

May 2014 subject reports

Literature and performance

Overall grade boundaries

Standard level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 13	14 - 28	29 - 44	44 - 56	57 - 70	71 - 82	83 - 100

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 and suitability of the work submitted

There was much variety on display in this assessment task and many creative and exciting transformations. Candidates should be complimented on their willingness to take risks in their approach to staging their work. It would be foolhardy to claim that the riskier the work the more engaging were the oral presentations on it but the more fully involved candidates are in their creative choices, and the more imaginative those choices might be, will inevitably color what they say and often render it more passionate and committed.

Imagination when exercised on literary works of poetry or prose can lead you on different journeys but teachers and candidates should remain aware that the “literary features” mentioned under Criterion E should establish important links to the original literary piece, so that no matter how high the balloon might fly it is always linked to terra firma. At times, in their enthusiasm for creative possibilities, candidates snapped this cord and lost the basic purpose of the assessment task.

There are more and more group ensemble pieces and fewer solo performances and this is, in general, a good thing. The range of acting skills explored within a group is arguably more extensive at this level than can be demonstrated by solo pieces. Re-action, to take an obvious example, can be more complicated, more artificial when acting alone.

Different centers approached the task in radically different ways. Some were entirely functional in their approach to design and production elements often adopting *complicité* approaches to staging with actors using their bodies to register props and stage pieces. While some groups looked for verisimilitude in their staging with a greater preoccupation for costume and even, in some cases, make-up. The focus on technical rhetoric like lighting and sound is beginning to become more apparent but teachers should re-read the guide to appreciate that what is being moderated here is the teacher's mark on acting not on production accessories ingenious and striking though they might appear.

The suitability of texts for transformation is a decision for the candidates with advice from their teachers but it is clear that some of the texts chosen did little to inspire the work. The expectation that candidates should identify literary features of the text in their oral presentations must be taken into account when making the selection.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A

Performances require discipline, focus, concentration, clarity and purpose. Candidates need to know why they are on stage, what they intend to convey through their position, their posture, their movement and their speech. All performance is for an audience. Performance spaces can vary, acting styles can vary, overall intention can vary but the relationship between actor and audience is fundamental no matter how that mediation occurs.

The best work kept these principles in mind. Actors who had no reason for movement or gesture were still and expressive in their stillness. Movement, when it occurred happened for a reason. Gesture was dramatic because it was part of a repertoire of communication not an exercise in nervous fidgeting. Voices were clear because what was said was necessary and directed not arbitrary and diffuse. Actors did not wander about the stage but moved in a focused way and understood the stage as a power-space where the position one assumed either increased or reduced status but was never neutral while others shared that space.

For candidates less experienced on stage the performance needs to be stripped down to essentials; too often inexperienced candidates tried to "do" too much and ended up doing very little.

Criterion B

The teacher's mark here is fundamental since few candidates appeared to see this criterion as a preoccupation in their oral presentation. The importance of creative choices here needs to be understood and candidates might like to articulate their role in this matter to meet this criterion. The "process leading up to performance" is on a trivial level about who finds the 19th century bonnets but the deeper matter is the question of how the transformation piece evolves and what is the role of each candidate in that evolution. This is where the creative argument should be rehearsed and the viability of decisions highlighted not as in "we decided" but as in "I argued for this or that because"...

Criterion C

Many candidates spoke really well and registered the passion of their commitment to their transformation through their voice. The oral presentation is not a performance but a bright and articulate 15 minutes is better than a contorted exercise in dispassionate synopsis dragged out over 10. Literary and theatrical terminology should be used as appropriate and the more precise a candidate can be about what is being described the easier it is for a teacher or moderating examiner to visualize the scenario. This is what you want them to do and the more interesting those pictures can be the better.

Criterion D

For some reason this is the ugly sister that is relegated (still despite subject reports warning of this) to the last few minutes of the presentation. The best way of meeting the specific requirements of this criterion is to be continually and critically alive to the contrast between process (rehearsal) and product (performance) throughout the presentation. It should be how the candidate speaks about the transformation and that contrast should be alive in much of the critical commentary that the presentation encourages. To create a ring fenced 2 minutes at the end of the oral to deal with this is to diminish reflection on practice to an afterthought instead of a central concern.

