

## May 2015 subject reports

### English A: Literature Time Zone 2

#### Overall grade boundaries

##### Higher level

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 - 15	16 - 31	32 - 42	43 - 55	56 - 68	69 - 80	81 - 100

##### Standard level

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 - 15	16 - 29	30 - 41	42 - 54	55 - 67	68 - 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

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	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 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 writer's 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.

## 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, say 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 so not. This does not mean that moderators expect quotation but candidates 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 candidate 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 candidates 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 candidate performance, and in this assessment, it is also vital that the teacher steers the candidates 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 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 and 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 centers 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. Centers should only upload a single copy of the poem that pertains to an individual candidate 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 centers 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 - disarming the students 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

for sustaining candidates up to the required length of time. Many teachers are particularly adept at asking questions that nurture 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

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	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

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 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.

## Higher level Written Assignment

### Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	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

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 students 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 student to reveal appropriate knowledge and understanding. When these are too broad or vague, or focused on cultural or sociological matters, they do not help students 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

Possibly more problematic than the production of the Reflective Statement, and contributing a potential 6 marks to the overall score in this component is the weakness shown by candidates in this criterion.

Candidates need to be pointed toward 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 students have been held to a generally high standard of organization and expression in their regular classwork.

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 students understand Criterion A; successful Reflective Statements often use the criterion as a heading to help the students 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 students 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 students 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 students 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

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	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

- 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

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 - 3	4 - 6	7 - 8	9 - 11	12 - 13	14 - 16	17 - 20

### General comments

- Examiners considered that both extracts were very well chosen and gave candidates of all abilities plenty to write about.

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

It seems that some candidates are still rushing at the paper, making a swift decision as to which passage to attempt without taking time properly to think through the possibilities presented by each. It may be that some centres specifically prepare candidates only for either the prose or the poem, which is educationally reductive and a shame.

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 what this exercise is all about, and was sometimes lacking. Some commentaries were very mechanical, as if the stylistic features and the meaning of the passage/poem were different entities. For more precise comment on this see the section below under 'Literary Features'.

Very few candidates are able to use an organizational 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.

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 because they might fix on the 'wrong' one, candidates should see this as an opportunity to demonstrate their ability to see into possibilities.

Finally, as ever, candidates frequently drifted away from analysis and into narration of content.

There is fuller comment on deficiencies in the commentaries under the criteria review below.

As ever, there is the frequent assumption that the writer and persona were the same.

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

Most candidates were able to identify the main concerns of the text, the better commentaries displaying impressive insight and perceptiveness.

Among the stronger candidates there was some very good close reading and consideration of the ways in which the writer's choice of language and imagery evoke a particular effect for the reader. Most were well-prepared in the art of feature-spotting, attempting to discuss literary features but not always succeeding in showing how these contributed to meaning. 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. Overall, examiners reported that awareness of the writer's choices was better handled this year, with even the weaker candidates showing some grasp.

In general, candidates demonstrated good and coherent organization of ideas. Few wrote too-brief commentaries.

Generally the standard of writing was good - both in the organisation of points made and in the use of language. Examiners have noted over the past two May sessions that fewer candidates were 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. This is encouraging.

There is fuller comment on the positive aspects in the commentaries under the criteria review below.

### A. Understanding and Interpretation

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

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

There is increasing evidence of candidates gaining a greater confidence in putting forward a personal response in their commentaries which is rooted in the text, and thus scoring more highly under this criteria.

As ever, weaker candidates resorted to re-telling or describing the content of the poem/passage. Some failed to read closely, thereby rendering interpretations which were not convincing.

In a few instances, students fixed upon a formulaic interpretation that they were attempting to force the poem to fit.

## B. Literary Features

Many scripts demonstrated systematic, well integrated analysis of the effects of the literary features, with candidates in some centres in command of literary terms and able clearly to identify features and discuss their effects.

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

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

With regard to the prose, not all candidates appreciate that the writer's presentation of a character, and relationship between characters, is a part of literary technique.

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

Overall, examiners report that students have a wide knowledge of literary terms but do not always know what to do once they have recognized a device in the way of justifying its usefulness and effect.

## C. Presentation

There is a pleasing year-on-year improvement in the effective organisation of commentaries, and this is having a beneficial impact on the scoring for Criterion C. Candidates are improving at integrating references and quotations, but there is still room for improvement. In nearly all commentaries there is now evidence that candidates had planned, something that there is plenty of time to do in a single question, two-hour examination. It does not matter if the plan is later modified, but an initial structure gives security and a sense of direction as the commentary progresses. The resulting commentaries were usually well structured with an introduction, link sentences between paragraphs, logical development and clear conclusions.

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

## D. Use of Language

On the whole candidates seemed quite well versed in the language of literary analysis and, whatever their powers of expression, were aware of the appropriately formal register for writing a piece of literary commentary. On the other hand, some misused basic literary terminology such as symbol, allusion, personification (especially so in both passages), theme (ditto), simile or metaphor.

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

### Prose

There were some very good readings of this passage. Most students understood the main ideas although there was some confusion about the origin of the narrator and the relationship with the girl. The best students explored this relationship and were able to examine how it shifted in the passage. There were many opportunities to explore the layers of meaning in the imagery which was fully exploited by the best students.

