



# GCSE

## English Literature

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**GENERAL CERTIFICATE OF SECONDARY EDUCATION**  
(former Midland Examining Group syllabus)

**GCSE 1501**

# **ENGLISH LITERATURE**

**REPORT ON COMPONENTS**  
**TAKEN IN JUNE 2000**



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

## ENGLISH LITERATURE

### General Certificate of Secondary Education 1501

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### **General Information**

This report consists of three sections. The first two are on the work of candidates in the written examinations, List 1 and List 2, and the third is on the Coursework submitted by candidates. All sections are united in their appreciation of candidates' efforts and the obvious enjoyment which so many have clearly gained from their study of literature at this level. The comments recognise the good practice and various successful approaches that Centres employ. It is hoped that Centres will find this Report helpful in identifying what Moderators and Examiners are looking for as they assess the responses of candidates to the literature they have studied.

#### **List 1: Components 11, 21**

This year's papers produced a refreshing set of responses. Candidates continue to respond to a variety of literary texts in an engaging and enthusiastic fashion. There were very few infringements of the rubric or major misinterpretations of the questions. Most candidates managed their time well, with few unfinished, uneven scripts or multiple answers. The extract-based questions produced many full, sensitive, close readings with an appreciation of both language and narrative technique. There were strong responses to empathic questions and some masterly answers to questions on the **OCR/MEG Anthology** and **Touched With Fire**. Some candidates chose to answer the poetry question first, which seems to have assisted them in writing detailed responses.

Overall, however, candidates seemed to find the written paper a little more difficult than last year's, and the general level of performance was slightly lower. Candidates who performed less well than they might have done frequently fell into one or more of the following traps. In **extract-based answers**, many went outside the set passage – especially on drama texts, where instructions such as 'in this scene' were interpreted as referring to the whole scene in their text, or even to the whole act from which the passage was taken. Other candidates seemed to forget (or ignore) the passage altogether. In **empathic answers**, some wrote in the third person ('Jessica would be thinking that her father.....'); this is limiting, in that the character's 'voice' is not captured, even if the candidate shows high levels of understanding. Candidates also need to anchor empathic answers firmly at the point in the text indicated in the question.

A greater number of candidates this year appeared to be missing out on the full three marks for spelling, punctuation and grammar. They might well be advised to spend the final five minutes checking through their papers for errors in mechanical accuracy. 'Bias' for 'biased' and 'prejudice' for 'prejudiced' were the two most common errors this year.

In **answers on poetry**, there is still a tendency to write a comparison which 'see-saws' from one poem to the other without fully engaging with either. The propensity to list technical terms continues; some candidates even laboriously count the number of lines/syllables/rhymes in a poem, without making any comment whatsoever. This should be seriously discouraged, as a waste of valuable time. 'Positive' and 'negative' are being used as all-purpose terms to describe the diction of a poem, and some candidates quote strings of individual words which fail to prove the point they are attempting to make. Over-reliance on annotation is a feature of some poetry answers. This often distracts the candidate from the question set. Many Examiners, however, commented on the improved quality of the poetry work as compared to past responses.

In the **DRAMA** section, the new (optional) Shakespeare text, **The Merchant of Venice**, has proved popular. There were well-balanced answers to Question 2, showing a strong response both to Shylock's character and to the issues of race in the play. The extract question was handled competently but in some cases without a strong sense of the drama of the trial scene. There were some convincing Jessicas, with candidates alert to the complexity of the situation in which she finds herself.

Work on **Billy Liar** this year showed a stronger appreciation of its humour and placed greater emphasis on theatrical effects. On the Foundation Tier there were well argued responses to Question 5, showing sympathy for Billy's parents. Many candidates wrote an entertaining dialogue between Mr Fisher and Mr Duxbury, with one, bizarrely, placing Florence's corpse on the sideboard. **Pygmalion** produced some strong work, although some candidates had problems balancing the two parts of the first question. There were some passionate Elizas in answer to Question 9. Few chose to answer on **When We Are Married**, but those who did wrote some well informed answers to the extract question, showing a strong sense of the play in performance.

