

TEXT AND PERFORMANCE

Overall grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 13	14 - 29	30 - 44	45 - 58	59 - 71	72 - 84	85 - 100

Written Tasks

Component grade boundaries

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

The range and suitability of the work submitted

Shakespeare continues to be a favorite with schools and, given the riches of the Shakespearean text, there seems to be eminently clear reasons why this is so. However dramatists like Arthur Miller and Oscar Wilde also have their advocates. What is clear is that the candidates respond to texts of literary substance and this set of choices might be considered a sound basis for the written task.

The candidates either chose a major speech to focus on for their characterization and acting challenge or looked to follow a character through a play by selecting smaller speeches in order to trace a line of development. Both approaches are acceptable and many were of a high standard.

On the question of suitability the examiner confronted a serious problem in the marking of the scripts due to three main issues.

- In many essays the candidate did not make explicit which character was the focus until late in the essay. The focus of attention was the pivotal scene not the particular characterization, as a result much of the analysis was diffuse rather than concentrated and the examiner was left to conjecture what part the candidate might be playing. **It is important that the candidate confine attention to the speech or speeches that are chosen for analysis and acting.** The task is not to scrutinize a scene. The task is to choose a character and speech/action to dramatize.
- The candidate will inevitably be acting with others but needs to write about the individual experience, not the experience of the ensemble. **“I” not “we” is the appropriate angle of vision.** The task is neither to direct a scene nor to design one. It is to act out a characterization through a single speech or a number of speeches and actions. The

candidate needs to be explicit in the introductory paragraph of the written task about the character for portrayal and that part of the play that has been selected for attention.

- It makes little sense for a group of candidates from the same school that have chosen the same play to study as a basis for the assessment task to choose the same speech for analysis and acting. It becomes very difficult for the examiner to distinguish the origins of ideas that hardly vary but emanate from a number of different candidates. Please ensure that there is a variety in response.

Candidate performance against each criterion

A: The critical analysis of the literary features of the text were completed satisfactorily and well by those candidates who understood that the relevant literary features are those that are brought into play through informing dramatic choices. The better candidates exercised a through scrutiny of the language of the text, following the line, in the case of Shakespeare, distinguishing the verse pattern, looking at the sound of the words as a major indicator of meaning, seeing the language as a prompt for action and acknowledging sometimes that figures of speech might only be effective on stage as gesture or action and not speech at all. The candidates who were less effective tended to look at content, plot and characterization, the latter deriving not from the language of the speech but through a more general understanding of the scene. The diffuse nature of this understanding often shifted the perspective from the essence of the task to a more general appreciation of the whole scene. In being selective and connective in their analysis of literary features, thereby maintaining relevance and linking analysis to staging decisions, the better candidates were able to effectively link the two criteria A and B and by doing so succeed also with the structural element in criterion C.

There is nothing wrong with beginning the task with a brief synopsis of the action and a contextualization of the chosen extract, this is good practice but it is the literary features of the content that are important for the staging choices.

B: The aspects of the text that have informed dramatic choices will be already clear if the candidate has done the work expected by the first criterion. There were some resoundingly brilliant pieces of textual analysis which were immediately connected to perceptive ideas for staging. Again the more detail the better, and a continual awareness of the importance of the audience must be resolutely held. The performance space, the movement, the posture, the gestures, the voice and the language and the action are all keys to the exercise of dramatic choices. The specificity of detail is the key to success here, generalization being a familiar refuge for those who are less than analytical in their approach to the task. Again a director's overview of the scene is not the requirement of this task; such a panoramic understanding is the experience of the director in western theatre not the actor.

C: The structure of analysis of text dictating dramatic choices mandates a link that is explicit between the two. At times these two approaches were so effectively divided that the examiner felt that two essays were being considered, not one. The fluency with which the candidate can move through the different registers that describe literary analysis and staging choices tell the examiner how internalized have been the two areas of knowledge which make up the course. Literature and theatre need to sit easily together and effective structuring of the task ensures that they do.

