English A: Literature

Overall grade boundaries

Higher level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 17	18 - 31	32 - 42	43 - 54	55 – 67	68 - 78	79 - 100

Standard level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 15	16 - 27	28 - 40	41 - 54	55 - 67	68 - 80	81 - 100

Higher level internal assessment

Component grade boundaries

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

The range and suitability of the work submitted

A wide variety of works was used. As in the previous session, some works were more popular than others. Most popular of all was poetry, followed by drama, then prose: novel and short story and prose other than fiction. The most popular poets were Wilfred Owen, John Keats, Seamus Heaney, Bruce Dawe and to some extent John Donne, Judith Wright and Carol Ann Duffy. Some rather "new" surprises included Baxter and Chaucer.

For the discussion section, the most popular genre was drama, closely followed by prose fiction. Non-fiction was a distant third. The most popular plays were Shakespeare's *Othello*,

Macbeth and *Hamlet* so some moderators were somewhat surprised at the scarcity of modern drama. In prose, works like *The Great Gatsby, A Farewell to Arms*, Edgar Alan Poe's short stories, and *Running in the Family* featured the most. The 'new' arrivals in this area included Jean Winterson's *Mules and Men* and Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People*. Orwell's essays tended to dominate the non-fiction choices.

In terms of the quality of challenge, most moderators were satisfied with the works taught by schools and the quality of guiding questions set on the extracts. Similarly, moderators were mostly satisfied with the quality of subsequent questions asked but unhappy with some teachers who asked too leading ones (e.g. "Can you tell me how the poet uses imagery to create a gloomy atmosphere in the piece?"). Equally, given the purpose of the subsequent questions (as stated in the Subject Guide), there were some weak tasks, like "Do you have anything else you wish to say about this poem?'' even when the candidate had left yawning gaps in the analysis. In some cases, it was evident that the teacher was either so tired or bored that the moderator was not surprised by the next question ''Is that all? Ok, thank you.'' In the discussion, some moderators were concerned at how the teacher tended to want to take centre stage – dominating the discussion and reducing the candidate to a sounding board. In a few others, the teacher's enthusiasm hindered the candidate's ability to develop their ideas. One case in point was in the discussion on Angela Carter's *The Blood Chamber*, a very obvious favourite of the teacher's and a source of strongly-held beliefs. Here, the teacher's interjections were rather excessive. Perhaps the most pressing concern is the nature of the questions to be asked. Currently, many teachers take prepared questions (usually the exemplars from the Subject Guide) and stick to them regardless of the candidate's answer, thereby reducing the discussion to a mechanical interview and not a dynamic discussion.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A: Knowledge and understanding of the extract

The vast majority of candidates provided good to very good knowledge of the extract. They spoke confidently about the content of the text, related the extract to the rest of the work where necessary and supported their views with pertinent evidence from the work. In poetry, the majority of the candidates related the poem to others in the body of work studied though sometimes without much depth. The best candidates were those who went beyond taught materials, dug into the extract and provided well illustrated insights into the relationship between form and content. On the other hand, moderators reported that there are still many candidates who are not sure of the difference between description and analysis. As a result, such candidates put in really average performances. Some candidates forgot to link the poem to others by the same writer (or the extract to the rest of the poem and then to others by the same author).

Criterion B: Appreciation of the author's choices

Overall, it seems that there was some improvement in this area. Most moderators observed that the best candidates were those who engaged with the text most intimately, showing a very clear understanding and interpretation of the different stylistic devices used in the extract

and linking all this to the author's achievement therein. Such candidates therefore saw choices like stylistic devices as strategies used by the author to communicate ideas, create specific effects on the extract (like creating mood, highlighting a character's character trait etc.) or on the reader (like engaging the reader emotionally, provoking reflection etc.) and even judging how well all this has been done and why. Notwithstanding this, many moderators are still concerned that, at best, many candidates tend to identify the author's choices, give examples of where and how they are used but fail to examine what the author achieves with them. According to one moderator "It seems as if some schools are treating description and explication as synonyms of analysis."

Criterion C: Organization and presentation

Most candidates were very good at organizing their commentaries and presenting their analyses coherently. They had a clear introduction in which they stated their thesis or intention, stuck to that plan and proceeded to present a coherent and persuasive 'argument.' However, the average candidate tended to announce their intention but somehow forget to stick to this plan as soon as they started analyzing the extract. The most affected were those who used the linear approach. They got bogged down into explaining and commenting on the use of individual stylistic devices but forgot to relate all that to the overarching focus of the commentary. In addition, some candidates tended to provide long biographical information about the author which often turned out to have no bearing on the rest of the presentation. Overall, however, most moderators were satisfied.

Criterion D: Knowledge and understanding of the work used in the discussion

Most of the candidates knew the works well enough to score at least an average mark. They were therefore able to provide much content-based information about the work, often providing convincing examples to support their ideas. Depending on the nature of the question, candidates tended to do well. However, 'understanding' was a bit tricky as the candidate's chances of scoring top marks depended on the teacher's question. Teachers who were able to elicit further clarification and expansion of the point with concise and pithy follow up questions made it easy for the candidate to score high marks on this criterion. On the other hand, such general questions as "What can you tell me about this work?" or "What was your favourite character or scene and why?" tended to produce less successful insights into the work. As one senior moderator opined, "Teachers need to ensure that the discussion is focused on the significance of the work or aspect of the work rather than issue such vague questions as, "What can you tell me about this work?"

Criterion E: Response to the discussion questions

There was much variety here. As noted above, very often it is the nature of the teacher's questions that influenced the quality of the response. Stock questions like "What is the relevance of the title?" or "How does the author develop the theme of money in this novel?" hardly provoke insightful responses. Happily, all the moderators observed that teachers who were well prepared and knew how to conduct the discussions provided the candidates with the best opportunities to show and illustrate their independent analysis and appreciation of the work as literature. Some moderators wrote glowingly of centres where the teacher and candidate had engaged in meaningful and purposeful discussion.

Criterion F: Use of language

Just as in C above, most candidates performed well on this criterion. They showed a keen awareness of the need to use the appropriate register, spoke clearly and confidently and with hardly any lapses in grammar. As usual, though, some candidates seemed unaware that the oral commentary is a formal exercise – an examination - and so requires the appropriate attitude to language use. As a result there were often too many colloquialisms, like 'sort of' and 'kind of.' A very interesting concern was how some candidates are speaking extremely fast as if to pump as many points in the time allowed for the commentary as possible. As can be expected, such speed tended to interfere with the candidate's clarity of expression.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

It is absolutely vital that teachers study carefully both the Subject Guide and the Teacher Support Materials (TSM). Both are available on the Online Curriculum Centre (OCC).

Schools are strongly reminded of the penalties coming into force in 2015. For example, there is a serious penalty for candidates who use the wrong work for the commentary (e.g. from the PLT or outside the PLA)
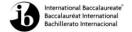
As was started in last year's subject report (and even in the last syllabus), it is very important that schools:

- Teach close analysis skills throughout the course and practise commentaries frequently, especially in the student's final year, to give them the necessary confidence
- Wean the students away from depending on other critics' views and foster in the learner the beauty of analysing a work with a fresh and independent mind
- Practise structuring the commentary frequently, especially in the final year. Such practice should include getting the student to state categorically why they will be analysing certain literary aspects of the extract
- Use the exemplars on the Online Curriculum Centre. They have dual functions: enriching the teacher's skills in conducting the orals, especially in asking subsequent questions and giving the students supplementary support in developing their commentary skills
- Select passages which do not disadvantage the candidate due to length or the 'un-desirable' level of difficulty
- Use the TSM exemplars to develop effective ways of engaging the student in more successful discussions
- Heed the feedback from moderators.

Further comments

The majority of schools followed the procedures and instructions very well and filled the forms appropriately. This year, also, there were very few problems with uploads from schools.

