

Moderators' Report/  
Principal Moderator Feedback

June 2011

GCE English Language & Literature  
6EL04

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## Introduction

Unit 4 gives centres the opportunity to choose their own topic and core text(s) in any genre (fiction or non-fiction) to be supported by independent research and wide reading. While most centres used a traditional literary text as their starting point, a number did select some interesting and challenging non-fiction texts as their primary source. The overall range of both fiction and non-fiction was very impressive. To quote one moderator, "it was a delight to read such a variety of imaginative writing and to appreciate the detailed research carried out by so many students."

The most important observation about this series is the extent to which most centres had learned from last year's experience and showed a real sense of progression from AS, both in terms of expectations and outcomes.

The best folders were characterised by individuality and a willingness to take risks. As with last year's submissions, there was a huge range of themes, some based on the suggestions in the specification, while others used the same stimulus text and allowed candidates to explore their own areas of interest. Some centres had been very prescriptive, with candidates submitting almost identical pieces. Others had given candidates free rein and, as a general rule, these tended to be more successful.

"The Kite Runner" and "A Thousand Splendid Suns" continued to be popular choices. "Birdsong" featured in many bibliographies but it was encouraging to see "Hamlet" coupled with Sylvia Plath's poetry, and Camus' "The Outsider", as well as John Hersey's "Hiroshima" also making an appearance. Pat Barker's "Regeneration" and "The Ghost Road" were used productively in work on the impact of war on the individual. Texts such as "Atonement" and "Spies" also proved popular, as did "Schindler's Ark", "Testament of Youth" and "Letters from a Lost Generation." "Captain Corelli's Mandolin" and "The Great Gatsby" put in guest appearances. Bernard Schlink's "The Reader" featured in a number of different centres' submissions. Other texts which proved inspiring were Valerie Martin's "Property", "Ivan Denisovitch", "Zorba the Greek" and "Once in a House on Fire."

Many candidates used family experiences, coupled with extensive research, to produce heart-felt fiction and sophisticated, reflective non-fiction.

Many candidates had embraced the challenge of researching their topic and this was reflected in the quality of their bibliographies. Some centres, unfortunately, seemed to have chosen their Unit 3 set texts as a starting point, with no evidence of any further reading. This lack of ambition resulted in some very thin commentaries.

The best work was often a delight to read and reflected the candidates' engagement with their tasks and the high expectations of the centres.

## **Choice of core texts**

Texts were either chosen as style models or for their thematic interest and often for both. Candidates who selected multi-layered texts found it easier to engage with rewarding source material and were able to discuss specific stylistic influences in their own writing. (A few did not progress beyond observing that their chosen writer used simple and compound sentences or was fond of adjectives which made their writing easy to relate to.)

While there is no guarantee that a candidate who has studied "Hamlet" rather than a ghost-written celebrity autobiography or a "misery memoir" is going to produce more interesting work, the evidence this year suggests a direct correlation between the ambition and range of the wider reading and the quality of the tasks and commentaries.

## **Choice of tasks**

All centres followed the specification requirement to produce two creative tasks, supported by a single, integrated commentary. A number of centres offered two separate commentaries, perhaps following the Unit 2 prescription. This limited the ability to cross-reference the texts and draw thematic parallels.

There was still some confusion about the nature of the non-fiction task, despite the advice in last year's report. Many of the non-fiction offerings were fictionalised versions of either real events or even a journalistic version of an event from a stimulus text. First hand reports from Kabul or the recent Japanese earthquake used non-fiction generic features but were essentially well-researched fiction.

However, a candidate who had visited Auschwitz used the trip as the starting point for a journalistic reflection on the horrors of war. A number of candidates used their own travels, combined with extensive reading, to offer distinctive non-fiction pieces.

There were some very successful literary pieces which used journalistic formats to imagine historical events.

Despite comments in last year's report, a significant percentage of candidates were still using columns and graphics for the layout of newspaper articles. As a general rule, work should be presented as if for submission to an editor. Thus, there is a case for a variety of fonts when a piece of fiction uses multiple narrators. Play scripts and screenplays should certainly use conventional layout. Many newspaper articles, however, seemed more like essays, either with no regard to the nature of journalistic paragraphing or losing sight of their audience after the introduction.

Candidates should not submit drafts or work books and will only be assessed on their final draft.

Many candidates were very precise about the exact nature of their work and had clearly shaped the texts with specific audiences in mind. Dramatic monologues were a popular choice but there was often no clue about the context or supposed reception of the piece, either in the task itself or in the commentary.

