English A: Literature Time Zone 1

Overall grade boundaries

Higher level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 15	16 – 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 – 43	44 – 55	56 – 68	69 – 79	80 - 100

Time zone variants of examination papers

To protect the integrity of the examinations, increasing use is being made of time zone variants of examination papers. By using variants of the same examination paper candidates in one part of the world will not always be taking the same examination paper as candidates in other parts of the world. A rigorous process is applied to ensure that the papers are comparable in terms of difficulty and syllabus coverage, and measures are taken to guarantee that the same grading standards are applied to candidates' scripts for the different versions of the examination papers. For the May 2015 session the IB has produced time zone variants of English A Literature Higher and Standard level, papers one and two.

Higher level internal assessment

Component grade boundaries

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

The range and suitability of the work submitted

For the commentary there was a wide range of works represented, from the more common choices of Carol Ann Duffy, Elizabeth Bishop, Robert Frost, Sylvia Plath, John Donne and Seamus Heaney through to somewhat less represented names such as Lorna Crozier, EE Cummings and Denise Levertov. Some poets prove challenging to candidates; the complexity of much of T S Eliot's work is a notable example, as is the relative brevity of some of Blake's 'Songs of Innocence and Experience'. Centers are advised to think very carefully about their choices for this part of the examination - making sure there is an adequate range of material for a candidate to comment upon, but not so much that they feel swamped.

Authors chosen for the discussion were also wide in range. The more familiar, canonical works were well represented in the form of Shakespeare - Othello, Hamlet and Macbeth most notably, The Great Gatsby, Heart of Darkness, Wuthering Heights and Prose other than Fiction works by Virginia Woolf, George Orwell, Bruce Chatwin and Michael Ondaatje. In Cold Blood by Truman Capote made a strong appearance this year, usually with good results. Moderators enjoyed encounters with less well-trodden paths: Joyce's Dubliners, Tim Findlay's The Wars and Hemingway's The Sun Also Rises being just a few examples.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A

The tendency towards paraphrase remains in evidence and teachers are advised to spend more time working with affected students to help them get to grips with the difference between description, analysis, interpretation and evaluation. The practice of making detailed, focused reference to the text in support of any assertion made is vital to secure marks in the upper end of this grade band; candidates who talk 'around' the poem, or spend significant time referring to other works studied do not do themselves justice. Similarly, it is never advisable to talk in any length about biographical - or any other kind of contextual detail. Many candidates continue to provide generic, pre-learned introductions - frequently consisting of an overview of the poet's life or an introduction to period or genre; this practice seldom leads to the award of any marks so it is best avoided.

Criterion B

There were some insightful and close analysis of stylistic properties in some schools but many moderators expressed concern that candidates continue to 'spot' literary features without exploring their impact or effect. Some comments are vague, mechanical or repetitive. Moderators often hear candidates suggest that free verse means that 'the poem has no structure' or that enjambment 'speeds the poem up', which are at best very dubious and at worst just simply wrong. Furthermore, showing sensitivity to literary craft is about drawing attention to the tools writers use to communicate their meaning - not speculating on the way a reader might or might not react. The comment 'this makes it easier to understand' is almost never worthwhile.

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Criterion C

Many candidates have clearly been taught about structure although it remains a requirement that too many fail to demonstrate. The provision of an introduction and a conclusion is one very easy way to show evidence of thinking about presentation, and it is a shame that very few remember this. The linear approach continues to dominate, but these responses tend to score higher marks only when there is some kind of point e.g. that the poem develops in a meaningful way. Candidates who organise their material conceptually, perhaps around 3-4 broad concepts, and who manage not to repeat themselves, are more likely to do better. It is also advisable to encourage the establishment of some kind of over-arching thesis - perhaps the most important or interesting thing about the poem/extract, or the means through which it achieves its overall impact.

Criterion D

Candidates who refer to specific details of the discussion work are almost bound to do better than those who do not. This does not mean that moderators expect quotation but students should be able to support points of analysis and/or interpretation with meaningful allusion to moments, scenes or events that provide validation for their points. Many candidates are encouraged to talk about plot and/or character, but little else. As mentioned throughout this report, addressing the status of the work as a literary artefact is always good practice. Of particular note is the fact that candidate performance is inevitably linked with the kinds of questions that teachers ask. All too often, marks are dampened by vague or inappropriate prompts. Examples include 'What can you tell me about this work?', 'Who is your favourite or least favourite character?', 'Would you recommend this work?' or 'Who did you most relate to personally?' These questions invite responses that lack focus or direction or are without reference to detail. When candidates feel encouraged to talk about their own lives, or about the way they feel about a character - without demonstrating analytical attention to the writer's craft, are inevitably failing to score well against the criteria. One moderator writes that it is better 'to say a lot about a little rather than a little about a lot'. Teachers should avoid asking 'is there anything you would like to add?' at the end of the discussion; it is very rare that a student has something to say at this point and the question is so open as to be almost meaningless. Thankfully, few teachers saw fit to spend significant time presenting their own ideas, thereby dominating the conversation, although the fact that this still happens is cause for concern.

Criterion E

Once again, better performances are nurtured through thoughtful questions, as well as sensitive reaction to the answers students provide. Moderators continue to note that too many teachers simply move through a series of questions, without taking time to build or develop thinking by allowing for elements of genuine exploratory discussion to take place. Equally, those who seemed content to sit back and allow a monologue to ensue made it difficult for candidates to score highly in this criterion.

Criterion F

This was the criterion on which moderators and teachers agreed the most. The register was most often appropriate, albeit with the unfortunate tendency among many to pepper their answers with 'like' 'sort of' 'kinda' fillers. In addition, teachers should note that the register they adopt is important as a means to elicit the right kind of language from their students. One senior moderator stated, 'Those schools where a formal sense of register was put in place by the teacher fared better than those where the candidate was encouraged to 'rock it' before announcing their candidate number. Putting candidates at ease is one thing but potentially costing them marks is another.'

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

It is of course absolutely vital that all centers take time to review the clerical and administrative requirements of the oral examination. Also, schools are strongly reminded of the value of reading the moderator's feedback and the IB Subject Reports. It is disappointing to see schools repeating the same mistakes poured out in the previous session. Plenty of support materials are also available through the OCC forums and the Teacher Support Material, and of course attendance at workshops can make a very big difference.

The quality of teaching always has a huge impact on student performance, and in this assessment, it is also vital that the teacher steers the cawndidates actively in the right direction. The kinds of passages chosen, the questions asked and the way the subsequent discussion is handled can result in some candidates performing much better, whilst others, sadly, can perform much worse. In reference to the discussion, for example, one senior moderator writes: 'Some teachers need to work on their approaches to developing discussion, learning to listen and to be interested in what is being said - or trying to be said - by the candidate so that naturally they ask a question to learn what a candidate thinks and why. The examination demands a great deal of the teachers and they have to be enablers - not knowing the answers but wishing to learn them.' Some candidates are not helped by the fact that teachers ask a very open, general prompt, such as 'So tell me your thoughts about the play' and then seem happy to listen for a long time to what eventually starts sounding like an IOP.