However, moderators reported some shortcomings:

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- Some schools did not complete the 1/LIA forms fully. Schools are reminded that by, for example, not entering the marking comments in the appropriate boxes on the form, teachers make it difficult for the moderator to determine the rationale for the marks awarded on each criterion. Similarly, the teacher's failure to provide the candidate's number and the works used for the two sections of the oral is very inconvenient to the moderator. In addition, schools are asked to ensure that they have not only uploaded all the forms and poems but that these documents are for the right candidates before hitting the 'Submit' button on IBIS

- A few schools are still neglecting to use the recommended length of 20-30 lines when choosing poems. It should be noted that the candidate has only 8 of the 10 minutes allowed for the individual oral commentary; the other 2 are for the subsequent questions. Therefore teachers who give overlong poems (like the whole of Owen's Disabled) are doing a disservice to their students. On the other hand, some shorter texts (like Owen's Futility) can be hard for average students to find enough material for a decent analysis

- The few schools which did not number the lines of the passages made it difficult for the candidate, teacher and moderator to refer to the poem easily

- Some commentaries lasted longer than the ten minutes allowed. It should be noted that moderators are not expected to award any marks for points made overtime. Some candidates with overlong orals were therefore disadvantaged

- Every candidate ought to have been asked some subsequent questions, according to the syllabus. The purpose of such questions is to ensure that the candidate benefits from the questions by either clarifying a vague point or covering one that has been omitted in the uninterrupted commentary

- During the discussion, some teachers tended to want to push their own ideas about the work instead of letting the candidates express theirs unimpeded

- In one or two large centres, where more than one teacher had taught the programme, it was often clear that little or no internal standardization of the teachers' marks had been done before entering the marks on IBIS for computer sampling

- A few commentaries were hardly audible. In such cases, it sounded as if the teacher was sitting far away from the microphone; in some cases, it was the candidate who was in such a position

- Background noise, like students playing and shouting outside the commentary room, mobile phones going on at any time and intercom announcements, inconvenienced several moderators in this session

- It was apparent from the sample that some schools had paid scant enough attention, if any, to the moderator's feedback on the previous examination session

- There were some isolated cases of schools teaching ineligible works (e.g. poems by Sassoon and Brooke OR teaching more than one poet's works). Other isolated cases of poor reading of the regulations involved schools not teaching enough short stories or essays by the same writer. For example, a school taught only one essay by Jonathan Swift: A Modest Proposal and spent the whole time asking about this particular essay only.

Standard level internal assessment

Component grade boundaries

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

The range and suitability of the work submitted

A wide variety of works was used. As in the previous session, some works were more popular than others. Most popular of all was poetry, followed by drama, then prose: novel and short story and prose other than fiction. The most popular poets were Wilfred Owen, John Keats, Seamus Heaney, Bruce Dawe and to some extent John Donne, Judith Wright and Carol Ann Duffy. Some rather "new" surprises included Baxter and Chaucer.
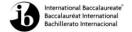
In drama, the popular choices were led by Shakespeare's *Othello*, *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*. In prose: novel and short story and in prose other than fiction, Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, Michael Ondaatje's *Running in the Family*, Malouf's *Fly Away Peter* and Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* held sway. The 'new' arrivals in this area included Hurston's *Mules and Men* and Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People*.

In terms of the quality of challenge, most moderators were satisfied with the works taught by centres and the quality of guiding questions set on the extracts. Similarly, moderators were mostly satisfied with the quality of subsequent questions asked but equally unhappy with some teachers who asked too leading ones (e.g. "Can you tell me how the poet uses imagery to create a gloomy atmosphere in the piece?"). Equally, given the purpose of the subsequent questions (as stated in the *Language A: Literature* guide), there were some weak tasks, such as "Do you have anything else you wish to say about this play?'' even when the candidate had left yawning gaps in the analysis.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A: Knowledge and understanding of the extract

The majority of candidates provided good to very good knowledge of the extract. They spoke confidently about the content of the text, related the extract to the rest of the work where necessary and supported their views with pertinent evidence from the work. In poetry, the majority of the candidates related the poem to others in the body of work studied though sometimes without much depth. The best candidates were those who went beyond taught materials, dug into the extract and provided well illustrated insights into the relationship between form and content. On the other hand, moderators reported that there are still many candidates who are not sure of the difference between description and analysis. As a result, such candidates put in really average performances. Some candidates forgot to link the extract (e.g. from a play, essay, poem) to the rest of the work. This was particularly so in the

Orwell essays where the subsequent questions further disadvantaged the candidate by not addressing this omission.

Criterion B: Appreciation of the writer's choices

Overall, it appeared that there was some improvement in this area. Most moderators observed that the best candidates were those who engaged with the text most intimately, showing a very clear understanding and interpretation of the different stylistic devices used in the extract and linking all this to the author's achievement therein. Such candidates therefore saw choices like stylistic devices as strategies used by the author to communicate ideas, to create specific effects within the extract(such as creating mood, highlighting a character's character trait etc.) or on the reader (such as engaging the reader emotionally, provoking reflection etc.) and even judging how well all this has been done and why. Notwithstanding this, many moderators are still concerned that, at best, many candidates tend to identify the author's choices, give examples of where and how they are used but fail to examine what the author achieves with them. According to one moderator "It seems as if some centres are treating description and explication as synonyms of analysis."

Criterion C: Organization and presentation

Most candidates were very good at organizing their commentaries and presenting their analyses coherently. They had a clear introduction in which they stated their thesis or intention, stuck to that plan and proceeded to present a coherent and persuasive 'argument.' However, the average candidate tended to announce their intention but somehow forgot to stick to this plan as soon as they started analyzing the extract. The most affected were those who used the linear approach. They got bogged down into explaining and commenting on the use of individual stylistic devices but forgot to relate all that to the overarching focus of the commentary. In addition, some candidates tended to provide long biographical information about the author which often turned out to have no bearing on the rest of the presentation. Overall, however, most moderators were satisfied with performance in this criterion.

Criterion D: Language

Just as in C above, most candidates performed well in this criterion. They showed a keen awareness of the need to use the appropriate register, spoke clearly and confidently with few lapses in grammar. As usual, though, some candidates seemed unaware that the oral commentary is a formal exercise – an examination - and so requires the appropriate attitude to language use. As a result there were often too many colloquialisms, like 'sort of' and 'kind of.' A very interesting concern was how some candidates spoke extremely fast as if to pump as many points in the time allowed for the commentary as possible. As can be expected, such speed tended to interfere with the candidate's clarity of expression.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

It is absolutely vital that teachers study carefully both the Language *A: Literature* guide and the *Language A: Literature Teacher Support Material* (TSM).

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Centres are strongly reminded of the application of maximum marks in force from the May 2014 session. For example, where candidates refer to an incorrectly chosen work (e.g. from the PLT or outside the PLA) the maximum mark they can achieve in criterion A is reduced to 6.

As has been stated time and time again in the biannual subject reports, it is very important that centres:

- Teach close analysis skills throughout the course and practise commentaries frequently, especially in the candidate's final year to give them the necessary confidence.
- Wean the candidates away from depending on other critics' views and foster in the candidate the beauty of analyzing a work with a fresh and independent mind.
- Practise structuring the commentary frequently, especially in the final year. Such practice should include getting the candidate to state categorically why they will be analyzing certain literary aspects of the extract.
- Use the exemplars on the Online Curriculum Centre (OCC). They have dual functions: enriching the teacher's skills in conducting the orals, especially in asking subsequent questions and giving the candidates supplementary support in developing their commentary skills.
- Select passages which do not disadvantage the candidate due to undue length or the 'un-desirable' level of difficulty.
- Heed the feedback from moderators.

