writer and persona were the same.

Prose

Although there were excellent commentaries which focused on the details and subtleties of the passage, many got bogged down in limited aspects, ignoring details such as the use of dialogue and the lyrical description of Janey's life in the boarding school.

Successful candidates dealt perceptively with the contrasting roles played by her parents. Some argued that both love Janey; some that the father does but the mother does not; some that neither parent really loved her. Many went over the top re 'Janey's dysfunctional family'. Overmuch was sometimes made of the fact that, because Janey's mother takes her into the kitchen, she wishes her to be in 'the feminine domain'. The mother is much more complex figure than most gave her credit for.

The multiple readings of "deafness" in the extract were well-handled by the better candidates and overlooked by the less confident. Some spent much time, without much evidence, on the consideration that as Janey is deaf her other senses must be enhanced ("it's a well know fact..."). Lack of close reading meant that a number wrote that Janey was deaf and blind, despite her use of sign language.

Candidates were able to pick up on some of the figurative language related to such as heat, smoke and string. Overmuch was sometimes made of the boy's beautiful hands - it must mean that sex is in the air for Janey.

One or two candidates were so inattentive that they repeatedly referred to Janey as 'Janet' or, in one case, 'Jeaney'.

Poem

Good tests of the candidate's close reading skills were:

- how well they understood what is meant by 'Never more' do the early memories come back 'against my will', and why they might at some previously have come back against his will
- the force of the simile of accepting the nipple with 'unnoticing hunger'.

- perceiving from stanza 6 that the persona is not now an old man as the second memory of early manhood is 'a part of the past not so deep or far away'.

Another good discriminator was whether candidates saw that the poem is fundamentally about youth and age rather than a memory poem.

Sometimes candidates blurred the two memories and did not sufficiently distinguish between the nature of the two time periods that the persona is recalling.

Candidates sometimes imposed their own meaning on the poem in this kind of manner: "Of the two memories, the persona prefers the second one of his young manhood because that has more meaning than the carefree one of his youth". The candidate may think that, but where in the passage does the persona say that?

There was a good deal of interference from candidates' own seventeen-year-old summer memories. Candidates sometimes became very excited by the sexual possibilities implicit in lines 4-5.

Some saw the persona as:

- learning important lessons from the old man
- wishing he were the old man
- seeing the old man as himself in the future

All these were usually asserted without close analysis of the text to back up the claims.

Some asserted, without giving textual support, that the second phase - of his young manhood - was good for him (in the words of one candidate, "gave his later life substance and meaning"), and that he benefited from the richness of the experience in the diner observing the old man. "The persona realises that the struggle is what brought him here today in the heaven of better days." Evidence? Mention of 'heaven' in the final line led many to consider that the persona is now dead (and, it is to be assumed, writing from the grave). The exact nature of the "Better Days", one of the complexities of the poem, was generally not well-explored. Too often candidates hide from the difficult bits rather than making an attempt to interpret them.

There was generally good understanding of poetic devices such as syntax, enjambment, caesuras, voltas (although, strictly speaking, this term refers to the shift between the octave and the sestet in a sonnet rather than the 'turning point' in stanza six of the poem) and diction (although few mentioned the kind of diction used, and too many simply said 'The poet uses diction' - How else can the poem be written?!).

For the first time I can remember I came across a candidate recommending a reading age for a poem: "An audience ranging from teenagers and above is most appropriate"!

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;
- avoid vague, general introductions - begin with an argument which is based on an analysis of the passage. Candidates who entered the commentary on a high level, stayed on a high level;
- 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, citing the 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 gender pronoun thereafter and thus avoiding the inappropriate use of 'their' and 'themselves' 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 frequent exposure to poets reading their work through the use of CD or DVD, will help in this regard;
- frequently practise writing commentaries under timed conditions (obvious, but too often one doubts that this is happening), focusing on how to analyse the effects of literary features rather than merely identifying them. A variety of text types should be covered so that candidates can identify different types of structure.
- Share relevant sections of the Subject Report (an excellent teaching tool) with their teachers.

