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# **GCE EXAMINERS' REPORTS**

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**GCE  
ENGLISH LITERATURE  
AS/Advanced**

**SUMMER 2018**

Grade boundary information for this subject is available on the WJEC public website at:  
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### **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**  
**Summer 2018**  
**Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced**  
**UNIT 1: PROSE AND DRAMA**

**General Comments**

There were many impressive responses to a variety of lengthy texts and it was pleasing to see many candidates balancing the AOs and discussing the question in an autonomous and often sophisticated manner. More specifically, the most successful responses kept a clear focus on the question and used close textual analysis as a springboard into relevant discussion of context and alternative readings. Nevertheless, some candidates still relied on pre-rehearsed essay plans which had little relevance to the question. This year, this was particularly the case for candidates responding to *Lady Windermere's Fan*.

Once again, *Jane Eyre*, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, *Doctor Faustus* and *A Streetcar Named Desire* were, by far, the most popular texts but it was pleasing to see a slight increase in the number of candidates studying *Top Girls*. By contrast, it was disappointing to see a decrease in popularity of *North and South* as those candidates who did respond to this text were able to successfully weave together textual analysis with relevant contextual detail: indeed, *North and South* is a context-rich text.

**Section A: Prose Fiction Pre-1900**

**Points for Consideration: Extract**

**(i) AO1**

- Once again, candidates must overtly engage with, and track through, the extract; examiners are not able to award the higher marks for responses which make irrelevant comments about other parts of the text, context or alternative viewpoints. It should be remembered that AO3 and AO5 are not assessed for part (i).
- Some candidates lacked focused, critical engagement with the extract and drifted into a narrative response. It is important to remember that a narrative re-telling of the plot is self-penalising.
- As stated in the 'information for candidates' section on the front cover of the Unit 1 paper, it is advised that 20 minutes is spent on Section A, part (i). A significant minority of candidates spent too long on this question which affected the quality of their part (ii) response. It is advised that centres provide candidates with timed practice to avoid timing issues.

**(i) AO2**

- Once again, it was pleasing to see many candidates comment on writer's techniques, in addition to the use of language, when exploring the ways in which meaning is created. However, in some cases, candidates simply embedded quotations in order to produce a narrative re-telling of the extract with limited analysis. It can be useful to think why a writer has used a specific word or technique and to discuss the connotations displayed.

## Points for Consideration: Essay

### (ii) AO1

- Effective planning is vital for candidates to produce an effectively structured and coherent response to the question. In order for candidates to be able to do this in the advised time of 40 minutes, it is important that teachers allow pupils the opportunity to complete timed essay practice under exam conditions.
- There was a balance of responses whereby some candidates chose to focus on character while others explored two separate parts of the novel: both are valid approaches.
- As discussed at CPD training, centres should inform candidates that the extract should be used as a 'springboard' into their essay and that frequent textual references from the extract are to be discouraged. Once again, some candidates simply re-visited the extract with very little acknowledgement of other parts of the text.
- In a minority of cases candidates relied too heavily on rewriting what were clearly pre-rehearsed responses. Centres should encourage candidates to take an independent and individual approach to the specific question.
- Expression continued to raise concerns. Once again, candidates' use of an informal, colloquial register and inability to maintain an academic discourse affected their mark for AO1. Centres should also discourage candidates from using technical terms taken from English Language as these were often 'shoe-horned in' and hindered literary analysis.

### (ii) AO2

- As stated in previous Principal Examiner's Reports, a significant minority of candidates embedded quotations without discussing how meaning is created, producing a narrative-driven response. These candidates often scored highly for concepts (AO1) but were less successful with their analysis (AO2).
- An understanding of the characters as constructs is important.
- Centres should advise candidates that, although this is a closed book exam, they are expected to integrate and analyse relevant quotations from across the text. It is not the case that a candidate must use a lot of quotations, but those they do use should be relevant and should support the argument they are making.
- Once again, it is useful to emphasise that some of the more successful responses used AO2 as an anchor for AO3 and AO5.

### (ii) AO3

- Once again, the most successful responses remained focused on the significance and influence of contexts, using relevant information to construct an analytical discussion of the text.
- Centres should advise candidates that the closer the link between the contextual point and the text, the more successful the answer is likely to be. Indeed, the strongest responses linked specific contextual ideas to specific textual support from the prose.
- Once again, due to the heavier weighting of this AO, a significant number of candidates wandered away from the question to produce lengthy paragraphs of unnecessary contextual information which seemed pre-rehearsed. As stated in previous Principal Examiner's Reports, contextual references, including biographical detail, cannot be rewarded for its own sake.
- Candidates are, again, advised to use the formula 'task-text-context' to ensure that context informs rather than drives their response.

(ii) **AO5**

- Candidates must use other relevant opinion to **inform** their **own discussion** of the text and build a **personal response**. Indeed, the stronger responses used alternative views to create a sense of debate.
- As seen previously, some candidates quoted lengthy sweeping statements from critics and did not fully integrate them into their own argument.
- Centres should advise candidates that there are a number of ways to gain marks for AO5:
  - Engaging with specific critical views (i.e. literary criticism)
  - Engaging with critical perspectives i.e. (Marxism/feminism)
  - Offering multiple readings of characters/events etc.
- There were some cases where candidates did not include any alternative readings or even any tentative vocabulary (such as 'perhaps'). These candidates can only be awarded zero marks for this AO.

## Notes on Texts

### Jane Austen: *Sense and Sensibility*

There were some confident and sophisticated responses to both the extract and the essay question: many used the extract as a 'springboard' into a wider discussion of the text. It was also pleasing to see some candidates exploring the significance of the structure of the extract and the way in which the passion of Marianne is set in contrast to the quiet calm of Elinor. With regards to the essay's focus on the relationship between secrecy and friendship, some candidates drifted away from the question to talk generally about secrets without specifically exploring the way in which various friendships are shaped by secrets.

### Charlotte Brontë: *Jane Eyre*

As seen previously, *Jane Eyre* was the most popular choice of pre-1900 prose text across Wales and so a variety of responses were seen. The majority of candidates were able to engage with the extract's discussion of Bertha's madness and the way in which an implicitly supernatural element shapes her depiction. The more successful candidates acknowledged the structure of the passage and commented on Brontë's technique of Jane learning about Bertha's fate from a stranger's perspective: indeed, a few candidates explored the contrast between the speaker's tone of gossip and Jane's desire for facts. There were some strong responses to the essay question, and the best answers were those who conflated the AOs rather than dealt with them compartmentally. It was pleasing to see a variety of approaches to the essay question. More specifically, the most successful candidates explored different types of violence – rather than, for example, only focusing on Brocklehurst – and explored events/characters from both the beginning and end of the text. Once again, centres should take note that bland, sweeping statements about mid-Victorian society did very little to allow candidates to access the top bands.

### Elizabeth Gaskell: *North and South*

A limited number of candidates responded to *North and South*. Those who did, however, often commented on the way in which Gaskell uses a belligerent tone and language of sacrifice to depict Nicholas as hard-headed and determined. Likewise, candidates were able to engage with the essay's focus on reform and the various characters' attitudes towards it.