The mention of the recent war triggered overmuch comment on the horrors of war, and speculation as to which was the war in question (although the better ones did explore the military sub-text evident in jungle). On the other hand, some candidates failed to see the background to the narrator – war – as an important feature to a better understanding of the passage.

Most responded well to the auditory and visual imagery and the atmosphere in the rainforest setting and also focused on the lack of dialogue. Some completely ignored much of the first paragraph and had us immediately in the jungle.

## Poem

There were a variety of sustainable interpretations of the poem, but overmuch was made of the horrors of industrialisation/capitalism overwhelming the earth. So many saw the poem as about the 'destruction of nature' or 'the despoliation of the countryside'. Where is the specific evidence for that in the poem? Assumptions should not be made beyond what the poem actually says.

A clear differentiator was the relative willingness of candidates to tackle the poem's perceived difficulties. The whole idea of the serpents at the outset is not easy, and how candidates tackled this was a good discriminator. Many gave creditable readings and were able to comment on the use of repetition (of the first two lines, of 'din' and 'but'), the internal rhyme ('clatter/shatters'), the linked imagery ('virginal' and 'deflowered'; 'heads', 'mouths', 'eyes', 'brain', 'wing', 'foot'), the two imperatives ('hark' and 'see').

There was misuse over and over again of 'personification'. At least two candidates understood that 'zoomorphism' was the word. Occasionally the words 'virginal' and 'deflowered' were sometimes picked upon in order to hang a completely sexual interpretation of the poem. Many identified and commented on tonal and mood/atmosphere changes in the poem. Allusions were made to Moses (or Noah in one answer) and the Red Sea as the air 'divides'. There were too many multiple pigeons (not an acceptable reading) and dead pigeons (which on the face of it is a misunderstanding, but examiners were generous here if a good case was made that the pigeon had sunk into the cement leaving a lone impression of a foot).

A few candidates hardly understood what was happening and therefore the 'crowd' was said to be a "crowd of pigeons" or the heat emanating from the machines resulted in mirages.

Most made some attempt to comment on the last stanza.

## Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Candidates should be encouraged to:

- Be bold readers, looking at what is there and trying to make something of it. If it appears difficult, have a go. 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...' or 'one way of reading this is that...'. If you can come up with more than one possible interpretation, so much the better. Provided that readings are supported by textual reference then they are acceptable. Which means...
- ...avoid unsubstantiated claims or generalisations, putting emphasis on interpretation rooted in and supported by textual evidence.
- Ensure that they first understand the passage on the literal level before moving on to the figurative. Many wild misreadings are prevented by careful attention to what is actually occurring in a passage.
- Go beyond identifying stylistic devices and consider their effects. Plenty of close reading practice is essential.
- Pay attention to formal use of language and desist from the use of 'sort of', 'kind of'

and using symbols such '&' in essays, which should always be written in a clear formal register.

- Avoid technical naming of parts if not totally in command of nomenclature.
- not to make over much of the author credits at the end of a passage: for instances, the title *The Garden of the Evening Mists*, or that fact the poem was written in 1955 in a collection called *Poems for Pleasure*.
- 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.
- Prepare as thoroughly for the prose and its conventions as for the poetry.
- Carefully study 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 with care every line of the passage. 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, waffly introductions - begin with an argument which is based on an analysis of the passage. Candidates who entered the commentary on a high level tended to stay 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.
- Ensure that they understand the meaning of the words 'theme' and 'tone', both of which are frequently misused. Not every idea is a 'theme'.
- 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. This includes dotting 'i's and crossing 't's. Try deciphering the word 'inimical' when the dots are missing - the dots on the 'i's are there for a reason.
- Frequently practice 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 this 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 with precise reference to details in the passage.
- 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.
- 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, some students seem to consider 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'.
- Avoid the word 'showcasing' when describing a writer's method.
- Make assertions which are not underwritten by close analysis of the text.

## Standard level paper one

### Component grade boundaries

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

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

Many examiners commented that literary devices were often listed but not explored. Candidates found the organisation of such analysis difficult.

Examiners also noted a lack of close reading this session; many candidates presented a line-by-line account as a means of uncovering meaning. Candidates do not appear to read the extracts in their entirety. Many candidates missed the point, for example, that the sister in the prose passage was visiting [line 16 (since) "she's been here"] and assumed that they had been together for 47 years.

Introductions also proved problematic. They were often full of irrelevant comment on wider issues, or a list of literary devices.

Tone proved difficult insofar as candidates missed humour and irony in the prose passage.

Other examiners noted that "Punctuation seems to be a thing of the past", especially the use of the possessive apostrophe.

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

- Examiners noted an easy acquaintance with literary terminology.
- Candidates were generally aware of the need to structure their responses.
- Language use was good and the choice of register appropriate.
- There was often good use of appropriate well embedded quotes.
- Examiners had mixed experiences of the understanding of content; some thought that candidates had been well-prepared whilst others considered this a weakness.

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

### Prose:

The use of humour and irony was missed in all but a handful of responses. Moralistic responses in particular missed these features.