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;
- quote without commenting on the effect of what they have just quoted (quotation is not in itself analysis);
- 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' (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 - 7	8 - 10	11 - 13	14 - 16	17 - 20

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

Generally, many candidates found it difficult to even get a basic understanding of the text, let alone move beyond the surface, literal meaning. Less able candidates tended to be imprecise in their interpretation and even weaker ones resorted to unsupported generalisations, or paraphrase/narration. Some candidates seemed to be working with a checklist and feature-spotted literary features without attempting to analyse how they are used to shape meaning. In both questions narrative stance and the reflective/retrospective view seemed difficult for candidates to recognise. In the prose extract, many of the candidates failed to show a comprehensive understanding of the text, giving only a fraction of the whole; the vast majority understood that the narrator had just emerged from a coma, and some included something about his relationship with his brother, but completely missed other aspects that were important. Indeed, very few included all the relevant points, and equally few candidates understood the retrospective stance of the narrator.

In the poem, many candidates found it difficult to comment on the rhyme in a meaningful way. Those that did offer long, repetitive, and often incorrect comments on it failed to make any link with how it contributed to meaning. Others got bogged down in lengthy discussions on punctuation and produced somewhat contrived arguments as to their effects.

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

Perhaps more candidates this year were aware of the importance of planning their answers resulting in better organised and more focused responses. Also, more candidates had been taught to support comments with close reference to the texts, with the better candidates offering some analysis and interpretation of these references. One examiner noted that there were "fewer ridiculous interpretations." Generally, the expression and register seemed better than last year.

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

The responses this year seemed more evenly balanced in terms of the quality of responses per question. Neither question stood out as eliciting markedly better/worse responses. In the prose, literary devices were noted and some attempts were made to appreciate their effects. There was a basic understanding of the situation in almost all the responses. Good candidates recognised the retrospective idea and linked this with narrator tone, while weaker candidates missed this completely. Good candidates analysed literary features and their effects, while weaker candidates barely mentioned them.

Comments on rhyme in the poem were, on the whole, weak. Candidates frequently struggled to link form with meaning. However, there were some good comments on the ironic tone.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Examiners' comments included the following:

- Put meaning first, then analyse its construction.
- Give more emphasis to narrative voice.
- Stress the importance of structure and coherence in the essay.
- Focus on a thematic thread that runs through the commentary and connects ideas.

It is vital, however, to stress the importance of advising candidates not to use the guiding questions to structure their essay, but to incorporate them into the structured essay form. Those who simply answered the questions lost marks not only for structure, but also because they failed to focus on other important elements that were not emphasised in the questions.

This was especially true in the poetry where candidates who did this were at a distinct disadvantage as meaning was sacrificed to tenuous comments on rhyme. Also, candidates with bad handwriting could be advised to write on every other line of their answer booklets, as this makes them a little easier to read.

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 - 15	16 - 18	19 - 25

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

It is a constant refrain of paper 2 examiners that many candidates would score better if they took the trouble to read and respond to the question more carefully. In fact fewer examiners this year reported the kind of formulaic answer which had evidently been prepared in advance with more or less of an attempt to make it fit the question. There were, however, many instances of only a partial grasp of a question, of candidates seizing on one word or phrase and concentrating on it to the exclusion of other demands on them. Many paper 2 questions ask for more than one thing ('presentation and importance', 'methods and effects', 'how and how successfully') or ask for a particular link ('key events' and 'development of central characters'), so that concentration on one of these to the neglect of the other is bound to lower the overall quality of the answer.

This year's examination confirmed the impression from last year's cohort, that many candidates effectively penalize themselves by an unwise choice of question (or an unwise choice of texts to answer a particular question). Some answers to question 4, for example, dealt with poems which are not centrally or primarily concerned with love, while many answers to question 8 might find plenty to say about the use of weather in one text (*Jane Eyre* and *The Great Gatsby* were two favourites) and then struggle to say much of consequence about a second text such as *Things Fall Apart*. It was difficult to read some of these essays without being keenly aware that one or other of the alternative questions would have been a much better choice for those texts.