The extract question on **The Crucible** was very popular, eliciting some sensitive, exploratory readings. The question was a strong discriminator. Many lost interest in the final section of the extract and, therefore, missed the mounting suspense in the town and the beginning of John's dilemma. Some candidates seemed oddly unaware of the context of the passage, while others used too much extraneous material. There was a misreading of the punctuation by many candidates, who interpreted 'She receives it. With a certain disappointment, he returns to the table'

as

'She receives it with a certain disappointment. He returns to the table.'

In answer to Question 14, candidates made wise choices on the whole but tended to be less effective in commenting on the dramatic impact of the character's change. In some Centres, candidates wrote about three or four characters, which seriously diluted the quality of their answers.

The tone of the passage from **A Taste of Honey** was misinterpreted by some, who took Helen's words very literally and missed the bantering nature of most of the conversation. Other candidates were distracted from the passage by re-writing

character sketches. Very strong work on this text was also seen, although few candidates, sadly, took up the opportunity to write as a director.

In the **PROSE** section, strong candidates writing about **The Son's Veto** made good use of the setting and the language, whereas weaker candidates wrote generalised accounts of the relationship which distracted them from the passage. The other two questions on the Hardy text were not as popular but were answered competently. Answers to Question 22 on **Pride and Prejudice** revealed excellent knowledge of the text – its plot, themes, and Jane Austen's irony; no mean feat for a sixteen-year-old reader. The second half of the question proved a discriminator, revealing those who could read closely. Some candidates were, like Elizabeth, blinded by prejudice in the sense that prejudice was all they wanted to write about. There was disappointing work on Question 23, where some candidates took a very narrow focus, concentrating on the sisters' importance to each other, rather than on the importance of their relationship in the novel as a whole: perhaps the range of material was too difficult for these candidates to select from. However, some strong answers did look at the psychological differences between the sisters, at how this relates to the novel's themes and at how Elizabeth's relationship with Darcy is affected by his behaviour in separating Jane and Bingley. In Question 24, there were some superbly-realised Mr Bennets, desperate for the solace and solitude of his library.

The passage-based question on **Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde** was answered extremely well. There was strong engagement with authorial technique, attention to imagery and setting and close reading of the final passage. There were fine answers to Question 27, too, which explored both scientific complexities and the hints leading to the idea of duality. Questions on **Huckleberry Finn** were dealt with competently although, in the extract-based question, candidates tended to lapse into character sketch and ironies were not picked up. Question 31 on **Daz 4 Zoe** was well answered, with close reading, but answers to Question 32 tended to lapse into narrative. Similarly candidates writing on **The Mist in the Mirror** wrote excellently on the extract with a strong grasp of how tension and mystery are created. The other two questions were rarely chosen. Question 40 on **A Kind of Loving** was answered effectively in both tiers.

**Ethan Frome** has made a promising debut on the paper, despite its predominant air of 'doom and gloom'. Many candidates responded strongly to the triangle of relationships at the heart of the novel. The passage-based question was answered well, especially at Foundation level. There was sensitive response to both the imagery and the symbolism in the passage. In answer to Question 38 some candidates over-emphasised the weather at the expense of the other factors in Ethan's environment which determine his fate.

In the **POETRY** section, we continue to see strong work on **Touched With Fire**. Many candidates this year wrote well on *Hawk Roosting*, making perceptive connections between the hawk's attitudes to killing and those found in human nature in *Five Ways to Kill a Man*. Weaker candidates, however, struggled more with the comparison, frequently wanting both poems to have the same 'message'.

## *Report on the Components taken in June 2000*

In answer to Question 44, many candidates ignored the wording of the question – ‘the idea of learning *about themselves*’ – and consequently missed the main thrust of the comparison. There were effective answers to Question 45 and strong personal response to the poems. Some Centres had an odd interpretation of *Adlestrop* as being solely concerned with an ex-soldier’s disappointment at there being no-one to meet him home from the war. This led them away from examination of the language, which does not support such an interpretation.

Question 46 on **The OCR/MEG Anthology** proved extremely popular and was generally well done. The poems seem to have struck a chord with students – and with their teachers, whose identification with Lawrence shone through some scripts! Many answers were hardworking and showed understanding of the poems but made little comment on language. ‘My pack of unruly hounds’, for example, was often cited but the image was equally often left unanalysed. Weaker candidates tended to skim over the darker elements in the Duffy poem, in order to shape a simple contrast between happy school and miserable school, whereas more sophisticated readings commented on the development which occurs in the pupil’s view of school in this poem and compared it to the more static ‘moment in time’ which characterises *Last Lesson of the Afternoon*. Some candidates used to good effect heartfelt personal memories of their own schooling.

