GCE

Chief Examiner's and Principal Moderator's Report
English Literature

Foreword

This booklet outlines the performance of candidates in all aspects of CCEA's General Certificate of Education (GCE) in English Literature for this series.

CCEA hopes that the Chief Examiner's and/or Principal Moderator's report(s) will be viewed as a helpful and constructive medium to further support teachers and the learning process.

This booklet forms part of the suite of support materials for the specification. Further materials are available from the specification's microsite on our website at www.ccea.org.uk.

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GCE ENGLISH LITERATURE

Chief Examiner's Report

Assessment Unit AS 1   The Study of Poetry 1900-Present and Drama 1900-Present

Section A: The Study of Poetry 1900-Present

It is pleasing to report that most candidates were well-prepared to confront the question on the poets they had studied. Among this season's candidature, those who were successful embraced the chosen pairings of poems, made use of appositely incorporated contextual knowledge, demonstrated analytical skills and kept the question's key terms to the fore. As was the case last year, less successful candidates struggled with prescribed pairs of poems, both in conceptualising meaningful linkages to the question and, in the weakest cases, with basic understanding of the poems beyond the descriptive; many struggled with integrating poetic methods into their responses in a meaningful fashion, often leading to the cold comforts of narration and recount; many struggled to develop a response which stretched beyond the speculative tagging-on of the key term(s).

Examiners considered this paper to have been "well-suited to candidates of all abilities" and to have "offered meaningful opportunities for engagement" and questions were reported to have offered the opportunity for "candidates of differing abilities to respond positively." Candidates were judged to have been able to engage with the questions set and examiners reported that the language of the examination paper was accessible and unambiguous.

The tendency to diminish some of the twentieth century's most thought-provoking and moving poetry to a mere methods-spotting exercise is still prominent among many candidates. To reiterate my thoughts from last year, I would still encourage teachers to focus on their students becoming accomplished in handling a selection of fundamental critical terms with the aim of producing quality linkages between the identified method and the key term in question. Candidates should be discouraged from simply "tagging on" the question's key terms in the erroneous belief that this creates a viable point; rather they should be encouraged to explain how the method they have highlighted creates poetic impact and why this is relevant to the question's key terms.

I would also like to take this opportunity to restate some of the advice given previously regarding the effective use of quotations. It is expected at GCE level that candidates are aware of the requirement to utilize an exemplifying quotation in its entirety when evidencing figures of speech such as metaphor, simile, enjambment or caesura. The Examining Team saw numerous examples of a lack of true understanding of the effect of the noted figure of speech, betrayed by an ineffectually quoted example. Thus, a simile must include the comparisons linked by "like" or "as", a metaphor must represent the association being made, enjambment must demonstrate the run-on line with a slash (/) or in the line layout of the example and caesura must exemplify effect by quoting before and after the caesural mark. This year, the term "pathetic fallacy" rose to the fore with varying degrees of success - I would expect clarification of what is being expounded as well as relevant quotation; equally, the term "extended metaphor" seems often to have become a generic 'catch-all' to allow candidates to make the wildest of claims without the need for exemplification. Careful and relevant exemplification of the metaphor's multiple linked intentions is required to make a success of this method.

Furthermore, the referencing of poetic form and structure needs to be handled in a more considered fashion. There is little to be gained from simple observation of the structure of the poem - candidates frequently proffer observations such as: "the poem is written in four quatrains which demonstrates the poet's perspective on landscape"; or "the poem contains 16 lines and is therefore almost a sonnet"; or simply remark that "the rhyme is ABAB". This approach is too general for credit to be awarded. Instead, candidates should be encouraged to present a reasoned hypothesis for the poet's chosen form or structure relative to the question's key terms. Often form and structure are explored in isolation and alienated from the question with no genuine discussion of authorial choice or effect.

As in previous years, examiners continue to comment on the poor quality of candidates' written communication. It is a basic imperative in a subject which demands coherent, well-supported analysis, that candidates can clearly express themselves both in their written accuracy and in the production of answers in legible handwriting. The number of candidates whose writing borders, and in some cases crosses into, illegibility seems to be increasing. It should be communicated to candidates that examiners will only mark what is intelligible on the page and they will not fill in the gaps for those areas where indecipherable hand-writing or confused presentation mitigates against clarity. Candidates who seem to habitually form only the first two or three letters of a word - usually a tricky technical term - will not gain any benefit of the doubt concerning the accuracy of the spelling, the validity of the veiled method, or the clarity of the point that may have been intended. Teachers are advised to ensure that candidates are made aware that clear presentation is fundamental if the clarity of a response, and thus the reward, is not to be hampered.