A significant number of candidates who demonstrated a good grasp of their texts and an intelligent engagement with the demands of the question fell short in fulfilling the demands of criterion C. This was particularly noticeable both in those questions which directed attention to widely used literary conventions (such as rhyme and rhythm in poetry) and in those which focused on a more specialized convention (such as the 'fourth wall' in drama, or the use of

formal or informal language in poetry): in these latter instances, many candidates showed little or no grasp of the convention referred to.

The regulation that all rough work must be completed on the candidate's examination script has once again revealed many long and intricate written plans, part essays written in rough, or whole poems written out (and then commented on in the actual essay). Most of this is time ill-spent. Effective planning means ordering one's thoughts, and then (if necessary) registering that order in a brief note.

With reference to criterion E, though examiners rarely encountered language which was so lacking in control as to be incomprehensible, several reported an increasingly casual register and a failure to observe the conventions of formal essay writing. The impression formed (it can be no more than an impression) was that schools concentrate on teaching the texts and devote little time to the formal use of language, to the elements of 'register, style and terminology' specified in criterion E. It is worth emphasizing that, despite the change in the syllabus name from 'Language A1' to 'Literature A', language skills still account for a significant proportion of the marks in paper 2.

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

Despite that lengthy recital of candidates' shortcomings, it should be emphasized that many examiners reported a number of encouraging trends this session: a reduced number of prepared answers which bore little or no relation to the question; arguments more grounded in textual detail, with fewer 'floating' quotations or the insertion of a lengthy quotation with little or no supporting comment; and more instances of an independence of thought or an insightful way of looking at texts than in previous sessions. The production of a well-crafted comparative essay on two or more texts within two hours is a challenge by any standards, but the number of responses which fell woefully short of the requirement (by being very short, incomplete, so poorly written as to challenge comprehension, or bearing no relation to the question) were very few indeed. Most candidates did make an attempt to compare their texts, even though in many instances their methods of comparison (often just a sentence or two in the transition from one text to another) were less than effective; and there seemed to be fewer instances of candidates being handicapped by attempting to compare widely disparate texts: in short, schools seem overall to be choosing their texts more wisely. (There are still some schools, however, which are choosing texts in translation or other texts not on the prescribed list, and schools need to be aware that from May 2015, essays on works not chosen from the Prescribed List of Authors will be subject to a penalty.)

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

Drama continues to be the most popular genre, followed by fiction and then poetry. It is gratifying to see the substantial number of schools now opting for poetry, which only a few years ago was a very unpopular choice, as is (at present) the final genre: prose non-fiction

has too few candidates to enable any confident generalisations on candidates' performance on questions 10 to 12.

Questions 1 and 3 were much more popular than question 2. On question 1, a majority of candidates indicated one or more characters from each of their plays whom they designated as 'minor' and indicated their role in the plot and/or as contrasts or foils to major characters. Many essays nominated as 'minor' some characters which might raise eyebrows, such as all and any characters apart from the protagonists Blanche and Willy in those ever popular works *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *Death of a Salesman* (including, as minor characters, Biff and Stanley). Few gave serious thought as to what makes a character 'minor': the essay which argued against the grain that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in Stoppard's play are minor characters despite their central roles – because they are continually being marginalized by the other characters – was one of the refreshing exceptions. This confirms the need for candidates to interrogate the key terms of a question. More responses looked at the role and hence importance of minor characters than considered their presentation.

Question 2 produced some fine answers where the question itself was understood. Alfieri in *A View from the Bridge*, Tom in *The Glass Menagerie* and Dysart in *Equus* formed the basis of some excellent responses. But an alarming number of candidates, including ones whose writing indicated in other respects an intelligent engagement with literature, simply did not understand what is meant by breaking the fourth wall. Many such answers simply endeavoured to show how the play as a whole communicates its meanings.