Recommendation for the teaching of future candidates

- The richer the original text the more likely it is that the candidate may have the opportunity to experience a full exercise of the literary and theatrical sensibilities the course is designed to cultivate.
- Focus on acting, not direction, on speeches, not scenes and on the “I” not the “we”.
- Explicitly set out the character and speech (es) which are your choice in the introductory paragraph, a brief synopsis and a contextualization and then complete the exercise.
- Ensure that analysis of literary features is the factor that influences (and is seen to influence) staging choices.
- Be specific, avoid the general; this is especially important in analysis of both the text and the performance.

Standard level internal assessment

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 7	8 - 15	16 - 22	23 - 26	27 - 31	32 - 35	36 - 40

The range & suitability of the work submitted / Conduct of the oral examination

There was a wide a range of performance work submitted based on transformations from both poetry and prose with explorations of the short story and the novel making up the latter. These ranged from the literal “translation” of pieces from one genre to another with limited attempts to “transform” to exciting pieces of theatre that could claim to have discovered new qualities in the original writing through the act of transformation into performance.

There are many ways of approaching this component and that is one of its most refreshing aspects. A candidate may sit down and deliver quite a searching but essentially restrained monologue from a chair or a group of wildly physical actors may decide to make movement their focus and convey more from their bodies than from their voice!

All the work was “suitable” though some of the approaches were less effective than others. Theatrical language, when it is explored can release an energy that is very striking but exposure to an empty stage, can, if the candidate is not supported, be an inhibiting experience that reduces more than it enhances. At times candidates aimed for theatrical effects they could not always effectively control; focused spotlights impose a discipline on the performer in terms of movement. The ability to “find a light” and stay in it defeated some of the less experienced, while others found it equally difficult to make an effective shadow play behind a scrim.

The more confident and assertive among the groups attacked the space and made themselves masters of it. More apprehensive groups filled the space with cumbersome stage pieces that restrained movement and lent an air of artificiality to their playing. A few groups experimented to some good effect with stylized movement and mime with clear inspiration from Berkoff and *Complicité*, while others slowed the pace down to a more processional style to find meaning in quasi-ritualistic movement that was quietly effective.

Candidates need to rehearse this performance piece carefully and they need to rehearse it thoroughly. At times there was evidence that the work was not consolidated with candidates revealing a tentative approach to what they were doing and demonstrating an uncertain relationship to the space they were in. In this context teachers should ensure that the piece is run through with camera as a trial so that candidates can see themselves and more importantly be aware of where the camera is. This is also important for the person filming since one group were filmed almost entirely from the side in profile which did not enhance their performance

Writers used included Poe, Fitzgerald, Eliot, García Marquez, Soyinka, Neruda, Perkins Gilman, Salinger, Coetzee, Chaucer, Kafka and Murakami.

The oral presentations often revealed themselves to be superior to the performances. This was particularly evident where candidates had clearly taken pains to study the original text and think seriously about rationalizing its transformation, taking this as an imaginative challenge and finding a way of genuinely exploring the two genres. It is interesting to note how complimentary these assessment tasks are. The performance needs to be weighted by and consolidated in literary analysis and performance critiques. The essence of the matter is how the style and purpose of one piece of literature may be utterly transformed and activated by another. Too often candidates “split” the task and the presentation might almost be addressing a different reality to that seen on stage in the performance. Schools should appreciate the importance of ensuring that the oral presentation is completed as soon as possible after the performance.

Candidates should also recognize the importance of speaking for the recommended time and schools can help them to do this by ensuring that the performance is played out in front of an audience of peers and that the presentation is completed in a quiet part of the school with absolutely no interruption.

Candidate performance against each criterion

A: see above

A key point: the moderating examiner needs to hear the individual voice of the candidate speaking about their relationship to the text, to the transformative experience and to the performance. It is taken as a “given” that much of the work is done by the ensemble and that the group is crucial to the “success” of the performance but the candidate needs to present an account of the individual not the group response. “I” is the angle of vision, not “we”.