### Charles Dickens: *David Copperfield*

Although this was not a popular choice of text, examiners did see some engaged responses for both the extract and essay questions. The changeable depiction of Rosa Dartle was discussed by many candidates with some exploring the significance of Dickens's use of the language of power and physical aggression in regard to this unconventional female.

Likewise, there were some perceptive essay responses as candidates took a variety of approaches when discussing both the power and powerlessness of women. Candidates' answers were strongest when they wove specific contextual information together with close textual analysis rather than making sweeping generalisations about Victorian women.

### **Thomas Hardy: *The Mayor of Casterbridge***

Once again, this proved to be a popular text and examiners saw responses of varying quality. In a number of extract responses, candidates explored the way the narrative perspective reveals Whittle's fondness and sense of loyalty for Henchard, depicting the protagonist as a flawed but tragic figure. It was disappointing, nevertheless, to see some candidates lose focus on the extract and drift into a narrative re-telling of Henchard's story and the events that led up to his death. There were some strong responses to the essay question with some candidates choosing to explore the effect of psychological as well as physical suffering. Likewise, a few candidates countered the statement in the question, and, whilst this is not a requirement of this section, it did allow candidates to score marks for AO5 as this approach allowed them to debate different readings of the text.

## **Section B: Drama**

### **Points for Consideration**

#### **AO1**

- As was noted last year, it is advised that candidates spend 40 minutes on Section B so strict timings are essential in Section A in order to prevent candidates from running out of time and producing underdeveloped responses for Section B.
- Weaker responses listed dramatic techniques with little comment on the dramatic effect. Such responses inevitably lacked clarity and relevance.

#### **AO2**

- Yet again, use of quotations was very impressive, given that this is a closed book question. Indeed, it was pleasing to see the more successful candidates using close textual analysis to discuss the ways in which meaning is created. Nevertheless, not all candidates wrote about the text as drama. It is important that centres encourage pupils to make full use of their knowledge of dramatic devices – such as props and staging – and frequently refer to the audience.

#### **AO3**

- This AO is heavily weighted and so some candidates wandered away from the question and produced lengthy, irrelevant and, at times, pre-rehearsed, paragraphs on context. It is vital that centres discourage this approach as the candidates who scored highly were those who drew upon a range of specific contextual material and avoided generalised statements about the time periods. Some candidates were able to make thoughtful comments about the contexts of reception.
- It is worth repeating the point from last year's report that candidates should guard against extensive use of biographical material as context. Whilst this can be informative, it needs to be handled carefully and clearly linked to wider contextual issues.
- Once again, centres are to advise candidates to use the formula 'task-text-context' to ensure that context informs rather than engulfs the response.

#### **AO5**

- As with Section A, candidates must use other relevant opinion to inform their own discussion of the text and build a personal response. Centres should advise

candidates that there are a number of ways to gain marks for AO5, as mentioned earlier in this report.

- There were some cases where candidates did not include any alternative readings or even any tentative vocabulary (such as 'perhaps'). These candidates cannot be rewarded for this AO.

## Notes on Texts

### **Christopher Marlowe: *Doctor Faustus***

This continued to be a popular choice of text and examiners saw many perceptive and confident responses. The majority of candidates chose to answer Question 6 and many successfully debated the view that 'Mephostophilis is **primarily** responsible for Faustus's damnation', commenting on ideas of Christianity and the significance of context to inform their analysis. Likewise, there were numerous strong responses to Question 7 with many exploring the significance of allegorical figures as a dramatic technique as well as the influence of morality plays.

### **Oscar Wilde: *Lady Winderemere's Fan***

It was pleasing to see an increase in the number of candidates responding to this text as well as a balance in popularity between Question 8 and Question 9. It is important to note that the most successful candidates followed the task-text-context formula and there were many examples of candidates using textual analysis as a springboard into a discussion of contextual influences. However, the weaker responses focused too heavily on irrelevant biographical information and centres should encourage candidates to analyse both language and dramatic techniques in order to drive their discussion rather than including long paragraphs of pre-rehearsed contextual detail.

### **Tennessee Williams: *A Streetcar Named Desire***

As was the case last year, this was overwhelmingly the most popular choice of drama text. There was a balance of candidates responding to both questions and examiners read some confident and perceptive discussions of the play. Nevertheless, it is important to note that, at times, candidates seemed to merge the two questions together and so it became unclear which question was being answered. In order to avoid this happening in future, candidates are advised to ensure that they spend an appropriate amount of time planning out their response so that their argument is clear and they don't compromise their marks for AO1.

### **Caryl Churchill: *Top Girls***

It was pleasing to see an increase in the number of centres choosing to study this text and examiners saw some interesting responses which successfully used contextual detail to illuminate their discussion and analysis of the play. Indeed, the strongest responses clearly engaged with the text as drama, exploring the effect of dramatic features such as the overlapping dialogue to create effect.

### **Joe Orton: *Loot***

A very limited number of candidates chose to study this play: there were fewer candidates responding to it than last year. Those responses seen demonstrated a clear understanding of the comic effect of farce and the impact of black comedy. It was pleasing to see a lack of dependence on biographical detail as well as a clear understanding of the effect of dramatic techniques such as props and staging.

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**UNIT 2: POETRY POST-1900**

**General Comments**

Examiners were happy to note that many centres had acted upon last year's report and that some weaknesses have been addressed. Some candidates responded to the texts with perception and sophistication but it was disappointing to see an increase in rubric infringements in both Section A and Section B which had a highly detrimental effect for many candidates. Examples of specific rubric infringements, and how to avoid them in future, are detailed in the relevant sections. Yet again, some candidates had answered Section B before Section A. However, some candidates dedicated too much time to Section B leaving their Section A answers incomplete. In some cases, this affected their marks for the section and we would like to emphasise again for centres to provide more timed practices to avoid rushed and incomplete responses.

Duffy and Larkin was again a popular pairing as was Sheers and Heaney. More responses were also seen on Hughes and Plath but only a small minority of centres choose to study Thomas and Lewis and Lawrence and Clarke.

**Section A: Critical Analysis**

Many perceptive responses were seen with some writing in great detail and length for the time allowed. However, some answers were overly concise barely reaching two sides of the answer booklets. These responses tended to be limited, lacked close analysis of the texts and did not always answer the questions set in enough detail. As we recommend candidates to spend approximately 45 minutes on this section, it is expected that candidates write in some detail. Some candidates answered both questions in Section A, a rubric infringement. Although examiners marked both responses and awarded the highest mark, the responses were invariably too brief and frequently infringed into time which should have been used for Section B.

Other rubric infringements included many detailed references to context, critical views and, concerningly, answering on a poem not noted on the examination paper.