Further comments

The majority of centres followed the procedures and instructions very well and completed the forms appropriately. However, moderators reported some problems:

- Centres are reminded to complete the 1/LIA forms fully. For example, by not entering the marking comments in the appropriate boxes on the form, teachers make it difficult for the moderator to determine the rationale for the marks awarded on each criterion. Similarly, if a teacher fails to provide the candidate's number this slows the moderation down. In addition, centres are asked to ensure that they have not only uploaded all the forms and extracts but that these documents are for the right candidates before hitting the 'Submit' button on IBIS.
- A few centres are still neglecting to use the recommended length of 20-30 lines when choosing passages. It should be noted that overlong passages (such as providing the whole of the poem Daddy by Plath or all of Shooting an Elephant or 50 lines of an extract from a novel by Dickens) greatly disadvantages the poor candidate who has only 8 minutes to engage with such a text. In some cases, the average candidate did not have enough to say about a short piece like Owen's Futility.
- Some centres used extracts with contextual information (e.g. by providing the Act, scene and line lengths of the extract from a play by Shakespeare), thereby advantaging some candidates over others who did not get such passages. In addition, centres which did not number the lines of the passages made it difficult for the candidate, teacher and moderator to refer to the extract easily.
- Some commentaries were too long. It should be noted that moderators are not

- expected to award any marks for points made after the 10 minutes allowed for the oral commentary. Some candidates with overlong commentaries were therefore disadvantaged.
- Every candidate ought to have been asked some subsequent questions. The purpose of such questions is to ensure that the candidate benefits from the questions by either clarifying a vague point or covering one that has been omitted in the uninterrupted commentary.
- In one or two large centres, where more than one teacher had taught the program, it was often clear that little or no internal standardization of the teachers' marks had been done before submitting the marks on IBIS for computer sampling.
- The general feeling among the moderators was that the quality of uploads was superior to last year's. However, a few commentaries were hardly audible. In such cases, it sounded as if the teacher was sitting far away from the microphone; in some cases, it was the candidate who was in such a position.
- Background noise, for example, candidates playing and shouting outside the commentary room, mobile phones going on at any time and intercom announcements, inconvenienced several moderators in this session.
- It was apparent from the sample that some centres had paid scant enough attention, if any, to the moderator's feedback on the previous examination session.

Higher level written assignment

Component grade boundaries

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

The range and suitability of the work submitted

There are two aspects to be addressed in this component: first, the selection and teaching of the texts, and second the management of the four stages involved in producing the final product, the Written Assignment.

As to the first aspect, texts chosen are often appropriate and interesting to students who are encountering texts for the first time, so that such works as *A Doll's House* or *Metamorphosis,* while familiar to many examiners, are provocative for candidates and can lead to some very good essays. The degree to which these essays are appropriately focused on literary matters will depend very much on the guidance given by teachers. Inventive teaching approaches and the empowerment of students' independent thinking are factors which differentiated successful schools and those which were challenged by this component.

Success in both the Reflective Statement and the Written Assignment is closely related to how these two steps that are not submitted to examiners are handled in the classroom: the Interactive Oral and the work with Supervised Writing prompts. If the first of these, the

Interactive Oral, is the product of careful and collaborative research by students, it is likely that their classmates will be exposed to material relevant to their informed study of the literary work. This material will include facts about the writer and her/his work, including relevant information about the historical, geographical, political or religious context in which the work was constructed. It may also be necessary to address contextual matters within the work, especially if they are different to those of the writer. The place of the work in literary history as well as its reception may also be highly relevant to acquiring a solid sense of the literature. It is likely that candidates will need the teacher's help in framing their investigation. Where this process is successfully executed, the outcomes are almost invariably positive.

The Supervised Writing step is another important stage that can make or break the candidate's success with the Written Assignment. If these prompts encourage essays that are more sociological ('In what ways does the story of Firdaus in El Saadawi's novel seek to change men's behavior toward women?')or philosophical ('How do the chief characters in *Waiting for Godot* exemplify the plight of twentieth-century existence?'), then students are much less likely to be able to gain solid marks in the criteria for this exercise. Students who are directed to issues of construction and effect in the literary work are the ones who do well in this component.

On the whole, the texts chosen for this component are appropriate and well-taught and in a number of schools the address of the four stages of the process are clearly being handled judiciously and the candidates often receive high marks. Where teachers have not clearly informed themselves of the four stages or have not carefully guided their candidates through each of them, the results are disappointing, and students pay the price for faulty handling of the process. In some cases, unfortunately, candidates revealed their sense of the circumstances of the work (the business of the interactive Oral and the Reflective Statement) at the beginning of their essay where it is not rewarded.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A: Fulfilling the requirements of the reflective statement

Candidates can fulfil the requirements of this criterion quite straightforwardly if they are well-guided by their teachers to produce rich Interactive Orals, upon which the class can base their Reflective Statements. Some schools are still not on target with these two stages, with candidates talking chiefly about the texts themselves and not the context or the culture that has produced them. In other cases, students are evaluating the performances of their peers in the Interactive Oral or only alluding in a sentence or so to the life experiences of the author or their political or religious context. Those candidates who pick up on 2 or 3 major factors of the context and culture and reveal that they have understood both facts and the implications for the text are the ones who will best achieve the full mark of three in this stage of the Written Assignment process.

Criterion B: Knowledge and understanding

As is recurrently the case, candidates often revealed both understanding and critical appreciation of the works they had studied, something especially true where there was some

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freshness of perception with more familiar works and a sense of excitement seemingly shared by both teacher and students in less frequently studied works. The Literature in Translation list ranges widely and it is good to see some explorations of such works as *Windflower* by Roy, *The Inhabited Woman* by Belli, and *Brodeck's Report* by Paul Claudel along with the poetry of Tomas Transtromer.

Criterion C: Appreciation of the writer's choices

Candidates in some centres seemed to believe that a plethora of quotations from the text will be a sufficient substitute for close analysis of the work, and in some cases, offered a plentiful tissue of (sometimes) well-embedded citations with little comment or reflection. Additionally, paraphrase is not analysis either, and candidates need training to understand the differences.

The overall description of expectations in Criterion C noticeably asks how stylistic features 'shape meaning.' Candidates would be well served by some focus on exactly what that means and how one can, first, discern that, and secondly, convey it. To do so does not come naturally and students need to have some scaffolded practice with this demand.

In particular Satrapi's *Persepolis* has been oft-used, but only in some cases do the candidates reveal they are working with a form where graphics and words offer a blended delivery of meaning. To stay with words or even with the polemic of the work without conveying a sense that meaning arises from a two-fold source in graphic novels is to falter in the delivery of the critical analysis.

Criterion D: Organization and development

There is always a tension between somewhat formulaic approaches to structure and an approach that might be less predictable and possibly more engaging to read, but candidates must always be aware that *they* need to do the work of making their case about the text. One weakness that was noticed was that some candidates tend to leave too much of the work of persuasion to the reader, making links and inferences that the candidate needs to spell out.

Candidates should also be helped to see that there are first things to be said about the structure and content of the meaning, and that the observations about style, and particularly about sound features in poetry, such as alliteration and sibilance follow upon the former, and support them and that needs to be shown, rather than seemingly random observations about various aspects of style. Embedding their references to the text, which are absolutely necessary to support the argument, is done well at some schools, but at others set-off and often lengthy quotations do not provide a very fluent integration of observation and proof.

Criterion E: Language

The quality of expression varies from school to school. In some cases there has clearly been a deep background and development of standard English, with attention to grammar, syntax and register. In others, students seem to launch out on their own version of how to handle conveying their ideas in an academic context. Even within a school there seem sometimes to be varying standards.

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Students need to know that such things as page references, apostrophes, handling of titles to distinguish them from the text around them, along with some attempt to proofread what they have written do matter, and that when they have not found the text particularly congenial or less well understood and appreciated than it might be, they can still garner some marks that matter simply by writing in a clear and standard mode of expression. Sometimes in aiming for a 'high' academic register, candidates falter simply because there does not seem to be an authentic student voice operating to convey what they understand, but only critical terms picked up from their classes which they imagine will certify their grasp of the task.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

As always, recommendations are usually the obverse of what has not worked very well for candidates hoping to achieve strong marks for their work in this session. In addition to those inferences, here are some further recommendations from examiners:

If several poems are addressed in an essay, encourage students to find a synthesizing angle rather than pursuing a list of instances.