Finally, for candidates who use word-processing facilities to produce their responses, it would be helpful to remind candidates that scripts presented using a size 14 sans-serif font with double line-spacing are the most straightforward for examiners to reward.

Frost and Heaney

This proved the most popular pairing of poets and the question on "landscapes" was generally fairly well handled. In many cases high-quality teaching was evident, with candidates demonstrating good knowledge of the poems and a sound ability to locate methods and provide meaningful analysis. That said, some candidates had prepared templated responses to "journeys" or "travelling" or "nature" for this pair of poems and there was clear evidence of attempts to shoe-horn these responses to meet the key terms, often through variations such as "travelling/ journeying through a landscape". This of course brought varying degrees of success, generally dependent on whether the candidate's focus fell on the "journey" or on the "landscape". As always, it should be impressed on candidates that attempting to deform the key terms to fit a previously written essay, is more likely to inhibit than enhance their responses. Biographical material was clearly understood in this question but was often off-loaded irrespective of relevance; examples such as the deaths in the Heaney family circle can hardly be made relevant to the key terms and the given poems.

Hughes and Plath

The question on "painful emotional experiences" was ably approached by many candidates. A variety of considerations was offered for linking the two poems with the key terms with varying degrees of success. Thus, candidates who comprehended the central imagery of the flowers in both poems were rewarded while those who became side-tracked by, for example, the role of Stoneman the grocer, or who misunderstood the role of the family unit and/ or the speaker's emotional reactions to her family in "Tulips", found it more difficult to attain reward. While context was handled much more succinctly than in the previous series, there is still a tendency for some candidates to feel that it is in the nature of confessional poetry to positively encourage the offloading of all known biographical detail in the assumption that everything is relevant. This belief could not be further from the truth and should be actively discouraged - a more discerning and sparing use of apposite biographical detail will always gain healthier reward.

Jennings and Larkin

The question on "love" provoked some interesting responses from candidates, many of whom were able to identify a range of methods and make worthwhile, often interesting, links to the key terms. There was some deft interweaving of biographical context, with most candidates noting Jennings' failure to marry and her broken engagement. Larkin's biography, perhaps being a little more salacious, encouraged many candidates to over-elaborate the context, to the point where responses lapsed into a general biographical summary of the juicier elements of Larkin's love-life rather than a critical analysis of his poetic methods. In such cases, success was inevitably very limited. The concluding sentence of Larkin's "Love Songs in Age" was usually evaded or misunderstood.

Boland and Bleakney

Regrettably, there were no responses on this pairing.

Section B The Study of Drama 1900 –Present

Candidates mostly managed to develop relevant arguments and engaged with the key terms with varying degrees of success.

A greater focus on dramatic methods (AO2), as opposed to language methods, would improve the overall calibre of the responses. When language methods are engaged, a more judicious approach is hoped for. Some features offered had neither significance nor relevance.

Contextual material should be used meaningfully and relevantly (AO3). Some improvement on last year can be reported.

Q1 Friel *Translations*

(a) There were many strong and enthusiastic responses, though a few candidates concentrated on what the future would bring for Maire, rather than for Ballybeg. Others missed the key term 'only' and neglected to analyse other characters. Better candidates unpacked the given prompt and wrote a balanced essay considering Maire and others who 'understood what the future will bring for Ballybeg'. A valid counter-argument, that Maire did not completely understand 'what the future will bring for Ballybeg', ignoring such signs as the 'sweet smell' or the danger of socializing with soldiers, was also made.

(b) A few candidates failed to address all the key terms: 'attitudes to language', 'cause the conflict'. Attitudes to language were sometimes explored through comparing/contrasting characters in pairs and considering the different views. Maire and Yolland's staged interaction in Act Two scene two was widely used, but not always clearly linked to the question. Some candidates examined the symbolism of Sarah as representing the Irish language, but 'attitudes' tended to get lost in these discussions.