Criterion E

“Literary features” are not a synopsis of the narrative or a summary of the poem; they are not a list of characters or even a selection of themes. They are questions of style and candidates are urged to look at the original text with the critical rigor they can summon; tell us how particular usage of language in the poem has set up creative questions you set out to resolve through your transformation; work on discovering a theatrical way of staging a symbol so that an audience can be enchanted by its multiplicity of meanings. This is high order thinking not translation. Too often the candidate summarizes, selects character or theme and skips away from “literary features” without giving them any real intention. The task is to critically analyze the original text: understand it through its style, its chosen mode of expression, and finding through exploration how the quality of the text, its meaning for the candidate or group, might be staged so that quality of action, thought, and emotion can be released in communication for an audience. The “rationale” for action on stage lies in the understanding of the original text, how it positions itself stylistically and to what purpose.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

- Ensure that all candidates know what they must do on stage and ensure they do not try to do more than they must. Less is more.
- Select a suitable text for transformation.
- Student “involvement” in the process is about creative choices.
- Use language simply and precisely.
- Speak for the full 15 minutes; few do.
- Incorporate reflection at every point of the presentation, not just at the end.
- Explore the literary features and establish a connection between them and the staging choices made in the transformation.

Standard level written coursework

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

Candidates covered a wide variety of dramatic texts from Shakespeare through to modern American theatre with a strong preference for the work of Tennessee Williams. The criteria that can usefully be used for the selection of texts for this assessment task can be narrowed down to two, namely: is the text rich in literary features and does it contain challenging speeches for the actor? The task is often misunderstood which leads to the introduction of irrelevant approaches to the task. Candidates and teachers should be clear that the written task consists of the selection of a scene from a play where the candidate chooses a character and explores through a critical engagement with the text the “dramatic potential” in it. The candidate is “playing the role” and the focus should be on how this is done. The object of the exercise is to demonstrate how, through a literary analysis of the language of a speech or speeches within the context of a dramatic scene, these might be “acted by the candidate. Thus the analysis of the “literary features” of the text is applied through acting choices taken by the candidate in the role.

The object of the exercise is to develop the relationship between the candidate, the role they chose and the acting of it in the dramatic context of the scene. Candidates may look at a character through a series of scenes where they make significant dramatic contributions in the absence of one scene where they may, as in for example, Hamlet, have a preponderant role. The usual way of approaching this is to choose a key figure in a specific scene but in a radical shift away from this, one candidate chose to focus on a servant in a scene from King Lear this session. The focus for analysis for literary features was spread across all participants in the scene (the blinding of Gloucester) with the candidate playing the servant who, in this dreadful scene, has to be keenly aware of the consequences of everything that is said *by other people since he has no voice*. This was a brilliant and new approach to how this task might be done differently.

Candidates should be careful to state their role in their introductory paragraph; this allows the examiner to direct attention to the task. Too often scenes were written about in a generally analytical way with little or no evidence that the candidate had either selected a role or engaged with specific speech or action of a particular character. The scene provides a context for the speech and action of the chosen character and it is that character in action who must be explored for dramatic potential through an analysis of speech and action.

In order to orientate themselves into the task candidates should be careful to write from a personal perspective, using “I” rather than “we”.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A

The quality of the literary features depends on the richness of the chosen text that is a matter for teachers and students when they make their choice. The analysis of literary features in this assessment task is not an inert exercise in academic scrutiny of text it is has quite another, more exciting function. It is a blueprint for action; the literary features are played out through the role on stage and in the scene. The candidate is using the understanding of the text as fuel for the acting of it. When this is understood the work is charged with a dynamic that really distinguishes it from literary criticism for its own sake. Plays are written to be performed and this task is designed to get at how you use text as a springboard for performance. The criterion directs candidates to the text and implicitly claims that this must be the source of action on stage. While this is demonstrably not true of all theatre it is undeniably a basis for text based work,

The candidates who were able to connect analysis to staging choices were most successful in meeting this criterion and the key to that relationship is to connect language to “dramatic potential”. Candidates who ignored the words they were using and merely articulated them as part of a function were unable to demonstrate the quality of the language they were using because no analysis of literary features had released it into their role.