The attempt to manipulate readers eluded many candidates. An allied weakness was starting a response without an understanding of the entire passage and thus how information was gradually revealed. Although appropriate in some cases the line-by-line approach adopted by many seemed to be responsible for this.

Further weaknesses included difficulty in understanding the siblings' relationship, and also a tendency to summarise rather than analyse or interpret.

Examiners noted that a strength was the ability to recognise the narrator as a construct created by the author. His/her ambiguity was also captured.

### Poetry:

Candidates found it relatively to recognise its literary features but lines 6-7 were often glossed over.



Responses which began with some sort of thematic statement or quotation were not enhanced by these openings. Often they imposed an interpretation on the poem which was not always pertinent. For example, "The poem is about death and nature" is imprecise. It is *about* the grandmother's calm acceptance of death (as inevitable and part of the natural cycle) and the effect of this strong attitude on the child.

Often key lines were left to stand alone and not analyzed. The final line was frequently ignored or passed over.

There was recognition of the grandmother's strength and its links to the rock, but not the nature of this strength, which is mental, even spiritual. It contrasts with her physical frailty.

## Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

- Avoid "fancy openings" with quotations and focus on the text.
- Spend more time reading and reflecting on the entire question before writing. Spend less time on enumerating literary devices.
- It is not necessary to know the names of highly technical and advanced literary terms; it is more important to be able to explore HOW the writer uses language and the effects created.
- Guiding questions must be addressed and should be integrated into the response. This should not be bipartite.
- Marks awarded for criterion C, organisation, could be improved with the use of well-structured paragraphs with a topic sentence which is then developed and exemplified.
- Ensure candidates know the correct spelling of frequently used words for example, simile, definite, beginning.
- Practise prose analysis; note that caesura and enjambment are not applicable in this context.
- Prose commentaries do not have to be thematic in nature, although it is important to identify the subject.

## Higher level paper two

### Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 - 3	4 - 6	7 - 9	10 - 12	13 - 16	17 - 19	20 - 25

## General comments

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

This is the third year of examinations with the revised syllabus, and in the previous two May reports, attention has been drawn to shortcomings in candidates' ability to identify and discuss the literary conventions of their chosen genre. The performance of this year's cohort gives little grounds for seeing any improvement in this respect. Some candidates showed a limited understanding even of common literary conventions such as symbolism (question 4) and first or third person narrative (question 8), as well as less common conventions such as pathetic fallacy (question 6); and there was a widespread misuse of critical terms, the most conspicuous being 'theme', which was variously employed to mean subject, motif or idea. Lack of attention to genre is particularly marked in responses on drama. Many wrote about characters in a play as though they were not literary constructs, but real people (or, perhaps, just as 'real' as we are encouraged to think of the characters in a TV drama). The remark in last May's report (in connection with internal assessment) that teachers should always bear in mind the distinction between Art and Life was strongly confirmed by the performance of many of this year's paper 2 candidates.

Lack of confidence in dealing with literary conventions was one factor in a second shortcoming: many candidates chose a question which did not match well with the texts they used. Some questions in paper 2 may be answered with any texts: such, for example is question 5 which requires a discussion of particular techniques (other than rhyme) apparent in one's chosen poets, or question 8 on *either* first person *and/or* third person narratives. In any one genre section, however, there may be a question of more limited focus, suitable for some but not necessarily all texts: such are question 6 on pathetic fallacy in poetry and question 7 on supernatural elements in fiction. Many candidates, even if they understood the question, answered on two texts only one of which was suitable (this was particularly the case in question 7), or in some cases on two texts which were clearly inappropriate. Candidates must recognize that the choice of three questions for each genre (as opposed to two in the previous syllabus) will open considerable possibilities in each genre, but that particular questions may be unsuitable for certain texts.

It still seems to be the case that more candidates have been deliberately prepared to fulfil the requirements of criterion D than criterion E. Many candidates seemed to have the control over language (in terms of syntax, expression and vocabulary) which might have merited a higher mark on E had these skills been deliberately applied, though in many cases they were partly marred by carelessness or a too casual register. With respect to criterion D, although there was much evidence of a deliberate approach to the planning of essays, introductions and conclusions remain difficult for many candidates. Introductions were too often simply a lengthy restatement of the question or a general introduction to the texts with little reference to the question, and lacked the essential feature of successful introductions: a clear thesis which the succeeding response would develop and substantiate. Conclusions were often a simple restatement of the question or of the main idea ('As I mentioned in the introduction, poets use techniques other than rhyme . . .'), lacking the synthesis and evaluation which make the conclusion a genuine extension of what the essay has established.

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

Many examiners continue to report that there seem to be fewer candidates attempting to set down a prepared essay, with some attempt to massage it in the direction of the question, although once again many candidates responded to just one aspect of a question, rather than considering it in its entirety. Most candidates showed adequate to very good knowledge and understanding of the texts they chose, reflected in their scores on criterion A.