Q2 Beckett *Waiting for Godot*

Part (a) and (b) – Only a few responses to *Waiting for Godot* were seen but responses to the (b) option tended to be the stronger of the two.

Q3 Williams *A Streetcar Named Desire*

(a) As with Question 1(a), there were many strong responses but some candidates struggled with the specific key terms, often neglecting the word "most". Some just used the key term "pity" or perhaps changed this to "sympathy". Some dismissed Stella very quickly or did not write about her at all, choosing to focus on Blanche or other characters as "most deserving". This may be valid as the extension of an argument, but the question demanded that Stella should be explored first.

(b) While there was a consensus amongst the Examining Team that there were some very strong responses, it was also felt that some candidates did not understand the term "stereotypes" or had only a rudimentary understanding of the relevant contextual areas such as post-war America, patriarchal societies or gender relations. Candidates sometimes reduced the key terms to either "stereotypes" or "American male". There were some outlandish claims about what a stereotypical American male was, and candidates who struggled to define this, struggled with the question in general. A number of candidates seemed to assume that Stanley's rape of Stella was in keeping with the American male stereotype. Mitch's attempts at refinement drew interesting comment, but only the very best remarked on his relationship with his mother in a way which was relevant to the question.

One centre appeared to relish the phrase 'toxic masculinity'.

A number of candidates commented on Stanley's 'red silk pyjamas'. I have not been able to locate this particular detail in the text, though I may be wrong.

Q4 Miller *The Crucible*

(a) A trend noted for this question was that less confident candidates rapidly descended into offering mere summary of the themes of the play. A more critical look at the ending of the play is to be encouraged.

(b) This option was equally popular with Question 4(a) and enabled some very strong responses. Candidates at the weaker end perhaps struggled to address all of the key terms: "Abigail", "powerless victim", "of her society". "Powerless victim" is a phrase we have made use of before, having found that it provokes an interrogation of such issues as 'soft power' or influence, or as here of opportunism and manipulation.

Q5 Stewart *Men Should Weep*

No responses seen.

Q6 Bolt *A Man for All Seasons*

Just a few responses were seen to both options, but they included some excellent work demonstrating very good teaching of methods. Candidates developed relevant arguments and found both questions enabling.

Assessment Unit AS 2   The Study of Prose Pre 1900

Examiners reported that candidates were able to engage with the questions set, and there was agreement concerning the appropriateness of the language used across all questions. The paper was successful in allowing candidates of differing abilities to respond positively to the questions posed. Many candidates wrote with enthusiasm and clearly showed that they had enjoyed reading their set texts. Those who had a flair for the subject, and whose skills of argument and written expression were of a high level, demonstrated a degree of sensitivity and perception which was impressive in young people who were, after all, only a year away from completing their GCSEs.

In order to access the higher mark bands, candidates need to adapt their knowledge and understanding of the texts they have studied to fit the key terms of the question. It was felt that some candidates often embarked on their responses prematurely, with little, if any, reflection on what the question was actually asking them to consider. This often resulted in responses which digressed into narration or description, or which were a reworking of a question from a previous examination series.

In this Unit, as with Unit 1, examiners expressed a general concern about candidates' poor standard of expression. As well as obvious difficulties with basic literacy, examiners reported seeing an inappropriately informal style and, on occasion, illegibility. Candidates need to be aware that quality of written communication is assessed under AO1.

Candidates should be advised to use the explicit key terms of the question and should avoid substituting the key terms with their own terms (often taken from a previous examination series). Candidates should be advised to spend a significant amount of time unpacking the stimulus statement and planning their responses; careful planning allows candidates to marshal their ideas and to think about a clear line of argument. Candidates should also be advised to avoid overly lengthy answers – very often candidates produced, for example, eight pages in which there was very little to credit; good responses consisting of four pages of concise and relevant argument can score highly. Some candidates produced contradictory and inconsistent responses: arguing from one point of view, and then, without acknowledging what they were doing, from the opposite point of view, which is not the same as offering a judicious consideration of a range of interpretations.

In relation to methods (AO2), as was the case with last year's examination series, candidates should be advised to avoid identification and discussion of small-scale methods such as pronouns, verbs, adjectives, alliteration, sibilance and onomatopoeia. Instead, focus should be on the overarching narrative methods such as form, structure, motifs, symbolism and thematic imagery. Those candidates who accurately identified significant and relevant narrative methods, linking them to the key terms of the stimulus statement, enhanced their argument and were richly rewarded.