Criterion B

Candidates should experience their role on stage. They should “do” the exercise and act out the scenes; otherwise the assessment task is artificial and pointless. The role and the words it embodies should be “felt” so that the “dramatic potential” can be realized. It is probably better that candidates begin from their role before moving out into the wider context of the scene. To make the scene the primary focus, at least initially, is a mistake since the focus then becomes more general and diffuse and the candidate can find it too easily to slip into discursive rather than analytical writing. It is better to use the role they have selected as a lens through which the wider scene is brought into focus and captured. Many candidates fell into the former trap and concluded the written task by hardly mentioning their own work at all.

A word of warning for teachers: it is important that candidates are encouraged to choose different scenes. The oppressive features of some of the work are quickly apparent if candidate after candidate is placed in the same scene even looking at the same speeches. Differentiating one from another is very difficult under these circumstances.

Criterion C

The key words are “language” and “structure” and the latter is often ignored. Many of the observations regarding how to address the first two criteria are about how the candidate’s response is “structured”. Use “I” not “we”; select a role, do the analysis of the literary features. There is a sequence to this and all candidates should consider carefully how they wish to use

paragraphing in their work to register their response to the task. Quotation from the text is crucial but quotation needs to be concise and supportive or reflective to literary analysis. The language the candidate uses is in an academic register and is subtle and careful enough not only to convey the relationship between words and action but also between the world of literature and the world of the stage. Teachers should ensure that candidates practise this task and prepare for it by dealing with more than one text.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

- Select rich texts
- Choose a role and make sure you “tell” the examiner which role you are playing
- Analyze literary features with a view to transforming them into dramatic action
- Move from your role out into the scene, use the role as your lens
- Study the whole play so you may be aware of the wider context
- Perform the scene and play your role in it
- “I” not “we”
- Think carefully about structuring a response which addresses the task and the criteria
- Use language precisely and with care.
- Use quotations that are concise and relevant to support your writing.

Standard level paper one

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 2	3 - 4	5 - 7	8 - 10	11 - 13	14 – 16	17 – 20

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

Candidates chose a variety of texts as one would expect given the nature of the assessment task. It is difficult to make claims about what text or other might best lend itself to a task of this kind since the quality of the candidate’s work is probably the most reliable criterion for excellence, that and the choice of a question that the candidate can work with. In this respect there was pleasing evidence of candidates actually focusing on the questions and trying, with varying levels of success, to respond to them. Choice of question was reasonably divided between the three with the question focusing on loss being particularly popular.

Many centers used the same novel as the previous year; again no judgments can be made on the advisability of this but extending the range of approaches might be a better option for the

teacher. There was little evidence to suggest that persevering with the same novel improved performance of the candidates.

Novels like “Lord of the Flies”, “Metamorphosis” or “One Flew over the Cuckoo’s Nest” where adapted plays already exist are probably not good choices for teachers to make. The popularity of “The Great Gatsby” is a slightly different issue but the ubiquity of filmed versions may divert candidates away from the more practical theatrical issues the questions encourage them to consider. Many of the essays on “Gatsby” were well done but at times candidates can get cinematic and more “panoramic” in their designs than they should. The word “practical” appears in Criterion B for a reason.

Sketching on the exam paper is often a quick and efficient way of giving the examiner a visual cue or clue as to what is being envisaged for the staging but a scrawled puzzle with lines pointing in all directions may obscure more than enlighten. Keep the sketching simple and use two or three rather than trying to convey three different kinds of information in one.

The choice of question and accompanying passage is obviously important. The tendency to select very long passages should be reviewed since it puts a great deal of pressure on the writing and can turn an analytical approach into a narrative one quite quickly.

Candidates often found it difficult to move from plot and character to more elusive categories like mood and atmosphere. Both of these require a focus on design, on lighting and staging as generating factors for mood and atmosphere. Staging and design elements require a visual sense transmitted in the appropriate theatrical terminology, again this was a real challenge for many of the candidates who were confident in dealing with more concrete matters like action and character.

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

Candidates were well versed in the action of the prose they were considering. Chain of events and broad characterization did not pose any problems. There was some excellent psychological analysis of character based on novels like *The Wasp’s Nest* and *The Great Gatsby*, Novels with descriptions which were strongly visual in substance really helped the candidates to “see” the work on stage. Descriptions of the sun setting in front of Lennie and George in “Of Mice and Men” are an example but how do you convey such poignancy on stage? Novels that offered such pivotal moments were obviously conducive to the assessment exercise.

