



GCE EXAMINERS' REPORTS

**ENGLISH LITERATURE (New)
AS/Advanced**

SUMMER 2009

Introduction

Summer 2009 is the first award of the new AS. For all specifications there have been changes to the content of the units, and in many new marking criteria have been introduced and unit weightings altered. Also in some subjects there has been the withdrawal of internal assessment. However, the biggest change in most subjects has been the reduction from a three to a two unit assessment.

In moving to the new specification awarding bodies have sought to maintain the overall United Kingdom standard for AS, as measured by the proportion of candidates achieving grade A and by the proportion achieving a pass grade in each subject. Comparability between 'old' and 'new' specifications is measured in terms of the overall subject outcome and not in terms of unit outcomes. Many of the units in the new specifications will bear little relation to those in the old specifications. Even where they are very similar, it is quite likely that outcomes will be different. The expectation is that the number of A grades at unit level will decrease in a specification where the number of units is reduced, whilst the number of passes will increase. The overall cash-in outcome, however, will be maintained. These same principles will apply to the new A level where a six unit assessment is reduced to a four unit assessment.

Statistical Information

This booklet contains summary details for each unit: number entered; maximum mark available; mean mark achieved; grade ranges. *N.B. These refer to 'raw marks' used in the initial assessment, rather than to the uniform marks reported when results are issued.*

Annual Statistical Report

The annual *Statistical Report* (issued in the second half of the Autumn Term) gives overall outcomes of all examinations administered by WJEC.

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ENGLISH LITERATURE
General Certificate of Education 2009
Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

LT1: Poetry and Drama 1

Principal Examiner: Cary Archard

Unit Statistics

The following statistics include all candidates entered for the unit, whether or not they 'cashed in' for an award. The attention of centres is drawn to the fact that the statistics listed should be viewed strictly within the context of this unit and that differences will undoubtedly occur between one year and the next and also between subjects in the same year.

Unit	Entry	Max Mark	Mean Mark
LT1	8667	60	35.4

Grade Ranges

A	47
B	40
C	33
D	26
E	19

N.B. The marks given above are raw marks and not uniform marks.

LT1: Poetry and Drama 1

General Comments

The majority of candidates were well prepared for this first summer LT1 paper: they showed knowledge and understanding of their three texts; they were clearly aware of the appropriate Assessment Objectives that had to be addressed in each section, and they answered relevantly. There was evidence, as in the January examination, of candidates using their time wisely to plan their responses. The majority had grasped the important core and partner text relationship and responses in Section A were almost all properly focused on the core poetry text.

Examiners were impressed with the quality of the papers, especially considering the specification has only been running for one year. Students and teachers are to be congratulated on a remarkable achievement.

Section A: Poetry post-1900

There were many answers that would have benefited from being shorter. There was still a tendency to write too much and not spend enough time planning and thinking. Candidates should be clear that length is not an advantage. Examiners are looking for well organised, coherent and focused responses. Candidates have time on this paper to re-read parts of their set texts and select from them.

It is worth repeating some of the advice given in the January report: candidates should write in some detail about at least two poems rather than range superficially over a number. Of course, once a degree of detail has been addressed, there is nothing to stop them examining other poems in order to develop and strengthen their arguments. The strongest responses avoided a too mechanical approach to the discussion of poetry, the sort of approach that works its way line by line, stanza by stanza, through the poem. Students are advised to select content and techniques which will help them produce a focused response.

While there were often fine discussions of the ways in which language creates meaning, there could have been more attention given to the form and structure of poems. Discussions based on an overall sense of the shape of a poem tended to be both more organised and pertinent. There were some unconvincing claims asserted for the effects of enjambment and rhyme – claims such as a simple, regular rhyme scheme had been chosen by the poet because it suited the subject of childhood. There were many fluent and articulate responses but there were also several which contained too many inaccuracies and poor syntax. Some candidates completely neglected inverted commas, forgetting to put them around titles and around quotations, the latter often left dangling on their own, lacking any syntactical link to a sentence.

Although the majority used the partner text appropriately to inform the core text, there were some who hardly mentioned their partner text at all, so failing to address that strand of AO3. There was a small number of centres who still seemed unsure about which sections of their chosen selected poems they should be studying, especially where Carol Ann Duffy was the core poet. The sections are clearly indicated on the exam paper but please check the online specification if you have any doubts. The other strand of AO3, 'informed by interpretations of other readers', was often neglected by candidates, some of whom seemed unaware of this requirement. At the other extreme, there were candidates who seemed determined to find alternative readings of every other line.