Although most candidates included contextual information in their responses (AO3), there was still a tendency to 'off-load' context which was not made relevant to the key terms of the question. The most successful candidates were able to integrate relevant contextual information throughout their responses, clearly linking it to the key terms, to illuminate and enrich their argument.

Q1   Hawthorne   *The Scarlet Letter*

(a) Many candidates wrote very successfully about Hester being a victim of her society, integrating contextual information about the harsh Puritan society, and offering a nuanced argument in which, although Hester is a victim of her society, she is able to transcend her victimhood to become a powerful figure. There were some interesting arguments about whether Hester was seen as powerful or powerless in her refusal to name Pearl's father. Unfortunately, some candidates ignored the key term "powerless" and simply focused on "victim". Likewise, some candidates overlooked the key term "of her society" leading to responses which focused on Hester being a victim of Chillingworth, Dimmesdale, and even Pearl.

(b) This question was not as popular as the (a) question; however, some candidates were able to produce focused, perceptive arguments about the just nature of punishment of sin in the Puritan society, and about the unjust treatment of women. There were, however, a great number of candidates who did not seem to appreciate the meaning of "just", or simply lapsed into describing characters' actions as being just or unjust, ignoring the key term "society".

Q2   Shelley   *Frankenstein*

(a) This question about Victor Frankenstein produced many insightful, enthusiastic responses. The most successful responses were those which argued that, whilst there is something to admire in Victor's pursuit of scientific discovery, there was little to admire in his rejection and abandonment of his creation. Many candidates were able to offer convincing textual detail to support their

argument, often illuminated by relevant contextual information. Less successful candidates produced very contradictory responses regarding Victor's admirable qualities or lack of them, and did not reach a convincing personal conclusion. Those responses which digressed into a discussion of whether the monster was admirable lost focus on the question asked.

(b) This question was less successful owing to many candidates writing very little on the question asked, moving away from the key terms far too early in their response (for example, by writing one paragraph on the novel being about scientific progress, and then dismissing the key terms and arguing for all of the other types of novel it could be classified as). Candidates should have dealt with scientific progress in detail before considering alternative interpretations. Many candidates substituted the key term "scientific progress" with 'science fiction', indeed, there was an obvious lack of understanding of the key term "progress".

Q3   Eliot   *Silas Marner*

(a) The majority of candidates were able to write very successfully about the marriage of Godfrey Cass and Nancy Lammeter and whether it was a failure or not, providing excellent textual references to support their points. Some candidates substituted the key term "marriage" for 'wedding' which led to a limited attempt to argue; others simply described the characters of Godfrey and Nancy. A few unsuccessful candidates tried to argue that the marriage was a failure before the marriage had even begun.

(b) Most candidates responded quite well to this question about Silas Marner, especially those who outlined the good luck he experiences before looking at whether he deserves it or not. There were a few candidates who perceived Silas as a real person, and not as a character construct, which resulted in a naïve personal response in their attempts to argue. Some candidates simply described the good and bad luck that Silas encounters in the course of the novel, ignoring the crux of the argument regarding his deserving it, or not.

Q4   Brontë   *Wuthering Heights*

(a) Many candidates showed an excellent understanding of the character of Heathcliff and were able to provide evidence from the text which showed his revenge. Less successful responses ignored the key term "main motivation" and simply described Heathcliff's vengeful acts. Surprisingly, many candidates failed to explore Heathcliff's desire for property. Quite a number of contradictory responses were in evidence, for example, arguing that whilst Heathcliff's main motivation is revenge, his 'other main motivation' is his love for Catherine, which clearly showed a lack of understanding of the key term "main".

(b) This question proved to be unsuccessful for many candidates due to a lack of understanding of the key term "supernatural elements", with many responses dealing very fleetingly with this aspect of the novel. There was very often an inability to produce an argument in relation to the key term "unbelievable"; details about the Realist novel were irrelevant and obtrusive. A small number of candidates were able to successfully argue that the supernatural elements enhanced the love story and were presented in such a way as to add to the complexity of the characters.