The importance of focusing attention on aspects of literary craft cannot be underestimated; candidates must be encouraged to develop sensitivity to the ways in which meaning is constructed in literature - and discouraged from working from the premise that these people have ever existed. These are literary works that exist as other to, or certainly different from, 'real life' precisely because of their status as works of Art - as fictional constructions. It is therefore always better to begin sentences with something like 'The play depicts Hamlet as…' or 'the novel uses a variety of characters in order to …' rather than comment on people and events in connection with what often or 'typically' exists in life. Teachers who ask candidates to comment on what would have happened if the ghost had not existed in Hamlet or 'You too are from a minority community. What does this make you feel?' to quote just two examples from this year's cohort, are potentially damaging their candidates' chances in a significant way. An examiner further noted that "Some teachers are clearly listening carefully and facilitating genuine discussions of literature, but many teachers are asking only one or two questions that

the candidate uses as a spring-board to spill all he or she knows without much regard for the question asked. Teachers need to listen carefully to the candidates and then ask questions designed to build on what has been said. Certainly a list of questions can be helpful, but such a list is best used when the discussion is waning, not as the discussion."

Further comments

Happily, most centres seem to have adjusted to the way in which recordings and associated paperwork are uploaded. It is good to report that recording quality was generally fine in the vast majority of cases, which is a significant improvement on the last couple of years. Problems continue to exist with centres who upload all poems or extracts as one continuous, sometimes lengthy, document; this makes things difficult for the moderator who has to search in order to locate the relevant source material. Centres should only upload a single copy of the poem that pertains to an individual student and a single, separate I/LIA form. Do remember also that the poems/extracts should be clean copies - not ones annotated either by the candidate or the teacher. Please could all centres also make sure that the poems/extracts are uploaded the right way up so that the moderator is not required to rotate the document in order to read it. Not enough schools send I/LIA forms with constructive comments that explain how marks for both the IOP and the IOC have been awarded. 'Good Job', 'Original Ideas' or 'Excellent work' do not provide helpful evidence that supports the mark. The more specific these comments, the easier it is for moderators to make a judgment. Detailed comments are particularly important for more problematic candidates.

Some centres continue to ignore the rule that only one poem or extract must be uploaded, not two (or more) short ones. Furthermore, it remains a source of considerable frustration that candidates are sometimes still given extracts that vastly exceed the required length of 20-30 lines. To do so is usually to place the candidate at a considerable disadvantage because there is simply too much material to try and cover in the space of only 8 minutes. Equally, poems that fall significantly short of the 20 lines should be chosen carefully; a sonnet by Shakespeare, Donne or Keats is usually justified but other kinds of shorter works are typically not. Please make sure that all poems/extracts are carefully proofread. Increasingly, centres are finding copies of their poems online and fail to spot that there are errors - particularly in lineation.

There seemed to be more centres than usual this year in which two teachers administered the examination; this practice should be avoided, whenever possible, as it seems to make the process even more intimidating for the candidates. Worse still, perhaps, is the fact that occasionally teachers in this situation find themselves talking at cross purposes to each other - unsettling the candidates even more.

Whilst the majority of schools adhere to the requirements, timing remains an issue for some. Please note, as the Subject Guide clearly states, candidates must be allowed up to 8 minutes to talk without interruption. This leaves two minutes for subsequent questions. If a candidate is still talking at 8 minutes, it is vital that the teacher comes in: subsequent questions are mandatory. A segue into the second part of the assessment should happen at the 10 minute mark, and the discussion sustained for a further 10 minutes. There is no point allowing candidates to transgress these timing requirements as moderators are instructed to stop listening to anything said after each 10 minute segment. Equally, there is everything to be said

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for sustaining candidates up to the required length of time. Many teachers are particularly adept at asking questions that evoke the best possible response from their candidates, particularly the ones that get into difficulty, and these teachers are to be commended.

Standard level internal assessment

Component grade boundaries

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

The range and suitability of the work submitted

Almost all the works chosen for commentary were suitable, although when candidates focus on nothing but repetition of content and listing of stylistic devices, it does not matter that the range of texts is acceptable. Centres most frequently choose poets such as Bishop, Duffy, Frost, Heaney, Hughes, Keats, Larkin, Owen, Plath (including poems *other* than *Daddy*, *Lady Lazarus* and *Cut*) and Yeats.

Shakespeare plays studied are most often *Othello*, *Macbeth* or *Hamlet*, but some centres opt for *The Merchant of Venice*, *King Lear*, *Anthony and Cleopatra*, *The Tempest*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Julius Caesar* and even the Henry plays. Prose, less often chosen, includes essays by Orwell and Chesterton, Ondaatje's *Running in the Family*, *The Great Gatsby*, *The Bluest Eye*, *Pride and Prejudice*, stories by Poe and *Animal Farm* (the last perhaps one of the few less suitable selections). Drama other than Shakespeare, also infrequently selected, includes *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *The Crucible* and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*?

Candidate performance against each criterion

It is their comments on the passage, and not their ability to introduce extraneous information, that form the basis on which moderators judge a candidate's performance. Biographical data and other such introductions add nothing to the value of the commentary and detract from the overall impression made. Stronger candidates demonstrate that they can analyse the extract in a way that effectively reveals their knowledge and understanding of the passage and the work.

Criterion A

Almost all candidates demonstrate that they are familiar with the extracts. The vast majority go on to show some degree of understanding. Most candidates can provide some context for the extract, at least in a general fashion, and virtually all candidates can demonstrate some degree of understanding of content. Some with poems fail to consider them in the context of other works by the poet, or if they are treating an extract, the context of the rest of the poem. Many candidates fail to distinguish in any way between the poet and the speaker, so that every

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statement in a poem, and every sensation, becomes autobiographical in their comments. While the best candidates note and can articulate subtleties of meaning, only a small minority are able to communicate an appreciation of the poem or prose passage as a literary experience.

Criterion B

Many moderators find the greatest diversity in the quality of commentaries in this criterion, Appreciation of the writer's choices. Only a very few candidates indeed can articulate what effect is achieved by a writer's particular choice or pattern of choices, or why such choice is significant. Few can distinguish the dominant techniques at work in the extract, while the majority of candidates point out an alliteration here or a personification there. Thus, most commentaries convey very little sense of how meaning is being created and shaped by the writer. Links between a stylistic device and meaning are often 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". Indeed, many candidates become so obsessed with identifying techniques that they focus very little on what is at work in the extract as a result of these techniques. Weaker candidates give up the attempt entirely and substitute paraphrase for analysis. Moderators note there is an absence of consideration being given to the structure of extracts (drama and prose as well as poetry). Questions of tone – and the very concept – continue to cause difficulties and confusion. The best commentaries demonstrate not only understanding and analytical ability, but also display a genuine appreciation of the author's accomplishment in the extract. Such commentaries confirm that candidates can indeed be guided to analyse texts closely.

Criterion C

Stronger candidates provide a clear thesis and use this as a basis for organising their points, while still taking care to treat all significant details in the extract. The weakest candidates offer only very general comments, randomly selecting details to address, or ignoring details completely, in favour of unsubstantiated generalisations. Most candidates fall between these extremes. Candidates fare better in this criterion because most of the commentaries are 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. Plans composed of seemingly arbitrarily selected items - "I'm going to talk about Hamlet's state of mind, images of disease, and all the s-sounds" – do not represent effective organisation, unless the candidate is able to link the different items and to show why these are of primary importance. Some candidates evidently feel that mentioning what is happening in the poem or passage constitutes a plan. A few candidates offer 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.