Try to avoid a single line of interpretation when studying a text; there seems in some centers to be a very narrow approach to interpretation, and examiners find that they encounter only 'the teacher's voice' and not much confident exploration beyond that. Students need to convey their own experience of and reaction to the works about which they write.

Choose appropriate works for your population; the PLT ranges widely, and so should school choices. Be sure that students address plays as drama, poems as poetry. There is a strong tendency to treat all genres as the delivery of a 'story' and only that.

Ensure that the Supervised Writing prompts point the students in the direction of literary study of the text, not investigations of social commentary.

Make sure candidates know that **even one word** over the limit in both the Reflective Statement or the Written Assignment will elicit a penalty.

Review materials designed to help both teachers and students deliver accurately what is intended in the Interactive Orals and the Reflective Statement. A new screencast has been added to the Online Curriculum Centre.

Standard level written assignment

Component grade boundaries

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

The range and suitability of the work submitted

Examiners should receive written assignments in candidate session number order. Written assignments and 1/LWA coversheets should be attached using a string tag or stapled; it is not helpful to the examiner if they are not attached at all and simply submitted in plastic document wallets. DP coordinators must include the candidate checklist. It is pleasing to note that in this session there were few examples of reflective statements submitted not being on the same work as the written assignment and almost every candidate remained within the word limits, meaning that examiners infrequently had to apply the marking penalties in Criteria A and D. Given the order of the assessment criteria, it is most appropriate if the reflective statement comes before the written assignment, not after it. The candidate must clearly indicate which edition of the work has been used.

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

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.

Guided by the teacher-devised prompts in the supervised writing, most candidates are choosing topics with a literary focus. The most successful written assignments are those that explicitly focus on authorial choices. The analysis of this topic must be sustained throughout the assignment; in a number of cases the actual content bore little relation to the topic/title, presumably as a result of the candidate developing the topic as s/he worked on it. In the final stages of submission it would be useful to check that the content actually matches the title and, if necessary, modify the latter accordingly.

The best written assignments are those where there is a strong sense of the candidate's own independent response: the essay is focused on appreciation of a particular aspect of how the writer has constructed the work and is suitably narrow to ensure that the candidate is able to demonstrate perceptive insight through analysis that marshals specific evidence to generate a persuasive argument. The assignments that fail to access the higher mark bands tend towards a descriptive approach and where the net has been cast too wide, leading to responses that make generalized assertions and arguments that do not convince.

Every examiner 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: Fulfilling the requirements of the reflective statement

Reflective statements must answer the question 'How was your understanding of cultural and contextual considerations of the work developed through the interactive oral?' This clearly indicates what the focus of the interactive oral (IO) needs to be; the teacher has a key role to play here in guaranteeing that this is the case, both before the IO takes place and during it. Reflective statements that simply summarize the content of the IO, with no reflection on how the candidate has assimilated this material and reflected on how it has changed his/her understanding of the cultural/contextual foundations upon which the work was constructed, cannot score well here. Reflective statements that exclusively reflect upon the content of the work itself are also unable to garner marks here. The best reflective statements tend to select two or three cultural/contextual elements of the interactive oral and examine, concisely, how his/her knowledge of these has led to an evolved understanding (or not) of these key factors that underpin the literary work.

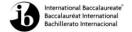### Criterion B: Knowledge and understanding

All examiners reported that most candidates had good knowledge of the works studied in Part 1. Topics that are too broad are likely to lead to rather vague responses, suggesting that teacher advice in response to the supervised writing and draft of the written assignment might guide these candidates in a more fruitful direction. Assertions without appropriate textual evidence are unconvincing and quoted or cited examples must be given some brief contextualization: *what* a character says or does is obviously important, but *where* and *when* are equally significant.

Criterion C: Appreciation of the writer's choices

Examiners, unfortunately, are still reporting that this is frequently the most problematic area for candidates. Appreciation of the writer's choices is best handled explicitly; when the chosen topic addresses the authorial construction of the work, this is usually relatively easy to achieve. These candidates normally make fairly frequent reference to the writer's name and examination of content works in tandem with how that has been done by the author. Weaker approaches often approach the two elements separately, if appreciation of the writer's choices is done explicitly at all. Those candidates, who treat characters as if they were real people, speculating on their thoughts and feelings or conjecturing how they might have acted had the plot evolved differently, fail to address the deliberate choices made by authors. Candidates who write about poetry often do well in this criterion, but, fundamentally, writing on any genre can be successful if the teacher has emphasized the validity of this approach.

Criterion D: Organization and development

Written assignments need thinking about, planning, drafting, revising, editing and checking. When this sequence is adhered to, candidates often score well in this criterion. The candidate is able to match convincing analysis with a focused, coherent argument that sets out to prove a point (or points) of interpretation and does so with conviction. Effective and efficient introductions and conclusions have a key role to play here. Weaker responses can often be

identified by only having a few lengthy paragraphs or too many that are underdeveloped. Connections between paragraphs need to be more coherent than 'firstly', 'secondly' and so on. Those candidates able to handle the successful integration and modification of quotations, skills that need to be taught, are also more likely to do better in this criterion.

Criterion E: Language

All examiners noted the quality of the language employed in many assignments, although several also commented that some candidates overstretch themselves (presumably a result of having access to a dictionary or thesaurus), leading to a writing style that seems inflated, pompous or overdone. Poor proofreading, weak punctuation and slips in register continue to remain the weakest areas here. In particular, the random use of the comma and lack of knowledge on how to use a semi-colon are problematic. The best candidates continue to impress, writing with clarity, confidence and sophistication.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Teachers are encouraged to access the *Language A: Literature 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.
- 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.

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Higher level paper one

Component grade boundaries

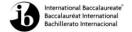| Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 3	4 - 6	7 - 8	9 - 10	11 - 13	14 - 15	16 - 20

General comments

Upon examination of a substantial and varied body of commentaries, it is good to report that the majority of candidates have a clear grasp of the requirements of the commentary and can be reasonably successful with the assessment task. Arguably, close and independent analysis of an unseen text represents one of the more difficult challenges for students and it is heartening to see the number of candidates who are clearly engaged with the work, even demonstrating genuine interest and enthusiasm in their engagements with these new texts. This November session included many good to excellent commentaries overall and evidence that there is clearly attention being given to literary devices within texts as well as structuring an overall commentary response. The very great majority of candidates revealed little trouble in at least gleaning a reasonable level of understanding with both the prose and the poetry options and most appear both comfortable and confident in moving beyond literal events to engage the texts toward further ends. While there remains evidence that candidates are approaching unseen texts with ready-made recipes, there are also very many candidates who are clearly approaching the task with open minds and an agility that the assessment task aims to instil.

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

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

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

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

Candidates also continue to struggle with some organizing principles. Several examiners commented on the need for stronger introductions and conclusions that were clearly related to the texts (rather than generic and vague filler that could be used with virtually any work) as well as the need for developing a coherent and logical argument. Even in sometimes good commentaries, a challenge for candidates is to have all points unified toward a singular purpose. Isolated paragraphs could offer a sense of cohesiveness as a stand-alone point but this would only be one of a series of stand-alone cohesive points. What is still sometimes missing is a developing/developed argument that is clear and sustained throughout the entire commentary work.

Related to the above is the problem of using literary features as the organizing principle for structuring responses (again, over the idea of a developed line of argument). It can be helpful for candidates to have approaches in mind for structuring responses but when commentaries are organized around identifying literary features, work tends to be mechanistic and misses the more authentically engaged readings asked of candidates in this assessment task. In such cases, for instance, a candidate may well have spent a paragraph on setting, another on character, a third on action, etc. but still failed to provide a compelling interpretation or evidence of a developed argument. With the current rubrics, organization is focusing on cohesive, unified and convincing lines of reasoning or argument. While there are plenty of commentaries that feature a recognizable paragraphing structure, the strongest works demonstrate an argument that develops and strengthens rather than more simply offer clearly siloed units of material.