Q5   Austen   *Emma*

(a) This question was answered by relatively few candidates. Mr Woodhouse was generally regarded as not deserving of respect as he was considered to be either very demanding or just weak and foolish; there was little understanding of the satirical nature of his characterisation or any sense of the humorous way in which Austen presents him.

(b) This question was more popular with some good responses which dealt with marriage and social hierarchy. Less successful candidates substituted the key term "conditions" with 'conventions' or 'norms'. A number of candidates ignored the key term "tells us little".

Q6 Stoker *Dracula*

(a) Many candidates responded to this question about Mina Harker with knowledge and enthusiasm, integrating relevant contextual detail about how women were regarded in late-nineteenth-century society, arguing that whilst Mina could be viewed by some of the men as in need of protection, it is she who plays a pivotal role in the defeat of Dracula, and, at times, she is the character who protects others. Unfortunately, some candidates wanted to write about Lucy as a woman in need of constant protection. This might be valid, if used to make a comparative point about Mina, but the latter was often eclipsed. Some candidates produced contradictory responses, arguing in one paragraph that Mina did need constant protection, and then arguing in the next paragraph that she did not, clearly showing a lack of understanding of the key term "constant".

(b) Only a few candidates were able to write a convincing response to this question, giving evidence for the victory of good over evil, particularly in the defeat of Dracula by the 'Crew of Light', and acknowledging that the victory comes at a cost. Many candidates were not so successful, particularly when they approached this question by simply describing the good characters and the evil characters, and ignoring the key term "victory". Other less successful responses moved away far too quickly from the focus of the question, often dismissing the key terms after the opening paragraph, and instead writing a response about the novel being about other things, such as the fears of late-nineteenth-century society (last year's question).

Assessment Unit A2 1   Shakespearean Genres

All questions in this section were considered suitable for candidates of all abilities. Othello and King Lear featured very heavily, with The Winter's Tale featuring as the third most popular text.

Examiners reported their impressions that the candidates had enjoyed studying these texts, and that they had arrived at a good level of knowledge of the plays.

Some candidates found it difficult to structure an answer which struck an effective balance between the extract and the wider text. Candidates need to be very clear that equal marks are available for their treatment of the given extract and other relevant parts of the text. The consideration of these two elements involves differing critical skills – of expansion and compression, for example, both of which are under assessment. This means that the extract should receive close critical attention, and unfortunately this was not always the case in the responses seen. Examiners will allow strengths in one area to compensate for shortcomings in another, but this has its limits. Regrettably, by neglecting the demands of the task some candidates did not achieve as they might have.

Another issue noted by the Examining Team was poor integration of quotations. There also seemed to be a high proportion of very lengthy responses, perhaps running to 2 or 3 booklets. These responses usually contained a high level of irrelevance. Candidates would be well-advised to spend some time reading and thinking about the extract and planning their answers so that their responses can be more focused and succinct.

Regarding AO2, there was a tendency for candidates to focus on 'micro-methods' (alliteration, sibilance etc.), rather than the more meaningful and significant dramatic

techniques at work in these plays. Candidates found it difficult to relate features of form and structure to the question. This may be because many candidates simply do not understand the concept of structure, and/or the difference between form and content, but a focus on these features in the classroom would be advantageous.

In terms of AO3, a reasonable number of candidates were able to use context in a way that illuminated their discussion of the text. It was pleasing to note that there was a very small number of context-heavy scripts.

Most candidates were able to bring AO5 into play to at least a certain extent, and examiners reported that they were able to reward this. High-quality responses offered arguments in which the stimulus statement was considered and qualified in a flexible way.

Othello

This question worked very well indeed. Less able candidates who simply focused on character and theme were still able to get significant credit for their work. The differentiator here was the contextual link indicated by the key term "tragic hero"; this allowed more capable candidates to apply their knowledge of genre to the question. A significant number of candidates explored the interplay of internal and external forces on the tragic hero; these candidates were rewarded for using literary context to illuminate their textual analysis. Significantly, however, few candidates mentioned the on-stage presence of Desdemona's body – indicative of the scant attention given to the extract by many candidates.

King Lear

Whilst there were more key terms in this question than in the others, most candidates seemed to find this enabling; it meant that there were many sections of the text that were amenable to discussion in this essay. Candidates were generally able to apply most of the Aristotelian template to the characters under consideration; it was disappointing to note, however, that the understanding of catharsis (a key concept in this question) was often insecure. Many candidates also made profitable mention of the idea of Senecan tragedy and its influence on the Shakespearean model – a further deepening of the understanding of the nature of the genre noted in reports on the concluding years of the previous specification.