T.S. Eliot: Selected Poems (Core text)

(Prufrock and Other Observations, The Waste Land, The Hollow Men, Ariel Poems)

W.B. Yeats: Selected Poems (Partner text)

Question 2 was the more popular and candidates seemed to find the named poem helpful in developing their response. Some candidates found a degree of difficulty with Q1 in developing a coherent response. Having made the productive distinction between Yeats' personal memories of loved ones and friends and Eliot's more detached, impersonal approach, there was a tendency to become rather descriptive and repetitive. Stronger responses explored Eliot's writing about memories in terms of imagery and mood and in relation to ideas about time and purpose. Candidates handled the part of AO3, 'informed by interpretations of other readers', particularly well in relation to Eliot.

Philip Larkin: The Whitsun Weddings (Core text)

Dannie Abse: Welsh Retrospective (Partner text)

Both questions were popular. Examiners noted that candidates wrote very convincingly about these two poets. There were some outstanding responses. 'Ambulances' was the most popular choice of poem in Q3, but candidates chose to write about 'death' in relation to nearly every poem in the selection. Many offered 'An Arundel Tomb' as an alternative to the argument that in Larkin's poetry nothing outweighs the finality of death. Q4 caused some difficulty for those candidates who chose to write about the personas/voices of the poems. Although this approach strained the notion of characters a little, the main difficulty came in developing the response so as to avoid repetition.

Sylvia Plath: Selected Poems (Core text)

Ted Hughes: Poems Selected by Armitage (Partner text)

Candidates wrote thoughtfully about both questions. 'Wuthering Heights' was used particularly successfully in answering Q5. There was a tendency to write too much about Hughes, partly because many candidates wanted to bring in their biographical knowledge of these poets and in particular their relationship. This affected Q6 adversely, where candidates saw the question as an opportunity simply to write about the Plath-Hughes marriage. Candidates who chose 'Daddy' were usually on safer ground. However, 'You're' offered more limited possibilities. There were many strongly felt and engaged answers on these poets but also some evidence that candidates could be too influenced by prepared material, so that, for example, Q5 on the 'individual and nature' sometimes drifted into a discussion about relationships and other themes. Candidates should focus on the key words in the question and use their time to select appropriate poems.

Carol Ann Duffy: Selected Poems (Core text)

(*Standing Female Nude, The Other Country, The World's Wife*)

Sheenagh Pugh: Selected Poems (Partner text)

As in January, this was the most popular pair of texts, and many candidates celebrated Duffy's appointment as Poet Laureate. There were many thoughtful and focused responses, but there was also a significant number of responses on these questions which were based on inappropriate choices of poems. Q7 produced the stronger answers. Candidates based their discussions around the difficulties of growing up, its pleasures and pains and, in particular, examined the concepts of innocence and experience. Responses to Q8 were sometimes less focused and discussions of unhappiness and suffering moved into discussions of cruelty or characters because of some poor choices of poems. There were some centres where some candidates selected poems from sections of the 'Selected Poems' which had not been nominated for study. This is a rubric infringement, and candidates should be reminded of the specified sections printed on the paper.

Seamus Heaney: New Selected Poems (Core text)
(*Death of a Naturalist, Door into the Dark, The Haw Lantern*)
Owen Sheers: Skirrid Hill (Partner text)

On the whole, the answers on these poets were confident and well shaped. Q9 produced some wonderfully sympathetic and detailed responses on childhood in which a good address of AO2 stood out. There were some memorable discussions of 'Alphabets'. Responses to Q10 often dealt with Heaney's view of Ireland's history and the more personal history of his family. Writing about both or either was acceptable. The choice of poems was mostly appropriate and the range wide: from 'Requiem for the Croppies' to 'Clearances'. Some candidates were exercised by Sheers' youthfulness and made much of the brevity of his past in relation to Heaney's.

Eavan Boland: Selected Poems (Core text)
(*New Territory, The War Horse, The Journey*)
Clare Pollard: Look, Clare! Look! (Partner text)

Q12 was the more popular. Candidates wrote thoughtful discussions of Boland's poetry about the experience of being a woman, the role of a woman poet, and made interesting explorations of her allegorical style. The quality of AO2 was especially strong in such responses. Q11 received more uneven responses; there was some tendency to avoid the very direct reference to 'seeing' in the question – which could lead to rather unfocused essays. The strongest responses picked up on the acts of seeing in the poems (for example, choosing to write about poems about paintings) and the obvious link to the title of Pollard's book.

Section B: Drama post-1990

It is a requirement in this section that candidates should re-read the set extract and some responses to the drama questions would have been strengthened if students had spent more time looking closely at the extracts and selecting relevant material from them.