Unsupported assertion and not considering the significance of points, however, is the big challenge encountered over and over. This tends to result in more simple narration, summary and paraphrase which should be avoided.

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

Candidates, on the whole, demonstrated a sound ability to uncover the basic scenarios or plots and to trace the course of any "action" whether physical, intellectual or emotional. The willingness to read slowly and uncover effect in both the prose and poem were strongly demonstrated by most. This basic understanding, then, became the springboard for more interesting and nuanced interpretations.

Most candidates did convey an ability to construct a response and convey ideas with appropriate language. Candidates were clearly competent and comfortable with writing about

literature using an appropriate register and a sense of organization and logic. Many examiners commented on the high level of both language and writing in general.

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

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

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

Prose commentary

Most candidates who selected the prose passage were able to glean the basic scenario involving Agnes and some of the challenges she faced in life. There was a reasonable ability to notice and speak to several characters, including Agnes, her mother, her sister, the rich woman in New York and Joe at the least. The narrative perspective was frequently mentioned though the degree of sophistication of treatment varied widely.

Agnes' confidence, or lack thereof, was considered by the great majority of candidates. Particularly with her physical description (both as an infant and later trying to gain health in New York), the attempt to pass off her name as French, her "tendency not to speak up" and the more overt requisite "expendable self-esteem" drew the attention of most candidates. Though candidates were generally successful with pointing to these details and offering some viable analysis, this could lead some to read Agnes as a singularly unfortunate creature rather than one of many tragic figures in the short excerpt. In such cases, candidates tended to find the contrast between Agnes and the others rather than the similarities. For instance, the New Yorker's misunderstanding of Iowa as Ohio was frequently interpreted as further evidence of Agnes' shortcomings rather than the more likely mocking of "not very bright rich people" or Linnea Elise's rubbery mole was frequently overlooked as a problematic blight on Cyrena's absurd views but treated as further evidence of her supposed beauty.

Tone, then, was often a distinguishing factor in stronger and weaker commentaries. More sophisticated candidates recognized both the humour and the tragedy suggested, often realizing that no character escapes scrutiny in the passage. Less sophisticated work treated events more literally and, again, tended to read Agnes as uniquely damned, fitting in nowhere; a kind of innocent but ungainly figure. In such cases, interesting lines like those around returning to Iowa to feel like having fifty years to live or the entire penultimate paragraph were not particularly well explored. Perhaps worse, some candidates would ignore the final paragraph as it seemed to present too great a contrast to try and reconcile. However, there were candidates who managed to find the humour with the brutal irony when they, like the narrator, managed a bit of detached distance. Candidates wanted to

sympathize with Agnes and could sometimes become rather too close to her instead of assuming a more critical perspective.

Contrast was an aspect most candidates considered as was names and naming. As with the points above, the difference between stronger and weaker responses was with the degree of metaphorical consideration versus literal. In cases of more metaphorical treatment, candidates could glean tone and generally offered deeper analyses and interpretations. In the case of more literal treatment, again, candidates tended to find direct causality (as in Agnes' plight quite literally a result of her name or her ill-founded actions in New York) and that tensions in the passage where the result of conflict between individuals rather than a more universal tension between desires and what is more likely realized.

An additional curious approach encountered among some candidates was one where Agnes is unfailingly optimistic and continues to try/believe/hope in a cheery way. In particular, her logic that failing in New York was better than not having tried to succeed and the line of the glass "half-full, half-empty…" did lead some candidates to focus on overcoming obstacles. This approach also seemed to suggest a more literal reading that missed some of the tone. This was not a recurrent but—perhaps complimentary of Moore's writing—many candidates seemed to be compelled to champion Agnes and engaged on her behalf. Unfortunately, such passionate connection did not always lead to strong commentary.
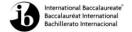
The strongest candidates managed to see something more sophisticated in the organization of the passage than simply a tension between Cassell and New York City. These candidates noticed a circularity but extended their thinking to note things like the collapse of time (e.g. seven years plus an indefinite future suggested in the short and dense final paragraph). These candidates commented more fully on the narrative perspective beyond being merely "omniscient."

Finally, many candidates played with the title but to varying success. While examiners were open to a wide range of interpretations, there were quite a number of candidates arguing for literal avian interpretations and imagining "birds" in a number of overly-imaginative ways. While titles can be important, it may be that candidates are trying to read too much into them on occasion.

Poetry commentary

The poetry commentary received some very engaged treatment by candidates who were clearly very invested with the characters in the poem and especially the speaker. The result was quite detailed and elaborate treatment of the speaker's reactions to the hugs and the differing experiences. While this level of engagement was positive for many, this did also lead many candidates to move away from an analysis of the poem and toward a presentation of their own philosophies of life, love and hugs. The most prevalent manifestation of this was to read the poem as a meditation on romantic love (informed particularly by the final few lines of the second stanza/verse) that limited some of the sophistication of the responses.

A side effect was, in many cases, a lack of treatment of place. More generally true in commentaries that were anxious to speak of romantic love, a sense of place was generally ignored. This tended to mean overlooking the first stanza/verse and the literal setting (two

women, the speaker and another) in addition to the notion of "house" with no one coming or going. Such an omission was not necessarily so significant but that these candidates often could do very little with later references to houses or finding "some place to go back to" which was more glaring. These interesting lines, then, were often ignored or not treated in significant ways.

Conversely, candidates that did grapple with place and location tended to be rewarded for their engagement. The descriptions of the houses, persons or emptiness revealed deeper consideration of the poem on the whole. Again, this suggested more distanced reading where candidates were sensitive not just to the clearly popular treatment of hugs and hugging but also to some of the self-questioning of the speaker and slight ambiguity around love, possession and the notions of connection or homelessness.
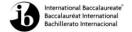
The final stanza/verse required attention in order to score better marks but examiners were generally open to a variety of approaches. Stronger candidates made something of the cosmic imagery, connection and place but also offered some treatment of the first line and the dangerous permission. Generally, candidates who were willing to explore these lines were rewarded but there were a fair number of candidates who chose to try and ignore these lines.

Candidates were, on the whole, very ready to attempt treatment of a variety of features in the poem including contrast, repetition and imagery. As suggested in the general points above, the true demarcation of success was whether this treatment was fluently integrated into the larger reading/argument or whether it appeared as tacked on or an aside. However, even when treatment was not always excellent, there was evidence that candidates were trying to engage with the poem authentically.

Finally, a few hearty candidates attempted to read the poem as a kind of meta-poetry. Poetry, in such cases, was seen as a kind of metaphorical hug or similarly enlarging opportunity for connection between people (or a kind of true "home space"). Such candidates often noted the singularity of the hug in the title in opposition to the multiple hugs within the poem. This approach represented a very sophisticated response but was typically rewarded only when this was coupled with more convincing and detailed analysis of other elements in the poem. There were several commentaries that would not do a particularly strong job of analysing more obvious elements (like those mentioned above) but seemed to *imply* sophistication by attempting this arguably more difficult line of thought. Responses were not rewarded for supposedly implicit understanding but only when fully demonstrated.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

- Commentary is meant to be an authentic engagement with literature that provides opportunities for students to demonstrate their intellectual agility with reading texts. Being taught to produce products that sound like commentary or criticism is rarely effective. Better commentaries always make sense and convey interpretations of the works that are heart-felt rather than forced. In some cases, this can be enhanced for focusing initially on the literal events/plot aspects before trying to extend to more figurative intentions. The best advice for teachers to help facilitate this skill is to expose students to a wide variety of texts and to work with more authentic

experiences in working through unknown texts independently.