Many candidates were more successful in writing about ‘*Stop all the Clocks*’ than ‘*Not Waving but Drowning*’. In the latter poem, they seemed to find the shifts of tone and voice elusive. Work on *The Planter’s Vision* and *Cynddylan on a Tractor* was stronger than responses to *Inexpensive Progress*, where candidates tended simply to list features of the poem. Weaker candidates missed the ironies in both Betjeman poems, or found these difficult to articulate. There were, however, some superb answers to this question, remarkable for the depth and skill of the appreciation and the sophistication of their expression.

Examiners were surprised this year by the number of candidates who did not know the gender of their poets. D H Lawrence was almost universally considered to be female. On the whole, however, teachers are to be congratulated on the interest and enthusiasm for English Literature which they continue to inspire. There are clearly far fewer bored Bert (or Betty) Lawrences out there than there are Mrs Tilschers, teaching ‘enthraling books’ in classrooms glowing like sweet shops.

### **LIST 2: Components 12, 22**

Once again, many candidates for this year’s examination seemed to have been carefully prepared, knew their texts well, and engaged closely and with apparent enjoyment with them. On occasion, however, especially in responses to poetry, some seemed to have over-prepared. In consequence, their answers lacked freshness, seeming too mechanical and over-reliant on listing technical terms, with no real appreciation of the actual effects of the language used by poets.

*Report on the Components taken in June 2000*

Most Centres usually judged the level at which to enter their candidates correctly. Some few did not, limiting the level of attainment of their candidates by entering them for Foundation Tier with its ceiling of Grade C; whilst some others entered weaker candidates at Higher Tier, risking the danger of the U which awaits those unable to achieve D (or the 'safety-net' E).

Very few candidates infringed the rubric, most attempting no more than three questions; again a sign that candidates were well prepared for the examination.

Once again, some texts proved much more popular than others. There were comparatively few answers on **Henry IV Part 1**, most Centres preferring to cover Shakespeare as part of coursework. **An Inspector Calls** and **Educating Rita** were again very popular. Coursework seemed to be the preferred option for prose published before 1900, although there were good examination answers on both **The Mayor of Casterbridge** and **Great Expectations**. **Of Mice and Men** and **Animal Farm** remained overwhelming favourites in the post-1900 prose section, whilst, unsurprisingly, the **OCR/MEG Anthology** was the common preference in the Poetry Section.

Although attention was drawn in last year's report to the negligence of candidates in completing the question grid on the first page of the answer booklet, Examiners again found that too often candidates failed to complete this page satisfactorily. Some also failed to enter their candidate number – and some even, their name. It cannot be in English Literature alone that Examiners would appreciate supervisors' checking that the instructions on the front of answer booklets have been followed.

In what is, of necessity, a short report it is difficult to give a detailed evaluation of the work of so many candidates. However, the overall impression was that candidates knew their texts, understood them in detail, and were able to support their views with appropriate reference to them. The best answers dealt incisively with texts, providing sharply relevant responses and avoiding paraphrase and plot summary. Weaker answers often failed to follow the thrust of questions, summarised the plot or avoided discussion of language.

In the **DRAMA** section, few candidates were tempted by the new text, **Henry IV Part 1**. Those who wrote well on Hotspur at Foundation Tier and on the conspirators and their conspiracy at Higher Tier, using Hotspur's language well to evaluate his character and what it promises for the success or failure of the conspiracy. At both Foundation and Higher Tiers, the most popular questions were those that were extract-based. The best answers focused closely on the given extract, or, in Higher Tier answers on **Absent Friends** and **A View from the Bridge**, provided an appropriate balance between the extract and other parts of the play. Weaker answers wandered from the extract and the question to tell all the candidates knew about a character named in the extract (Mrs Birling, for example, at Foundation Tier in **An Inspector Calls**) despite the guidance in the question concerning 'this extract'.