Many candidates showed impressive knowledge and understanding of their drama texts. The liveliness of many of the responses suggested that candidates had often been deeply affected by the power of these plays. The strongest responses integrated relevant discussions of cultural and social influences, illustrating confident appreciation of the significance of these contexts in the making of the text. With half of the marks allocated to context (AO4) in this section, some candidates needed to think more precisely about ways of addressing context in their responses. Links to other parts of the play were not always as clear as they could have been. It is useful to indicate which act and scene and part of the scene is being referred to. Links should be relevant and used to develop and support the response. There should also be clear evidence that the extract has been examined in some detail, not by simply describing the action and characters, but by selecting key moments in relation to the question and commenting on dramatic features such as setting, movement, lighting, sound, pauses, stage directions and the nature of the dialogue.

On the whole, there was more of a sense of the dramatic nature of these texts in the responses to this paper than was seen in the January answers. However, there were still students who wrote about the texts as though they were novels – and in some cases even referred to them as such. To score highly, candidates needed to show relevant knowledge of contextual influences, make two or three clear and appropriate links to elsewhere in the play and make convincing evidence-based suggestions about how an audience might respond to a performance.

David Hare: Murmuring Judges

Both questions were addressed confidently and there was strong evidence that candidates had researched the contextual influences on Hare very thoroughly. In Q13, the strongest responses selected relevant material from the extract in order to focus on paperwork/bureaucracy, chauvinism, other prejudices, and the perceived 'Boys' club' ethos of the police force. There was some useful focus on Sandra's soliloquy and the nature of the language used in the extract. Similarly, there was some useful close attention to the tense dialogue in Q14's extract, especially to the contrast between Irina's short comments and longer outbursts. Candidates found it difficult to hide their dislike of Sir Peter!

David Mamet: Oleanna

The strongest responses were those that focused clearly on the extract before (or while) making links with other parts of the play. With both the Mamet questions there was some tendency for candidates to drift into character studies. In relation to Q15, there was sometimes insufficient attention to 'presentation' though most commented on the importance of Carol's notes from Act 1, the tone of John's voice while reading the list and the effectiveness of the dialogue, especially the emphasised words. Candidates who recognise the importance of pause, tone, emphasis – these small but dramatic features – in Mamet tend to produce the more convincing responses. The inclusion of the words, 'to what extent', in Q16 offered candidates the opportunity to move beyond the problem of communication as the main cause of conflict and quite a number seized it and explored the effects of gender differences and teacher-student roles.

Brian Friel: Dancing at Lughnasa

There were many lively and engaged responses to the questions on this play. Most candidates seemed to have studied it with pleasure. Q17 produced some wonderful answers about the role of dancing in the play. Candidates wrote especially well about the social context in Ireland, the importance of the Catholic Church and poor social conditions in relation to dance, and also about links with music, paganism and ceremony. AO4 was often very confidently addressed in both questions. There was some danger in Q17 of writing too much about the female characters as real people and drifting somewhat from the practicalities of the drama.

Tom Stoppard: Arcadia

Both questions produced lively and thoughtful answers, illustrating how successfully students had engaged with this play. However, there was room for more attention to some of the dramatic features of the extracts; on, for example, props such as the apple and Plautus and the effects of witty dialogue. Candidates used their knowledge of the movement from Enlightenment to Romanticism very effectively in answering both questions. Yet there could have been more use made of some of the other intellectual contextual influences on Stoppard (to do with determinism, chaos theory, time and mathematical prediction) and of the effects of his interest in dramatic innovation.

Arthur Miller: Broken Glass

Candidates engaged strongly with the moral issues of this play. Answers also demonstrated a powerful sense of the effectiveness of Miller's characterisation. However, the focus on the dramatic qualities of the extracts could have been clearer and more detailed: the use of faces, for example, and the final position of the characters' bodies in the extract of Q22. There was some tendency in both questions to write character studies. Most candidates had some idea of the contexts in America and Europe (as seen from America) which Miller himself experienced and which affected his creation of the play but these were often described in a very general way. On the other hand, there were a number of students who integrated confident contextual knowledge very effectively into their answers.

Diane Samuels: Kindertransport

Candidates wrote about this play with evident pleasure, and there were very sophisticated and focused responses to both questions. The focus on the key words, 'German' and 'Jewishness' in Q24 was impressive, with students examining the ways in which Eva moves towards being English and Christian in this extract and during the play. Most students wrote confidently about contextual influences. Q23 sometimes produced a lack of focus on the extract's effectiveness as the play's ending, with candidates failing to address effectiveness in terms of the themes and actions of the rest of the play. Sometimes ideas and characters predominated but generally most candidates addressed AO2 effectively, often drawing attention to lighting and sound and movements on stage.