Question 3 was generally well answered. Most candidates were able to make something of the use of sound and light in their chosen texts, and the better answers showed awareness of different ways in which they could be used, such as naturalistically (as in *A Long Day's Journey into Night*) or in a more expressionistic fashion in some of the plays of Tennessee Williams or Arthur Miller. A number of answers combined discussion of a modern play together with Shakespeare, particularly *Macbeth* or *Othello*. In these instances, not only was there usually no evident awareness of the different conditions of the original productions of these earlier dramas (relevant to the ways that sound and light might be realised on stage) but there was limited awareness of the significance of the time setting of particular scenes (in light or darkness) and attendant indicators (in dialogue and the use of candles or torches), though both those Shakespeare plays offer rich possibilities in this respect.

In answers on poetry, here again there was one question (5) where the central concepts – 'formal and/or informal language' – seemed to cause difficulty. Question 4 was perhaps the most popular in this section, and most answers were able to marshal some images from their chosen poems in connection with the theme of love. The responses which really explored 'the ways in which . . . poets . . . use imagery' were comparatively few. Many answers, for example, compared poems by Donne and a modern poet (Carol Ann Duffy being a particular favourite), but for the most part did not seriously attempt to show what was very different about the images – beyond stating that Donne is metaphysical poet and uses conceits – and the ways they are used in the two (or more) poets.

Probably a minority of the candidates who answered question 5 were able to show an understanding of what constitutes formal or informal language. Most responses described the language of a poem as formal or informal without showing, by reference to the text, what

made it so. There were, however, some fine answers by candidates who took the time to explore these terms and consider the particular ways in which uses of language might be considered formal or informal.

Question 6 was more popular. There was a tendency to discuss rhyme more than rhythm, perhaps because it is more easily identifiable; though even where rhyme was identified, there were few candidates who could confidently identify and discuss the use of half-rhyme, or distinguish between strong and weak rhyme. With regard to rhythm, more candidates were able to identify particular metrical patterns than were able to discuss the actual use of rhythm to organize ideas. The best answers were those which eschewed all general comment and conveyed a sense of the candidates listening to the rhyme and /or rhythm of a poem in their heads there and then, and attempting to set down the precise effect they conveyed.

In Prose: novel and short story, questions 7 and 9 were (understandably) much more popular than question 8. There were good answers to question 7 where key events were clearly identified and related to the development of character. But far too many responses failed sufficiently to identify key events, and instead just recounted plot with no real sense of which events were 'key'; or focused on whole episodes (more than one candidate discussing *Jane Eyre* on the basis of the 'key events' in her life of Gateshead, Lowood, Thornfield Hall etc.); or concentrated on the development of central characters independently of key events.

Question 8 was a less popular question since it has a narrower application, and the only real difficulties were experienced by candidates who chose one work in which weather is a paramount element in the setting, and another where it is not. A number of candidates, however, strayed outside the strict terms of the question to include other elements of setting or atmosphere. There were some fine answers exploring Gothic elements in the settings of nineteenth century texts such as *Jane Eyre* and *Great Expectations*.

Most candidates attempting question 9 showed a reasonable awareness of what might be thought of as a work with a single line of action or one involving a subplot or subplots, though some candidates employed a questionably wide definition of subplot: the use of flashbacks (*The Handmaid's Tale*), the parts played by minor characters (the mother in *The Bloody Chamber*), or simply characters' different points of view were sometimes subsumed under the term subplot. The quality of the answer was usually governed by how far the candidate moved beyond simple narrative of the plot or plots, and considered these narrative choices in relation to other aspects of the work. There were some very good answers on the nineteenth century novel, in particular Charlotte Bronte, Emily Bronte and Jane Austen, relating the form of the narrative to narrative voice.

As indicated above, too few candidates answered questions 10 to 12 to be able to comment (although a few candidates answered one of these questions using the wrong genre).

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

These recommendations, some of which will of course repeat points which are returned to year after year, are to some extent implicit in previous comments, and they are for the most part set out in a rough order of priority.