**AO1**

- Many candidates wrote general analyses on the named poems without focussing on the theme noted. Although aspects of the responses touched upon the themes, much of the essays lacked application to the questions posed.
- As accuracy in spelling, grammar and punctuation is one of the foci of AO1, some candidates' marks were negatively affected by careless errors in expression which led to a lack of clarity.
- Informality in register and tone was still a problem for many candidates. Referring to the poets by their first names and voicing their opinion on the poets' lifestyles does not equate to an academic register.
- Fewer candidates used linguistic terminology usually seen in English Language A level this year. Some terms, of course, overlap but some essays were hampered by

excessive (and not always correct) use of linguistic terminology, especially when not linked to literary analysis.

## **AO2**

- Examiners saw some detailed and confident analysis of the poems chosen, many with a sophisticated balance between close examination of techniques used and the writer's intended meaning.
- Some candidates only dealt with a stream of implicit readings. While these have their place, some literary analysis based on techniques and effect would improve the overall quality of these responses.
- Conversely, some responses depended on "technique spotting" without any detailed comments. This approach limits the marks awarded and would be improved considerably with an examination of the effect of the techniques on the reader.
- Examiners noted that the strongest responses used a well-chosen selection of quotations and did not attempt to analyse the whole poem within the time given.

## **Edward Thomas**

Although not a popular choice, examiners commented on some perceptive and thoughtful responses focussing on Thomas' use of imagery and language. However, in some cases, contextual details of Thomas' depression were far too prevalent and, in a minority, dominated the essay.

## **Alun Lewis**

This was a less popular question than Q 1. Nevertheless, some responses offered a perceptive analysis of the poem and it was pleasing to see candidates analyse the mythological and animalistic imagery of the text. A small number dwelt for too long on Lewis' background and his socialist views.

## **D H Lawrence**

Very few candidates responded to this question although there were some very sound answers dealing with Lawrence's use of imagery and the poetic voice. Some responses drifted into contextual detail by discussing Lawrence's personal views on organised religion.

## **Gillian Clarke**

A very limited number of candidates attempted this question. Some dealt well with Clarke's use of imagery and creation of atmosphere with stronger responses commenting on Clarke's use of structure.

## **Ted Hughes**

This was a very popular choice of poem. Examiners commented on many confident responses which dealt with Hughes' language and imagery very well and highlighted the differences between the jaguar's attitude towards imprisonment and the other creatures' acceptance. It was pleasing to see a lack of AO3 included in the vast majority of responses, although a few candidates tenuously linked the zoo to Hughes' agricultural background.

## **Sylvia Plath**

This was a less popular choice than 'The Jaguar' although there were some fairly strong responses to the poem which dealt with Plath's use of tone and poetic voice well. Plath's struggle with her mental health was discussed in a small minority of responses but most candidates kept their focus firmly on AO1 and AO2 only.

## **Philip Larkin**

This was a popular choice where most candidates engaged with Larkin's overall depiction of love with some level of success. The strongest responses discussed the ambiguity of Larkin's message, exploring his cynicism alongside the seemingly sensitive ending. Some candidates, however, focused only on Larkin's scepticism which did not prove to be as

successful. We would also recommend that candidates refer to the last lines of the poem as they are frequently crucial to the poet's message, particularly so in this case.

### **Carol Ann Duffy**

This was one of the most popular choices where many candidates responded successfully. Many candidates dealt with Duffy's use of brutal metaphors and similes well but some responses were too general and lacked focus on Duffy's portrayal of school life. Some candidates slipped into AO3 with over-detailed descriptions of the Aberfan disaster which did not aid their responses.

### **Seamus Heaney**

This was a less popular choice than Sheers' poem. Examiners commented on many successful responses which discussed Heaney's fear in depth. Some weaknesses included an incomplete reading of the poem with little or no mention of the badgers symbolising the IRA. There was also, unfortunately, very little reference to Heaney's use of the anecdotal tone throughout the poem.

### **Owen Sheers**

This proved to be a very popular choice with some interesting and original observations made on the effect of war. Many candidates commented on Sheer's use of personification and aural effects with some success although many would have benefited on a closer focus to the question. A minority of responses dealt with a very limited number of quotations from the poem, leading to a very narrow approach which didn't always answer the question significantly.

## **Section B: Poetry comparison**

### **AO1**

- Planning remains a key element in this section as balancing all five AOs needs clear structuring. Stronger responses in this section usually showed clear evidence of planning. It is recommended that candidates spend 10 to 15 minutes of their 1 ¼ hour planning their essays as structuring and developing their argument is crucial.
- Sadly, many rubric infringements were seen this year, mainly with candidates focusing on fewer than the four poems required. In some cases, candidates only responded to two poems despite managing to write extensively and completing their essay. We would like to remind centres to emphasise the need to use four poems (two from each poet) to their candidates.
- It was pleasing to see fewer candidates using poems named in Section A. This also constitutes a rubric infringement and can have a highly negative effect on marks.
- Likewise, although not a rubric infringement, a few essays contained references to up to eight poems which led to a superficial coverage of the texts.
- Some candidates also dealt with poems not in the prescribed sections or lists for Thomas, Lewis, Hughes and Lawrence.
- Informality continues to be a problem with many candidates writing in a non-academic register.

### **AO2**

- Stronger essays included an analysis of specific textual evidence as a link to contextual detail.
- Some candidates analysed their chosen poems in full, tracking through each line. This is unnecessary and time-consuming.

- Examiners noted that it was pleasing to see some thoughtful and purposeful discussion of the poets' use of structure as well as close analysis of language and literary techniques.
- The use of linguistic terminology should be restricted. While it has some value, it is invariably used without being developed into how the writer has used it to create meaning.

### **AO3**

- Contextual details were most successful when linked to specific aspects of the poems chosen while also linked to the question. Some original contextual links were seen but some, unfortunately, were not always relevant to the question.
- Band 5 answers made excellent use of specific context linked to poems/ quotations and included social and historical context not merely general biographical detail.
- Context was woven into the essays more this year and not “tagged” on to the end of responses. However, it was slightly worrying to see that some candidates had omitted AO3 altogether.
- The inaccuracy of some contextual detail is still a matter of concern as some candidates referred to incorrect birthdates, locations and relationships.
- Examiners saw many underdeveloped contextual links. As this AO is worth 20 marks, specific details are recommended.

### **AO4**

- Many excellent and perceptive connections were made between texts with the strongest discussing similarities and differences while using specific quotations or commenting on the poets' use of techniques. However, due to lack of planning, links in some responses were very sparse.
- Stronger responses included connections throughout and not just after the analysis of two poems.
- Many confident connections were made when dealing with how the poems affected the reader.
- It is recommended that candidates develop their links as many stated the connection between the poems but limited their marks by failing to expand upon their ideas.
- Attempting to link four poems simultaneously is unwise as it almost inevitably leads to a superficial approach.
- Centres are reminded that linking poems by the same poet provides a limited scope for discussion.

### **AO5**

- In the third year of the specification, it was pleasing to see how few candidates omitted this AO.
- More perceptive candidates dealt with this element with confidence and sophistication, weaving their critical discussion throughout their responses.
- Some candidates named critics and provided quotations from their sources which should be regarded as a prompt for critical discussion. Unless the candidate develops the view by linking it to the poem/ quotation, their marks are limited.
- Likewise, examiners again saw the overuse of “arguably” or “perhaps” without a following interpretation or discussion. This approach could limit the candidate to Band 2 as they only “acknowledge” an interpretation.