Candidates often wrote well about specific action and the selection of the passage (so important in this task) generally reflected an overall understanding of the work. Indeed candidates were often more successful in contextualizing the passage than they were in developing a thorough response to the question.

Their understanding of the staging space, rudimentary though this may sound, was absolutely crucial for their response and it was good to see some creative departures from the

“proscenium arch” though most staging was resolutely literal in a realist or naturalistic sense of the term.

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

Q1: This was generally well done though candidates did tend to rely on character to dictate shifting moods rather than any external force. The focus on the “role of the actors” helped but too often the candidates omitted to demonstrate how their ideas might work for an audience. This was a common omission and a regretful one since it is this relationship that can give purpose and design to the response. The word “pivotal” was generally understood and this allowed the candidates to give due contextual emphasis to the passage they chose.

Q2: “Atmosphere” was not such an easy element to work with and candidates either tended to make this a vague reflection of dominant thoughts within the mind of the character (difficult to stage for an audience) or get rather too preoccupied by “special design effects” which they often allowed to become cinematic rather than theatrical. A greater precision in their use of theatrical terminology could give them a control over their imaginations in this respect.

Q3: Arguably the most popular question this was usually considered in relation to an “event” which triggered an emotional response in the characters allowing the candidates to focus on acting but once the acting is analyzed the audience becomes crucial and this was too often neglected. The “meaning” of the loss was also rarely captured by the candidates and since the quality of the experience is caught by this term the examiner would conclude that much of the potential subtlety in the responses was squandered.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

- Practise the task.
- Do not over prepare by trying to anticipate questions and singling out passages.
- Understand that “context” refers to the place of the chosen passage in the novel; this requires attention since ideas for staging relate on one level to the passage but must also carry with them a sense for the novel as a whole.
- Encourage candidates to sketch neatly but remember that sketching is not obligatory.
- Candidates need to be proficient in the language of literary criticism and the theatre.
- Candidates should be careful about the length of the passage they select.
- Look for balance in the use of production elements and be careful not to get too “technical”. At times this tendency compromised responses.
- Be imaginative but stay practical and don’t forget the audience, all staging ideas must be related to the audience.

Standard level paper two

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 2	3 - 5	6 - 8	9 - 11	12 - 15	16 - 18	19 - 25

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

There is, in some centres, the need for a greater grasp of the demands of the task. Many answers were hampered by an absence of detail, or by a tendency to description or paraphrase in place of analysis.

The process by which candidates will best succeed is the ability to select from what poems they have studied and reviewed so that they can adapt their knowledge to the angle of the chosen question. In a way their poems are a palette from which they select the particular shade or hue that will complete their work. Some candidates seemed to have a very limited range of works well known and understood enough to make this selection possible, so that they poems they were working with demanded some considerable stretching to be relevant to their argument.

Reading all the questions under examination conditions is a somewhat unnerving experience, especially as they must make a rapid decision and then embark on a plan for their answers.

Plans were not always in evidence in the way the essay was delivered.

Knowing both actual details of the poems and then being able to connect those to the terms of the answer, all the while meeting the demands for detailed address of literary features, is a skill that needs honing. By practising with past questions or those constructed by the teacher and getting some critical response enables candidates to acquire a technique they can use in the examination.

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

In many cases the candidates seemed to have responded both enthusiastically and critically to the poems in their syllabus. These were often candidates studying Heaney, Duffy, Owen, Mary Oliver, Yeats, Atwood and Larkin. These candidates tackled the questions with a sense of purpose and some detailed analysis of literary features, both those mentioned explicitly in some questions and many which they generated from their own study. Expression was on the whole accessible and understandable to the examiners.

Candidates' preparation for the exam was clearly wide in its approach which meant that all of the questions were chosen by at least some candidates with numbers 1, 3 and 6 particularly popular. Good answers in all of the questions combined relevant knowledge and a way of grappling with the questions that showed both appreciation of the poet's work and a degree of independent interpretation.