*Report on the Components taken in June 2000*

There were many lively responses to the extract from **Hobson's Choice** at both Tiers, candidates finding plenty to say about Hobson and finding much that was significant and amusing; the best answers recognised the irony of Hobson's situation, and Brighouse's use of Jim to reveal more about Hobson and provide humour. At Foundation Tier, candidates were not comfortable with the invitation to choose and write about two moments from **Hobson's Choice** that they found particularly entertaining. This unease was paralleled at Higher Tier in the comparatively few answers on the effects of using a single setting in **Educating Rita** (and just two characters) and in **An Inspector Calls**. The extract-based questions were overwhelmingly embraced on these two texts, but there was an impression on the part of some Examiners that candidates had given little consideration to the contribution of setting to the overall dramatic effect of a play. Certainly candidates who had reflected on what the film version gains or loses from freeing itself from the play's self-imposed restrictions might profitably have answered the question.

There were comparatively few answers on **Absent Friends**, but these revealed a good understanding of Diana, and the best showed an ability to analyse her speeches in detail to show her character and anxieties, and how these warn of her later breakdown. There were some excellent answers on the extract from **A View from the Bridge** at Higher Tier, although Foundation Tier candidates also showed their ability to respond to its drama. The best answers combined a close reading of the extract with appropriate awareness of the way it prepares an audience for the conflicts involving Eddie in Act Two and his defeat at Marco's hands. Candidates also wrote well on Alfieri, seeing his importance both as a commentator on and participant in the action of the play.

**An Inspector Calls** produced a variety of responses, but even the weakest found plenty to write about. The drama of the ending was well discussed, candidates commenting very thoughtfully on the suspense, change of atmosphere, conflicts and the abrupt, open ending. At Foundation Tier, candidates had much to say about the Birlings. On occasion, however, accounts focused solely on what Mr and Mrs Birling said and did, without making clear their own response to them; or went beyond the extract to the play in general; or interpreted the question to mean the Birlings generally, and discussed the contributions of Sheila and Eric as members of the Birling family. Answers on Eva Smith were often interesting and thoughtful. Foundation Tier candidates sometimes outlined what happened to her without making any inferences about her character, but nonetheless showed a good knowledge of the play. The best answers at Foundation Tier did make inferences, and, at Higher Tier, candidates wrote perceptively about Priestley's use of the character, often showing awareness that 'Eva Smith' is not a character so much as a function.

There were few empathic answers on drama, and comparatively few on the prose section. The best answers showed perceptive understanding of character, reflected the themes and concerns of the plays and novels, and created a convincing voice based on intimate knowledge of the text and the author's style.

In the **PROSE** section, neither **The New Windmill Book of Nineteenth Century Short Stories** nor **The Warden** found much popular favour. However, answers on Bierce's *An Arrest* were sometimes outstanding, with some sophisticated analysis of the style and astute understanding of the genre. Both pre-1900 novels, **The Mayor of Casterbridge** and **Great Expectations** were popular choices, particularly at Higher Tier. Once again, the extract-based questions proved particularly attractive. Candidates found ample opportunity to discuss the characters and their relationships in the Hardy extract, using reactions to the seed-drill to illustrate the differences between Henchard and Farfrae and analysing the extract well to show Farfrae's feelings for Elizabeth-Jane and Lucetta. There were good answers at Foundation Tier on whether Henchard deserves what happens to him; and well developed discussions at Higher Tier on the cause or causes of Henchard's fall. The extract from **Great Expectations** prompted some very good answers, with candidates responding well to the presentation of Pip and Joe and being aware of the older Pip's exasperated disapproval of his younger self; the humour in the extract was well understood.

There were many good answers to the post-1900 texts. Answering on **Roll of Thunder**, candidates understood the importance of the incident in Mary Logan's classroom and often paid close attention to the writing to show how it is made particularly disturbing to a reader; at Foundation Tier, candidates who followed the prompts to the question were often able to show a clear understanding of and personal response to the incident. Candidates at Higher Tier often wrote well on the inevitability of what happens to TJ, although weaker answers tended to list his early misdeeds and contrived not to mention what finally happens to him. There were some thoughtful reflections on the visit to Strawberry that accurately conveyed the dilemma of Big Ma; her loathing of what happened to Cassie and her helplessness in the face of white supremacy.