### **Thomas and Lewis**

Examiners read some interesting and well developed responses on the texts with the strongest candidates linking Lewis and Thomas' poems with confidence. The strongest responses to Q 11 dealt with Thomas' ties to Hampshire through his portrayal of country life and Lewis' ambivalent relationship with Wales. However, some candidates overemphasised

the poets' depression in response to Q12 while ignoring other "personal troubles" facing them. It is vital that centres teach only the prescribed list of poems as some candidates lost marks referencing poems not on the list.

### **Lawrence and Clarke**

A very small number of candidates studied these texts but many answers displayed a generally well balanced approach to the AOs required although very few commented on the poets' use of dialect/ dialogue. Connections between Lawrence and Clarke's poems were interesting but examiners would remind centres that specific text based links are generally more successful than merely context based links. . It is vital that centres teach only the prescribed list of poems as some candidates lost marks referencing poems not on the list.

### **Hughes and Plath**

Question 15 was by far the more popular of the two questions with many candidates successfully exploring Hughes and Plath's contrasting depiction of death in their poems. The most successful responses examined elements beyond Plath's death or suicide attempts. A recurring issue with this pairing is that some candidates over-emphasise the relationship between the poets without considering their influences beyond that relationship .Very few attempted Q16 but, in general, their focus was clearer and avoided

### **Larkin and Duffy**

Larkin and Duffy continued to be a very popular choice for centres and therefore a wide range of responses were seen by examiners. Both questions proved to be popular with the most successful answers including some perceptive and well selected contextual detail. Some responses lost focus on the "superficiality of society" in Q17 and examined the portrayal of society in general. Very few also displayed a clear understanding of Larkin's satirical tone in many poems selected for this question. Sweeping statements about the poets' private lives were prevalent again, with some commenting on Duffy's sexuality and Larkin's bachelorhood as "lost opportunities".

### **Heaney and Sheers**

Q19 was clearly the most popular choice with this pairing producing some confident responses to Heaney and Sheers' depiction of love. Examiners saw a range of responses using a generally relevant choice of poems although many concentrated solely on the poets' romantic relationships at the expense of a wider focus on their love for family or friends. Q20 responses made use of a broader range of poems. AO3 in responses to both questions tended to be dominated by Heaney with references to his marriage and his life in Ireland and California at the expense of Sheers.

## ENGLISH LITERATURE

### General Certificate of Education

Summer 2018

### Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

## UNIT 3: POETRY PRE-1900 AND UNSEEN POETRY

### Section A: Poetry pre-1900

#### **Chaucer: *The Merchant's Prologue and Tale***

Most candidates recognised the heavy irony dominating this extract and didn't take May at her own words. The strongest responses drew attention to the narrator, the Merchant, and how his attitudes informed the tone and values of the passage, revealing May's real intentions.

Most candidates engaged successfully with this question. Excellent use was made of contexts such as religious attitudes to women, Biblical references and other religious texts, of how courtly romance depicted women and of the wider Canterbury Tales in particular the merchant's allusions to Griselda and the Wife of Bath. A significant number of candidates argued that the author, Chaucer, might be seen as an early feminist, suggested by the ways Proserpina and May 'defeated' their husbands.

#### **Donne: *Selected Poems***

Many candidates wrote confidently about the sustained use of the personification of death, of the 'pictures' and 'sleep' conceits, and of rhythmic emphasis on key words such as 'proud' and 'Might', and of the powerful monosyllabic rhythms in lines four and fourteen. Many also drew attention to the ways in which Donne used the sonnet form. Candidates who took a less selective approach and who tried to explain their way through the poem, tended to meet difficulties of interpretation. There seemed to be some centres whose candidates were unfamiliar with the Holy Sonnets.

The strongest responses were often seen where candidates chose a couple of love poems ('The Relic' and 'A Nocturnal on St Lucy's Day' were favourites) and a couple of religious poems (one of the Holy Sonnets and 'Hymn to God my God, in my sickness' were popular) and focussed clearly on how Donne dealt with death in these poems. A significant number of responses, however, looked at love or religion but then barely touched on or ignored the requirement to relate these issues to death. Other candidates struggle to answer the question because they chose inappropriate poems. There did appear to be a small number of centres where only a small selection of Donne's poems had been studied. There was confident knowledge shown of religious, Renaissance and new worlds and discoveries contexts. Personal, biographical information is used in Donne responses, but it is not used as liberally as it is with Keats.

#### **Milton: *Paradise Lost Book IX***

Milton was the least popular choice. Candidates wrote confidently about the complexity of Eve's character, and the way in which her tone changes from confident to hurt in these lines. There were sensible discussions about the effects of alliteration and enjambment and generally a comfortable handling of Milton's syntax and style. Some candidates wrote perceptively about Eve's relationship with Adam.

Candidates seemed well prepared for a question on women and marriage. They made relevant use of seventeenth century religious debates about the purpose of marriage, of Milton's own marriages and views on divorce, and on the role of women in the family and

wider society. In Milton responses, candidates generally show confident knowledge of relevant contexts; perhaps of all the poets in Section A, Milton has the clearest political and religious affiliations.

### **Keats: Selected Poems**

These two opening stanzas of 'The Eve of St Agnes' seemed to invite very detailed examinations. Many candidates drew attention to the excessively cold atmosphere, to the dark religious mood, and to the Gothic elements in the references to death and the ecclesiastical setting. The confident, knowledgeable approach of some candidates suggested they had closely studied the poem. Conversely, some candidates struggled to find their way, suggesting they had less experience of Keats as a narrative poet.

Most candidates were comfortable with this question. They often focussed on the ways Keats wrote about love in 'Ode to Psyche' and 'Lamia' (making use of legend) and 'La Belle Dame sans Merci' and 'Isabella' (examples of medieval romance). However, there were a significant number of candidates who simply wrote about love. Examiners felt that some candidates might have suffered because they had studied a relatively narrow range of poems, perhaps just the Odes. If that had been the case then it would probably have restricted their ability to show how Keats made use of legend and medieval romance to write about love. Some candidates used Keats's personal life as a contextual influence in pertinent and appropriate ways, often supporting their suggestions with references to his letters, for example. Unfortunately, there were others who *asserted* Fanny Brawne to be the source of most of the poems and many of his, usually unhappy, experiences. Biographical contexts work well when they are closely linked to the texts. Candidates, who looked beyond the personal, wrote confidently about the influence on Keats's writing of the Romantic Movement, of the renewed interest in Greek art, and of the social changes brought about by developments in industry and politics.

### **Rossetti: Selected Poems**

Candidates responded very well to 'Confluents' and wrote confidently about Rossetti's use of nature, the extended conceits, the effects of the short lines and intricate patterns, and the change of moods in the poem. This seemed an especially accessible poem which elicited positive responses. Some candidates thought 'Yet a little while', a short poem which came after 'Confluents' on the same page, was part of the poem and treated it as though it were an epilogue. This was an addition that didn't benefit or disadvantage anyone.