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

With the wider range of schools this session, came a wider range in the selection of poets. Gwendolyn Brooks proved a popular choice along with Wilfred Owen, Sylvia Plath, W.B. Yeats and Seamus Heaney. Poems were well understood and employed in the best papers, with slighter evidence of the ability to connect what was read to the demands of the question in the weaker ones.

A very popular question was Question 1; the issue of tone appeared to be a recognizable literary feature which meant, perhaps, that candidates felt they were on solid ground in relation to Criterion C. The range of understanding of tone was, however, quite wide. Some candidates honed in on the feature sharply, identifying the tone in poems they had studied. The best candidates were able to not only use accurate affective terms to describe what they discerned in the poetry but also to see how tone framed the whole content and emotional effect of the poems they discussed. Connecting Eliot's or Owen's emotional register to the content of their poems was well handled by such candidates as well as the attitudes that shape the critiques of Atwood or Duffy. Students were able to point to diction, imagery and structure as helping to shape tone. On the other end of the spectrum were essays that simply invoked the term to give general descriptions of the material of the poems or how the poems had affected them.

Such large issues as time, (Q. 2) resistance and rebellion (Q.3) or private experience and its connection to the wider human community (Q.6) contained the usual temptations to generalization, didacticism and revelations of personal experience and opinion. However, these were well-resisted by many.

The question of time was most aptly handled when poems dealt with memory or specific references to events of the past as in the poetry of Yeats or Larkin, and candidates discussed some of these poems very well, showing how perceptions and feelings could change with 'the passage of time. 'Resistance and rebellion' were attractive topics, again with Yeats but also with Owen and Duffy. Poetry in a feminist vein by the latter, along with poems by Plath and Atwood, was well directed to answering this particular question. When students did not define their terms, or the exact nature of the rebellion, but simply talked about general attitudes as they saw them in the poems of Bukowski, for example, they did not deliver strong essays.

The arguments for private experience connected to the individual in the human community ranged from nicely specific to very large assertion. It was necessary for the candidate to accurately describe the individual experience, but then to get beyond that to show how this was inserted into a larger context. There was some good work with Mary Oliver and Naomi Shahib Nye with this question, although the candidates tended to address their personal

feelings and response to the poets rather than to apply a critical focus, appreciating both the content and the form.

Colour and sound (Q.4) as well as patterns (Q.5) were chosen by smaller numbers of candidates. There were some very good answers involving a range of poets, although in the first case, color and sound were sometimes left at the level of identification without showing how they created 'vivid effects.' There were several impressive responses about patterns in poetry produced by candidates whose study of the poems had clearly involved very close attention to form. Some candidates attempted to deal with patterns in very vague terms without producing very successful essays.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

- All candidates can profit from first, being shown good models of Paper 2 responses.
- Since the Literature and Performance Paper 2 is so close to what is done by candidates in the SL Literature examination, samples from that program, found on the OCC, can be effectively used to exemplify how one approaches both questions and the structuring of a comparative essay. There are samples of Paper 2 for both courses under Teacher Resource Material on the home page for those courses.
- The difference between success in this 90 minute examination and a challenge that is too difficult and not successful for candidates often lies in the opportunity for students to practise with past questions. Even having access to only the May 2014 examination paper can provide plenty of opportunity for discrete exercises in choosing questions, deconstructing them, choosing appropriate texts and argumentative lines, writing introductions, making outlines of answers, and finally writing practice essays and getting helpful feedback from teachers.
- There is no question that candidates should have ample opportunities to express their personal reactions to the poetry that they read. A good place for this is with reader response journals. However, students also need to understand, largely through acquaintance with and close scrutiny of the descriptors, what Paper 2 demands of them. And this is a critical response, where they need to assess not only what the poet says, but how that 'saying' is delivered, something which involves an understanding of the terminology of the discipline and plenty of practice in applying it. Some centres have focused so heavily on personal response that candidates are constructing their whole essay around that aspect, and as a consequence are failing to meet the criteria of 'response to the question' and 'appreciation of literary features.'
- It is very important that candidates address the poems in as much depth and detail as they can. Often it is better that they write (as is legitimate) about just two poems from two different writers they have studied. As to organizing their answers, it is important that candidates not be taught to follow just one or two specific structures or formulas, but take ownership of organizational patterns that are appropriate to the subject of the essay.