The most urgent task for a majority of students appears to be gaining a greater understanding of the specific conventions of the genre they are studying. One would expect that a school teaching drama for paper 2 should make their students aware of the convention of the 'fourth wall' (and the breaking of it), or that a school teaching poetry (or indeed any school in their teaching towards paper 1) would develop students' appreciation of the different types of language which may be found in poetry. The comments above on question 3 relating to the discussion of a Shakespeare play and a modern play point to one of many examples of candidates writing about texts with little or no acknowledgement that they are literary constructs employing specific conventions to convey meaning. The conventions of a literary genre are something which need to be deliberately taught: none but the most capable students will be able to work out for themselves the different ways in which rhyme and rhythm can be employed in poetry, or the different choices that novelists make in devising their narratives. Though some examiners suggested that answers on poetry generally fulfilled the demands of criterion C better (perhaps because the form of a poetry text foregrounds its conventions more clearly), responses to question 5 highlighted the fact that candidates need to develop not only awareness of a particular convention (in this case the linguistic register of a poem), but also how it is created and how it functions as an element in the overall meaning of the poem.

Developing awareness of the conventions of specific genres is something which should be inseparable from all teaching of literature: there is no need to wait for consideration of part 3 texts. The same could be said of the skill of comparing texts, even though it is only in paper 2 that there is a specific requirement to compare. Some work in this regard, with texts in any part of the syllabus, needs to treat the principles of comparison (what do we expect to gain from the comparison of texts? what kinds of comparison is it helpful - or unhelpful - to make? how is comparison of two texts helped by a consideration of their uses of specific conventions?); but some should address matters of organization in paper 2 essays. Students should be made aware and shown examples of extended comparisons beyond the one or two sentences when moving from one text to another, and of the different ways that this can be managed within the organization of an entire essay.

Teaching the conventions of good writing is also, of course, something which will benefit students in more assessment items than this paper alone. The following are some of the most frequent transgressions, often in responses which in other respects show a good control of language, but it is recommended that teachers make their own list from observation of their own students' work:

- loosely constructed sentences, employing the comma splice or the use of 'however' (with or without commas) as a conjunction;
- failure to indicate titles of works with inverted commas (or underlining) and the use of lazy abbreviations such as DOAS for 'Death of a Salesman' (which might, however, be reasonably abbreviated to 'Salesman');
- mistakes in agreement of subject and verb ('The presence of minor characters have a large impact . . .');

- failure to use the apostrophe for possession;
- failure to distinguish 'its' and 'it's'
- the misspelling of writers' names (Tennessee Williams is a notorious example) and of frequently used words such as 'playwright'

Other common errors, not specifically linguistic, are the following:

- failure to provide context when using quotations or references. Candidates sometimes appear to assume that, since the examiner will know the work referred to, context is not necessary. But (to take one example) the discussion as a sound effect of the cry of the Mexican woman in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, 'Flores para los muertos', without an indication of the situation and dialogue between Blanche and Mitch at the close of scene 9, and Blanche's response to what she hears, is to lose the purpose of this particular effect.
- use of terms such as 'theatre of the absurd' or 'existentialism' without any clear indication that the candidate understands what the term means, or without showing how it informs our reading of the text. If a particular term is introduced in teaching, ensure that students know how to use it so that they do not commit solecisms such as 'Charlotte Bronte uses bildungsroman to show that . . . '.
- The number of answers which showed a mismatch between question and the texts used (in particular, the choice of inappropriate poems to answer question 4) once again highlighted the need for candidates
- to make a wise choice of question: there should, within each group of three questions, be at least once suitable question whatever texts have been chosen, but not all questions suit all texts. Not all novels have weather as an important element of setting and not all plays contain examples of a character breaking the fourth wall;
- to be prepared to answer on any of the four texts studied (to ensure the best match between question and texts), and, when studying poetry, to learn a sufficiently broad selection of poems well enough to make a wise choice in response to a particular question.