### **Creative tasks**

The majority of these were a delight to read and there were some truly exceptional pieces of work in both sections. The best were original, confident and not afraid to take risks. Candidates had clearly relished the opportunity to explore their chosen theme and to come up with work that was often very moving and occasionally very funny.

Many candidates were clearly at ease with their chosen genres and the moderators were often humbled by the quality and maturity of many submissions.

As mentioned elsewhere, there were still some distracting graphics and unnecessary layouts. Some candidates seemed to have been rewarded for their efforts with *Publisher* and *Paint Shop* rather than the specific lexical and syntactical shaping of the texts. Some candidates had produced convincing web pages and blogs.

It was encouraging to see candidates using knowledge gained from other parts of the course, especially when creating distinct idiolects and narrative voices. These were often supported by fully integrated critical frameworks.

### **Audience**

The most successful tasks and commentaries showed awareness of audience and how the texts had been created with readers (and listeners) in mind. Some commentaries offered generalisations about broadsheet and tabloid readership but did not explore context or shared assumptions.

Decisions about the nature of the audience will also help candidates to avoid writing fiction in the non-fiction section and to offer precise discussion in the commentaries.

### **Commentaries and Bibliographies**

The best commentaries offered thorough but succinct discussions of thematic, generic and linguistic choices and were able to distil the essence of the stimulus texts as a starting point for analysing their own work.

A number of candidates spent more time discussing the stimulus texts than their own writing and copied out long quotations as a substitute for analysis. There was sometimes a tendency to describe the reading process and discuss what had been omitted, which is not quite the same as discussing a writer's choices.

There was a sound command of technical terminology, with the best work moving beyond observation and assertion towards a sophisticated appreciation of the writing process. Some commentaries offered fully integrated outstanding discussion of genre, purpose, audience, language and effect.

The word limit was usually adhered to and the best commentaries used this restriction to great effect by not wasting a word. Some very good commentaries were let down by careless proof-reading. Others were object lessons in clarity and conciseness.

The best bibliographies were wide ranging but believable and there was also a clear connection with the commentaries. Some seemed to be a suggested reading list rather than a reflection of the candidates' research. Candidates often listed their Unit 3 texts and/or their AS texts without discussion. Many fine commentaries included fiction, non-fiction, poetry, drama, films, websites and blogs.

### **Exemplar 1**

*I chose to focus on differing perceptions of war, and used my own experiences, interviews with family and friends and wider reading to explore how civilian attitudes to war contrast with those of people with military experience.*

*From reading about public outcry over the false disclosure of friendly fire deaths (particularly those of the high profile US soldier Pat Tillman in 2004 and the aid worker Linda Norgrove in 2010), I became interested in civilian perceptions of war. I chose to pursue this interest by writing a blog focusing on common misconceptions of war, based on personal experiences and a short, self-contained story comparing how contrasting war experiences with life at home and how the differences can affect a relationship.*

### **Exemplar 2**

*My wider reading and research have inspired me in writing on the topic*

*'Impact of War on the Individual', and the comparison of the events during Vietnam War with the situation today in Iraq and Afghanistan. The first is intended as an article for "The Guardian", reflecting on the Vietnam War protestors during the 60s and how the war had impacted on them, and the second is a short story about a family who have been affected by the war.*

### **Examiner Comments:**

Both of these examples offer clear opening statements about the candidates' intentions and are beginning to explore genre and purpose.

### **Exemplar 3**

*'Part Four of 'The Reader'' is a suggested starting point for an additional part of the original novel. My literary piece is aimed at an audience which*

*has read 'The Reader' by Bernhard Schlink, who is interested in his work – from a critical view or otherwise – or anyone who has an interest in post-war Germany.*

**Examiner Comments:**

This shows how discussion of audience can be introduced succinctly.

**Exemplar 4**

*My comment about Britain not having had to “pick themselves up” – a deliberate use of colloquial language – is controversial, reflecting my attitudes and values, and is especially a phrase that would provoke comments from readers. My use of an adverb as an intensifier, “Terribly politically correct,” is an ironic use of language in that it is intended to be typical of “English speakers”. I juxtaposed the Checkpoint Charlie Museum, where we “dared” to enter, with “a nearby coffee shop” to highlight the differences between two cultures*

**Examiner Comments:**

This is a good example of a candidate who is able to integrate use of terminology with some developed comments about effect.