**Animal Farm** again proved to be enormously popular at both Higher and Foundation Tier. Candidates showed good understanding of the animals' situation immediately following the Battle of the Windmill, contrasting the bruised and bleeding animals well with the beaming Squealer and triumphant Napoleon. At Foundation Tier, there were knowledgeable evaluations of the roles of the sheep and dogs in maintaining the pigs' control of Animal Farm; and, at Higher Tier, some penetrating discussions of the part played by fear in the novel. The focus of answers seemed to be more on the novel and less on drawing historical parallels than has been the case in some years. Candidates at Higher Tier who took the invitation to write as Napoleon often showed an excellent understanding of his character and methods; there was sometimes an admirable tension between what Napoleon felt he ought to conceal and what he wanted to boast of in order to win the congratulations of a human audience. Squealer was sometimes used in a masterly manner to provide a compromise in the form of the cosmetic euphemism.

**Of Mice and Men** was, as ever, a very popular text at both Tiers. Almost all candidates were able to find enough to say about the extract; at Foundation, they showed awareness of the importance of the Dream and responded to the reactions and hopes of the three characters; at Higher, the closeness of the Dream to reality was clearly seen, and the best answers focused closely on the way Steinbeck's language affected the response to the characters. Candidates responded clearly to the death of Curley's wife, with weaker ones seeing in it only the appropriate punishment for being a 'tart'; more sophisticated answers saw her more vulnerable side, whilst the best answers were aware of the way Steinbeck transforms her in the description of her dead body, liberated from all meanness. Answers on the inevitability of Lennie's death were often very thorough, cataloguing the tally of unintended injuries and deaths Lennie causes, and linking Candy's dog and its ending to Lennie and his death at George's hands. George and Lennie's time on the ranch, either to the point at which Lennie crushes Curley's hand or to Lennie's death, was often thoughtfully considered, with candidates able to reveal their understanding of ranch life and the lives of itinerant workers, using the voice of Slim; often this voice was well assumed. Weaker answers simply told the story from Slim's viewpoint.

The extracts from **To Kill a Mockingbird** were also popular with candidates who chose this text. Foundation Tier candidates were able to show their understanding of Atticus's cross-examination of Bob Ewell, of Bob Ewell's growing confidence, and of his lack of realisation of the hole he is digging for himself. At Higher Tier, the best answers to the extract-based question sought to highlight both what was serious and entertaining about the conversation; weaker answers concentrated on either 'serious' or 'entertaining'. The question concerning 'real courage' gave candidates the opportunity to pursue this central theme in some detail; it was well understood and produced a number of excellent answers.

Answers on **Lord of the Flies** at both Tiers were often perceptive and knowledgeable. At Foundation Tier, candidates found much in the extract that was frightening both to the boys and to the reader. At Higher Tier, there was often penetrating analysis of the extract; Ralph's involvement in the hunt was seen as very important, as was the regression of the boys towards a stage not far removed from the killing of Simon. Close attention was often paid to the detail of the writing to establish why the episode was particularly disturbing. Candidates seemed to relish the opportunity to show that the novel is more than a story about lost boys. Themes were carefully outlined and various symbols thoughtfully discussed to suggest that the novel operates on a more complex level than simple narrative.

Of the two **POETRY** texts **The OCR/MEG Anthology** was by far the more popular. However, there were numbers of good answers comparing the poems in the Plath/Heaney sections of **Poems 2**, and responses here sometimes seemed fresher than many on the Anthology poems – perhaps partly because the margins of **Poems 2** give little scope for copious note-making. Although the Syllabus states that only light annotation is permitted in texts, the wide margins of the **Anthology** are clearly taken by many candidates as an opportunity to write exhaustive commentaries and notes.

## *Report on the Components taken in June 2000*

Sadly, some were so overwhelmed by their marginal notes identifying figures of speech, rhythm, rhyming patterns, etcetera, that they hardly engaged with the actual language of the poems. Too often, candidates would identify a metaphor, or criticise a verse because it did not contain a metaphor. Answers in some cases were so obsessed with the mechanics of the poems that they gave the impression of being themselves simply mechanical. Given the syllabus requirement to compare poems, candidates had, in all probability, been thoroughly prepared for the questions on the examination paper and approached them with a degree of weariness bred by over-familiarity. Gender problems with Lawrence and Stevie Smith occurred; DH often was 'she', whilst Stevie became 'he'. *In Mrs Tilscher's Class* had obviously been studied with enjoyment by many candidates; at least, the first half of it had, but the darker, second half of the poem was often ignored or hurriedly glossed over as an unfortunate after-thought that spoiled the overall happy effect. However, there were also some excellent answers on the poetry, in which candidates were able to demonstrate clear analytical ability, the capacity to compare poems closely, and a lively response to language.