B: The importance of this criterion is clear since the performance of the piece depends on a great deal of work in the preparation of it. The moderator sees none of this but can register much from viewing the performance and more from listening to the candidate assessing it. It

is important that the candidates indicate in the oral presentation just exactly how they met the challenge of the text and what were the pivotal moments in that process. The “evidence” for this must be found in their relationship to the text and the performance, NOT in a series of anecdotes about how hard they worked or how they went out to buy the props!

C: The organization of the presentation is obviously important and few candidates are particularly adept at this skill. The tendency to neglect one or other of criteria D and E is frustrating to listen to for it is rare that a candidate is incapable of dealing with the demands of either. Knowledge and understanding of the literary features of the original text is required before considering how this style of writing might be transformed into drama. Too often candidates made cursory reference to “figurative language,” to metaphors or imagery, even to symbols in the original without connecting this identification (or more promisingly, this analysis) to the transformation process. It was as if the text was an inert body to be dissected purely to demonstrate an ability to recognize some literary features when in fact a vibrant presentation would immediately show how a particularly fascinating literary feature of the text might be transformed on stage. The better candidates were able to trace a literary feature through the process into the performance and lay claim to ownership of it in their performance critique under criterion D.

The “use of language” here refers to the facility with which the candidate can move through two registers, the first dealing in literary criticism, the second dealing with the language of performance. Again the teaching of the course has a part to play in ensuring that schemes of work insist on this kind of flexibility and ease in moving through the two areas of knowledge.

D: Critical reflection: This was far too often left to the very end of the oral presentation and misrepresented as a kind of appendix to the process, saying goodbye to it by the addition of a few meaningless value judgments. The performance critique is far more complicated and interesting than that and should be continually referenced in the presentation. The critique should focus on the particular not the general and should not be framed as a value judgment but as a form of exploration. What is being explored is the relationship between the text and the performance and the reflection while centered on the latter cannot go into much depth without continually referring to the former since that provides the subject matter out of which the performance is built.

E: This criterion is more heavily weighted because it focuses on the key relationship between text and performance but does this on the basis, not of the content of the text, but on the way it is written. A child could work out that Gatsby is shot at the end of the novel, but the question is not the action but the way the author chooses to represent it. The tone of the narrative voice, the mood conveyed by the descriptions, the image of the body in the pool, these are literary features. Too many candidates mistake this specificity with the general sweeping assertions they might be drawn to make about content and theme. The register for this exercise is analysis not narrative: the candidate should not tell but analyze. The story has been already told by the author, it does not need retelling in this assessment task. What is fascinating is what the individual candidate makes of the style of the writing, what is selected for transformation, how that challenge is met. How a symbol or a mood can transfer from the imagination of the candidate to take shape on stage and communicate to an audience.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

- Insist on the literary analysis of the chosen text
- Ensure through appropriate schemes of work that candidates learn the terminologies associated with performance and literary analysis
- There is no better way of preparing for this than going to the theatre and exposing the group to as wide a range of diverse performances as possible.
- Candidates would do well to keep a journal through their rehearsal process. This will give them an invaluable resource as they prepare for the oral presentation.
- Use “I” not “we”.

Standard level paper one

Component grade boundaries

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

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

The first question on the comic passage was not the most popular choice. A great deal depended on the kind of work that had been studied and though it could be argued that even the grimmest of novels have their comic moments few candidates risked venturing a passage for analysis and staging. When the question was attempted it was quite common to see a candidate begin brightly but “dry up” rather quickly as they grappled not so much with the original comedy but with how it might be theatrically staged. A question like this does rather depend on comedy as a theatrical and narrative form, style or device being actually considered during the course. Had this not been the case candidates were probably well advised to steer clear.