Candidates appear to be planning their time in the examination well, in that there were comparatively few essays which were either very short or clearly unfinished, and very lengthy and time-consuming written plans and drafts were probably fewer than last year (though still sufficient to suggest that some specific training in planning in the examination room would not come amiss). The trend noted last year of a more considered choice of texts on the part of schools – enabling fruitful comparison between them – seems to have continued, though there is still (disappointingly) a tendency to focus on a very small number out of the many texts available on the PLA. It is probably no coincidence that candidates who have studied plays by less frequently chosen dramatists, such as Brian Friel or Timberlake Wertenbaker, are often able to produce more challenging responses than many of those found on old favourites such as *Death of a Salesman* or *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

There seems to be a continuing trend to respond more fully to the requirement to compare texts, particularly in answers on poetry. Schools seem to be persuading candidates away from the response which is effectively two discrete essays linked by one or two connecting sentences, and towards a strategy of making comparison an ongoing feature of the entire response. There are, of course, varying degrees of success in this. Some candidates tried to convey comparison by moving back and forth between texts, paragraph by paragraph, without clearly indicating links between the texts. Others simply listed similarities between different texts without understanding that true comparison requires an evaluation of the significant differences between two texts' use of a common feature: this was particularly noticeable in a number of answers which used *Othello* and *A Streetcar Named Desire* in response to question 1. Despite the different levels of success, however, it is clear that many schools are approaching seriously the requirement to compare texts.

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

As usual, drama was the most popular genre, followed by fiction and then poetry, and there were once again too few candidates answering on Prose other than fiction to enable any confident generalisations on responses to questions 10 to 12.

In Drama, the numerical order of questions on the paper was reflected in their comparative popularity. Question 1 was the most popular and occasioned many answers on conflicts of gender and social class in well known plays by Miller, Tennessee Williams and Albee. Though most candidates were able to identify particular characters as representative of a group, fewer were able effectively to 'compare *how conflicts are portrayed* through individual characters'. The weaker answers would simply identify the two parties to a conflict (such as Stanley and

Blanche, or Biff and Willy) and the nature of their dispute, without exploring how this conflict is realized in the text of the play.

Question 2 was also popular, though surprisingly few took on the challenge of 'a significant arrival or departure', and many responses widened the terms of the question in such a way as to lose all real focus: in some cases mention of an arrival or entry of a character was used simply as an occasion to discuss that character, or the dramatic action, subsequent to the entry. Many answers dealt simply with entrances and exits, without questioning their *significance*, or how they might *enrich the work*. The most successful answers were those which engaged with these terms, such as the essay which argued that the really significant departure in *A Streetcar Named Desire* is that of Stella at the end of Scene 8, in that it leaves Blanche isolated and vulnerable, comparing it in this respect to the departure of the scholars from Faustus's study in the final scene of *Doctor Faustus*.

Question 3 was much less popular, and few candidates fully understood the dramatic effect and purpose of the audience understanding more than the characters on stage. The success or otherwise of answers on this question was partly governed by the candidate's ability to illustrate arguments by reference to actual pieces of dialogue. There were some answers which suggested promising ideas on (for example) the miscommunication inherent in George and Martha's talk about their child in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* or comparable failures on the part of the two protagonists in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* or *Waiting for Godot*, though only those responses with specific illustration of their ideas would be likely to convince.

Once again there was an encouragingly large number of candidates who wrote on poetry. Many examiners reported some excellent responses to question 4, though a surprising number of candidates showed limited understanding of the concept of symbolism. The term was often used in relation to any figurative language, or even more loosely to denote any kind of representation or creation of meaning. Typical of such, for example, was the answer which claimed that in 'Anne Hathaway', Carol Ann Duffy 'uses metaphors and imagery to symbolize the power of love'. The best answers did compare 'the use and effect' of symbolism, showing clearly (to take one example) the difference between the often humorous, self-deprecatory use of symbols in Larkin ('Toads' and 'Sad Steps'), and the more solemn and philosophical use of them in Hardy ('The Darkling Thrush' and 'The Convergence of the Twain').

Question 5 is sufficiently open for most candidates to have made a reasonable attempt at it. What distinguished the better answers was a focus on a few specific techniques which would be compared across poems by two or more poets, and a concern with how these could 'contribute to meaning'. Weaker answers would point out particular techniques in passing in individual poems, without making convincing comparisons or considering how they contributed to meaning; or, in a bid to make such a comparison, would focus on a trivial technical feature (such as 'repetition of a word').

Question 6 was much less popular than the other two, and probably the most diverse in terms of responses. A number of candidates did not understand the central concept (even though the question explains it) and therefore produced irrelevant answers. Others broadened the terms of the question by assuming that any portrayal of the external world by definition reflects the attitudes of the poet or persona, and then simply went on to describe that portrayal. There was,

however, some relevant and thoughtful examination, often of quite difficult poems by Keats, Shelley, Dickinson and Eliot.

Of the three novel and short story questions, question 7 was the least popular, though many who did attempt it would have been better advised to choose another question. Many candidates attempted to redefine the term supernatural – for example as anything unusual or extraordinary - to fit their particular texts. In some cases, there was a convincing case made for one text (the importance of tribal religion and ritual, say, in *Things Fall Apart*), and then a struggle to apply the concept of the supernatural to a second such as *Heart of Darkness*. Such answers seemed to give little thought as to the nature of the supernatural or how it might be manifest in fiction, whereas the successful responses interrogated the concept, and showed (for example) how differently it might be viewed in relation to *Slaughterhouse Five* (where the protagonist's travel to another dimension might be read as delusion) and *Beloved* (which includes an apparently supernatural character in a realistic setting).