Despite the occasional complaint in this report, the work of candidates made clear that both they and their teachers found literature far more interesting and challenging than the weary narrator of Lawrence's *Last Lesson* and had done much more than simply wait for the bell.

### **List 1 and List 2 – Coursework: Component 03**

The process of moderation is well settled and routine in most Centres now. This was demonstrated by prompt dispatch of MS1s, accurately filled in Coursework Assessment Forms and accord with Moderator judgements over marks given. In the most successful Centres, tasks were carefully worded to elicit the various criteria and the selection of pieces for presentation was appropriate and economical. Teachers' annotations and remarks on the back of the Coursework Assessment Sheet were supportive of candidates and guided Moderators as to why the marks had been awarded. Where there were deficiencies in content this was clearly indicated and some Centres took great trouble to provide background material explaining tasks.

There was, however, a significant number of Centres where candidates were clearly disadvantaged by the way in which work for the folder was selected and the Coursework Assessment Sheet was completed. Too often, candidates appeared to have been left to fill in forms without supervision; or, more worryingly, staff errors were left undetected. This latter point causes Moderators to ponder on the quality of internal standardisation in some Centres. Where a whole teaching set is found by a Moderator to be deficient because there is (for example) no comparative work or study of pre-1900 poetry, this can only suggest that folders have not been subjected to the wider scrutiny demanded by section 7, page 21 of the Syllabus.

*Report on the Components taken in June 2000*

Often a plethora of tasks was submitted for assessment in English Literature folders; as in last year's report, Centres are reminded of the required content as set out in Appendix B of the Syllabus – three pieces only. Superfluous assignments – on an examination text, perhaps, or post-1900 poetry – simply fragment the coherence of the folder (and add to the postage costs). This 'over-kill' approach most frequently leads to superficiality, especially where the folder is cluttered with mock examination work or short-answer tests. Occasionally tasks are ticked for assessment in a way which, on literal reading, would render folders deficient. Careful analysis of titles and re-sorting by the Moderator is frequently required to restore them to legitimacy.

The need to fulfil the requirements for reading of pre- and post-1900 texts is often a dangerous area, especially as choice of drama text now has to be balanced against the Centre's examination selection. One would hope that departmental planning at the beginning of the two-year course would ensure that problems are avoided. Using tasks common to both 1501 and the English Literary Heritage component of 1500 is generally a convenience to candidates and Centres, but care has to be exercised. Non-English texts may be acceptable in 1501, but a number of Centres still incorrectly submit them in 1500; American writers are usually the victims. The short stories of Kate Chopin and Guy de Maupassant led to successful Literature tasks but caused problems where Centres used them for Unit 3.

Even where the same text can be studied, the same task is not always appropriate for both syllabuses, and teachers are advised to compare the marking criteria for Reading with those for Literature. At Grade C, for instance, Literature requires more extended commentary, more sophisticated comparison between texts and the connection of language, structure and form with meaning. Tasks causing problems here are often of the re-creative or empathic type, which may meet the requirements for Reading without necessarily facilitating higher grades in Literature. This is not to say, of course, that empathic tasks are inappropriate vehicles for response in English Literature – work in examination scripts demonstrates repeatedly that they are – only that they need to be formulated carefully.

A key indicator of achievement in English Literature has always been the ability to analyse the effect upon meaning of language, structure, style and form. Centres are reminded that candidates are unlikely to gain the higher grades if this skill is not illustrated, in the poetry task at least. However, the mere naming of literary devices is unhelpful if it is not combined with an appreciation of effect and an engagement with meaning. Task titles can usefully guide candidates towards such a response. For example, a number of Centres tackled structure by using sonnets. At times this proved a very positive experience for candidates; at others, work read too much like an exercise in engineering or instructions on the assembly of a wardrobe, with extended descriptions of structure (iambic pentameter, ABABCC, etc.) but no response to choice of language, intensity of feeling or creation of meaning.