The Taming of the Shrew

A large proportion of candidates agreed that Kate's spirit is indeed entirely broken, and some crude arguments that the play was merely a tale of bullying were offered. Further credit was available to candidates who developed nuanced readings in which, for example, Kate seems not to have been completely subjugated. (Some lively, though at times only partially digested, arguments based on the Apollo-Dionysus polarity were striking.)

As You Like It

Most candidates seemed to argue that good order and happiness were indeed restored at the end of the play. Whilst candidates could still do very well by adopting such an approach, credit was available to candidates who explored the more dissonant elements of the plot (e.g. Jacques's ongoing self-marginalisation). Most candidates were able to demonstrate an understanding of the generic features of Shakespearean comedy. Prominent dramatic methods such as music, song and dance were frequently overlooked.

Measure for Measure

There was a tendency for candidates to substitute the key term "ruler" with 'leader'. In this case, no great harm was done to the progress of the argument, but it should be noted that these terms are not synonymous and that candidates would be much better advised to keep things simple by using the precise key terms contained within the stimulus statement. Understanding of the nature of the Problem Plays and their place in the Shakespearean canon was limited when compared with other genres.

The Winter's Tale

Many responses engaged productively with the key terms "forgiveness" and "reconciliation", but then managed no more than unsubstantiated assertion in relation to "unconvincing". Responses of this type achieved only limited success.

Assessment Unit A2 2   The Study of Poetry Pre 1900 and Unseen Poetry

Section A

The questions in this section were considered suitable for candidates of all abilities. All options across the various texts were answered.

The driving Assessment Objective for Section A is AO2: the analysis of the ways in which meanings are shaped in literary texts. Candidates were given credit when they were able to identify a particular literary method, illustrate it, analyse it to show understanding of operation and effect, and then relate it to the key term of the question. General identification of 'language' (using a preceding adjective e.g. aggressive language, gentle language, sad language) lacked the specific focus on poetic methods required in this unit and therefore received little credit. Similarly 'image' was used loosely at times to describe impression or general picture. Candidates would find it more to their advantage to focus more specifically on particular literary techniques. In relation to tone, there was often general labelling, without a consideration of how the particular tone was achieved. Examiners noted that much of the comment on form and structure amounted to description. In particular, the laborious recording of rhyme schemes did not serve candidates well. Comment on form and structure, if it is to prove useful to candidates, must be made relevant to the key terms of the question. If there is nothing meaningful to say, say nothing.

In this section, candidates should also demonstrate understanding of the significance and influence of the contexts in which poetry is written and received by drawing on appropriate information from outside the poems (AO3). All of the questions address a specific contextual area, and it is important that candidates limit themselves to the context of the stipulated type. Little credit can be given for contextual information that has been introduced merely for its own sake. Good responses used contextual information sparingly and judiciously.

In this examination, the rubric for Questions 1(a), 1(b) and 4(b) stated that equal marks were available for the treatment of the given extract and other relevant parts of the text. For all other questions equal marks were available for the treatment of the given poem and the poem selected by the candidate. It is imperative that candidates are aware of the importance of choosing a poem which enables them to engage effectively with the key terms of the question. Examiners are flexible in their approach and are fully prepared to credit the consideration of a poem that has been argued into relevance. It was however a shame to see candidates with good knowledge and understanding underperforming in this section because of a poorly considered choice of second poem.

Section A also requires candidates to explore connections between and within poems (AO4). What is not required here however is the type of formal comparison and contrast produced at AS. Candidates fulfil the AO4 element of this section by focusing on the key terms of the question when discussing two poems, or when considering an extract and wider text in the light of these key terms.

Chaucer *The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale*

Question (a) was less frequently attempted than Question 1(b). In some cases the key term "sexual desire" was abbreviated to 'sex', which meant that candidates' responses were only partially focused on what was required. Question 1(b) asked candidates to consider "sovereignty in marriage". There was not always secure understanding of sovereignty and this obviously limited some candidates' answers. There was slippage in the handling of the term "sovereignty" when other words such as 'maistrie' or 'control' were substituted. The key term "in marriage" was also dropped. There were however many precise, focused and perceptive answers on this text, and an evident enjoyment was often communicated.