The final recommendation is as true, and as important, as in the many previous years that it has been offered: that students should approach paper 2 with an open mind. To enter the exam having decided to write about two of the four texts, or about particular poems, because these are the texts or poems best known, may enable an effective answer if there happens to be a good fit between text (or poems) and the question chosen, but it is just as likely to produce a response which does not fit the question. Candidates should go into the exam with a detailed knowledge of four texts, should weigh up the merits of the three questions against the texts they know, and, having decided on a question, closely scrutinize it word for word. As one examiner puts it, those students who think on their feet that day, approach the question with freshness and avoid the tired rehash of a class discussion are a joy 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 - 16	17 - 19	20 - 25

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

Candidates have little difficulty showing their knowledge of texts, but they are still challenged in terms of exploring those texts relevantly and in making effective comparisons of one text with another. Too many candidates waste valuable time in making vague, irrelevant or hackneyed statements in their introduction when what they should be doing (after planning) is getting to the heart of the matter as quickly as possible.

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

Most candidates continue to make an honest attempt to present a valid essay, display good knowledge of their texts and are able to construct a response with its major constituent parts. It would appear that candidates are becoming increasingly more aware of the requirements of this 'new' course, examined for the third time in this May 2014 session. This is especially so with the elements of comparison (required in criterion B) and attention to literary conventions (criterion C). These elements still need additional focus as they often are neither integrated into the response very smoothly nor are they fully developed; but at least it seems that more and more attention is being paid to them. Although there is still evidence that candidates are trying to force prepared approaches into the questions, there was less of this than in past sessions, an indication that candidates are more and more prepared to think on their feet and construct a direct response to the question on the spot.

WARNING: Many candidates based their essays on authors who are no longer on the PLA or works that were perhaps from sections other than Part 3 of the centre's reading list or works that have been studied in translation. All of these situations will be penalized as of the May 2015 session although they were not subject to penalties in this session. Teachers need to check their reading lists against the instructions in the *Language A: Literature* guide and the *English A: Literature PLA* in order to avoid unnecessary penalties next year to innocent but wrongly informed candidates. Many teachers will be surprised to find that they have been teaching invalid texts for two years. Choosing the wrong genre question but using valid texts for another genre is most likely an error on the part of the candidate at the time of taking the exam. (This error too was not subject to penalty in this session.) However, even here, teachers need to stress avoiding this error and the unfortunate consequences of not doing so.

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

Examiners are instructed to accept as broad and varied an approach to each question as the candidate makes possible based on the effectiveness of the presentations. The questions are not intended to quiz candidates on specific terms but to provide points for the candidate to construct a personal and substantiated response that s/he makes relevant to the question.

Drama

1. This was perhaps the most frequently chosen question on the examination paper. Many good responses were produced here. The problem arose because the question has two parts: it asks for both the 'presentation' and 'importance' of the minor characters chosen for discussion. Many candidates did one without much of the other. Candidates who limited the discussion to two or three minor characters generally fared better than candidates who presented a sentence or two about many, as the discussion of two or three was generally more thoughtful and detailed, spending time on both the presentation and the importance.

2. The question was infrequently chosen, but those who did elect to address this question usually produced good or very good papers, probably because this particular issue had been discussed in class and the works that they chose to discuss lent themselves well to the question. A working definition of 'breaking the fourth wall' was even given in the question. In keeping with the approach to allow leeway in terms of interpreting the question, candidates were given a very wide range in terms of defining what constituted 'breaking the fourth wall'.

Credit could also awarded to the extent that those approaches were effectively substantiated. For example, music that only some characters and the audience could hear (such as the Varsouviana in "A Streetcar Named Desire") could be allowed as a form of 'direct communication' with the audience even if it does not fit a strict definition of 'breaking the fourth wall'.

3. Many candidates wrote on this question. Planning (as in all questions) seemed to make a great deal of difference here. Selecting significant examples and thinking about the ways (often not just one) in which they contributed to the plays seemed to precede the writing in the best of cases. Again, a detailed look at a limited number of instances worked better than an attempt to show the presence of as many examples in each work as the candidate could think of. The candidates who chose to address both light and sound were particularly prone to this second, less successful, approach.