**Exemplar 5**

*The two narratives were clearly defined and separated through the use of two very distinctive idiolects. Andy used more complex sentences and favoured the present tense, in order to give his speech a more immediate feel. His perspective was deliberately the more lyrical – with syntactical patterning such as “We grew up and we grew apart” and similes like “flesh as red and delicate as a summer fruit” in order to recreate the vivid and dreamlike state his life has taken, now that his experience of war has altered him. My research on soldier experiences originated from reading “War” by Sebastian Junger, included using modern soldier blogs and First World War poetry and proved instrumental in recreating and exploring the feelings of loss and alienation some military personnel feel once they return from life on the front line.*

*To contrast Andy’s use of complex sentences, Lisa’s narrative featured more elliptical sentences – “Everything frantic” – and where Andy had commonly used military terms, she frequently used colloquialisms such as “the Med” and “all for ringing around”, to draw attention to how each narrator’s lexical choices have been influenced by their very different experiences. Lisa’s common use of the past tense shows how she has distanced herself from the events described, in a way Andy cannot.*

*The motif of the “desert” is used as a metaphor for the war that has divided and defined them; the title “Deserted” reflects this metaphor and how each narrator feels cut off from the other.*

*The title of the blog was also carefully chosen; as it alludes to a popular song, it helps to create a colloquial and familiar tone – an effect that is*

*enhanced by the occasional use of humour (“even Jarhead”) and use of the impersonal second person to emulate direct speech. A mixed register– “whacked around the head ... at the tender age of seven” – is used throughout, to make the controversial subject matter seem more accessible to the general reader, while still respecting the seriousness of this topic.*

**Examiner Comments:**

Here the candidate has successfully synthesised AOs 2 and 3. The use of terminology is accurate and unobtrusive, allowing for cogent analysis and evaluation.

**Exemplar 6**

*I felt I was able to make an idiolect for the main narrator in my fiction piece by creating a voice for him which the reader can sympathise with and relate to on a personal level. Examples of this are shown in the text, “I...I...I’m not sure I un...understand officer” I murmured slowly under my breath. What do you mean she didn’t return home”? Repetition is also used in order to create a feeling of shock in the narrator’s voice.*

**Examiner Comments:**

Here the approach is mainly observational and descriptive. The discussion of effect is undeveloped and generalised.

**Exemplar 7**

*Structurally, my core text “The Kite Runner” by Khaled Hosseini influenced my literary piece, as I also used a circular narrative like he does in my core text, and finishes in the same place and with the same sentences “Here I sit”. I used flashbacks, like he does, to tell my story “Jamilla was at the board”.*

**Examiner Comments:**

The candidate acknowledges the structural influence of the stimulus text but the discussion is undeveloped. The quotations are not integrated or discussed.

**Exemplar 8**

*The title, ‘Crossing the Rubicon’, is an idiom which historically refers to Caesar’s crossing of the Rubicon River in 49 BC – considered an act of war. Additionally, it is the name often given to the political speech made by ex-South African President, PW Botha, in 1985. The idiom means to pass the point of no return and by using it I reflect my view that South African society is unable to recover from the fateful decisions of its previous government.*

*‘Azania’ was the name given to South Africa by black nationalists and the phrase ‘Viva Azania’ was on many student banners during the Soweto uprisings in 1976. By choosing this title for my literary piece, I have made it clear from which viewpoint this short story is written.*

**Examiner Comment:**

Research and context are seamlessly integrated here.

**Exemplar 9**

*Hamlet's hatred toward Claudius, shown in the intended pun, "a little more than kin but less than kind", inspired Timothy's repulse towards the (absent) Roger),*

*"She went to hospital to pick Roger up", the anonymous pronoun instead of the word "mother" emphasizing the emotional distance between them. Some of Timothy's actions parallel Hamlet's: Timothy tricking the psychologist mirrors Hamlet fooling Polonius; "It reminds me of a truck, he snorted. It doesn't remind me of an elephant or a giraffe because it is nothing like them". This precocious exchange and Timothy's mocking insult create his voice, "Did you go to university?, the sarcastic rhetorical question underlining the unsympathetic portrayal of the child, and foreshadowing the story's climax. The onomatopoeia, "Nyeh nyeh nyeh nteh", extracted from Shriver's novel, enhances the ironic tone, shaping timothy's voice and creating an annoying image. I included flowers, paralleling Ophelia's use of their meaning in "Hamlet". Timothy breaking a vase of freesias, symbolizing innocence, foreshadows the gruesome ending; there is nothing pure left in him.*

**Examiner Comment:**

There is a clear synthesis here of analysis and discussion of the influence of wider reading.