Question 8 was the most popular question in this section and accessible for most candidates. Most but not all were able to distinguish between first and third person narrative: several candidates, for example, described the third person limited narrative of *1984* as first person. A fair number of candidates, while able to distinguish the basic narrative form, were less able to show awareness of different forms of third person narrative. Many candidates cited the advantages of first person narrative as insight into the protagonist (and a corresponding disadvantage of ignorance of the thoughts of other characters, or personal bias in the narrative) and the advantages of third person narration as objectivity and omniscience. More nuanced responses were comparatively rare, though some of the most memorable were on the nineteenth century novel, one response drawing interesting parallels between Elizabeth Bennet and Jane Eyre (as women who eventually marry the man they come to love after delay and setbacks) and showing how the choice of narrative form in each case reflects the different concerns of Austen and Bronte.

Question 9 was another question which tested the thoroughness of candidates' knowledge of their texts. Many who were unable to show in detail the degree of physical description (or the lack of it) afforded to characters would stray into more general comments on characterization. Of the many who wrote on *The Handmaid's Tale*, most would comment on the use of clothing of a particular colour to indicate a character's function in Gilead, and perhaps the way that handmaids conceal their faces from casual view, though fewer commented on the significant intrusion of physical description when these restrictions were bypassed. There were some good answers on the explicit use of physical description as a tool of characterisation in *The Great Gatsby*, *Heart of Darkness*, and *The Things They Carried*.

## Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

The chief recommendations may be grouped under five headings as follows.

## Choices.

Schools should impress upon students that the start of paper 2 involves their making choices, and that bad choices will likely be detrimental to their performance. Unlike in paper 1, where there is simple choice of whether to write on the poem or the prose passage, in paper 2 the candidate must choose a question which offers potential for the texts studied, and then choose the two or three texts out of four which offer the greatest possibilities. The aim is to find the best fit possible between question and texts, and students must enter the exam with the knowledge and openness to make that choice a real one. To anticipate that choice, for instance by deciding in advance which two texts to write on, or deciding which poems from a selection to discuss, may well compel the candidate to attempt forcing the texts into a mould they will not fit.

## Reading the question.

Having made (one hopes) a wise choice of question and texts, candidates should scrutinize every word of a question, and recognize exactly what it is asking them to do. The aim is to answer the *whole question*, not just an isolated word or phrase (such as 'conflict', 'arrival and/or departure', 'characters ... fail to communicate'). Some minutes spent reflecting on the question and highlighting or underlining *all* its key terms is never time wasted. There is an abundance of past papers readily available which teachers can use for practice in this crucial skill.

## Genre.

Attention to genre, to the literary conventions of the chosen genre, and to the relevant critical terminology, remains a priority. In addition to the formal teaching of literary conventions, and guidance in helping students recognize the use of conventions in their chosen texts, creative writing, in particular the guided rewriting of extracts from their texts to alter particular meanings or emphases, may help students to understand the process of writing and to recognize the all-important role of the writer's choices.

## Comparison.

The skills of comparison can be taught with appropriate texts at any stage of the English A Literature course. It could well begin with a consideration of what we hope to achieve in comparing texts (a keener sense of the distinctive features of a text by seeing how a common theme/motif/idea/technique is handled differently in two works? an appreciation of what makes one text more interesting/engaging/satisfying to the reader?). Following discussion of a common feature of two texts, students need to learn how to set down their perceptions with sufficient cross references such that the two texts are continually present to the reader's mind – to avoid the error of writing about the works separately with no more than a linking phrase or sentence.

## Writing skills.

Another skill which can be improved by practice is the writing of proper introductions and conclusions. The aim for introductions is to say something of substance, to formulate a definite thesis which may be applied differently to the two (or more) works under consideration. Students might be encouraged to read their own introductions with a critical eye and strike out

anything which is lacking in substance, such as a mere repetition of the question. Conclusions are more difficult to give guidance on, since they will very much depend upon the body of the essay, and successful conclusions will take account of what has been argued in the preceding pages. It is a good idea to suggest that students practise keeping something in reserve for their conclusion: a telling quotation, or a parallel with another text which can be used to bolster their argument. In practising their writing, students should keep in mind that they are being asked to produce a formal essay, that an informal register is therefore not appropriate, and that practices common in note taking (like the abbreviation of titles such as DOAS for *Death of a Salesman*) have no place in an examination essay.

Those five headings cover the most important areas in which many students could, with the right kind of practice, increase their chances of a good mark in paper 2. The following are a miscellany of other points, of varying importance, which examiners consider worth emphasizing.

- Several examiners commented on poor handwriting this session. Trying to decode a response, sometimes word by word, does little to create a favourable impression.
- If candidates write of concepts such as 'existentialism' or 'absurd theatre', it is important that they show a clear sense of what these terms mean and how the concept informs their reading of the text.
- Candidates should refer to authors by their last name (or their full name), not by their first name.
- A number of candidates use a particular written convention on some occasions (indicating their awareness of it) and carelessly disregard it on others: initial capitals for the titles of works, and the apostrophe for possession, are two common examples.