Some candidates are incorrectly allowed to continue beyond eight minutes – some beyond nine – before they are stopped and subsequent questions are put to them. Inevitably, this leads either to an insufficient subsequent question period, or to an overlong recording.

Criterion D

Using appropriate and effective language now consistently appears to be the least difficult requirement for candidates. The vast majority of candidates are able to reach at least the 3 level in criterion D, and there are many more above average marks in Language than in any other criterion. Even those who, to judge by their pronunciation, have been studying in English for a relatively brief time, can 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 and guidance 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 complete 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 as part of the creative act that is the writing of the poem, 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.

Teachers and centres new to the IB are particularly urged to familiarise themselves with the Teacher Support Material and to attend workshops, where they will have the opportunity to listen to examples of best practice, and to hear explanations for why these constitute best practice, while other samples do not.

As has been noted repeatedly, 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.

Further comments

There is greater adhesion to the guidelines of the Oral Commentary this year. Extracts are generally within the thirty-line maximum. Fewer samples are inaudible or substantially over the

time limit. (The way to observe the limit, however, is by ending on time, and not by deleting everything recorded after the ten-minute mark.)

Unfortunately, some centres continue to have difficulty providing appropriate conditions for oral examinations. If ambient noise cannot to be prevented, another venue needs to be identified. Telephones, PA announcements, persistent buzzers and bells, all can interfere with the candidate's thoughts, words or audibility, and have no place in an examination room.

A few other reminders also need to be repeated:

- 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 (as opposed to photocopies) are usually poor in quality.
- Extracts produced by typing or OCR should be checked carefully. Many are sent with uncorrected errors. Please do not assume that any text downloaded from the Internet is error-free either.
- 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. The rule is not an arbitrary one. Candidates repeatedly demonstrate that it is almost impossible for them to treat longer extracts in sufficient depth in the eight minutes allotted to the commentary.
- Teachers should keep in mind that at least two minutes of subsequent questions are expected, and that moderators will not listen to anything said after ten minutes.
- Some Guiding and Subsequent Questions are 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. A question such as "What mood is created in this passage?" is preferable to "How does the writer create tension in this passage?" which offers far too much guidance, because it tells the candidate how the extract is to be read.
- 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 has not made, are seldom if ever helpful to the candidate.

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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

Particularly from schools with experience in this component there was both work that was of a high quality in some cases, and at an acceptable standard in many. Guiding students toward producing Reflective Statements and Written Assignments that range in quality from satisfactory to very good or excellent demands that teachers are fully familiar with the *Subject Guide,* the criteria, the previous Subject Reports and the Teacher Support Materials on the Online Curriculum Centre. In addition there is now a film on the Online Curriculum Centre for both examiners and teachers that addresses the Interactive Oral and the Reflective Statement. The forum on the same site is also useful when specific questions arise and where teachers can share good ideas and concerns.

It is extremely important that teachers make use of these resources, especially in the case where the teacher is just beginning to teach the literature course. Disappointment with results in this component can sometimes be traced to a cursory acquaintance with helpful materials such as these. Ultimately it is the candidates who are disadvantaged by the teacher's poor understanding and lack of clear direction.

As has been previously noted, choice of texts for Part 1 is a crucial element in the success of the whole range of candidates in a given school or class. Examiners continue to be concerned about works of literary merit that are simply too challenging for a whole group and lead to poor results simply because the individual candidate reveals only the slimmest grasp of the work about which s/he is writing. Many schools choose a familiar range of works, which is fine, as long as they are works translated into English (not originally written in English) and listed on the Prescribed Literature in Translation list. Works that are beloved by teachers from their university study are often not suitable in these times and at the level of secondary school students.

Poetry and short stories are often used and can be very successful, although it is useful if the poem or poems or the stories are presented with some indication of their context in a larger collection.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A: Fulfilling the requirements of the reflective statement

There continue to be problems here, although a number of examiners noted improved performance in this criterion. In the hopes of improving the submissions in these aspects of the

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process, a document of review and clarification has been added at the end of the Subject Report. Included in that document are indications of where the Reflective Statements fall short and how better performances can be achieved.

Criterion B: Knowledge and Understanding

On the whole, examiners found that most candidates knew their texts, to varying degrees; at least they had a sense of the arc of the plot, the way a drama evolved, the nature and choices of characters, the meanings of poems. However, examiners had more reservations about the quality of the candidates' understanding of the layers of meaning, of the subtext, of the patterns of artistic expression that give the work their richness. It is also important that candidates understand they are working with translations, and one examiner rightly recommended that at least a class or two be devoted directly to the matter of translation itself, especially in the case of poetry where candidates are sometimes not aware of the vexed issues of sound in translated poetry.

The Supervised Writing prompts which are intended to focus on features discerned through close reading and analysis of many aspects of a literary work have an important role to play in encouraging the candidate to reveal appropriate knowledge and understanding. When these are too broad or vague, or focused on cultural or sociological matters, they do not help candidates to reveal their grasp of a piece of literature.

Overall, there was some exceptional or very good insight into the texts revealed through the handling of the Written Assignment, but some that was quite limited.

Criterion C: Appreciation of the writer's choices

This criterion which contributes a potential 6 marks to the overall score, is possibly more problematic than the production of the Reflective Statement. Many candidates have shown weaknesses in this criterion.

Candidates need to give specific attention to two questions: what choices do you observe the writer making in presenting ideas, plots, characters, places and what do these particular choices contribute to the particular or overall effect of the literary work. Coming to terms with these questions will require modelling, practice and evaluation on the part of the teacher.

Particular weaknesses here are summaries of plots with slight allusion to the topic chosen for the essay, treating characters as real people, and adding hypothetical observations about how the work would change if other choices were made by the writer. Both plays and novels were sometimes treated as if they are all novels. Finally, discussion of graphic novels should address both words and images and how they interact to produce meaning.

Criterion D and E: Organization and Development, and Language

As always there is a range of performance in these two criteria, but on the whole examiners find much of the work to be acceptable or very good, especially where it is clear candidates have been held to a generally high standard of organization and expression in their regular classwork.

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Two particular points: secondary sources need to be acknowledged and reported word counts need to be legitimate.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Further comments

Special Supplement on the Interactive Oral and Reflective Statement

The Interactive Oral addresses skills of research and collaboration as well as those of effective presentation.

The materials to be researched and presented by students, then discussed by the whole class and should include the following:

(a) The **context** of the *creation* of the literary work under discussion. These are matters connected to the writer: relevant details of life and writing practice; the place of the writer's work in literary history and the development of the text's genre; reception of the work in its own time; relevant connections to other works, e.g., Sophocles and Anouilh, *Antigone.*

(b) Elements of the larger **context** of the time and place in which the writer lived and created the work

OR

The above aspects as they are included in the work itself. These can be significant matters that apply to various aspects of the writer's personal situation (Levi, *If This is a Man* or Satrapi, *Persepolis)* or any of the following: geography (e.g.Kadare, *Broken April);* history (Solzhenitsyn, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* or Suskind, *Perfume);* politics (Zamyatin, *We);* philosophy (Borges, the short stories).

(c) The **culture** of the work, concerning such matters as value systems and social structures, matters relevant to the text touching on education, family, power, class, ethnicity and race, or belief systems. These matters may also be important to treat in regard to the writer as well.