ENGLISH LITERATURE

General Certificate of Education 2009

Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

LT2: Prose Study & Creative Reading

Principal Moderator: Rhodri Jones

Unit Statistics

The following statistics include all candidates entered for the unit, whether or not they 'cashed in' for an award. The attention of centres is drawn to the fact that the statistics listed should be viewed strictly within the context of this unit and that differences will undoubtedly occur between one year and the next and also between subjects in the same year.

Unit	Entry	Max Mark	Mean Mark
LT2	9164	80	53.8

Grade Ranges

A	65
B	55
C	45
D	36
E	27

N.B. The marks given above are raw marks and not uniform marks.

LT2: Prose Study & Creative Reading

General Comments

Centres should note the following key points regarding this coursework unit in order to ensure that:

- Candidates address all AOs equally in section A;
- The right balance is achieved between core and partner text;
- In Section A, candidates consider how literary texts might be informed by the 'interpretations of other readers' (AO3);
- Tasks in Section A should enable candidates to address all the relevant AOs;
- Texts chosen as the stimulus text in Section B are of sufficient substance and challenge for study at AS Level.

There was a great deal of excellent work produced in this new unit and candidates produced some engaging and sophisticated responses to a wide range of texts in both sections. The most successful candidates wrote concisely, managing to balance the relevant AOs effectively. A number of candidates struggled to remain within the word limit in both sections and often penalised themselves as a consequence. Essays often resorted to narrative while creative responses lost focus. Many teachers had used the INSET programme materials, the specification, Teachers' Guide and LT2 Teacher Guidance available on the WJEC website to prepare candidates well and to ensure clarity in their own assessment.

Assessment was most helpful when annotation was accompanied by qualitative comments on the essays themselves and where summative comments addressed the AOs clearly. It is worth remembering the key words in the marking grid as a guide to assessment. Although AO2 in Section A, for example, includes 'increasingly appropriate textual support' for Band 3, there should always be evidence of the central feature of this AO - 'detailed critical understanding' - in order for work to be placed securely within the band. Centres should download from the WJEC website the correct forms for the sample mark sheet and the individual candidate coversheet, as some centres this year used either legacy specification forms, or copied the one in the original hard copy specification which has now been superseded by the online specification.

Section A: Prose Study

It was encouraging to see such a wide range of texts studied in this Section and many centres took the opportunity to buy in to the ethos of the specification in giving independence to their candidates. This independence was seen in the choice of texts and also in the choice of tasks. There tended to be greater personal engagement where a range of texts and/or tasks were considered by the same centre, while some candidates were stifled by a set task which was addressed in the same way, in terms of content and structure, by the whole centre. This 'catch-all' approach might have been helpful to the weaker candidates but certainly hindered others, particularly in AO1 where there was little opportunity to be creative or individual. A task which foregrounds the writer, such as 'How does Fitzgerald present', would benefit students in order to avoid a narrative approach to the essay. AO1 was also compromised by an inability to stay within the word limit. It is essential for all candidates to state the word count on their coversheets.

The finest essays were often the most concise. Task-setting has a role to play here again. The narrower the focus, the easier it will be to keep to 1500 words. Moreover, candidates should be rewarded highly not for writing everything they know but for choosing carefully the most relevant details.

Task-setting also affected responses, particularly when an AO was weighted strongly in the wording. When candidates were asked to consider 'social class' for example, the focus on AO4 led, in some cases, to a lack of detail on AO2 (form, language and structure). Indeed, there were far too many essays where AO2 was rarely considered and this also affected the connection between texts. When the analysis of the ways in which structure, form and language shape meanings was detailed the candidate had far more opportunity to make significant and productive connections between texts. In relation to AO3, there was also a tendency to spot general similarities and differences and to award these 'clear and appropriate comparisons' in the top band. Comparisons which could be developed in relation to the core text, so that the discussion of the connection always came back to ways in which it might affect a reading of the core text were the most productive. It is also worth remembering the balance between 'core' and 'partner'. Some essays became very similar to the Elit5 Comparison of Texts from the legacy specification while for others the 'partner' became the 'core' during the course of the essay. For this reason, detailed teaching of the 'partner' seemed to affect the focused analysis of the 'core'. The marking grid itself suggests that the majority of the essay should be focused on the core as all AOs carry equal weighting.

The best responses also addressed clearly the strand of AO3 which asks candidates to consider how **'literary texts are informed by interpretations of other readers.'** This was an area which was often neglected and which needs to be addressed at most centres. Coursework allows candidates to use their wider critical reading to aid their understanding not through merely quoting critics but by engaging with critical ideas in order to inform their own reading. As a consequence, it is expected that centres make the most of the opportunities here to support their students in preparing bibliographies along with their essays.