Poetry

4. This was the most popular of the three questions for this genre. Hardly a work was addressed that did not offer the opportunity to discuss some kind of 'love' promoted by some kind of imagery. As a result some very good responses were produced here. However, in part because of the breadth of the possibilities, many candidates did not specify the kind of love clearly enough so that the images chosen for discussion did not always have the realm into which their effect could be couched. A number of candidates attempted this question in reference to the war poets they had studied and their responses were somewhat contrived as

a result. Additionally, other weaker papers made sweeping statements about the imagery, but often failed to provide examples. It is strongly recommended that if poetry is the genre option, candidates must commit some to memory. Even that does not insure that candidates will select the appropriate evidence from the poem to support the argument, but at least all the material ought to be at hand for judicious use.

5. The choice of question was more evenly spread across the three poetry questions than across those of the other genres. Success on this question depended on the candidate's ability to define and exemplify in/formal language in a plausible way and choose apt poems. A number of strong responses appeared using Duffy, Larkin and Nichols (among others) as representative users of informal language with Donne, Auden and Tennyson often as poets who used formal language. In weaker papers, no clear distinction between the levels of language was made. The response often became focused on the attitude toward the subject rather than the language used to convey that attitude.

6. This was a tricky question since many candidates did not clearly distinguish between rhythm and rhyme (a confusion that was sometimes indicated also by spelling one almost to resemble the other). In general candidates handled rhyme better than rhythm that was often misidentified and whose function was either to speed up or slow down the flow, with little attention to the nature of the thoughts or experience that was being expressed. Indeed rhythm, especially, is a difficult element to recognize, particularly for the many candidates whose first language is not English.

Prose: novel and short story

7. This oft-chosen question (second only to question #1) is a bit trickier than it may first appear. To show how something that happens affects a character would be a simple way to reduce the question to its essence. Many candidates did just this and produced satisfactory responses. The more sophisticated responses did as has been mentioned above: they selected and described a limited number of key events and then went into some detail how each event influenced not just one character but other characters where applicable. The word 'development' was interpreted both to mean 'revelation/presentation' and to mean 'change'. Both approaches were accepted. Only the very best candidates recognized the need to address the relative success of this technique. This eliciting of an evaluation is something that is generally directed only to higher level candidates. Consequently, examiners did not penalize those candidates who did not address this element of the question, but they may have tended to reward those who did.

8. Some texts lent themselves well to this question: Hemingway and Fitzgerald for example. There appeared to be enough centres that had dealt with such texts to make this an attractive question for more than a few candidates. (Some had one very appropriate text but not the second.) One potential problem with this genre is that every candidate comes prepared (or ought to come prepared) to discuss in some detail the narrative voice. In order to show that they are up on this element, candidates often make unnatural leaps within the response in order to accommodate this supposed need. Many who probably should not have chosen this question did that here. Candidates need to be prepared to dare not to use much of what they have learned about the texts. Instead, they should be ready to select relevant learned

material and to search in their knowledge of the texts on the spot to retrieve evidence relevant to the question.

9. Some leeway was given here concerning what makes up a 'subplot'. Pretty much any wandering from the central story line (even those that feed it directly) was allowed but then evaluated on the effectiveness of its discussion. Therefore, 'back story', 'flashback' and 'mobile concurrence' (among others) were accepted, and indeed in some cases subplot is involved. In the end, the discussions often ended up addressing structure in one form or another often including how the work was constructed with the use of time as a central factor. One way that made the responses to this question different from those to other questions was that the accepted breadth of approach offered a greater variety of ways that candidates could succeed or not on this question.

Prose other than fiction

10. – 12. Apart from the very occasional response that chose one of these questions by mistake, I read only three responses (all using the same texts, so I assume from the same centre) that addressed one of these questions. That said, the three responses were quite good: knowledgeable, focused and well-written. None of the three that I read chose question #12.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