Some candidates argued that uncertainty was not the same as doubt, the latter being darker. Most candidates engaged with the key words directly and explored their significance in appropriate poems, the most popular being 'Uphill', 'Sweet Death', 'A Better Resurrection', 'Twice' and 'De Profundis' – the selection was wide. A small number of candidates wrote about uncertainty in love, ignoring the reference to 'her religious poems'. Such responses struggled to find relevance. On the whole biographical references were used pertinently, but more use was made of Rossetti's theological beliefs and reading, of literary influences and of developments in scientific knowledge.

### **Section B: Unseen Poetry**

The comments about the success of this section made last year can confidently be repeated. There were many (if not very many) delightful responses to these 'moon' poems. It may be a sign of how positively candidates feel about this section that so many begin their scripts with question 6. There didn't seem to be any pairing with Charlotte Smith's poem that was particularly favoured. Candidates appeared equally comfortable comparing Smith with Hardy, Cummings or Auden. Most candidates recognised Smith's poem as a sonnet, leading to thoughtful suggestions about how sonnets usually address love, and about how this showed how Smith felt about the moon and influenced her choice of romantic language and

imagery. To clinch the point, some candidates compared Smith's poem to an ode. Informed candidates drew attention to the structure of the sonnet and to the different language and tone of the two parts.

With half the marks allotted to AO3, candidates who score highly in this section tend to organise their answers around four or five clear connections usually based on attitudes, tone, salient feelings and form, though, of course, responses are not quite so schematic. It often seems useful to locate these connections in comparable parts of the texts, such as the openings, endings and any significant shifts in the body of the poems.

Although there were some candidates who tended to discuss the poems separately, there were very few who didn't recognise the central importance of making connections. Many candidates engaged with Hardy's genderless, more sardonic moon; some, probably students of 'The Mayor of Casterbridge' in Unit 1, drew attention to the bleaker, more pessimistic Hardy-moon voice. Comparing Hardy's ending, its nihilistic view of humanity, with Smith's more optimistic 'world serene' often helped candidates open up their understanding of both poems. No-one appeared phased by Cummings's lack of punctuation and capitals; indeed, many saw his 'sailing' balloon moon, as not just a vehicle for the poet's imaginative escape but seemed to want to join 'the pretty people' themselves. A comparison of Smith's strict, traditional poem with Cummings's seemingly spontaneous contemporary one often resulted in highly engaged and individual responses. The warmth and protection offered by Auden's moon in those tight, concise stanzas appealed to many candidates who found it more 'loveable' and personal when compared to Smith's 'Queen of the silver bowl' – a comparison of openings which many saw as setting the atmosphere and tone of both poems.

What was particularly noticeable reading section B responses was how the act of comparison helped many candidates see the relationship between experience and form/structure that much more clearly. Though there is still progress to be made when writing about form and structure (often not confidently addressed), comparison led candidates into a clearer articulation of what they were seeing and reading.

**ENGLISH LITERATURE**  
**General Certificate of Education**  
**Summer 2018**  
**Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced**  
**UNIT 4: SHAKESPEARE**

**General Comments**

This closed-book unit is devoted wholly to the assessment of Shakespeare study. Section A presents candidates with a compulsory extract-based question, which should take no longer than the recommended 45 minutes, with Section B therefore presenting plenty of time for proper planning of the essay, which features a choice of two questions.

It was encouraging to see evidence of candidates planning their responses first, usually producing a more focused, organised response. However, as noted last year, examiners saw too many overly long responses which lost their structure and coherence. Candidates who signalled early on in the essay that they were focused on the question were generally more successful than those who started their response more tentatively. Too many candidates begin with no acknowledgement of the question. Others are more adept at signalling where they are engaging with the view in the question.

Where responses were successful they generally featured:

- good knowledge and understanding of the text
- appropriate support from and references to the play
- a clear engagement with critical views, usually put to good purpose
- considered approaches to integrating context (AO3) and other interpretations (AO5) which enhanced the central arguments in responses
- generally accurate and coherent expression.

Where responses were less successful, they generally featured:

- insecure knowledge and understanding of the text, particularly in the extract question
- poorly constructed sentences and paragraphs: it was common to see sentences which stretched to over half a page in the booklet and pages with no paragraphs
- sweeping generalisations in discussing context/inaccurate historical referencing
- too much time retelling the narrative
- failing to engage with the whole question.

*Hamlet* and *King Lear* were by far the most popular texts, but we saw an encouraging number of *The Tempest* responses, with *Antony and Cleopatra* also modestly popular, and *Henry IV Part 1* very much a minority choice.

**Section A: Extract**

There were several instances where candidates were clearly unfamiliar with the extract, possibly seeing this part of the text for the very first time and therefore responding to it as if unseen. On the other hand, where candidates were better prepared, it was refreshing to see them engaging thoughtfully with the text. We saw many good responses where perceptive analysis and evaluation were offered for AO2 rather than just a list of literary devices. Given the demands of the task in the extract question, where candidates are confronted by a

section of text without the actual text for reference, and as AO2 is worth twice the marks of AO1, it is important candidates ask themselves ‘what is the meaning here and how is it shaped?’ As the extract from their set play is relatively short, there is no need to enter into excessively long discussion of every line of the extract. It was encouraging to see that contrary to our observations last year, there were not as many instances of ‘trawling’ through the lines, while missing the central meaning of the speech or speeches in respect of the question. There appeared to be a clearer focus on analysing the meaning of the extract in relation to Shakespeare’s presentation of characters/attitudes/relationships.

### ***King Lear***

The extract from Act 4 scene ii, featuring Goneril and Albany, seemed to present good opportunities for candidates to show their knowledge and understanding of the contrasting presentation of both characters. Many grasped the situation at this point of the play and many noted the different attitudes and values of the two characters. There was some clear engagement with Albany’s attack on Goneril, but there were some candidates who struggled with some of the imagery, in particular the ‘disbranch’ image, with the vast majority taking ‘sliver’ to connote a snake or serpent. There were also instances of candidates failing to read the whole sentence uttered by Albany, not grasping that ‘have you madded’ refers back to the ‘gracious aged man’ at the start of the sentence, and is not a question posed to Goneril about her own sanity. Although the vast majority spotted the animal imagery, in particular ‘tigers’ and had sensible things to say about it, ‘perform’d’ led some to argue that this suggested a circus of performing animals. Literal reading was often an indicator of a less successful response.

More worrying is the lack of knowledge and understanding regarding form and structure, with all sorts of claims being made for the use of iambic pentameter. Others even more worryingly thought the whole scene was written in prose.