It is important to note that there is some perceived dissonance between the 4 prompts included on page 30 of the *Subject Guide* and the expectations of Criterion A.

Recommendations for dealing with this dissonance:

- For the Interactive Oral discussions following the presentation, use the prompts in the Subject Guide.
- For the construction of the Reflective Statement focus precisely on the demands of Criterion A: 'how …understanding of cultural and contextual elements was developed through the Interactive Oral.'

The Reflective Statement addresses the skills of listening, assimilation, and written articulation.

Keys to constructing a successful Reflective Statement;

(a) Ensure that the candidates understand Criterion A; successful Reflective Statements often use the criterion as a heading to help the candidates focus precisely on its demands.

> **N.B.** 'Developed understanding' may range widely, from simply revealing that particular elements of context and culture are grasped (possibly for the first time) to much deeper insights.

(b) Remind candidates to indicate, briefly, that the materials they are including in the Reflective Statement are derived from the Interactive Oral and point out how these connect to the text or enhance understanding.

(c) Ensure that candidates understand that the following are **not** the business of the Reflective Statement:

- an abstract or statement of intent for the Written Assignment;
- an evaluative report on the quality of their peers' delivery of the Interactive Oral;
- the comparison of their own culture to that of the text;
- close critical analysis of the text itself.

(d) Remind candidates that the word count is not one word over 400 words, with a deduction of one mark for exceeding that number.

Standard level Written Assignment

Component grade boundaries

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

The range and suitability of the work submitted

From the November 2015 session all written assignments will be electronically uploaded, so it is not appropriate here to focus on the procedural issues that were frustrating to examiners in the May 2015 session. Please note that in the future all written assignments will be marked anonymously, so candidate names and numbers should not appear anywhere on the actual reflective statement or assignment. In addition, there is no need for candidates to include a title page. It is important, however, that the reflective statement be identified as such and it is most effective if candidates are encouraged to copy the question that the reflective statement must address. The title of the written assignment must be given. Although it does not need to be expressed as a question, it is worth noting that many of the most successful candidate productions do frame their titles as 'How does writer X …?' The candidate must clearly indicate which edition of the work has been used (in a bibliography, works cited or in a footnote).

It is pleasing to note that in this session there were fewer examples of reflective statements submitted not being on the same work as the written assignment and more candidates remained within the word limits, meaning that examiners had to apply the marking penalties in criteria A and D less frequently. However, it must be reiterated that a reflective statement over

400 words will lose one mark and a written assignment over 1500 words will lose two. Given the nature of how this assessment component is produced and that candidates should have access to the assessment criteria, there should be no cases in which these marking penalties need to be applied. Because of the order of the assessment criteria, it is most appropriate if the reflective statement comes before the written assignment, not after it.

From the May 2015 session marking penalties applied if the Part 1 works were 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 centres are already correctly choosing Part 1 works from the PLT, but not all. As with penalties for exceeding word counts, it is disappointing to have to limit candidate marks. When constructing courses teachers must carefully check that Part 1 works are legitimate choices.

Although a relatively limited number of authors continue to constitute the majority of Part 1 choices, it is always positive to come across centres that select a wider range from the extensive Prescribed Literature in translation list (PLT). Teachers are encouraged to return to this list and make appropriate choices for their incoming cohorts. The Online Curriculum Centre (OCC) has many valuable discussions on the forum about what works well in Part 1.

The teacher has a key role to play in developing prompts for the supervised writing that encourage candidates to focus on literary aspects of the works. Subsequent to this process, guidance to candidates will help them to develop an independent title or question, leading to a draft that can then be commented on by the teacher. The greatest weaknesses in written assignments remain: topics that do not have a literary focus; topics that are too wide to be treated effectively in an assignment of this length; topics that fail to analyse the writer's choices explicitly; assignments that consist mainly of unsubstantiated generalisations; assignments that do not have a strong sense of a developing argument. Of course, the converse of this leads to the most successful assignments: the topic is suitably literary and narrowly focused, with a powerful and persuasive argument that allows the candidate to demonstrate considerable insight into how the text works, through convincing analysis of the writer's choices.

It is worth noting that centres that still call this assessment component 'World Literature' and/or the subject English A1 may suggest that some teachers need to pay more attention to the subject guide and the Part 1 assessment objectives.

Many examiners commented on the fact that many of these submissions were a pleasure to read and enjoyable to mark, a testament to the effective teaching and learning that is taking place in so many centres.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A

Reflective statements must answer the question 'How was your understanding of cultural and contextual considerations of the work developed through the interactive oral?' Insisting that candidates copy the question at the start of the reflective statement may help to ensure that this is indeed what determines the content of the response. Responses that simply summarise the content of the interactive oral are unable to show independent understanding of relevant

elements of culture and context. Candidates need to examine how works are produced in a particular time and place and the influence these elements have on the content of the literary text. For this reason responses that focus exclusively on the actual content of the work are unable to score highly, since they offer little or no critical insight into the cultural and contextual foundations on which that particular work was constructed. Another worrying trend is for candidates to write an introductory paragraph that summarises the conditions in which the interactive oral took place: this wastes valuable words and can gain no credit. Other candidates write a concluding paragraph that states the topic that will form the basis of the written assignment; this, again, wastes words and is unlikely to gain credit in criterion A. The strongest responses identify two or three relevant elements of culture and context and succinctly summarise what was explored in the oral, using most of the available words to examine how their individual understanding of the work was furthered (or not) as a result of the discussion.

Criterion B

Many examiners reported that candidates had satisfactory knowledge of the Part 1 works used in the assignment, leading to many marks in the 3 – 4 range. To reach the 5 – 6 band the key issue is 'perceptive insight': there needs to be a strong sense that the candidate has marshalled enough specific evidence that allows for illuminating conclusions to be drawn. A narrow and focused literary topic is the best way to guarantee success in this regard. Encouraging candidates to return to the texts and re-read them, or at least parts of them, will help to provide them with specific examples to substantiate the claims made and perhaps identify examples that go beyond the most obvious and frequently repeated. Incorrect assertions about plot, misspelled character and author names, inaccurate labelling of genre do not inspire confidence in examiners. A written assignment that does not focus on particular examples, whether quoted or cited, is, in general, unlikely to score highly in this criterion. Too many candidates suffer from a lack of contextualization when using specific examples: simply rehearsing the plot does not indicate understanding of the work, but not identifying where and when an example occurs is deleterious to the argument being developed.

Criterion C

Although a number of examiners reported positive development with regard to this criterion, it remains problematic for many candidates. If the topic is suitably literary, then the attempt to answer the candidate's title will automatically cover this. It is, however, most effective if the appreciation of the writer's choices is explicit rather than implicit. Although not necessarily a guarantee of success, frequent mention of the writer's name normally indicates a productive approach: the candidate is aware of the fact that the work has been shaped by conscious choices made by the author. The opposite extreme – one where the candidate treats the characters as if they were real people, one where the candidate speculates on how the plot might have developed differently – is fundamentally flawed and likely to receive little credit in criterion C.