Finally, a number of examiners commented on what seems to be an increasingly narrow range of texts studied, and one wonders how far those schools teaching the old favourites year after year can instil in their students the sense of discovery and adventure that a literature course should offer. These recommendations often contain the advice that students should approach the examination (like all their literary studies) with an open mind, that they should (in the words of last year's report) 'approach the question with freshness and avoid the tired rehash of a class discussion'. One would expect that, to enable them to do so, schools should approach both their decisions about what texts to teach and their teaching strategies with a similar openness.

## Standard level paper two

### Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 - 3	4 - 7	8 - 9	10 - 12	13 - 16	17 - 19	20 - 25

## General comments

Given the fact that the elements contributing to the assessment of the responses reveal both strengths and areas in need of strengthening in the candidates' performance, this report will address each criterion and question, pointing out in each case both those strengths and suggestions for improving performance.

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

### Criterion A

Candidates are generally well prepared in terms of their knowledge of the Part 3 texts and are able to make accurate references throughout those texts. Very few candidates fail to indicate some understanding of the texts, even if that understanding is not always clearly linked to the essence of the question. However, this exposition of knowledge too often comes in the form of narration rather than detailed exploration of the parts of the texts being addressed. Many candidates seem to think, in error, that a summary or unsupported claims, although perhaps accurate and/or defensible on their own, reflect good knowledge and understanding, something only achieved when specific, detailed evidence and an understanding of some of the central ideas of the works are integrated into the response. Therefore it is possible to do well on criterion B by keeping the question in focus but not all that well on criterion A if the response does not also reflect an understanding of some of the central ideas of the work.

Additionally it should be noted that criterion A is the one criterion on which a penalty may be applied for choosing an invalid text (i.e. one in translation or one by an author not on the PLA for Part 3) or for choosing an invalid question for the genre of the works used in the discussion. With this in mind, here follows a list of some of the invalid works that appeared in this set of May 2015 responses, thus making those scripts subject to the penalty that limits the level of assessment on criterion A to a mark no higher than 3 – *Wide Sargasso Sea*, *Doll's House*, *Educating Rita*, *Antigone*, *Dracula*, *The History Boys*, *Of Mice and Men*. Centres are reminded to review their reading lists against the PLA that has been in operation since May 2013.

### Criterion B

Examiners have noted an increased awareness of the requirement to provide some sort of comparison of the texts treated in the response. Few scripts treat the texts separately without some evidence of attempting a comparison. A continuing challenge for candidates lies in the area of decoding the question. Many candidates find a familiar word ('conflict', 'dialogue' or 'first/third person') and make such a term the focus of the response rather than the essence of the question. The more successful candidates often begin by defining the terms of the question in light of the texts that they are about to discuss. A further problem arises when a candidate somehow feels it important to show knowledge of as many important things as possible about each work. A more effective approach is to select a limited number of instances from each text, show their relevance to the question, explore them in some detail and show how they contribute to the central ideas of the work.



## Criterion C

The higher achievement levels are gained by those candidates who keep the literary convention of the question in focus while showing how other, additional conventions work in tandem with the central one under discussion. A full treatment of these devices involves naming them, identifying them and discussing their impact on the text. Some credit can be given for fulfilling some, if not all, of these steps.

## Criterion D

Serious attempts at a response (and there are few which are not) demonstrate structural soundness to the extent that there is a clear introduction, body and conclusion to the script. Working in a planned direction and providing evidence for the claims go a long way toward satisfying the need for organization, coherence and development. Even when the response is not clearly directed at the question, credit can be and is given for responses demonstrating these qualities. Effective evidence of a planned direction can often be seen in the transitions that provide insight into the logic of the argument. Perfunctory transitions such as 'similarly', 'on the other hand', 'in contrast' and the like are too often used to give the sense of logic without there actually being a clear one as the precise point of similarity or difference is not clearly pointed out. Or, if it is, it may not be one of much substance. Here is a partial list of transitions found in responses that make little attempt at logic: 'following on from this', 'going back to what I said before', 'meanwhile', 'moving on', and 'interestingly'.

## Criterion E

In spite of the worries and predictions that social media language would destroy expression in general, the level of the language on the scripts is encouraging indeed. The usual mechanical errors (possessives, plurals, spelling, subject/verb agreement) continue to pepper the papers; and their frequent occurrence can affect the overall performance. However, most candidates could express themselves in a way appropriate to the task at hand. Many were fluently effective: some almost poetically forceful. It would still appear that some centres choose to enter candidates, for whatever reasons, whose English is not at a level suitable to the task. However, some of these very same candidates do compensate for limited expression with a knowledge and understanding that still earns them satisfactory results.