### ***Antony and Cleopatra***

This extract taken from Act 4 Scene xii provided most candidates with the opportunity to show their knowledge and understanding of Antony’s thoughts and feelings as revealed here. Many discussed the attack on Cleopatra but fewer understood Antony’s referencing his men at the start. There was some confusion regarding the situation Antony was reacting to – Alexandria taken for Actium. There was some clear engagement with his sense of loss as a military leader and the recognition (some saw it as anagnorisis) of the role of Cleopatra in this loss. His passionate anger at her in her absence was discussed, with many seeing Antony in an unfavourable light as a result of the terms of abuse which pepper his speech. The end of the extract left some unaware of the penalty waiting for them in Rome and also no grasp of why Octavia would be vicious towards Cleopatra. Several did not engage with the rich imagery in the extract, and so missed the opportunity to discuss Antony’s acute sense of betrayal and of having been ‘beguil’d .to the very heart of loss’. Cleopatra’s appearance was usually noted, with many doubting the sincerity of her question, but some seeing this as an opportunity to sympathise with her character.

### ***Hamlet***

This soliloquy taken from Act 2 scene ii gave the opportunity to analyse Hamlet’s own self – analysis in response to seeing the Player deliver his ‘Hecuba’ speech. It was concerning to see many candidates struggle to understand the significance of the situation, and to have no idea what Hamlet is regarding as so ‘monstrous’. ‘Hecuba’ was variously ascribed to Ophelia and Gertrude and ‘conceit’ was taken to mean Hamlet’s own self obsession. With half the extract not understood, candidates were still able to recognise Hamlet’s self-castigation and could grasp that he is angry with himself over his hesitation to avenge. Some thought the self-castigation continued to the last two lines, instead of recognising that here Hamlet is attacking Claudius. There was also some confusion in understanding that Hamlet imagines a hypothetical attack on his cowardice, instead thinking the attacker is the Player or Claudius.

Some thought that the whole extract was an attack by Hamlet on the theatre, citing 'drown the stage with tears' as a pejorative reference.

Only the stronger responses were able to comment on the verse and the impact of frequent interruptions with short single lines. Too many thought this was a prose passage. The vast majority wasted time waxing eloquent about the power of either exclamation marks or the single word 'O'.

Whole paragraphs were written about the opening few words and their significance, instead of seeing them as a signal for the soliloquy.

### ***Henry IV Part 1***

Unfortunately, as was the case last year, there were too few responses to this text to make adequate comment.

### ***The Tempest***

This extract taken from Act 1 scene ii offered candidates the opportunity to discuss both Prospero and Miranda in terms of their attitudes towards Caliban. Many thought Caliban had actually raped Miranda, failing to see the significance of 'seek to violate'. There was meaningful discussion of the possibly racist attack on Caliban in respect of the terms of abuse used by both Prospero and Miranda, in particular the 'vile race' comment. Some expressed sympathy for Caliban initially, until their 'tracking through' reading allowed them to understand the source of the hostility. There was some recognition of the disappointment felt by Miranda in particular at how her careful education of Caliban was for nothing, while others saw this as an example of colonial/'Eurocentric' attitudes to native inhabitants. Prospero's imperious language in addressing Caliban was generally noted as typical of the master-servant relationship.

### **Section B: Essay**

In the essay task, AO3 is double weighted at 30 marks, yet a number of candidates are still not properly addressing context. Again this year we saw instances where AO5 had not been addressed at all, with a further loss of up to 15 marks. It is vital that all candidates are aware of what is expected of them prior to entering the examination room.

Approaches to AO3 ranged from the token gesture 'acknowledging' contexts, to a distracting chunk of narrative/descriptive relating of contexts with little or no application or relevance to the question. Sometimes this was at the expense of discussing the actual play. Far too many responses still feature sweeping generalisations along the lines of 'Jacobean society hated all women' or dubious tales of kings and queens, and in particular that all Elizabethan/Jacobean audiences and even 'Jacobethan' audiences 'would be shocked' at some of the portrayed behaviour of the protagonists. The most successful responses integrate discussion about contextual significance into their argument, not merely presenting it as a stand-alone comment of questionable relevance. Some candidates see the value of literary contexts in enriching their arguments, and this constitutes a positive step forwards. It is also rewarding to see many engage with other critical views than their own in addressing AO5, and 'make use' of them to advance their own argument, as indicated in the assessment grid descriptors for this AO. As noted last year, there is still a trend to over-use the word 'arguably' in the belief that this is enough to address AO5. In one response the candidate used this word in almost every sentence within the whole response. It is also not acceptable to allege what 'some critics' say when making a reference to a simple feature of the plot of the play, for example 'some critics say that Edmund is illegitimate'.

### ***King Lear***

Both questions attracted a considerable number of candidates, although the clear favourite was question 6 on the 'trials of kingship' and 'the trials of parenthood'. Too many candidates saw this as 'trials', though fortunately did not pursue this line of enquiry! Equally there were those who took 'trials' literally, not appreciating the connotation of hardship/difficulty. More worryingly, there were several instances where significant numbers within a whole centre thought the concept of 'kingship' extended to Gloucester and his sons. Others dismissed the trials of kingship in the opening paragraph, seeing it as only applicable to the early stage of the play when Lear was actually king. The vast majority argued that the play was more concerned with the trials of parenthood, the more astute suggesting that although the parents were examples of 'poor parenting' in both main and sub plot, their children constituted the biggest 'trials' in the play. Some argued convincingly regarding the role reversal of children and parents, citing Edgar and Cordelia's kindness and care and Goneril and Regan's hectoring tyranny of Lear.

Some excellent, thoughtful responses were noted in addressing question 7, and candidates took the presented opportunity to enrich their arguments with contextual material relating to Christianity and paganism.

### ***Antony and Cleopatra***

Both questions on this play were popular, with many enjoying the opportunity in question 8 to talk about the relationship between the lovers and the impact it has on their lives and responsibilities as rulers. The opportunity to discuss the tragic genre was not always embraced, despite the signal to this in the question, and resulted in a partial engagement with not only AO3 but also with AO1 and AO5 in responding to the given view in the question.

Question 9 produced some decent discussion on 'those who serve' in particular and some interesting analysis of the concept of honour and its different meaning in Rome and Egypt. The failure of Antony as a leader after a glorious career was explored, and some found Cleopatra's leadership of her 'women' sensitive and touching.

### ***Hamlet***

Both questions were popular, with candidates appearing to welcome the opportunity to discuss Hamlet as a 'tragic hero' in question 10, and 'moral corruption' in question 11.

The issue of 'real' and 'unreal' produced some mixed responses in question 10, some citing the Ghost as an example of the unreal, others regarding Hamlet's obsession with his mother's reprehensible behaviour in the incestuous marriage being possibly unfounded. Fewer than expected seized the opportunity to discuss the issue of Hamlet's antic disposition as 'unreal' and instead believed he actually is mad in his scene with Ophelia. Those who had grasped the meaning of the given extract in Section A gave consideration to the extra significance placed on the play within the play as an important aspect of the debate. Several were able to discuss Hamlet's introspection and fears of what is not 'real' like his thoughts about death. Moral corruption was discussed with careful discussion of related imagery, Claudius' role in its provenance and Hamlet's resistance. However, many candidates did not engage with the question as a whole, and ignored the concept of 'impossible to resist'. Those who did saw Ophelia as a prime example, being corrupted into espionage by her father and the king.