- Good commentaries incorporate a consideration of literary features as part of their larger reading/interpretation rather than as additional, supplementary material or as the organizing principle for a response. Good commentaries include personal voice. Structure is something we all teach, but candidates should be encouraged to explore independently.

- Terms and phrases should be meaningful to candidates. The use of features like tone, symbol and motif, especially, need to be treated precisely. Candidates need to understand what it actually means to "symbolize" or "be a theme" and this needs to be demonstrated in commentary.

- Fluent, good quality writing does make a difference. Even candidates who were not able to extend the quality of their analysis were, with at least some level of general understanding, able to earn solid marks overall with good work in both organization and the use of language. Especially with the new rubrics, this makes a considerable difference.

- Purpose/effect/significance always needs to be considered.

- Analysis needs to be precise. Support needs careful and considered elaboration. Even ideas assumed to be self-evident should not be treated as such and need to be "proven" with specific textual referencing and elaborate explanation as to both how and why it is used.

- Larger interpretations need to be supported by the larger text. Candidates should be encouraged to "plug their interpretations back into the text" in order to verify that they are still reasonable and not merely associative. An interpretation based on a single word, line or element/aspect will likely not reinsert very easily and might then be re-examined. Avoid considering possibilities of what might have been or what might later be (i.e. avoid hypothetical considerations outside of the context of the work).

- Avoid narration.

- Teach students to plan responses. Candidates who seek to write as much as possible and think via their writing are not always successful with their responses. Strong commentaries should convey a clear line of reasoning, argument and development.

- Introductions and conclusions that are meaningful and meaningfully connected to the works are valuable. A ready-made or hyperbolic introduction and simple repetition as conclusion is not helpful in developing an argument.

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Standard level paper one

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 2	3 - 4	5 - 7	8 - 10	11 - 14	15 - 17	18 - 20

General comments

Perhaps because of the greater use of computers for the preparation of essays, some candidates' handwriting is receiving less practice and is subsequently less legible. This may affect marks awarded as examiners cannot award marks to what cannot be read.

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

In this session there were no particular difficulties in the examination insofar as many candidates showed good understanding of both prose and poetry. Examiners generally felt that the paper was accessible to a wider range of candidates and that it furnished plenty to write about.

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

The level of language was generally good, and most candidates used an appropriate register. Many opted for a linear approach to formulating their ideas and this gradual unfolding seems to have worked well. However, it is important to read the chosen question in its entirety before starting. Some candidates failed to comment on line 29 of the prose extract "But I do stutter, it is true" whereas the end of the poem "...eyes like hallways filled with smoke" was invariably commented on.　Perhaps this indicated a problem with timing. Many candidates provided evidence of planning before writing. Candidates showed a greater willingness to engage with the idea of connotation, and to attempt to infer from the writer's choices; for example, "pushed and shoved" emphasises the mother's haste to get the children into the Olds.

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

Prose strengths: A significant number of candidates saw the bigger argument, namely the idea that "the collective consciousness has assigned to fat a meaning". Some saw the discrepancy between "rickshaw fleet captain and land pirate" and the educated voice of the speaker.

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Prose weaknesses: A number of candidates failed to follow through on Badshah's argument lines 13-16, which examine the positive aspects of size, such as power, magnificence and strength. Others missed the importance of lines 19-26 in which he uses a logical argument to disprove the idea that he is fat.

Poetry strengths: some candidates commented intelligently on the effect of the child's perspective on events and noted that it gave the account a kind of objectivity based on observation: for example "My mother/watched my father, not the house". Others picked up on the sinister quality of the father's obsession, that it was not right to enjoy others' tragedies. The effect of using mythical beasts was also appreciated.

Poetry weaknesses: The mother's behaviour was not always fully realised, particularly her concern for her husband and his behaviour. Reasons for the father's envy of the Cadillac owner were not always stated. The effect of unemployment on the father needed fuller analysis in some cases. Where "wolf whine" was concerned, very few if any candidates picked up on the primitiveness of this image, the solitary howling coming from an atavistic source as a primitive response.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

- Points made in previous reports appear to have been noted and acted on, particularly the need to analyze connotation and to draw cogent conclusions. Please continue to teach this skill.
- Please clarify the use and punctuation of "however".
- Please be aware that merely identifying stylistic devices will not earn marks; their effects must be examined.

Higher level paper two

Component grade boundaries

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

General comments

George Hillocks, a pioneer in the field of teaching writing to students, once suggested that form always follows from the delivery of content. He found in his research that students who wanted to communicate their own ideas on a topic no longer worried about the intricacies of an assignment or a formula for writing but naturally conveyed their ideas. Though I have simplified this theory, it suggests something that examiners noticed in this session in relation to paper 2. candidates generally understand the task at hand—the general concept of a literary discussion in an essay—and they generally have a sound knowledge of their works.

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Most importantly, though, when candidates have found something that interests them in a text and in a question and are engaged with the task, they produce stimulating work that scores well. While examiners have noticed various good elements of performance such as detailed references to the texts and attention to literary conventions, and problematic areas of performance such as lack of attention to the entire question or a basic listing of features or elements, almost all examiners are more excited to note the moments when candidates (who we assume have a wide range of abilities) show a spark of insight and analytic grit.

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

Though there were many areas for which candidates were well prepared (see below) there were still areas of concern in regards to candidate performance. Problematic areas mentioned by examiners included the following:

- Candidates, while admirably focusing on the question, only had a partial grasp of the question or were not considering how an element might "govern," "drive," "affect," or be of some import in the works.
- Candidates would use details that showed knowledge but without at least developing discussion, approaching interpretation or pushing to evaluation, would not demonstrate strong understanding.
- Some candidates tend to make assertions about the effects of various conventions without offering support or rationale. This closely relates to candidates making interpretive assertions—perhaps good assertions, perhaps learned in class-- about works without justification or support (is Blanche really washing away sins when she takes a bath? what suggests this interpretation?).
- There are times when an artificial comparison between texts indicates a low level of understanding. Examiners have suggested, for example, that if a candidate is making easy, one-to-one comparisons between novels as disparate as Tess of the D'Urbervilles and Lolita, without some acknowledgement of the very different natures of the texts, there may be a fundamental lack of understanding of either the works themselves or the genre.
- Candidates sometimes attempt to make either transitions or a nod to comparisons by simply using words such as "however," "likewise," "Moreover," etc. without the following paragraph actually being linked or relevant to the preceding. Most strikingly, after "similarly" we often find something quite different.
- While there was frequent attention to literary features, there was less often a considered investigation of conventions of particular importance to the question at hand.
- Though the paper is written in an exam situation, candidates could be more attentive to conventions such as subject verb agreement, paragraphing and the underlining of work titles.

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

As suggested in the general comments, a majority of candidates had a clear sense of the task at hand and its particular demands. Candidates produced organized essays that were focused on the question and that used details from their works in order to come to an answer. Most candidates were clearly aware of the possible pitfalls in relation to paper 2: the comparative aspect, the expectation for discussion of generic conventions, and the need for detailed/specific support. As in the recent May session, examiners also noted that candidates produced fewer responses that seemed "prepared," and less frequently listed literary conventions without any discussion of meaning or effect. In addition, while in the past many candidates seemed to memorize lists of quotations and use those quotations whether they were appropriate, during this session candidates used quotations—and integrated quotations—more judiciously.

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

Question 1

This was a popular drama question. Some candidates had difficulty in narrowing in on exact motivations, settling instead on broad attributes such as "evil." When motivations were identified and discussed, however, students found some success. The biggest difficulties in relation to this question proved to be discussing "opposing" motivations and finding a way to show how these motivations (and their opposition) might "shape the material."

Question 2

Many candidates were able to make a case for characters who might strive for good, including those who have a problematic relationship with goodness (John Proctor, Willy Loman). It was more challenging for candidates to discuss whether or not the notion might govern a play. Many candidates did, however, go on to suggest that even in plays where characters don't seem to be perfected (or good) in the end (A Streetcar Named Desire was a frequent example) the notion that the character might be able to be good somehow shaped the play.