**Exemplar 10**

*The inspiration for my literary piece came from Khaled Hosseini's A Thousand Splendid Suns. Parallels exist between Jackie and Amy and Hosseini's characters Mariam and Laila. All four characters experience unhappiness in their societies which are in some way to blame for this. For example, the patriarchy and suppression of the Taliban cause misery for the characters in A Thousand Splendid Suns, while the weary and unvarying existences of Jackie and Amy causes their depression to manifest itself in their lives. Although there are major differences between Amy and Jackie, such as their age and family situations, the use of dual narration uses these differences to advantage by juxtaposing the histories and settings of the two main characters.*

*It is made clear to the reader that both the main characters are trying to escape from or deny reality. It is in the deceptively comforting setting of their bedrooms, that they each reveal streams of consciousness, which reveal glimpses of their hidden thoughts and inner struggles.*

*At the end of the first chapter, Amy and Jackie are then both brought 'back to reality' by the harsh sound of a telephone ringing. This is another example of the parallel lives they lead and implies that they are more closely related than they appear to be. Similarly, the 'few relics' that remain in her son's room show how Jackie has not yet come to terms with his death and almost tricks herself into believing he is still alive, while references to 'old souvenirs' and the 'fine layer of dust' illustrate Amy's attempts to escape by remembering her past. The reader is told that Amy's room has*

*never changed over the years, but merely accumulated more possessions, which have fallen into a state of disintegration. This is symbolic of the loss of her childhood as she gets older and is also an allusion to the character of Miss Havisham in Charles Dickens's Great Expectations.*

### **Examiner Comments:**

Although not as focused on specific linguistic analysis as Exemplar 7, this is still a very good example of developed discussion of the structural influence of stimulus texts.

### **Internal Moderation**

The majority of this was very accurate and reflected the Assessment Objectives and band descriptors. Some centres had included speculation about potential grades but this is not advisable.

Some of the high band folders had been over-rewarded, especially at AO2, where some very superficial "feature-spotting" and assertions about the effect of the language had been awarded very high marks. This is not to say that centres should not award full marks if there is no good reason not to. As with last year's entries, some carelessly proof-read and poorly-edited work was awarded high marks for AO1. Very few folders exceeded the word count but the ability, for example, to edit journalistic pieces might reasonably be regarded as a pre-requisite for AO4. Awarding in the middle bands tended to be accurate and most centres' rank-ordering was correct.

### **Annotation**

The quality of annotation ranged from a few ticks and a single sentence summative comment through to detailed reference to band descriptors and personalised responses indicating where AOs had been met. Some centres had corrected grammatical and spelling mistakes but had not responded to the way in which the work addressed the syllabus requirements. Many centres included their own mark sheets and these were often helpful in seeing how judgements had been arrived at. It is also helpful to indicate the breakdown of marks for each task. There was plenty of evidence of high quality internal moderation, in some cases with up to three different teachers offering perceptive comments about the quality of the work. Some annotations, however, consisted of copying out the band descriptors. The best marking showed a real engagement with individual tasks and acknowledged specific achievements and strengths.

### **Front Sheets**

Some centres used these as an opportunity to offer helpful information about genre, purpose and audience. This was referred to in last year's report and some centres had adopted it as good practice. An exemplar is included at the end of this report.

## **Administration Issues**

A number of coursework samples missed the official deadline of 15<sup>th</sup> May 2011. However, many did arrive promptly and it is advisable to allow more than one day for the delivery of packages.

Unfortunately, many cover sheets were incomplete, e.g. no candidate numbers, incorrect centre or candidate numbers, no word counts or signatures. Some gave no indication of the nature of the work or were confined to "Story" and "Article."

Most folders, however, were well-presented and easy to read. Candidates should be encouraged to double space their work and use size 12 font.

Drafts, working books and additional materials are not required and will not be assessed.

Candidates should be reminded of the requirement to include a running word count on each page of their writing and that any writing which exceeds the total word will not be assessed.

Although most work was very well-presented, there were a number of centres which had taken little consideration of the impression their work created or the need to work out precisely what was being offered. It would be helpful if work could be presented with treasury tags; some centres had stapled their work and this was perfectly acceptable. Separate plastic or cardboard wallets for each folder should not be used, although some centres did include the whole sample in a cardboard folder to protect it in the post.

## **Conclusion**

The over-riding impression of this submission was of centres which had learned from last year's experience, encouraged their candidates to work independently and be original and creative. The best work far exceeded the number of marks available in the mark scheme and showed exceptional maturity and sophistication.

Centres are to be congratulated on the overall quality of the work which was often a pleasure to read.

This is an example of a front sheet which has been personalised to include full details of genre, purpose and audience for each task.