Donne

The (a) option asked candidates to consider "attitudes to love." Often what was substituted here was simply 'love' which made for a less successful answer. At times very simplistic responses were offered with consideration merely of 'positive' or 'negative' attitudes. Comment on Metaphysical poetry tended to be tagged on, rather than integrated into a discussion of the poems and the attitudes to love expressed therein. The (b) option focused on "feelings of religious anxiety" but the key term here was sometimes dropped in favour of 'religious feelings'. In relation to both questions, candidates were able to make appropriate choices for their second poems. Examiners did note, however, that in relation to option (b) candidates' comment on form and structure in relation to the sonnet often tended to have no real linkage to the key terms.

Blake

Question 3(a) focused on "views of religion" and Question 3(b) focused on "social injustice". Although there were candidates who were able to write about these areas with analytical skill and poise, there were others who were baulked in their attempt to frame a successful response because of their choice of a second poem. Candidates should be encouraged not to think about the poems solely in terms of 'pairs'. Rather, they should be flexible in their approach and be ready to select whichever poem is most appropriate to the key terms of the question.

Keats

There were relatively few responses to Keats. Question 4(a) required consideration of the poetic methods used to "write about the classical Greek world". Although there was appreciation of "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer" and definite engagement with biographical context, candidates sometimes struggled to identify specific poetic methods or to relate these to the key terms of the question. In relation to "The Eve of St Agnes", given the length of this particular poem, candidates were not required to go beyond the poem in their consideration of the poetic methods used to tell a love story. Again, there was awareness of the contextual area of Romantic poetry and knowledge and understanding of the poem, but often consideration of methods was scarce.

Dickinson

There were some excellent answers on both options relating to the poetry of Emily Dickinson. Both questions asked for relevant biographical information but candidates should be reminded that this is biographical information relevant to the specific key terms of the question, in this case "attitudes to death" or "marriage." Methods were often dealt with in a perceptive way, but comment on form and structure was, at times, not made relevant to the key terms of the question. In order to access the higher mark bands, it is important to consider a range of methods. Numerous separate points made on one method, such as the use of the dash, do not constitute a range.

Barrett Browning

Only a few candidates wrote on Barrett Browning's poetry. Those who did were able to select appropriate second poems with ease for both of these questions. As with other options, although there was general understanding, answers needed a greater number of methods and more effective linkage to the key terms of the question.

Section B

The driving Assessment Objective for Section B is AO5: argument/interpretation. In relation to "Chicago" by Carl Sandburg this meant that candidates were required to assess whether the speaker, as he considered the city, conveyed only admiration. Many of the responses the Examining Team encountered offered engaged and, at times, spirited discussion of the speaker's attitude. There was overwhelmingly a genuine, concerted attempt to deal with the ideas of the poem. Candidates considered whether the speaker conveyed something other than admiration when he reported the criticism expressed by the city's detractors, or, when acknowledging the aspects of the city that were unpleasant, whether his attitude could be described as admiring. There were very few answers which simply agreed with the stimulus statement or which offered merely an AO2-based consideration of the poem.

This was a poem where there were plenty of opportunities for the consideration of language and form and structure. The best answers were those where the analysis of methods was used effectively to support an argument in response to the stimulus statement. As in Section A, there was loose identification of 'images' and descriptive comment on language. The form of the poem was often ignored, or identified incorrectly. It was however, encouraging to see that when faced with a challenging poem, candidates were able to show independence of thought and utilise their own critical skills. Responses were enthusiastic and sometimes exceptional. One stunning response related Sandburg's use of epithets to describe his city to the use of epithets for Homeric heroes – an excellent fusion of the critical, the personal and the creative.

Principal Moderator's Report

Assessment Unit A2 3   Internal Assessment

The first year of the new GCE A2 English Literature specification offered both challenges and opportunities, as the demands of the new coursework element were considerably different from those previously prescribed. It is a huge credit to teachers, therefore, that so many have embraced this new beginning so positively, and enabled candidates to produce outcomes characterised, on the whole, by enthusiasm and engagement.