### ***Henry IV Part 1***

Too few responses to this text were seen for adequate comment.

### ***The Tempest***

As was the case last year, there were some very fine responses to this play, and it is pleasing to see it gain in popularity. Both questions were popular, though question 14 appears to have been preferred on the whole. Most saw this question as a chance to talk about masters and servants and on the whole this worked well, except some forgot to engage with the wording of the expressed view 'how best to' rule and be ruled. Ariel and Caliban were given due consideration and it was refreshing to see other 'relationships' explored, with the comedy of the minor characters offering further insights into this discussion. Question 15 saw candidates discussing themes of colonial oppression, relationships between parents and children and power among other concepts which were cited as familiar and not 'new'. Fewer addressed 'brave' but those who did embraced the opportunity to discuss the presentation of the island and Prospero's magic and its effects.

### **Summary**

Some issues to inform us all going forward, some of which were identified last year:

- candidates should take time to consider what the question is asking, and also try to identify where assessment objectives are targeted in the question. In order to facilitate candidates being able to address all relevant AOs, questions have been carefully phrased to allow each candidate access to a focused discussion
- the set extracts proved to sort candidates out quite sharply into those who had read their play in depth, either in class or at home, and those who had presumably only familiarised themselves with some big speeches. Wherever possible, candidates need to practise analysing speeches closely
- centres might want to think about extending the range of contexts which their students might draw upon, in particular literary/cultural contexts.

**ENGLISH LITERATURE**  
**General Certificate of Education**  
**Summer 2018**  
**Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced**  
**UNIT 5: PROSE STUDY**

**General Comments**

The PM's report for 2017 acknowledged there would be obvious teething problems in the first year of a new specification. The report was longer and more detailed than usual for that reason, highlighting the main issues which adversely affected candidates' performance, especially in those centres whose marks had been adjusted. There was also emphasis on suggesting ways to make improvements based on examples of good practice seen in successful centres.

Sadly, the same issues arose again this year and were perhaps even more marked than in 2017. A large number of centres' marks were adjusted, and in order to avoid the same disappointment for candidates and teachers next year, it is essential that centres review current practice in light of advice based on moderators' reflections on the work they have seen across Wales.

**Characteristics of successful centres**

On a more positive note, all moderators reported on centres where good practice is already embedded and whose teachers can be justifiably proud of having given their candidates every opportunity to achieve. A lot of centres had acted on advice given in their 2017 moderators' reports, whether it was to make small tweaks to current practice, consider quite important changes, or simply to carry on doing a good job! There was, as always, evidence of excellent work from gifted candidates which was a genuine pleasure to read. Of course, not all candidates are blessed with that level of confidence and maturity, and it's by no means expected that all candidates will achieve Bands 4 and 5. Good practice was seen in centres across Wales, with very different profiles, even in those where no candidates met Band 5 criteria and where the majority were accurately placed by their teachers below Band 4.

Irrespective of the size and ability range of the cohort, the most successful centres tended to adopt a self-reflective approach. Many had reviewed decisions about how best to prepare candidates in light of specific feedback and more general advice offered in the Principal Moderator's report.

**Successful centres tended to demonstrate the following characteristics:**

- correctly judging the appropriate level of independence for this particular cohort when deciding on text choice and teaching approaches
- selecting texts which had enough literary heft to allow for in-depth study
- planning ahead in order to begin study as soon after AS exams as possible
- placing emphasis on studying the whole texts in the same way as examination texts, so that the candidates could draw on and demonstrate secure knowledge and solid understanding
- ensuring candidates had a firm understanding of the genre and how prose works might differ from poetry and drama

- encouraging candidates to choose from a range of suitable literary topics so they could follow genuine interests
- guiding candidates in the crucial wording of their titles so that there was a firm emphasis on literary appreciation rather than foregrounding theory or context
- advising on planning, drafting and editing so as to balance the AOs effectively
- marking candidates' final drafts using the WJEC standardising materials as guidance to help fine-tune marks within the agreed band
- annotating folders in detail to demonstrate careful, considered application of the assessment criteria
- making sure internal standardisation was robust by dual or cross marking to reach an accurate rank order.

Many centres will feel that they have done all of the above and will therefore be disappointed that their marks were nevertheless adjusted. It is important to stress at this point that moderators do not refer any centre for further scrutiny unless they feel there is good cause and no centre's marks are adjusted unless their sample has been reviewed by a senior moderator.

Unfortunately, given the relatively high proportion of centres where problems were identified, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that advice is not being heeded. It is strongly urged that those centres take this opportunity to reflect on their own approaches, revisit guidance and identify areas for improvement.

### **Main problems**

- Inappropriate or unhelpful text choices and/or combinations
- Lack of secure knowledge of texts and/or reductive focus on a single idea across the centre's entry
- Task setting: Poorly worded titles which led candidates away from literary responses
- Common pitfalls in addressing and balancing AOs
- Inaccurate assessment: marking which was overly generous and did not reflect accepted standards

As these issues were discussed at some length in the previous report, it would be unproductive to repeat the same information in this year's. The PM's report for 2017 is still available on the WJEC website and might be a useful starting point for centres wishing to review their procedures. There will also be available on the WJEC website an appendix\* to this main report giving more detailed feedback on key areas for consideration.

It might be more useful here to outline as briefly as possible the main concerns under each problem.

#### **(a) Texts Selection and Approaches to Study**

- A small number of centres did not submit their texts for approval and some candidates were seriously handicapped by unsuitable choices.
- Some texts, especially in the post-2000 category, did not help candidates look beyond plot and character to appreciate the craft of the writer.
- Some texts had been combined to focus on a single connecting idea which led to a reductive, narrow approach rather than a clear overview. In many cases all the candidates were effectively writing about the same topic
- Candidates had not always studied the texts in sufficient detail and simply did not know or understand the texts well enough to write with confidence, engage creatively or support their claims to make convincing arguments. There was often the sense that the texts had been read only once and, in some cases, that only extracts had been studied in any detail.

- Some candidates given a free choice of texts seemed unable to cope with that level of independence and had relied too heavily on study guides as a result. This often led to a tendency to emulate the descriptive, commentary-style approach of such materials as well as compromising independence and personal response.

### (b) Task-setting and wording of titles

- Despite repeated emphasis on the crucial importance of careful task-setting, many candidates seemed to have devised their own titles which were often poorly worded making it more difficult to craft effective responses. To be frank, if some of the titles tackled by candidates in this unit were to appear on exam papers, there would quite rightly be a torrent of complaints from centres! As *learners*, candidates cannot be expected to have the experience and knowledge needed to craft effective titles which will target all five AOs.
- Previous PM's reports for this and the legacy specification have advised steering candidates away from the following emphases in tasks, yet these were nevertheless popular choices in many centres: *social class; generic features such as gothic or dystopian; identity; philosophical ideas or theories.*
- Many titles were simply too abstract or wide-ranging, making it difficult for candidates to organise material into a structured response.
- Some titles included a view or statement in the wording, which can be a helpful way to make the focus of the response more precise and defined. However, this is less effective when the statement is not a literary criticism but instead: a quotation from one of the texts; a saying by a famous person, loosely linked to the topic; a philosophical viewpoint; a bland statement with which the candidate cannot engage.