Question 3

With this question there were some dubious selections of "turning points" (with scant justification) and some candidates forgot to focus on "unexpected causes," but many candidates were able to find many plays where an unexpected, or perhaps seemingly insignificant, even not only caused a turning point but had impact on the play.

Question 4

Examiners were careful to allow leeway in discussing the pleasure a poet might experience in creating a poem. In the end, even without some benefit of the doubt, many candidates were

able to discuss ways in which a reading of a poem might suggest some pleasure the poet may have found (choosing words, creating an intricate rhythm, revealing a personal passion or secret). On the other side of the question, as long as a candidate was careful to make justifications and use support, there were some solid ideas presented.

Question 5

Some candidates had difficulty with this question because of the term "elegiac" and the implied definition in the question of poetry dealing with "things remembered or lost." The best responses manage to tie memories or loss with some clear effect. Candidates dealt successfully with poets ranging from Donne to Plath and were able to show how looking back with some emotion can affect meaning or the reader in different ways. Weaker responses tended to simply list "memories" and tended to define almost any experience expressed in a poem as a memory.

Question 6

This proved to be a popular question. Candidates who chose this question were able to recall the titles of poems and had something to say about how these titles related to the poems themselves. The difficulty in relation to this question was taking discussion beyond an initial impression based on the title to a discussion, through close analysis, of how an interpretation may or may not be affected by a title.
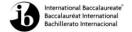
Question 7

This was a popular question with good responses that dealt with novels such as The Great Gatsby, A Handmaid's Tale, The God of Small Things and Lolita. Candidates were able to draw attention to specific moments of flashback or foreshadowing and often discussed not only the broadening of the time span (quite general) but how this broadening might be interesting as well as other possible effects of the techniques.

Question 8

The key to this question, perhaps, was in being able to show how "such ambiguities" were purposeful or meaningful in the text. Responses that simply listed ambiguities were not as effective as responses that showed that meaning in the text somehow depended on readers being mislead or being presented with ambiguities that were meant to spur thought. There were good responses, for example, that suggested that the ambiguities surrounding Jay Gatsby at the beginning of the novel were part and parcel of what the novel was really "about." A less successful response would simply point out that there were many ambiguous moments in the work.

Question 9

Though this question was not as popular as the other novel questions, there were some interesting responses here. It was important to go beyond a discussion of how characters violate social norms and to consider various ways in which suspense might be generated by

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these characters and why this suspense might be important to the meaning/effect of the works.

Questions 10 - 12

There were not enough responses to this question to allow for general comment.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Students often wonder what it takes to write a good Paper 2 essay. They worry, of course, about what they "have to" know about their texts and they often worry about the format of their responses. Time and again, examiners note that good paper 2 responses show "engagement" but we know, as teachers, that engagement is a rather loose term that doesn't offer anything concrete for students to consider in their preparation. Once again, however, it appears that the sense of an engagement in a response separates the very strong papers from the weaker papers. In looking at good Paper 2 responses, we can see that examiners are not looking for a quality that is not in the descriptors and they are not looking, necessarily, for originality, but they are looking for the kind of knowledge, understanding and general response that comes through when a candidate has considered the problem (question) at hand and brings to their consideration a depth of experience with the texts they have studied. In this session there were many responses that met the requirements of the programme or the task itself but the better responses showed detailed knowledge, a depth of understanding of construction and meaning and a consideration of the question that can only come from not just isolated preparation for the exam itself, but from a broad and coherent study of literature and what makes it special. That being said, teachers can certainly focus on some of the "mechanics" of approaching and writing paper 2: writing introductions with some detail and indication of the coming response, crafting coherent paragraphs, integrating quotations, principles of comparison, the art of choosing and reading a question. More importantly, though, we continue to advocate the following:

- Use of spontaneous, authentic (related to the discussion at hand, the particular moment in the work being discussed), frequent questions in class that are more like the questions found on the exam.
- Less use of direct teaching of particular knowledge or particular interpretations.
- Fewer activities in class that ask students to parse a text without suggesting how this might relate to issues of larger importance either in the works themselves or in the discipline.
- More frequent consideration of the problems presented by the text and to the larger problems of the discipline (why do plays have acts? Does a character have to be believable? Why do bad characters attract us and are they simply bad? Does sound matter in poetry? Is a toilet on the wall of an art gallery really art?

Standard level paper two

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 3	4 - 6	7 - 9	10 - 13	14 - 16	17 - 20	21 - 25

General comments

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

Candidates need to take the time to decode the question in terms of all its parts and address each part in the response. In question 3 for example, for a complete answer, the candidate must identify the turning points, explain what 'turns' in each case and show how this turning point arose out of some unexpected cause. Some questions contain more elements that need to be addressed than others.

Candidates often had difficulties integrating literary conventions into their responses. The skill with which the candidate addresses ones given in the question will gain recognition in criterion B. However, to score well in criterion C additional literary conventions that support the ones in the question also need to be discussed. Some questions (for example, questions 2 and 4) leave the field wide open in this regard.

Candidates often seem more prepared to reproduce teacher-led discussions about the texts than to produce an individual critical response. Many of these taught responses resemble one another to a high degree. One must recognize and give credit to candidates who have learned their lessons so well (and many of these responses do earn relatively high marks) but in the best responses candidates find their own path through the material using learned knowledge as evidence in the argument constructed at the time of the examination.

Candidates do not seem fully aware of the importance of relevant well-integrated quotations, and many responses at the lower end were just general commentaries, alluding (often inaccurately) to sections of text.

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

Candidates often had a detailed knowledge of the texts although understanding in many cases did not extend widely into understandings of the wider purposes of the texts in relation to the question.

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Candidates had a solid understanding of the structure of a literary response. While many introductions continue to be somewhat lacklustre and overly general in focus, they nevertheless are framed to the question and offer some direction.

Most candidates appeared to approach the task seriously and with the intent to do their best.

In many essays, candidates showed strength in register and in the overall presentation of ideas. For example, one candidate summed up a consideration of the kite as a symbol by writing 'the kite transcends its lowly origins (of brown paper, paste and string) to fly.' Another framed Shaffer's *Amadeus* as 'an intent to portray a historical feud in eternal relevance'.

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

Question 1

Many candidates did not seem to understand what is meant by the term 'motivation'. All too often the candidates addressed character traits or particular actions rather than motivations. These elements often do operate in close proximity to, and in conjunction with, one another; but they are not the same. Some credit was given, even in B, for the discussion of opposing behaviors and characters (more accurately described as 'competition' rather than 'opposition') as the element of motivation was often lying just below the surface even if it was not recognized as such. Much discussion pointed out characters in opposition leading to conflict but did not identify 'opposing motivations'.   In short, in the phrase 'opposing motivations', too much attention was spent on 'opposing' and not enough on 'motivations'.   Too many candidates simply worked with the 'selfishness versus generosity' phrase in the question, twisting characters in conflict so that one exemplified one condition of behavior and the opposing character the other.

Question 2

The soundest responses here often took issuance with the notion expressed in the prompt. This allowed for some interesting exploration of the nature of human beings in contrasting characters, such as Othello and Iago, or of the government officials (judge) and the three unarmed citizens in Friel's *Freedom of the City* as a means to consider the nature of good and evil. Many, many characters in drama do not always 'strive to do good', so candidates had plenty of material at hand to show this. Some of the least successful argued that some character strove to do 'good' in terms of their own attempt to 'better a situation' often materially, through wealth and social advancement More thoughtful responses argued that some characters thought they were doing 'good' but actually they were contributing to their own downfall or to that of others. There were widely varying interpretations of 'infinitely perfectible' with no single one of them producing a markedly better response than the others.