<b>Centre Number</b>  <i>01010</i>	<b>Candidate number</b>  <i>1010</i>	<b>Edexcel</b>  <b>COURSEWORK MARK &amp; AUTHENTICATION SHEET</b>  <b>ADVANCED GCE ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE</b>  <b>JUNE 2011</b>	<b>Centre's final mark:</b>	
<b>Surname and initials</b>  <i>SMITH, J.</i>			<b>AOs assessed</b>	<b>Mark</b>
<b>6EL04 - Unit 4</b> <b>Presenting the World</b>			<b>AO1</b>	<b>/16</b>
			<b>AO2</b>	<b>/16</b>
			<b>AO3</b>	<b>/16</b>
			<b>AO4</b>	<b>/32</b>
<b>Total no. of words</b>  <b>3739</b>	<b>(AO1, AO4)</b> <b>LITERARY WRITING: "Viva Azania."</b>			
	A short story exploring the events of the Soweto Uprisings in 1976. Intended for an audience interested in historical fiction and the Apartheid era.			
	<b>(AO1, AO4)</b> <b>NON-FICTION WRITING: "Crossing The Rubicon."</b>			
	An extract of informative travel writing recounting my own experiences in South Africa. Intended for an audience interested in travel and culture.			
	<b>(AO1, AO2, AO3)</b> <b>COMMENTARY: As for above.</b>			
<b>Student's declaration:</b> I declare that I have produced the work involved without external assistance apart from any which is acceptable under the scheme of assessment and is recorded. <b>Signature:</b> _____  <b>Date:</b> _____				
<b>Teacher's assessment and comments:</b>  <b>Teacher's declaration:</b> I declare that the student's activities have been kept under regular supervision and that, to the best of my knowledge, no assistance has been given apart from any which is acceptable under the scheme of assessment and has been identified and recorded. <b>Signature:</b> _____  <b>Date:</b> _____				

**This is a very good example of a varied and well-organised bibliography.**

### **Books**

- Stimulus text: *Atonement* by Ian McEwan (Jonathan Cape, 2001)
- *Five Quarters of an Orange* by Joanne Harris (Doubleday, 2001)
- *A Town Like Alice* by Nevil Shute (House of Stratus, 2000)
- *Blue Skies and Gunfire* by K M Peyton (London Definitions, 2008)
- *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini (Bloomsbury Publishing 2007)
- *The Dawns are Quiet Here* by Boris Vasilyev (Russian Literature) (Azuka-Klassika, 2004)
- *Descendants from the Sky* by Vladimir Kunin (Russian Literature) (Novyi Gelikon, 1994)

### **Diaries**

- *The Diaries of Virginia Woolf*, Volume 5, 1936-1941

### **Poems**

- Herschel-Clarke, May 1917, *The Mother* from <http://oldpoetry.com/opoem/44435-May-Herschel-Clarke-The-Mother>
- Brittain, Vera, 1920 *Perhaps* (to R.A.L.), Heinemann
- Reed, Henry, *Judging Distances* from *Collected Poems*, ed. J. Stallworthy, OUP 1991
- Letts, Winifred, *The Deserter*, from "Hallowe'en and Poems of the War", John Murray Ltd.

### **Articles (printed)**

- *Briefing: The Arab Uprising* from the Economist (February 26<sup>th</sup> 2011)

### **Articles (web)**

- *Excerpts: Gaddafi Interview* from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-12604102>
- *Elites Loosen Embrace on Gaddafi Son* from <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703409904576174691596817796.html>
- *Gaddafi Sons ask Saudi Clerics for Help* from <http://www.news24.com/Africa/News/Gaddafi-sons-asks-Saudi-clerics-help-20110228>
- *An Unlikely Hero of a Youth-led Revolution* from <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/02/28/AR2011022805298.html?hpid+topnews>
- *Gaddafi's Children as Controversial as Father* from <http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/02/23/138886.html>

- *Gaddafi's Children are a Motley* from <http://ktwop.wordpress.com/2011/02/27/gaddafis-children-are-a-motley-but-dangerous-lot/>
- *2011Libyan Uprising* from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2011 Libyan uprising#Abu Salim Massacre](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2011_Libyan_uprising#Abu_Salim_Massacre)
- *United Nations Security Council Resolution 1970* from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United Nations Security Council Resolution 1970](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations_Security_Council_Resolution_1970)

### **Plays**

- *Flare Path* by Terence Rattigan, staged by Trevor Nunn (March 2011)

## Grade Boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

<http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>

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