The second question received many treatments that, again, began well but failed to stay with the terms of the question allowing the character chosen to become more and more diffuse as other characters took over or a particular theme seized the attention. The fact that many responses seem to have been pre-prepared and were struggling to fit into the particular subject raised by the question was a general issue. In an open book exam of this kind with general questions the temptation is always to prepare a response through a passage but the imposition of this onto a different question can be and often is fatal to the candidate’s expectations.

The more fascinating and “strong” the character, the more likely it would claim the attention of the candidate. A character like Heathcliff does rather insist on being noticed, yet a character less rhetorical, more elusive like Jay Gatsby called for a different approach.

The third question was by far the most popular and very well done with many examples, not only of close reading and analytical approaches to the text but also some wonderfully

inventive ideas for staging the chosen passage. The fact that any choice of concluding passages would be required to take the notion of a “climax” into account might have helped as did the focus on a particular part of the novel which tended to “center” the question and allow the candidate to achieve greater relevance.

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

The assessment criteria are pretty straightforward for this task with the attention paid to analysis of the text, staging concept, structure and use of language. Those who can marry analysis of the literary features of the text with consequential staging will usually score well under structure since this is the aim of the exercise. An effective structure will probably not present a response with analysis followed by staging but will establish a recognizable connection between the two. The essay where the examiner can mark a dividing line between analysis and staging is going to be less effective because the candidates are expecting the examiner to connect the dots or, more explicitly, do their job for them. The relationship between the style of the extract and the staging should be explicit throughout, just as the staging should be explicitly linked to the particular question that the candidate has chosen to answer. When these relationships were clearly present the examiner’s job was a lot easier.

Candidates who analyzed the passage excessively often got lost in the literature of it and this was a tendency which the examiner finds easy to understand. The act of staging complex prose may often be a simplification of it; a stripping down, as visual properties gain weight, verbal intricacies may be transformed. I guess the analogy here might be the distinction between a passage from a novel and a script. The one moves more slowly and word does not have to initiate action, and while this is not always the case with a theatrical or film script it is certainly a more likely outcome.

Few candidates took the opportunity to use sketches to illustrate their argument which is a pity since these can be more expressive and certainly a more concise way of telling than words. The emphasis on language transferred to stage is a predictable outcome of the task but candidates who struggled with the possibilities of space and explored action as metaphor or symbol managed to present some sparkling ideas and avoided the literal translation which is always the risk this assessment task dallies with. The language of the stage also involves dealing with production elements like costume, set design, sound and lighting. Here candidates were often tentative and the examiner needs to stress the point that it is acknowledged that not all candidates have the opportunity to work in custom-built theatrical spaces; many make do with the school hall, a few make do with more reduced spaces. Given this reality the examiner is circumspect and understanding in the assessment of candidates in these areas. It is always better to look for simple coherent staging rather than ambitious inflated effects-- you do this at your own risk!

In a sense the above point applies also to the use of language. Ideas in theatre cannot afford to be too complex since the audience is seeing the play live and therefore their view of the play needs to be carefully orchestrated. Nothing the candidate does is of any value unless it communicates with clarity to an audience, and therefore the audience is always the objective. There were many candidates who appeared to be formulating a concept in some kind of neutral space remote from a viewing public. That is not useful.

Standard level paper two

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 2	3 - 5	6 - 8	9 - 12	13 - 15	16 - 19	20 - 25

General comments

There are signs of considerable improvement in schools with some experience in this discussion of poetry; newer schools are struggling a bit with a number of aspects which can be found in the remarks below.

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

One of the most challenging aspects of the examination seems to be the first encounter and then the subsequent thought and planning in relation to the question itself. Bringing the appropriate material to bear on the question is a skill that must be learned; that skill must be built on the practice of reading the questions carefully and choosing one that is clear to the candidate and appropriate for the work they have studied.