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

### Question 1

This very popular question produced a range of responses. Many candidates simply presented a series of conflicts between characters with little awareness of the heart of the question. It must be noted that examiners were instructed to accept not only conflicts 'within' such groups (as is stated in the question) but also 'between' individuals representing different groups. Indeed this 'between' approach proved to be more common than the 'within' one. The candidates were given an idea of three elements that groups might be based on: generation, class or gender. Less probing responses often settled for one of these terms as the defining

factor that would put individual characters into conflicting groups. In some cases, a reasonable argument could be made, for example, with Blanche and Stanley representing different classes although stronger responses took this a step further and linked this broad category difference into their being representatives of the Old South and New South. In many cases candidates stopped at a first-level identification without assessing what subgroup these characters really represented. So John Proctor and Abigail Williams in *The Crucible* represented men and women. They are that, of course; but even on that level few candidates attempted a refinement into their roles in the play. Even leaving aside their representational qualities in terms of the McCarthy hearing, few candidates attempted a more focused designation of a group such as those who bring chaos through lies vs. those who strive for truth and order. There could be others, but at least there is some sense of what they represent, something more than one being a man and the other a woman. There was a marked difference between scripts that showed individual characters being from different broad groups and those that showed them representing more focused groups that are closely connected to the impact of the works.

## Question 2

This relatively straightforward question was treated most effectively by candidates who cleared up for themselves and the reader, either by definition or by implication in the introduction, the approach that was to be adopted in terms of arrivals and/or departures. Many works lent themselves to this question as long as the terms were functionally defined. In addition to the most narrow (and perhaps originally intended) applications of the terms (someone's physical arrival at - or departure from - a place in the course of the play, usually at the beginning and/or end), other defensible treatments involved entrances and exits, births or deaths both in the play itself or as part of the backstory or implied story extension and even the arrival/departure of abstracts such as hope or love. The success of the chosen approach did not depend on the orthodoxy of the choice but on the strength of argument that ensued in its presentation. The biggest problem here came in the form of responses that identified an arrival but instead of exploring it in some depth (although in some choices there were few specifics on which to expand), the candidate used one or the other to tell what happened after that (an arrival) or what happened before that (a departure). Moving into the work or looking back into it could be valuable in shedding light upon the significance of the arrival/departure; however, in many cases the links to the arrival or departure were not made in the ensuing discussion.

## Question 3

This question led to only a few focused and completely relevant responses. Instead the responses produced a grab bag of approaches, most of which did involve some look in the direction of dialogue but few of which actually captured the intent of the question. Some of the more successful ones worked with dramatic irony although often the character being spoken to did not misunderstand the words of the other – it was just that the dramatic irony was missed. Other responses looked at intentional deceit that a character did not understand; and so it was actually not 'failed' but successful communication from the point of the deceiver. As examiners are instructed to do, the response is not judged on the exactness of the comprehension of the question (although severe misunderstanding or a complete ignoring of it has its consequences) but on the way the other four criteria contribute to the response in spite of the questionable degree of relevance of the approach. Some beautifully written responses can be widely wide off the question and still get solid marks in criteria A, C, D and E.

#### Question 4

The question very clearly distinguished between those candidates that understood symbolism and those that did not and those that had an idea that sounded something like symbolism. Many elements in poetry may represent something else (metaphor, simile, image, sound devices) but are not strictly symbols. Credit could still be given for discussion involving these devices and a subsequent relevant discussion in criteria A and C (especially if those elements were identified as the conventions that they are) rather than in B. Symbolism seems to be a commonly used, if not always accurately understood, term. Many poems lent themselves to this question with candidates regularly taking advantage of those possibilities in their discussion. However, once identified, the symbols are only a gateway to the use of other conventions and the development of ideas of each poem (Duffy's 'Valentine', for example), elements that, if explored, can unite the discussion into one that can help to satisfy all the criteria except criterion E. It is a recurring problem how to address a central convention and still address additional ones. Poems usually show a confluence of elements and effects at work. Candidates for this, and other genres, need to learn techniques of how to address the convention at hand as well as how to integrate the discussion of additional conventions into the discussion.

#### Question 5

The challenge of Question 5 was to give this open-ended question a response with some organization and direction beyond that of a simple list of devices that did not include rhyme. Among the most successfully focused and credible responses were those which addressed poems without rhyme and which showed how alternate conventions fed the poem sometimes in place of, but also perhaps as an extension of, the absence of rhyme. Another more frequent approach could be seen in responses that at least recognized the question somewhere, usually in the introduction and conclusion, even though the rest of the response left it alone. Most of the responses simply launched into a commentary that did not include rhyme. This approach was allowed by the question and displayed merits relative to the depth of knowledge and understanding, coherence and development of the organization, and fluency/accuracy of expression: in other words, the performance with respect to the other criteria. One complication regarding this question arose in terms of avoiding double reward or penalty for Criteria B and C that, in many ways, were looking for the same thing. In the end, examiners considered the overall achievement and completeness of the response and then considered the nature of the comparison (in order to refine the judgment for criterion B) and the thoroughness of the treatment of effects (for criterion C). In the end, it was very possible that the same mark was given on both criteria, but the marks were not based on the same exact elements in the performance.

#### Question 6

For those candidates who were not familiar with the term 'pathetic fallacy' (and examiners have seen some surprising interpretations of the term over time), the question was good enough to provide a definition. By and large, the relevance of the ensuing responses may have been helped by this fact as few responses presented irrelevant approaches although some, as one can well imagine, went into much greater depth, showed greater perception and expressed their ideas much more effectively than others. The range of poets used in the responses was

wide indeed, indicating that the question (along with the definition) made this question suitable for a wide variety of reading lists.