Criterion D

Written assignments need thinking about, planning, drafting, revision, editing and checking; the teacher needs to guide and advise candidates throughout this challenging process. Candidates need to be aware that they have formulated a question that needs to be answered or made a

claim (or claims) that needs to be substantiated. This will help to give the developing argument a sense of direction and encourage the use of effective transitions that link the paragraphs together in a manner that becomes persuasive. Most candidates are able to gain at least a three on this criterion, as the basic sense of essay structure is there; however, there are a number of ways in which candidates adversely affect marks in this criterion: introductions that fail to identify the topic of the essay, paragraphs that wander away from the stated subject, weak or meaningless transitions, lengthy and repetitive conclusions, assignments that fail to reach 1200 words. Quotations often need to be modified grammatically, using square brackets to indicate the editing, and there are specific rules governing the punctuation of integrated quotations. These are valuable skills that IB Diploma candidates need to have mastered and that can only be done by explicitly teaching them. It is always a pleasure to come across centres where this has been done effectively and to discover that candidates are confident in employing these skills, which will be so useful in tertiary education.

Criterion E

Although many candidates do well here, the greatest weaknesses remain inappropriate register/use of colloquialism, weak punctuation and poor proofreading. The conditions in which these assignments are produced mean that candidates have no excuses for a number of these errors. Contractions are not appropriate in formal academic writing. If candidates wish to use more sophisticated punctuation, the semi-colon being a key example, it is imperative that they understand the rules governing its use. It is usually dangerous to seek to improve diction artificially by using a thesaurus, if there is no countercheck on how individual words may be contextually inappropriate or result in awkward collocations. Unfortunately there are still a number of candidates whose written work is difficult to follow and this inevitably means that a mark of less than 3 will be given here. On the other hand, there are those who write with such sophistication, clarity and concision that their written assignments are a pleasure to read.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Teachers are encouraged to access the Teacher Support Material on the Online Curriculum Centre (OCC) and to share some of the material with candidates. A short screen cast, called 'English A: Literature Written Assignment examiner guidance', is now available on the English A: Literature home page of the OCC; although developed for examiners, it contains valuable advice for the teaching of this component, particularly the conduct of the interactive orals and the writing of reflective statements. In addition, the points below are worth bearing in mind:

Teachers and candidates must be aware of the required focus for the interactive oral and the reflective statement

The reflective statement submitted must be on the same work as the written assignment

Devise supervised writing prompts with a suitably 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

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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

General comments

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

The prose extract was clearly less popular than the poem this year. There were some strong prose responses, but there seemed to be a trend for many candidates to try and impose a feminist reading on the text that tended to be rather generalized and not based on textual evidence. The poem seemed accessible to all levels of candidates and the majority could relate to its content. Most candidates could identify literary techniques to some degree. However, many weaker candidates did not move far beyond the mere listing of these techniques and even stronger candidates lost marks on occasions because their exploration of the effects of these techniques was not developed enough.

Generally, candidates need to understand the importance of a thorough and sustained close reading of the text, where they explore the different layers of meaning in each stanza / paragraph. There was a tendency by some candidates to focus on certain literary features at the expense of others (characterisation), over - analysing and attaching meanings that were just not convincing. Others appeared to be following a literary technique 'tick list', writing whole paragraphs on techniques which only had superficial significance.

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

Though there was obviously a range in the ability of students to use language accurately and appropriately, the majority of candidates tried to use a correct formal register and accurate terminology. Many candidates had evidently been taught to structure a response clearly and

coherently and could embed textual references effectively into their writing. Even weaker responses had a recognizable introduction, main body and conclusion.

Candidates seemed particularly confident about exploring the effect of word choice and imagery in both the prose and poetry. There were also many who could identify changes in tone and mood and develop a convincing exploration on how this shaped meaning.

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

Prose
Weaker responses opted for rather vague allegorical readings and ignored key techniques used by the writer. Many candidates showed an overall understanding of structure, noting the shift from the general to the specific and back to the general. However, a considerable number said little about sentence structure and the effects it created. Many were able to explore setting to some degree but weaker students seemed confused about the time period and there was considerable misreading about the position of the women and their level of poverty. In terms of word choice, many were able to focus on how the language created a sense of uniformity and drudgery. There was also some interesting analysis of the character of Caro, her new flat and the significance of the 'moment' with the stranger in the street.

Poem
This was a popular choice and seemed to appeal to the imagination of many candidates. It appeared that students of all levels could extrapolate some meaning from it and there were some very impressive responses which demonstrated the ability to analyse literature at a high level.
However, there was some confusion over the identity of the poet, the scholar, the original writer and the 'he' in the last stanza. While the ambiguity in certain parts of the poem allowed for different interpretation, lower down there was clearly some misreading. Some candidates even argued that the scholar killed his rival or that the original writer scored the message on his own bone.
Only the most able candidates were able to explore the effect of structure and rhyme convincingly. A significant number of candidates when into a great deal of detail about the rhyme scheme but were unable to offer a convincing exploration of its effect, resorting to rather vague comments about 'flow' and 'helping the reader to read on'.

Overall though, many could explore contrast and word choice effectively and had a clear understanding or at least appreciation, of the main ideas explored in the poem.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Based on the evidence of responses seen this year, it would appear that teachers are working hard to prepare students for this exam and students clearly understand what is expected of them. However here are some general recommendations for future candidates:
While candidates obviously need to understand how key literary devices can create effects,

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they should guard against having a rigid 'tick list' of techniques that they try to 'spot' in the text. Literary analysis should be about engaging with the whole text and consideration of techniques should be part of a larger reading rather than a section of the commentary tacked-on at the end. Additionally, structuring a commentary around 2-3 techniques leads to a narrow reading of the text.

Candidates should guard against attaching a symbolic meaning to the text which cannot be well-supported with textual evidence. Layers of meaning should be explored through a close and thorough reading of the texts, ambiguity should be recognised and discussed.

Candidates should be given plenty of opportunity to explore how structure (particularly sentence structure) is used for effect in both prose and poetry, so they feel confident exploring this in an exam situation.

The evidence is that candidates who plan their response first, not only produce more effectively structured commentaries, they also demonstrate higher level thinking and more developed analysis. Teachers need to 'teach' candidates to be effective planners.

It is also worth noting that some examiners saw responses that were comparative treatments of the two texts. It is vital that candidates are constantly reminded what they need to do before the examination.

Standard level paper one

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 2	3 - 5	6 - 9	10 - 11	12 - 14	15 - 16	17 - 20

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

Discussion of the writer's choices seemed to pose the biggest difficulty. Most candidates could name literary features, often following the prompts provided by the guiding questions, but either failed to analyse them at all, or omitted completely any discussion of their effects. Identifying narrative voice and perspective appeared to be particularly challenging for candidates. Also, imagery was sometimes interpreted literally, leading to insecure responses. Many failed to link imagery with overall meaning and, therefore, struggled to gain an "overview" of the extracts in the light of the details contained within them. Interpretation also proved to be difficult for the weaker candidates, who were often imprecise and vague, while even weaker ones tended to rely on generalization, paraphrase or mere narration of the events described in the texts. While most candidates were able to grasp some of the most basic elements of both extracts, few candidates included all the salient points which might have been expected in the candidates' responses.

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Although most candidates were able to organize their commentaries into acceptable paragraphs, in some cases it was unclear where the introduction finished, for example, or there was no sense of an introduction at all. Some were weak in the logical sequencing of points, often skipping most of the poem, for example, to focus on the final stanza right at the beginning, or coming back, towards the end of the commentary, to points found in the beginning stanzas. Relatively few organized their commentaries solely around the guiding questions, but those who did lost considerably in criterion C. Oddly, some candidates started off well, but in the second half seemed to lose focus and depth and failed to analyse as well as they did in the first half, if they analysed at all.