- Instilling the process of choosing and planning before writing. Candidates need practice in selecting the question most appropriate to their works in Part III. They need to decode the question to become aware of all its constituent parts. They should decide which two (usually recommended above three or more) works will be addressed and choose a limited number of relevant textual moments for exploration rather than engage in a sweeping overview or narration. Even in poetry, where one might expect attention to many elements in each poem, the emphasis should be on the examination of effects rather than multitude of quotation. The introduction should be planned giving the reader a clear sense of the central ideas and direction the response is about to follow. And then the candidate should keep to that blueprint.
- There are a number of terms which candidates frequently misuse, often those to do with 'contrast': oxymoron, paradox and dichotomy are the three most commonly misused terms. Candidates appear to have an affection for these terms; perhaps it is the allure of the mystery of the unknown. Restraint needs to be exercised in their use; although when they are apt choices, they contribute solidly to the candidate's awareness of style.
- More and more candidates present inaccurate quotations. Even Blanche's iconic 'kindness of strangers' comment is not safe from deformation. There were some painful misquotations from Wilde whose language must be replicated exactly as written if the quotation is to have its full force and not become an unintentional comic parody of itself. If a candidate is not certain of the exact wording, then paraphrasing is always an option, one that will most likely capture the heart of the thought effectively.

- There appears to be a growing tendency to construct incidents and quotations in a sort of 'wishful thinking' mode, elements that would suit the purposes of the candidate at that moment. These fabricated elements tell (to paraphrase Blanche) 'not what is in the text but what ought to be there.'
- There is much confusion between the collective nature of 'imagery' and the singularity of 'image', likewise with 'symbolism' and 'symbol'.
- If the candidate has planned well (see point #1) then truly functional transitions arise almost naturally. That so few papers contain such transitions is one indication that the candidate probably does not have as clear an idea of the direction of the paper as s/he might have. Some of the least effective attempts at transitions include (and these are exact quotations) the following: 'Interestingly...', 'Getting back to what I said earlier...', 'Moving on...' and 'Following on from this...'. Other even more common ones such as 'Similarly...', 'In contrast...' and 'On the other hand...' generally do not make a true connection as the point in comparison or contrast is usually not specified as the sentence continues.
- Subject and verb agreement is one element that does seem to deteriorate each year. One would think that pure guesswork would produce correctness about 50% of the time. And yet, in some cases, it is consistently incorrect as if it had been taught that way (although I am sure that it has not been). In the past, candidates did not necessarily consciously operate by the rules of grammar here, but they generally got it right because 'it sounded right'. Now the 'sounds right' element seems to have lost its impact. In many sentences to which I refer, the verb agrees with the noun that precedes it most closely. Correctness in the area, which once was almost a given, has now become a telling element in the control of expression.
- When a text or character is referred to the first time in the body of the paper, there is usually a need for at least some brief, relevant context for each work or character. Candidates appear to expect the examiner to fill in the bits and pieces necessary to make a point. I say 'brief, relevant context' because too much background material can misdirect the response into simple narration or a character sketch.
- A title of a work needs to be so indicated with parentheses or underlining not only the first time it is mentioned, but also every time it is mentioned after that, even in its shortened form. (i.e. 'Death and the King's Horseman' should become 'DATKH' if that is what the candidate has chosen to do.) Often using the last name of the writer, instead of the name of the work, is as effective and less cumbersome once the title and author have been identified.
- Very few themes can be identified in a single word or phrase, such as 'death' or 'appearance versus reality'. These are subject areas or elements, but a theme is not clear until the stance on the element is stated. So, 'the American Dream' is not a theme. It is the subject or topic that a work may treat, but the theme identifies the treatment, such as 'the power of the American Dream to inspire but also to destroy those who follow it blindly'. (Even the term "American Dream" needs defining as it is quite a different thing for many characters.)

- More and more examiners noted difficulty in deciphering handwriting. It is recognized that handwriting is becoming a lost art in many ways. However, until it is possible for all centres all over the world to provide all candidates with a word processing possibility, IB cannot give blanket permission to those centres that can provide this option as that would disadvantage those centres that as yet cannot. Alert centres can note those candidates whose handwriting is difficult to decipher, have that fact documented by recognized testing and apply to the IB for a suitable assessment accommodation. I do not think that I have ever seen a typed script that was disadvantaged by its being typed (and it can be arranged if done on time for needy candidates) while I have seen many where credit could not be given to illegible handwriting.