### Question 7

This question either clearly applied to the works studied or it did not. This made a choice by candidates fairly straightforward. However, it also offered quite a number of candidates the chance to define 'supernatural' in a way that they hoped would fit their works. Some implied definitions (forces at work that could not be identified but were felt as in McCarthy's *The Road*) had something of an abstraction that could be made believable. Less easily adapted to this question were less abstract forces beyond the protagonist's control such as in *1984* or *The Handmaid's Tale*. Some centres had studied *Jane Eyre* in combination with *Wide Sargasso Sea*, a pair of works that work well together and do contain elements of the supernatural without having to bend the definition in unusual directions. However, since *Wide Sargasso Sea* is no longer a valid choice of text (as Jean Rhys is not on the current PLA), candidates were limited in terms of their possible rewards in criterion A. Some definitions suggested that candidates ought to have chosen a different question (doesn't everyone study narrative voice?): 'supernatural' equals a strong faith in the natural world or 'supernatural' means very, very natural = very, very realistic.

### Question 8

This question was the most frequently chosen one in the genre, and almost every candidate was able to state (not always completely correctly) the narrative voice of the works discussed. Many went on to state the advantages of a particular voice from which statement it was not a great leap to its disadvantages: i.e. the advantage of the reader's closeness to the narrator in a first person work is balanced by the disadvantage of having to rely on that single perspective. And so forth. This, and comparable comments for a third-person narrator, are certainly valid and relevant statements. There were three ways in which the potential promise of such statements was under-fulfilled: 1) the nature of the narrative voice was not actually exact in that in some texts first person switches to third person (*The Things They Carried*) or an omniscient third person narrator switches central perspective from character to character (*Things Fall Apart*); 2) sometimes it appeared that once such statements were made, the candidates had unloaded something important about the texts and to a great extent were then relieved of the need to develop them further; and 3) the advantages and/or disadvantages were not applied against the particularities of each text beyond the general statements that are potentially relevant for all texts. For example, take Nick Carraway's first person possibly biased but largely credible point of view as he tells a tale retrospectively so he has had time to consider and re-consider. How is this combination of elements an advantage or disadvantage as he recounts a particular event, some of which he experienced directly and others he knows about because of what others (Jordan Baker or Henry Gatz) have told him? A simple response could survive this question as most candidates were given enough of a life jacket in having addressed narrative voice in class discussions. However, candidates producing superior answers delved more deeply on the spot in order to come up with a personally relevant and substantiated response.

## Question 9

One would think that authors had provided a lot of physical details about a work because most readers go away with a fairly concrete picture of a character in mind whether details have been given or not. As it turns out, it would seem that very few works actually provide detailed character descriptions although those candidates who focused on physical details of setting fared better. Those candidates who attempted to discuss physical descriptions of character either came up short on details, or, in the best of cases, pursued the 'or not' element of the question, discussing why so few details had been given. It is also difficult to discuss the lack of something although some successful responses were produced discussing the intended mystery of the character (*Gatsby*) or presenting how the physicality of the character was suggested through his/her dialogue and actions.

## Questions 10, 11 and 12

No comments were reported on these questions.

## Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Although attention had been paid to this focus in the course of the report, some summative comments are made here:

- Although the presentation of the paper has been credited as being one of the stronger points of candidates' responses, improvement in this area can occur by developing awareness and skills in two areas: 1) the use of working transitions (already covered in the comments for criterion D), and 2) developing a thesis and then following it through in the response.
- Developing techniques as to how to integrate into the response relevant literary conventions beyond the one that is perhaps addressed in the question. Many responses name a set of literary conventions in the introduction but ignore many or all of them in the response. The same set of conventions applied to every work is not likely to reflect critical thinking or an effective awareness of authorial style.
- For poetry it is generally more effective for candidates to discuss a few poems in some depth than to touch on as many poems as they can remember.
- The use of detail cannot be over-stressed. In many cases, candidates do not seem to be aware of the difference between a statement (claim) that applies to a work and the details that illustrate that claim. Although the phrase 'for example' is not exactly to be encouraged in the response itself, it is something that needs such constant reinforcement during classroom discussions that supplying details becomes a natural habit.
- Naming a literary convention is not enough. Pointing it out and then discussing its impact on the work are obligatory steps toward receiving full credit.
- Raise awareness of unnecessary mechanical errors and weaknesses: subject/verb agreement, plurals and possessives, the difference between imagery and image. Certain phrases ought to ring bells that the candidate is avoiding specificity: 'makes it flow'; 'can relate to'/'is relatable'; 'reveals emotions/feelings or relationships', all terms that need specification – which emotions/feelings? (*name* them) and what sorts of

relationships? (*identify* them).

- A very useful question to use and repeat in discussions (and one hopes eventually in candidates' own thinking and planning) is this: 'Anything else?' There usually is. Often what comes then goes a little deeper than the first reaction. And then ask again.
- If one is dealing with works for which the term *American Dream* comes into play, it might well be worth the effort to delve into its complexity a little more than *the desire for materialistic gain*. It is a term that applies to a number of works; but it is a multi-faceted concept, not one that can be summed up in a phrase or two. Moreover, few of the characters with whom the term is often used share the exact same idea of *the dream*.