As suggested in previous guidance, it would often be more helpful if the critical statement was worded by the teacher in discussion with the candidate, so as to give a clear focus for a literary argument.

### (c) Common pitfalls in addressing AOs

#### AO1

- Some candidates **strained too hard for sophistication** in their expression and vocabulary which actually made their meaning more obscure rather than communicating clearly what they knew and understood.
- **Excessively long responses**, some more than 5,000 words, were nearly always self-penalising and would have been improved by editing and careful proof-reading
- A worrying number of candidates wrote in **overlong paragraphs** which did not help them organise their material effectively
- Some candidates – and markers - did not seem fully aware of the difference between **creative engagement**, firmly rooted in confident knowledge and understanding of the texts, and **mere assertion of ideas**.
- There was even more pervasive use of **linguistic rather than literary terminology** in evidence this year. While this is not penalised, and can be used to support valid literary analysis, there is a danger that candidates will mistakenly feel that they are demonstrating sophistication simply by identifying features such as syndetic lists, pre-modifiers, concrete nouns and semantic fields.
- Some terminology used demonstrated **insecure grasp of the genre** and would be more appropriate in the discussion of poetry or drama. For instance, many candidates focused intently on phonological devices such as sibilance or alliteration and some even included obliques to indicate the end of lines of prose when quoting evidence, as if referring to line breaks in poetry.

## AO2

- There is an increasing tendency to **micro-analyse brief quotations at length**, making claims for each word and punctuation mark and how it exemplifies complex ideas and overarching themes. This suggests a less than secure grasp of how prose writers, especially novelists, convey meaning. While there is obviously a place for close analysis of language, candidates need to avoid assertion by providing more direct textual evidence to develop and support claims, rather than pinning all their arguments on a few brief quotations taken out of context.
- The most successful candidates demonstrated a **strong sense of the genre** by analysing how novelists used other prose devices to shape meaning: imagery patterns and motifs; narrative viewpoint; setting; characterisation; use of dialogue; structure or organisation of events; tone, etc.

## AO3

- The relationship between text and context continues to cause problems for many candidates. There was still a pronounced tendency in many responses to let context drive their responses, using the texts as illustrations of generalised attitudes rather than considering how awareness of possible influences on the writing and reception of the texts can enhance our appreciation and understanding of them. Sadly, in some cases, the emphasis on AO3 at the expense of AO2, suggested that this had been a factor in the way the texts had been approached in the classroom.
- Many candidates would have benefited from keeping in mind the simple advice to avoid starting or ending any paragraph with context but to focus instead on the texts.

## AO4

- Many candidates made really illuminating connections between their texts. They used comparisons *and* contrasts productively to further their argument and showed clearly how their understanding of one or both texts had been enhanced by studying them together.
- These illuminating and productive links were less evident in centres where the texts had been chosen to focus on one over-riding connection which had dominated candidates' study.

## AO5

- There was encouraging evidence of candidates making use of high quality literary critiques of the texts to inform their own interpretations. Some cleverly used criticism of more established pre-2000 texts to consider the post-2000 work as well, targeting both AO5 and AO4 simultaneously.
- Unfortunately, there was still a tendency to rely too heavily on study guides, both print and on-line versions, and candidates did not always make fully clear when they were using another writer's words rather than their own. Centres must impress upon candidates the strict requirement to place all material taken from other sources inside quotation marks and to reference such sources in their bibliographies.
- Too much emphasis was placed on non-literary views which related more to the general topic than the texts and took candidates even further away from literary appreciation. For instance, Queen Victoria's view on marriage had only a limited value in a discussion of *Pride and Prejudice* and *White Teeth*.
- Some bibliographies were dominated by contextual material rather than worthwhile literary criticism which did not bode well for the candidates' attempts to balance AO3 and AO2 effectively.

- In some confident candidates' responses, there was too much consideration of other readers' views of the texts, at the expense of close focus on the texts. It is important to keep the relative weighting of AO2 and AO5 firmly in mind. In the best responses, candidates had clearly read and absorbed a lot of worthwhile critical views of the texts and used them to inform their own understanding of what the writers were saying and how.

### **Assessment**

Although a significant number of centres' marks were adjusted, the majority assessed their candidates' work fairly and accurately and there was evidence of exemplary good practice. Those centres which had used the WJEC standardising materials as benchmarks tended to assess their own candidates' work more accurately and some actually referred to these materials in their summative comments to justify their decisions.

In the overwhelming majority of centres where assessment was judged to be insecure, the marking was too generous or inconsistent:

- While the wide mark range of 120, and centres' relative unfamiliarity with it, may well have played a part, the assessment criteria are well-established. In many cases, centres had not correctly identified the band which accurately reflected the candidates' achievements in each AO and marks were very inflated as a result.
- In quite a lot of centres, all the candidates had been placed at the top of Band 4 and above, while some had awarded all their candidates Band 5 marks which were difficult to justify.
- Even when the correct band was awarded, there was still a tendency in some centres to 'push to the top' and award the highest mark in that band rather than fine-tuning within the band.
- Annotation was often too sparse with only AO markers used instead of the qualitative judgements in marginal comments recommended as the best way to ensure accurate assessment.
- Internal standardisation had taken place in most centres and many had demonstrated good practice by dual marking folders. This was more difficult in smaller centres, although some had contacted the Subject Officer to ask for guidance on this matter. In larger centres where there is more than one class, internal moderation is obviously vital. However, there were cases where there was a clear lack of consistency in applying standards between primary markers which had not been addressed during the internal moderation process.

### **Summary of Advice**

- Centres should be willing to reflect on approaches in light of specific feedback and general guidance.
- It is advisable to review text-selection, judging the appropriate level of independence for each new cohort and how best to support their study of prose technique.
- Candidates should start reading and preparing for this component as soon as possible in Year 12.
- Task-setting and the specific wording of titles should be made a priority
- The emphasis should be placed on reading and studying the texts in some detail as with examination texts.
- Primary markers should consult all available guidance on standardising before assessing their own candidates' work.
- Heads of department/Team Leaders should review internal moderation procedures to ensure that the centre's assessment is consistent and in line with agreed standards.

Although some might view this report as patronising or overly critical, it gives moderators no pleasure to identify problems which lead to adjusted marks or to write reports which dwell on the negative. The intention is to encourage in all centres the self-reflective approach seen in the most successful, to the benefit of all candidates. The pressures on English departments are intense and have not been overlooked but it is hoped that some relatively small changes will make a difference without adding too much to teachers' workload.

To end on a happier note, many centres will have received positive reports complimenting dedicated teachers on the support they have given their candidates which has undoubtedly helped to prepare them for their examination components and higher education.

\* The appendix to this Principle Moderator report with more detailed advice on text selection, task-setting and assessment will be available on the WJEC website in the Autumn Term.



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