Some excellent addressing of AO4 was seen with some insightful use of biography, social, political, historical, ideological and personal contexts enabling students to gain a greater understanding of the texts. AO4 was less productive when used as an add-on paragraph in essays instead of addressing the 'significance' and 'influence' of the context or when comments were rather general, such as remarks about the subjugation of all women in the 19th century. Indeed, some comments were inaccurate ('Pride and Prejudice' wasn't written in 1927!) and blindly rewarding any contextual comment made for some generous marking. This AO provides an excellent opportunity for candidates to carry out some diligent research and to present their findings to their peers in a seminar type lesson in order to encourage discussion about the usefulness of context in analysing their texts.

Some very fine essays were produced in this section, perceptive and sophisticated, which were a pleasure to read and to moderate.

Section B: Creative Reading

Assessment tended to be more secure in this section with a clearer understanding of the band boundaries. Some teachers obviously enjoyed teaching this section and some of the summative comments on the creative responses were particularly helpful. Moreover, many candidates engaged thoughtfully with the creative process and wrote some mature and structured pieces, reflecting perceptively on their work in their commentaries. Although the short story was the most popular genre, it was a pleasure to read so many responses written in different genres.

The best responses were when students had engaged clearly with the stimulus text but had written subtle pieces which were clearly using their own voice. There was a tendency for some candidates to be rather dramatic, writing plot-driven stories rather than creating character. This became evident in the commentaries which were often rather general. When candidates wrote poetry there was a tendency for the centre to be rather generous in their marking. There is an excellent support document available on assessing poetry on the WJEC website. Teachers should encourage students to look carefully at genre and structure. Many candidates had little sense of genre and this not only affected the quality of their creative responses but also their commentaries. This focus would also aid candidates in shaping their writing, considering their audience and the way structure shapes meaning as they do so.

It was exciting to see the range of prose texts used here, from contemporary writers like Cormac McCarthy to very challenging novels such as Joyce's 'Ulysses'! However, it was a pity that some candidates penalised themselves by choosing **inappropriate texts** which stifled the creativity of their responses and the quality of AO2 in the commentaries. We advise teachers to be more vigilant in monitoring candidates' independent reading. Although some texts, such as Stephenie Meyer's 'Twilight' or novels by Jodi Picoult might be popular with younger readers, A level students should be encouraged to find more challenging and enjoyable texts which contain similar ideas. As there is such a wealth of literature to enjoy and to encourage pupils to read, some students have missed a wonderful opportunity to enhance and deepen the quality of their reading. **Next year, the stimulus text must be nominated and accepted before submitting coursework.**

A number of candidates presented re-creative writing, creating an extra chapter to a novel for example. These efforts struggled to be 'creative' and 'independent' and suffered as a result. As in Section A the best responses were often the most succinct, keeping within the 750 words. A loss of focus was, again, typical of longer responses.

Teachers should encourage students to avoid vague, generic comments in their commentaries when it comes to discussion of form, language and structure. Merely spotting techniques such as pathetic fallacy or imagery and considering how these benefited the 'flow' or 'effectiveness' of the writing made little engagement with the creative response. The lack of focus on structure in the commentaries also suggested that candidates need to be better prepared in this area. Perceptive writers also concisely considered AO2 for their stimulus text. Indeed, AO4 should not be solely thought of as the influence of the stimulus on their own writing but also the context of their own writing (and the stimulus), be it sociological, ideological, geographical, political and so on. Although some wrote very sensitively on a range of ideas, candidates might have been better served had they written from their own contexts rather than tackling issues and situations which are often difficult for even adults to comprehend.

Importantly, LT2 is a **prose study**. Using poetry or drama as a stimulus text is a **rubric infringement** and every effort must be made to ensure that students aren't punished for straying from the specification. While we have tolerated such infringements for the first year of the specification, next year it will not be possible. Commentaries also tended to 'overdo' the stimulus text and became rather lengthy. Moreover, the commentary isn't intended to be a point to point comparison with the stimulus text. Encouraging students to refer to the influence of the stimulus while keeping the main focus of the commentary on their own writing will also help candidates to stay within the word limit.

As with Section A there was some wonderful work to be seen in this section. Many students had been prepared well and wrote some impressive poems, essays, plays and stories. Commentaries engaged thoroughly with their own craft and ideas while also considering the stimulus prose text. There was plenty of evidence to suggest real engagement and enjoyment not just with the art of writing but also with the art of reading and that often made the process for the moderators one of real pleasure.



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