While there seemed fewer candidates this year who made serious expression mistakes, the vast majority still made minor errors, some surprisingly basic, such as tenses, subject verb agreement, and punctuation.

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

Perhaps more candidates this session were able to organize their commentaries into a reasoned and logical sequence of points, starting with a clear introduction in which a general sense of overall understanding was made apparent. Similarly, more candidates seemed better versed at substantiating their claims with well chosen, as well as well integrated, references. The majority of candidates used appropriate register and literary terms. Fewer candidates were hampered by serious weaknesses in expression and grammar. General understanding seemed better than in past sessions, particularly with the poem, perhaps indicating that it was well - chosen and accessible to the average standard level candidate. The better candidates in both prose and poetry, were able to go beyond the literal and appreciate layers of meaning and were able to notice the impact of contrasting attitudes, past and present, or situational irony. Some were particularly good at exploring contrasting moods and atmospheres.

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

The poem

Strengths

The strong candidates understood and were able to focus constructively on the nature of the obsession and its stages and the isolation of the tree cutter vis-a-vis the rest of his community. Many recognized the link between the barber "cutting too much" and how it related to the trees. Most candidates identified the personification of the trees and linked this with its effect on the reader and the narrator's tone/perspective. Many of the responses were coherently structured and the majority seemed to be able to complete the analysis without running out of time. Some candidates saw interesting contrasts between the speaker and the tree cutter while others appreciated figurative language well. There were some successful attempts to interpret the final stanza.

Weaknesses

Many candidates failed to notice stylistic features beyond the "imagery" suggested in the guiding question. Some candidates interpreted the imagery literally, such as in the case of the "Mohawk Indians" and this often led obscure interpretations. Fewer candidates than one would have expected commented on the poem's form, and those who did were often rather vague and not always successful in their analysis. The majority of candidates avoided commenting on the more difficult "patriot of springtime" and "bald bald heart" of the final stanza, with a few attempting to interpret one or both of them, and even fewer coming up with acceptable ideas. Some became distracted by discussion of serial killings, and some found more global meanings such as environmental destruction, which were not really there.

The prose

Strengths

The better candidates were able to recognize the change in mood and tone and offered convincing interpretations which were supported by close references to the text. The very good candidates were able to write convincingly on humour, and a select few were able to include comments on aspects such as sensory imagery, as well as the more easily detectable ones of Granny's illness, state of mind and relationship with the doctor and Cornelia.

Weaknesses

The guiding questions may have added to the weak to average candidates' difficulties who found it difficult to focus on "humour "or "shifts in tone". In fact, many candidates seemed not to understand the concept of "tone" at all. Also, the average candidate had some difficulty identifying stylistic features not mentioned in the guiding questions. Few candidates focused at all on the use of direct speech and its effect. Few candidates, if any, referred to the "Jilting" of the title and Granny's sentiments at the end of the extract were widely interpreted and not always well supported. Perhaps more candidates here than in the poem, structured their response around the guiding questions instead of developing a structured analysis format.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Teachers should stress the importance of developing a coherent, developed and structured analysis and not simply answering the guiding questions. They should stress the need not only to identify literary features but to also analyse them and their effects.

They should also stress the importance of planning the essay before starting.

Candidates should be reminded to write as legibly as possible.

More should be taught about poetic structure and its connection with meaning.

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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

General comments

In a recent and somewhat controversial article entitled "Why College Kids are Avoiding the Study of Literature," Gary Saul Morson seems to contradict much of the advice we have given in past subject reports in relation to the teaching of and response to literature. He notes the problematic nature of looking too closely at literary features or of seeing a text as a vehicle for studying—or as a representation of—context. He also calls for students to go ahead and consider characters as "real people." What Morson is really getting at, though, is not that literary or contextual elements should not be studied, but that students and teachers should place themselves—hypothetically—in the shoes of an author, that students and teachers should immerse themselves in the ambiguous and complex world of a work and consider what it means, what it suggests to the reader, and how this might offer significant insight. So despite the fact that the essay might seem like a conservative backlash, what is really suggested is, in fact, what we want candidates to do in paper 2 and what successful candidates have done during this session. The study of a text is not the memorization of information (easily found on Wikipedia or in Sparknotes) about a text, not the isolated study of literary conventions, not the isolated study of particular contextual elements, nor the memorization of responses to possible questions, but consistent engagement of what and how a text means and how this might be significant. The best questions in paper 2 are authentic, interesting problems of literary study and the best responses in paper 2 seem to have a subtext that says, "what a surprising, interesting question that is even more interesting in relation to some of the particular complexities I have seen in the novels I have studied." Examiners in this session remarked on a number of qualities in the responses of candidates. While there were many, and many types of, good responses, the best all shared qualities of being holistic, thorough responses attentive to the particulars of the question and the particulars of the works studied.

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

The most pressing concern in relation to candidate performance on the examination is response to the question. While many candidates understand the particular demands of paper 2 there is still a lack of attention to the specific demands of particular questions. Some candidates appear to approach the exam with prepared answers to which they add brief reference to the wording of the question. Other candidates seem to be desperately stretching what they know to reach the question at hand. Still others seem not to have read the question very carefully. While it is natural and right that candidates would apply what they have learned to a question, it is also

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important that candidates understand that questions are often meant to ask for a response to a new idea or to a literary aspect that hasn't been "covered" in class. Questions, then, should be read carefully, time should be taken to think and plan and responses should be based on a deep understanding of the texts studied and, more generally, of the genre to which they belong.

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

In general, candidates are aware of the demands of the task and are well versed on their works, especially in relation to plot and character. Many candidates have an impressive array of textual detail at their disposal to use in response to the question. Once again, stronger responses use this detail in a flexible way in relation to the demands of the question while weaker responses tend to ineffectually force material—perhaps less well understood—to a question. The best responses have introductions that give evidence of significant thought in relation to question and a particular focus in relation to the texts themselves. These responses often read as if the candidate does not have nearly enough time to get at their thoughts on the complexities of the question or the nuances in comparison.

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

Question 1

Successful responses tended to have a clear grasp of the meaning of stock or stereotypical or managed to make a strong case for a given approach to stereotype. Many candidates focused on *aspects* of a character that seemed stereotypical. While this approach could be successful, it was only carried out well by candidates who had a clear grasp of how stereotypical elements were "made use" of by the playwrights. There were many candidates who *pointed out* stereotypical aspects of characters but did not suggest how these aspects were significant or effective.

Question 2

Though this was not a popular question it was often handled well though moments of harmony were more clearly identified than explored in terms of their creation and significance. Weaker responses made claims about moments of harmony that seemed dubious in relation to a literal understanding of plays.

Question 3

This was a very popular question with many possible avenues to take in relation to any work studied. Examiners clearly allowed for the exploration of any dynamic within a relationship. The candidates who struggled tended to describe a relationship between characters or offer a summary of "what happens" rather than take a close look at interactions, dialogue, motivations, suggestions, tensions, etc.

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Question 4

Did not see enough responses to this question to make general comments.