To begin, it may be useful to offer an overview of approaches. In work submitted for moderation, several teaching models were evident. A few centres focused on only two texts for all candidates. These texts appeared to have been traditionally taught. Such an approach was restrictive, leaving candidates with little freedom to explore their own interests. While different essay titles were usually chosen, the resulting responses often tended to have numerous similarities, thus reducing opportunities to exhibit the "independent thinking" identified at the top end of achievement in AO1 in the mark grid. It is hoped that as the specification develops, and teachers grow more confident, that this model can be widened to allow candidates more scope in their selections of texts; the overwhelming evidence from this series showed that, when candidates were given the scope to follow their own interests, their responses were coherent, original and engaging.

A second model, adopted by the majority of centres, offered candidates a core "reading list", often thematically linked. This approach allowed a greater degree of freedom in terms of textual pairing and essay titles. Many interesting areas were focused on, including Irish Writing, Outsider Fiction and Dystopian Literature. In many of these centres, it was clear that some candidates had pursued areas of study entirely of their own choosing.

A pleasing number of centres offered an even more open choice for candidates. A rich variety of texts and essay titles was evident, and the work produced often demonstrated a high level of fresh, personal engagement. This pedagogical approach was furthest from that adopted in the legacy specification, and as such may have been the most challenging for teachers; it may also have been the most enabling for candidates.

The rubric requirements were very carefully followed by nearly all centres. The stipulation for at least one post-2000 novel was strictly adhered to. The novels chosen were suitable in allowing candidates access to all five Assessment Objectives. A small minority of candidates chose novels which lacked sufficient depth (impairing in particular AO1, AO3 and AO5), or more specifically chose two novels which were mismatched, thus undermining attempts to connect texts in a meaningful way, as required in AO4. Bibliographies were nearly always included (and are a requirement). Word counts were also helpfully attached, and it was pleasing to note how few candidates exceeded the 2500 word limit. This length seems to be a fairly natural fit for this assessment task.

Title setting was generally secure. Most essays offered candidates the opportunity to explore all the Assessment Objectives, and yet to focus on particular areas of interest. Occasionally, however, essay titles were too narrow, leading to work that was overly reductive.

It was clear that many centres had made careful use of the marking grid (Appendix 4 in Specification) to inform their assessment. This document is a crucial tool to ensure consistent and accurate marking, and its assimilation is thus of key importance. It might be worthwhile to note that each band has both an overarching broadstroke descriptor (for example "general", "competent" or "very good") and also specific and detailed explanation of the Assessment Objectives within each band.

The majority of centres' assessment was deemed to have been in line with the CCEA standard this year. However, some centres had their marks adjusted. This movement was nearly always because of over-marking. Such adjustments are perhaps understandable in the first year of a new specification, as teachers come to terms with the move from the legacy coursework unit, which was very different in its focus, and was assessed at AS level. It may be helpful to note that the mark range is now 0 to 75, and that competence is seen to begin in Band 3, 27-39 marks. Likewise, Band 6 work is characterised as "excellent", "perceptive", "very confident" and independent". Work that had been placed here sometimes better belonged in Band 5, "very good". It is hoped that Agreement Trials will help to further develop secure understanding of these standards.

Work was well presented, nearly always in word processed form. As mentioned previously, word counts and bibliographies were included, and footnotes often added. As an A2 Unit, the coursework has also functioned as a bridging activity for those candidates who plan to move on to tertiary education, building on key academic skills.

The annotation offered by centres continues to be unstintingly detailed and thus very helpful for moderators. Marginal comments and Assessment Objective referencing, supported by a thoughtful summative comment, allowed moderators an opportunity to have a clear view of how marks were awarded. The professionalism shown by teachers in this area is highly impressive; it is in many ways, the key part of the moderation process.

Instances of the use of unacknowledged sources and phrases were identified during this first series of moderation for this unit. Centres are reminded that credit cannot be given for work that is not the candidate's own and teachers should be vigilant in guiding candidates in this important matter. The proper referencing of the work of others is, of course, good practice and candidates would benefit from being made aware of the regulations surrounding plagiarism and the impact it will have on their final grade. A useful guide for teachers can be downloaded from the JCQ website: http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/malpractice/plagiarism-in-assessments---guidance-for-teachersassessors

In conclusion, the inception of this new unit has been generally encouraging. The work offered for moderation suggests that secure foundations have been built by centres, which can be further developed over the lifespan of the new specification.

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