Question 3

The moments chosen for discussion in response to this question almost always could qualify as turning points. However, candidates did not always clearly identify what change happened at that moment. Those who did could often smoothly integrate additional dramatic conventions into the discussion: characterization, plot, tension, mood, atmosphere, sound and lighting among others. Too many candidates pointed out mistakes, misunderstandings or accidents in some form but without demonstrating the element of unexpectedness.

Question 4

It was accepted that it might be difficult for a candidate to assess the pleasure of the poet and to some extent, examiners' reports reaffirmed this, a surprising number of essays concerning Blake, Heaney and Hopkins managed to make a reasonably convincing argument. As far as the reader is concerned, the subjectivity of the source of pleasure opened up a wide range of possible sources including the pleasures brought by sound, imagery, a comforting or challenging idea – even pleasure at the apparent emotional mood of the persona (often claimed to be the poet him/herself). That is, candidates who were most successful delineated their understanding of 'pleasure' and sought to demonstrate it through consideration of aspects within the poem.

Question 5

A definition of 'elegiac', rather clearly presented in the question itself, was too often passed over by the candidate in favor of a general 'sadness' not clearly related to 'things remembered or lost'. Some responses seemed to assume that the elegiac nature of the poem spoke for itself and so a running commentary addressing some poetic devices would suffice. Blake's 'London' comes to mind. According to the definition, this poem could have been an apt choice. However, many candidates addressed this poem without identifying what was being 'remembered' or what was 'lost', more often simply noting what the persona was observing. Some quite good responses addressed Heaney's 'Mid-term Break' especially when the candidate was able to explore the ways and effects by which the sense of loss was accomplished.

Question 6

Some poems lent themselves to this question, and others less so. The question tested the ability of the candidate to keep the title in focus throughout the course of the discussion of the poem rather than simply launch into a straight-on commentary. Examiners varied in terms of their judgment as to the general quality of response here. It is possible that each examiner may only have read a very limited number of responses on which their opinion is based.

Question 7

This was a popular question for this genre and, as one might expect, produced a variety of responses in terms of quality. A number of types of time shifts that are not, strictly speaking, either flashbacks or foreshadowing were accepted as means of broadening the time span: recounting of events, memories, reveries, dreams, among others. Although the discussion

of these moments indicated reasonable knowledge and understanding of the moments themselves, the reason for – or effect of – the writer's widening the time span in order to tell the tale was less often considered. On the other hand, breaking the chronology in one way or the other often, but not always, prevented the common and generally unproductive plot summary approach.

Question 8

Ambiguity is a difficult and mature concept to deal with especially by candidates often looking to provide clarity in their responses. Still, ambiguity is a crucial element in portraying human behavior and so well worth the effort to address it. Many responses simply addressed dynamic character development where the reader goes on learning about the character in the course of the work. Up to a point credit was given for uncertainty or vagueness and for contrasting or contradictory character traits or situations, especially if the argument suggested intentionality on the part of the writer. Few responses focused on the specificity of the ambiguity with such oppositional phrases as 'On the one hand the reader is led to believe…' and 'On the other hand, it is also possible that…'. Very few responses pursued its ideas to the extent of addressing how this intentional ambiguity advanced the central ideas of the plays.

Question 9

There were some interesting responses here especially for the dystopian societies in which the social norms of those worlds are already in large violation to the social norms of our societies. Some candidates approached the question from the perspective of 'our' social norms while others approached it from the norms of the society presented in the text, dystopian or not. Either approach was acceptable.   The problems here arose if the social norms were not clearly declared in one way or another and if the idea of the suspense generated was not addressed. Candidates referred to conflict or tension more often than suspense: a question that reverberates in the mind of the reader based on conflicting possible outcomes of a particular moment of tension/conflict. Will Winston succeed in his personal defiance of the regime, yes or no? Will Jane be reunited with Rochester, yes or no? Will Waiyaki succeed in his saviour role and bring harmony between the opposing villages, yes or no?

Questions 10 - 12

Examiners provided no comments on these questions although occasionally one was chosen by mistake by a candidate who ought to have chosen elsewhere. This session was the last time that this sort of error was not subject to the application of a maximum mark.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Criterion A: Although the knowledge of the texts was sound and the understanding of the detail under discussion adequate on an immediate level, the highest marks for Criterion A are difficult to achieve without addressing the way in which the focus of the question contributes

to the central and larger impact of each work. Unless a candidate takes this step, it is difficult to say that very good understanding of the work has been demonstrated.

Criterion B: Candidates need to be trained to decode the question in such a way that all the operative terms of the question are identified and addressed in the response.   Making comparisons between texts needs to be a constant factor in class discussions so that when the time comes to compare them in the exam, the candidate will be able to make meaningful comparisons points out the specific points for comparison or contrast in the transitions between paragraphs rather than simply using a word or phrase such as 'Likewise….', 'Similarly…', 'On the other hand…" or 'Interestingly…' among others.

Criterion C: Please see previous comments in this report. Ensure that candidates know and understand the central conventions used in the chosen genre.

Criterion D: In the main, candidates do present a response that contains all the generally recognizable parts (introduction, body and conclusion) and so may gain a 3 on this criterion with some ease.   However, the challenge arises in terms of the development of the response. The two most common factors holding candidates back from gaining above a 3 are these: a) long narrative sections or displays of knowledge in some other form irrelevant to the question, and b) a relevant discussion but one lacking in details.   The most effective examples that contribute to achievement on Criterion D focus on carefully selected moments from each work that are then explored in detail. It is also often in these details that the candidate has a chance to reveal knowledge of some of the literary devices present at that point and so too gain rewards for Criterion C.

Criterion E: This may be the most difficult criterion of all to address in the classroom. Somewhere over the years certain candidates have developed a fluency, precision and forcefulness of voice superior to that of others. However, what can be addressed are many of the basics which, when attended to, combine to produce a response that is difficult to fault in terms of clarity and correctness.   Following are some of the most common errors that continue to undermine those two qualities:

- syntax – especially the long, run-on sentence. One realizes that in stressful exam circumstances candidates may commit errors in haste that they would normally not do. It is important to train candidates to produce their response with enough time at the end to reread checking for this type of weakness.
- Possessives and plurals – with a special nod in the direction of its and it's.
- Subject/verb agreement – this ever more common error does not seem to be one made in haste but in oversight of the current conventions on this matter, conventions which may be in the process of changing but ones which still say that the verb of the sentence should agree with its subject. It would appear that many candidates simply remember the last noun that has occurred before the verb and take the verb form from that, such as in "Blanche's trunk containing many items suggesting the Belle Rêve prosperous years is evidence in Stanley's eyes that he has been cheated" although many candidates are likely to write "…are evidence…' (or even '…are evidences…').
- Handwriting – candidates cannot be given credit for whatever is contained in illegible sections of the response. As soon as a teacher or school sees that handwriting is a

problem, it is probably too late to correct that within the time frame of the Diploma study. However, the IB is very sensitive to such needs and will allow assessment accommodations for those candidates for whom the school provides the required documentation.

- Spelling – it is likely that the candidate will misspell the same words on the exam that s/he has misspelled during the course of the study. These can be identified candidate by candidate although there are some words which teachers no doubt see misspelled across the group (separate, beginning, occurred, existence…for example).

- One notices an increase in certain types of vague language. For instance, the word "this" was used as the subject of a sentence far too often. For example, "This is implying that this will happen forever." "This allows Fitzgerald to say that unless something changes this will happen for the rest of time." "This drastically increases the time span covered by the narratives." Although extreme, these sentences are examples of the problem created by the unchecked use of "this" as an ambiguous pronoun.

- Candidates need to be encouraged to spend more than one sentence at the end of each paragraph relating the ideas in the paragraph back to the question. In many essays, candidates wrote a sentence at the end of a paragraph that only said, "And that creates suspense..." or "And this creates pleasure...".

- Schools are reminded that from the May 2015 exams, incorrect choice of text and/or genre question will make the response subject to the application of a maximum mark.

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