Question 5

While in the past examiners have noted that candidates struggle to have something to say about structure, many noted that in response to this question candidates seemed secure in their descriptions of structure and its possible effects. Though this was not a popular question, it was chosen with care by candidates who had clearly studied various aspects or elements of structure ranging from line length to rhythm. Less successful responses either veered to elements that could only tangentially be related to structure/form (though reasonable cases were made for many elements) or had problems clearly making a link to effect.

Question 6

This was a popular question. While it may seem that this question would be problematic in that it opens itself to a very personal response, the question was handled well by many candidates. The most successful responses clearly turned back to the poems in question to examine various elements that might most pointedly appeal to or reach out to a reader. It was equally important for candidates to make a reasonable case for connection rather than just assuming a connection.

Question 7

This was a very popular question and there were many successful responses that defined closeness or distance in a variety of ways. Examiners were open to candidates discussing, for example, Nick Carraway's distance in time from the events being narrated, his closeness to the action as a participant in the events, his distance from events because of his observational role, his emotional distance and/or closeness to other characters, etc. Examiners noted that many candidates had difficulty pinpointing the exact narrator in a piece (sometimes confusing focalization for a first person perspective) but they also commented that some of these same candidates successfully engaged with the intricacies of the questions nonetheless and perhaps, even with mis-identification, managed to get at the heart of the question.

Question 8

The relative success of response to this question hinged on two points: the understanding or reasonable definition of epiphany and the attention to the key part of the question that asks candidates to look at "the means by which our attention is drawn" to these moments. Less successful responses resorted to summaries of key events in the works.

Question 9

This question was also popular and also had the potential to be problematic. Candidates, however, responded well to the question offering interesting and defensible definitions of beauty and using specific detail to support their claims. Less successful responses tended to make quick connections to "beauty" or had difficulty dealing with ambiguities or contradictions either in definitions or in textual examples.

Question 10

Did not see enough responses to this question to make a general comment.

Question 11

Did not see enough responses to this question to make a general comment.

Question 12

Did not see enough responses to make a general comment.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Students should practise handwriting so that their scripts are legible.

Focus on the work at hand is the most important element in preparation for paper 2. Students should be responding frequently to interesting, ambiguous and difficult elements of a work as opposed to learning accepted readings of a text.

While literary conventions need to be studied, they should be considered as part of a discussion of what a text means and how meaning is generated rather than as isolated elements with a narrow range of effects.

Structure is important in an essay but a particular structure is not mandated and the best essays read as reasonable arguments that consider necessary detail rather than as narrow discussions that follow formula. Formulaic introductions, reduction to three key themes or elements, quick tags to the question and broad or grand conclusions often seem empty as compared to essays in which form simply follows a desire to communicate an idea through a beginning, a middle and an end.

Standard level paper two

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 4	5 - 8	9 - 10	11 - 13	14 - 17	18 - 20	21 - 25

General comments

Candidates had studied a wide range of texts, although this session saw a narrowing in range of genres with Drama and Prose proving overwhelmingly popular. It would appear that no-one had studied Prose other than fiction and relatively few centres had studied Poetry. Any loss of variety is to be lamented but within the two most popular genres there were some welcome new texts, such as plays by August Wilson and novels by Salman Rushdie. It was also something of a trend that the 'classics' made a fresh appearance with an increased variety of

Shakespeare plays now being studied including Twelfth Night, The Tempest and Much Ado About Nothing. Novels by Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë and Thomas Hardy amplified the range of historical material that centres are exploring.

This was the first session in which examiners were required to take notice of the use of incorrect texts and restrict the marks available under criterion A. Only texts from writers who appear in the PLA can be used; works in translation are not acceptable. Despite clear instructions having gone out to centres, examiners reported seeing responses to *Antigone*, *A Doll's House*, *The Stranger*, *House of the Spirits*, *An Inspector Calls* and *Journey by Moonlight*. Moreover, text selection must be genre-appropriate; for example, although Truman Capote appears on the PLA under 'Prose other than fiction', he does not appear under 'Prose'. Examiners find it very frustrating to view promising work from candidates who have clearly prepared their texts carefully, whilst knowing that text choice has already excluded them from top marks.

Choice of texts does need very careful consideration, given that candidates will have to write comparatively.   Teachers preparing candidates for this paper should ensure that they are alert to a variety of possibilities for comparison, not just in terms of broadly comparable content but also with reference to stylistic features and authorial intent.

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

In past sessions, reports have often highlighted success in the presentation of candidates' responses yet this year seemed disappointing. Most candidates were able to construct a response in a conventional format, employing introductory and concluding paragraphs. Marks for criterion D were generally adequate or higher depending on the clarity of argument progression. Criterion E proved something of a hurdle this year and it would be worth reminding candidates that they should address the examiner with some measure of formality. Frequently examiners reported use of casual, idiomatic language. We were told that Willy Loman needed to 'get his act together', 'the guy is a sap' or that Beatrice and Benedick 'had the hots for each other'. Whilst examiners appreciate the freshness and sense of engagement that this suggests, it did make awards of 4 and 5 in criterion E difficult as there is a requirement for 'appropriate register'. A note on abbreviations is also needed here; we are familiar with the use of initials for long titles and we have come to accept, albeit reluctantly, that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern will be 'Ros' and 'Guil' but we cannot extend this tolerance to permit candidates to talk to examiners in a form of code. Shortened forms of 'between' and 'with'/'without' were noted (among others) so that one examiner assessing work on *A Streetcar Named Desire* read, 'there is conflict b/w S and B' and 'B is left w/out a place to go'. For assessment purpose, examiners do need a formal essay, not a text message.

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

There is a year on year improvement in recognition of conventions within the selected genre and this is particularly true of candidates opting to study Drama and Poetry where candidates show increasing familiarity with a variety of literary and dramatic techniques. Awareness of

genre is less well-represented in work on Prose and this is an area which could see improvement, guiding candidates away from seeing their characters as 'real people' and recognising the authors' craft. Improvement in willingness to offer direct reference to the works studied was also noted and it is certainly true that all candidates would benefit from engaging with the texts more specifically. In many instances, candidates revealed understanding of the overall trajectory of a text and its possible wider purposes, but often fell short in demonstration of these understandings with specific detailed knowledge. While direct quotation does not guarantee an insightful observation, it does provide an important 'anchor' around which to explore and offer comment.

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

Question 1

A common misconception was that 'stock characters' encompassed all minor characters (messengers, soldiers and maids) and some comment was confined exclusively to a minor character's role as a plot device. Allowing that candidates might not be familiar with the term 'stock character', the question had broadened out into 'stereotypical characters'. If following that thread, the candidates did have a responsibility to identify the stereotype being employed and explain what was added to the drama. There was some good commentary on how Stanley exemplifies the typical 'alpha male' of the working classes (*A Streetcar Named Desire*) and also consideration of the contrasts between the sporty Biff and the studious, 'nerdy' Bernard as they are growing up and in adult life (*Death of a Salesman*). The best answers considered the effects achieved by including stereotypical characters and manipulating our response to the stereotype. Some thoughtful responses looked at how Iago adopts the persona of the stereotypical 'honest ancient' and exploits the prejudices held by others against 'super subtle Venetians'.