Identifying appropriate poems with which to develop the argument is also an area where students falter. In some cases, namely Question 3, students had good material, but seemed unsure of how to deploy it to actually address the “extremes of emotion,” not just “emotion.”

Making the connection of the evidence to the argument was difficult for some candidates. Simply pouring out all that one has learned about the poems, or other supplementary and sometimes irrelevant material, does not contribute to a good answer.

A consistent pattern of including relevant examples, and then exploring them in some detail, is a general weakness.

Finally, it should be noted that it too often appears that candidates who have been given the option of word-processing their responses are failing to work out a plan for the answer beforehand and proofreading what they have written after they have finished the essay. This option seems to encourage even further the disorganized amplitude of words that does not lead to an effective response.

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

Most candidates were aware that they needed a treatment of two poets and a balance between the attention they were given. They had a sense of the task and were able to deliver a discussion that responded in some way to the questions.

Knowledge of the content varied in terms of how much detail candidates could include in their responses, but many were indeed able to cite details from their poetry.

In some schools, candidates have clearly practiced with the necessity to note the way the poems are constructed and to address authorial choice and effect.

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

1. The topic of youth and old age was eagerly embraced by candidates, some of whom chose both aspects, or often, old age, since poets such as Tony Harrison and Thomas Hardy had provided them with some good materials. Often the candidate's emphasis was more on the content than the "way" the topic was "explored," but many wrote quite well on this question.

2. Memory was a less popular topic, and proved somewhat elusive when it came to connecting it to particular poems. Again, Hardy was useful here as were Edgar Lee Masters and Pablo Neruda.

3. "Extremes of emotion" attracted many candidates, but very few paid much attention to defining or clarifying "extremes," and the preponderance of candidates simply offered answers on emotion itself which did not garner high marks in Descriptor B. Even those candidates who began their essay using both terms, eventually abandoned the notion of extremes in the course of their writing.

Many simply did not point the good material they had to the precise terms of the question.

4. Question 4 was another popular question, and there was plenty of opportunity to find a preoccupation which applied to both poets: death, preciousness of life, beauty and art, all provided good subjects for this question. Integration of the topic and the poetry proved challenging for some, and those did best who kept a fairly narrow focus.

5. "Surprise and originality" proved to be a difficult question for candidates in this course to handle. Given the limited range of literary history candidates were likely to possess, it was difficult for them to discern where originality, in particular, was found. A very subjective approach – what was surprising or seemed original to

me – was not an angle that occurred to the candidates, and most struggled to make a case.

6. Poets' preoccupations were also a congenial subject for many candidates, although a tendency to treat these quite generically undermined success for some. But the topic, as in Question 4, proved a good opportunity to find some linkage between the work of two poets.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

1. Candidates should avoid simply retelling or summarizing the content of their poems. Some candidates did this almost exclusively as a way of responding to the question.

2. Practice with deconstructing exactly what the question is asking would help all candidates. This is an aspect where many candidates were penalized, even though they had both good knowledge and the ability to express themselves quite well.

3. Acquaintance with the descriptor on literary features produced some good work, but also some extremes: either the candidate turned the essay into an exercise of listing all the literary features they could think of, or of completely ignoring the demand to include an address of how the poet has constructed the poems. It is crucial that candidates are clear about this demand and shown how to meet it in writing an essay.

4. Volubility is no substitute for a focus on the terms of the question and a clearly structured address of its demands. Some schools need to be more rigorous in explaining the difference and providing students with evaluated practice in this aspect.

5. It is important that appropriate poets are chosen for study, poetry that students in the particular group can understand and enjoy. Often a pairing of a nineteenth and a twentieth-century poet worked well to provide students with material they could use. It may be that translated poets are a little less appropriate for this task.

6. Paragraphs can really help candidates to arrange a structure for their essay. It is clear that there has not been much emphasis on this rhetorical feature in some schools, where students are delivering a single long “paragraph,” aside from an introduction and conclusion.

Addressing the foregoing would be significant factors in greater success for students in this component of the course