*Report on the Components taken in June 2000*

An attempt at comparison of texts, rather than two unconnected commentaries 'end-on' is also recommended for candidates aiming at the higher grade levels (as has been emphasised in much of the OCR training this year). *The Charge of the Light Brigade with Dulce et Decorum Est* remains the most popular comparative task, with Hardy, Blake and Browning increasingly in the running. A number of candidates still treat poetry as sociological document, however, ignoring any sense of genre. Short stories have stimulated excellent comparative response but a title such as 'Compare the following two....' often fails to focus the study, whereas a comparison of (e.g.) heroes within the texts can prove more supportive. Some Centres, for instance, provoked their more gifted candidates to more penetrating analysis by considering the idea of paralysis in two or three **Dubliners** stories. A number of Centres have stretched their candidates by channelling them into studies of genres. Thus **Frankenstein** or **Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde** as horror stories, or Conan Doyle and detective fiction were often successful starting-points.

The requirement for candidates to comment on the dramatic effectiveness of drama texts should not be allowed to distort tasks. There were, for instance, some assignments that purportedly examined dramatic effectiveness in Shakespeare, but – taking the form of reviews of performance or film – led not to discussion or interpretation of the text but only to description of lighting or costume. Social, historical and cultural background remains a challenge. Some rather erudite introductions about the Renaissance or Stalinism seemed to owe more to the blackboard, printed notes or dictation than genuine involvement within the text. Biographical details of authors are only useful if they inform interpretation. The fact that Wilfred Owen fought in the First World War is significant; the fact that he was born in Plas Wilmot, Oswestry, normally is not. With suitable guidance from well worded titles, many candidates were able to exploit the social background of **Jane Eyre** or **Cider with Rosie** without it reading like 'Jackdaw' resource material for a history project on education. A title such as, 'Is **Hobson's Choice** a play about social class?' is simple but leaves the candidate in no doubt as to how to approach the play.

None of these comments should cloud the fact that, in a vast majority of cases, coursework folders were efficiently presented and supported candidates in their achievements. The relative homogeneity of tasks commented upon last year remains and Moderators always welcome novel tasks or texts that conform to the criteria.

Not everyone would risk 'Defend Shakespeare against the charge that he is boring', but with proper handling it proved surprisingly successful, relating Shakespeare to universal experiences. Encouraging candidates to relate their reading of pre-1900 literature to contemporary issues is indeed no bad thing, though it may produce unexpected conclusions. Thus, while one candidate argued convincingly for a likening of Ozymandias to Tony Blair, the Moderator was less persuaded by another's assertion that **Romeo and Juliet** is about 'Courteney Love'.

*Report on the Components taken in June 2000*

The number of candidates awarded each grade was as follows.

These statistics are correct at the time of going to publication.

**Component Threshold Marks**

Component	Max Mark	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
11 Paper 11	69	–	–	34	26	19	12	5	
12 Paper 12	69	–	–	33	25	17	10	3	
21 Paper 21	69	51	42	33	25	–	–	–	
22 Paper 22	69	50	41	32	25	–	–	–	
3 Coursework	105	85	74	63	53	43	33	23	

**Option A – Foundation Tier  
Components 11 and 3**

	Max Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
Overall Threshold Marks	100				52	42	32	22	12	
Percentage in Grade					28.87	31.69	23.86	9.16	5.37	
Cumulative Percentage in Grade					28.87	60.56	84.42	93.57	98.94	

The total entry for the examination was 1144.

**Option A – Higher Tier  
Components 21 and 3**

	Max Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
Overall Threshold Marks	100	88	76	64	52	41	35			
Percentage in Grade		12.32	30.31	33.05	18.75	4.68	0.52			
Cumulative Percentage in Grade		12.32	42.63	75.68	94.44	99.12	99.63			

The total entry for the examination was 6797.

*Report on the Components taken in June 2000*

**Option B – Foundation Tier  
Components 12 and 3**

	<b>Max Mark</b>	<b>A*</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>U</b>
Overall Threshold Marks	100				50	40	30	20	10	
Percentage in Grade					22.24	30.44	26.78	13.66	5.43	
Cumulative Percentage in Grade					22.24	52.67	79.45	93.11	98.57	

The total entry for the examination was 11 854.

**Option B – Higher Tier  
Components 22 and 3**

	<b>Max Mark</b>	<b>A*</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>U</b>
Overall Threshold Marks	100	86	74	62	51	41	36			
Percentage in Grade		7.28	20.93	34.64	26.01	8.53	1.31			
Cumulative Percentage in Grade		7.28	28.22	62.86	88.87	97.40	98.70			

The total entry for the examination was 31 214.