Question 2

This was the least popular of the Drama questions but when it was selected it was generally handled quite well. Interestingly, although candidates are often primed to write on tension and conflict, the moments of calm tend to be neglected. Often the strongest responses looked at the interplay of harmony within discord, such as pointing to the reconciliation between Stella and Stanley after the poker game but contrasting it to the reaction of Blanche; or the moment between Blanche and Mitch after their date, where both seem to acknowledge their need for one another. Other responses ably examined the use of music within an understanding of 'harmony' and considered the influence and use of, for example, the incorporation of the flute in *Death of a Salesman,* or of the Varsouviana and Jazz music in *A Streetcar Named Desire.*

Question 3

This was by far the most popular question and elicited a diversity of responses, some of which engaged very effectively with the specifics of the texts to present fluent, knowledgeable and sharp analysis. It is worth noting that the keywords in the question were 'dynamics in relationships'; 'power' and 'persuasion' were given as examples and were not compulsory

elements. Having said that, many responses did explore power dynamics, often very successfully, looking at the shifts in power in the exchanges between Blanche and Stanley, Willy Loman's attempts to hold on to the power to determine his sons' lives and Othello's complete loss of power as he falls to the persuasions of Iago. Other popular choices considered the dynamics of parent and child relationships (*The Tempest, Death of a Salesman*); workplace relationships (*Glengarry Glen Ross*); patient and psychiatrist (*Equus*); rivalry, (*Amadeus*); love and marriage, (*Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf, Much Ado About Nothing*). Candidates found plenty to discuss and there were some particularly original responses to Absurdist drama, looking at what happens when the expected norms of relationships are subverted (*Waiting for Godot, Rosencrantz & Guildenstern*). Once again candidates with detailed knowledge of their plays fared best. General accounts of how a relationship develops were much less effective than responses which could home in on key exchanges between protagonists and unpick exactly what each was trying to achieve.

Question 4

This was not the most popular question but when it was chosen the candidate met with some success. The term 'allusion' was understood and relevant, specific examples were explored. Often exploring the chosen allusions opened up wider themes and issues in the works, looking at how Thomas Hardy and Wilfred Owen employ references to classical imagery or historical fact to contrast modern warfare and emphasise its horror, for example. Candidates considered how William Blake's allusions to the Bible added a moral, spiritual dimension to his social criticism. Attention to other conventions was sometimes less well-represented in these responses, as candidates confined themselves to explaining the allusion and this was unfortunate as there were certainly opportunities to look at language choices.

Question 5

Responses to this question exemplified some of the very best and the very worst in the poetry genre. The best candidates offered detailed, wholly analytical commentary on the interplay between form and content, displaying superb knowledge and understanding. Sadly, some candidates attempted this question with insufficient knowledge. This was not a question that could be answered with vague generalisations; candidates did need to know, with a measure of accuracy, how the poems were structured. Errors in identifying metre, line endings, stanza separation all weakened the candidates' arguments. Candidates who persist in quoting lines of poetry as if they are lines of prose struggled here. Poor performance on this question did highlight the need for careful close study by those choosing the poetry genre; if the texts studied are relatively brief then a greater degree of detailed knowledge is expected.

Question 6

This was the most popular question and, predictably, we wanted more than a general assertion that connection was achieved and that the candidate had 'really related' to the poems. The key words in the question, for those that decoded them, were that the candidate was to explore '*the means*' by which connection is '*achieved and sustained*'. Again, a high degree of textual knowledge was needed, especially if the 'sustained' element was to be successfully addressed. Unlike question 4, candidates writing on 'connection' often scored highly on criterion C through

examining a wide range of devices, such as in the creation of a certain mood or tone, direct address to the reader or emotive word choices.

Question 7

Candidates appeared well-prepared to write on aspects of narrative technique but the key words 'closeness' and 'distance' sometimes faded into the background. There was a curious and unexpected misunderstanding with this question where candidates seemed to think they were being asked about how close *the author* was to the narrator or the work and there were some stretches of speculation about whether Nick Carraway was Fitzgerald, or whether Kambili was Adichie. Any question about narrative technique does carry a risk of generating a 'story-telling' response. The best responses here kept firm focus on moments of closeness and/or moments of distance, analysing, with some precision, the effects achieved. Weaker responses simply asserted what 'first person narration' or 'third person narration' *usually* achieves and there was some fruitless speculation about what the work might have been like had it been written differently. Candidates sometimes revealed lack of accuracy when writing on works with multiple narrators, or shifting perspectives.

Question 8

Examiners were once again surprised that candidates who had no prior knowledge of the term 'epiphany' were still prepared to select the question. Moreover, even candidates who did know the term sometimes struggled to find a suitable example. The question was asking about 'moments' of sudden revelation, not a character's general personal growth nor the progress of a relationship. Some candidates assumed that an epiphany had to be the climax or the ending of the work; some thought that any moment where a character changed their mind or made a decision would suffice. Clear focus on one character at a moment of sudden and striking insight was relatively rare but where it was achieved the responses were of a very high order. The best responses considered how the epiphany of that one character correlated to the overarching themes of the work, such as Denver's moment of understanding the joy of being alive and free, with its connections to the experience of slavery in the history of America (*Beloved*).

Question 9

The weakest of responses often came from this question and this seems to suggest that candidates may need more support in preparing to deal with the more open questions. The biggest failing here was an inability to delineate what constitutes 'beauty', and in assuming beauty might constitute anything that might be noted in the texts. We were told repeatedly that "beauty is in the eye of the beholder" and this was followed by claims that anything could therefore be beautiful simply by labelling it so. Candidates would put forward aspects of the texts (e.g. the lavish descriptions of Gatsby's parties) and then conclude that the presence of such aspects made the work beautiful 'because' they were present. Some stronger responses offered insight in to how a literary convention operated to effectively advance, for example, character (such as the landscape in *Ethan Frome* as part of advancing understanding of Ethan's character) and declared it beautiful because it was effective, and this had some validity. Even stronger responses were able to identify 'beautiful' more specifically, perhaps as presenting us with a 'truth' or a sublime, inspirational moment, exemplifying the nobility of the human spirit, perhaps. There was some thoughtful appreciation that even though the text itself was difficult,

harsh, or even 'ugly', the understanding or enlightenment taken from it could be seen as beautiful, for example Pecola's skewed understanding of beauty within a racist environment (*The Bluest Eye*), or how the brutality of Sethe's beating transforms into the image of the chokecherry tree of scars and takes its place in the striking pattern of imagery referencing trees in *Beloved*.

Question 10, 11 and 12

No candidates offered responses to Prose other than fiction in this session. This is unfortunate as non-fiction texts by, for example, Michael Ondaatje, Bruce Chatwin and James Baldwin have generated interesting discussion in past sessions.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Teachers are to be congratulated for the efforts they make in supporting candidates as they prepare for this paper. The vast majority of candidates come to the examination with a clear sense of what is expected of them and sound knowledge and understanding of their chosen texts. However, examiners do hope that candidates might be encouraged to have a little more freedom of interpretation and not to be directed towards delivery of prepared points, which may have only implicit relevance to the question. Practice in unpacking questions is crucial and candidates must practice ways of keeping the key convention foregrounded in the response, not merely mentioning it once in the introduction and then again in the conclusion. Delivery of prepared comment remains the single biggest blemish in a response; thinking afresh, rather than merely recalling, is still the best way forward. We are not looking for a 'correct' answer; we are hoping to see a 'response to the main implications of the question' and candidates have to spend some time considering what those implications might be.

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