

Italian A: Literature

Overall grade boundaries

Higher level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 16	17 - 29	30 - 42	43 - 56	57 - 70	71 - 83	84 - 100

Standard level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 17	18 - 29	30 - 42	43 - 56	57 - 69	70 - 82	83 - 100

Higher level internal assessment

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 5	6 - 10	11 - 13	14 - 17	18 - 21	22 - 25	26 - 30

The range and suitability of the work submitted

Recordings were generally of good quality and appropriate length; the selected extracts were likewise appropriate in length and nature, though some passages of ancient writers proved to be, in my view, too difficult and not proportionate to the candidates' capacity. Quite often in these cases (extracts from ancient works from the Middle Ages for example) candidates read aloud the whole passage and paraphrase it line by line: this is not good practice, this is not what the literary commentary is supposed to be. Yet teachers seem to approve it and usually award high marks to such performances. Guiding questions were at times too general and vague, unrelated to significant aspects of the extract. Subsequent questions were not always asked or, when asked, often inappropriate: not focused on the extract and very rarely used to give candidates "the opportunity to improve or expand on doubtful or inadequate statements" (Language A Literature guide, p.65). The recommendation that "teachers must be satisfied that students have understood specific words, phrases and allusions, as well as appreciated their importance within the extract or poem" is by and large ignored, and there have been

cases in which even blatant errors of comprehension of specific words or phrases have been overlooked by the teacher.

As to the discussion, the way it was conducted was generally not very satisfactory. The question or questions, the supposed starting point of the discussion, were often too vague or they were merely focused on the subject matter and did not encourage the candidate to go much beyond a mere narration of the plot of the work. Some teachers asked a lot of unconnected questions, jumping from one to another on a completely different matter, continuously interrupting the candidates who were not given “every opportunity to demonstrate their independent understanding of the work under discussion” (Language A Literature guide, p.65).

Candidate performance against each criterion

A. Knowledge and Understanding of the poem

Most candidates knew what the poem (or extract from a poem) was about and were able to place it into context. As usual, however, some candidates spent too much time on unnecessary information about the author, his/her life and work, to the detriment of the actual commentary. Understanding and interpretation were less satisfactory: candidates were rarely capable of identifying sub-textual aspects and implications; they generally repeated what they had learned in class.

B. Appreciation of the writer's choices

While most candidates managed to identify the most significant literary features in the poems they were analyzing, only a minority were capable of showing the relationship between form and content, providing precise and pertinent textual examples.

C. Organization and presentation of the commentary

Rather than organizing their ideas and interpretations in a well-structured response, candidates usually followed the text line by line, commenting on the various aspects as they came up or, in the worst cases, just paraphrasing. There were also well-organized commentaries, in which ideas were clearly linked and effectively illustrated by precise references, but these were a minority.

D. Knowledge and Understanding of the work used in the discussion

Candidates generally showed adequate acquaintance with the works' content and the authors' thoughts and feelings, though not much in depth. Some were also able to discuss the implications of the works and their sub-textual elements.

E. Response to the discussion questions

Candidates' answers were usually relevant; questions at times were not (see above, section 2). In such cases, candidates have not been penalized in the assessment, but an inadequate conduct of the discussion might have prevented them from showing “their independent understanding of the work under discussion”.

F. Language

Generally clear and grammatically correct though not always precise in the use of the literary terminology. Some candidates were not fluent, others lapsed occasionally into colloquialisms.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

The main recommendation is, as usual, to practise the literary commentary and the discussion over and over, concentrating on the texts themselves, without relying too much on secondary sources and general ideas. Teachers should take care not to propose to their students texts that are beyond their capacity. Finally, I recommend that both teachers and students read very carefully the Literature guide.

Standard level internal assessment

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 4	5 - 8	9 - 12	13 - 16	17 - 19	20 - 23	24 - 30

The range and suitability of the work submitted

The extracts represented a wide range of works and genres and were mostly appropriate in length and challenge, with some exceptions. Guiding questions were not always appropriate in number and in nature: in some cases candidates were asked to comment on the authors' ideas, irrespective of the extracts and their content; in other cases the issues raised were too wide or too vague to be treated effectively on the basis of the extracts. Occasionally, both questions dealt with the same aspect or, more rarely, they were missing altogether. Subsequent questions appeared even less satisfactory, as too often they were not focused on the extract and had the effect of carrying the discussion far from it.

Candidate performance against each criterion

A. Knowledge and Understanding

Many candidates showed an adequate general knowledge of the works and were able to place the extracts into context, but in most cases the analysis was not sufficiently detailed and the interpretation not always supported by appropriate references.

B. Appreciation of the writer's choices

Most candidates identified in the extract some significant literary features, but only a few were able to appreciate the way in which language, technique and style shape meaning.

C. Organization and presentation

There has been some improvement in this respect, many responses showed evidence of some planning and were more or less focused.

D. Use of Language

Language was generally clear though not always correct. The choice of register and the terminology were not always appropriate to the literary commentary.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

Students must improve their techniques of literary commentary through continuous practice of literary analysis. They must concentrate on the text (its structure, literary features, content) without relying on second-hand sources, such as school handbooks or information that can be gathered from the internet. Teachers and candidates should bear in mind that the main purpose of the oral commentary is not to assess the candidates' knowledge but to test their ability to analyse, interpret and comment on a literary text in a well-focused and effectively structured manner.

Standard level internal assessment (self-taught)

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 4	5 - 8	9 - 12	13 - 16	17 - 19	20 - 23	24 - 30

The range and suitability of the work submitted

Individual Oral Commentary

The extracts selected by the candidates were generally appropriate in length and challenge, but quite often they did not fit the questions chosen among those proposed by the IB well. Even when they did, most candidates tended to disregard them and delivered a commentary that was only partially, or not at all, focused on the question. Some candidates did not place the extract into context, others, on the contrary, spent a lot of time in superfluous considerations about the author and his/her work before starting the actual commentary that, in the majority of cases, was little more than a paraphrase.

Individual Oral Presentation

In some cases, the presentation was based on one text instead of two. In general, in delivering their presentations, candidates relied heavily on the notes they had prepared, and did not seem to care much about strategies to interest the audience.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Individual Oral Commentary

A. Knowledge and Understanding of extract

More or less half of the candidates demonstrated no more than some knowledge and limited understanding and were rarely able to produce precise and relevant references to the extracts; some even almost ignored the extract and the question they were supposed to address and talked about the work and the author in very general terms. The “meaningful link between the question and the selected extract” that the examiner should expect to see according to the note “Applying the assessment criteria” was but rarely to be found. Only a small number of candidates – about 17% - met successfully the requirements of this criterion. The performances of the remaining candidates were generally between adequate and mediocre.

B. Appreciation of the writer’s choices

The figures are approximately the same as the previous criterion: a small group deserved high grades; about half of the candidates performed satisfactorily, the rest in between. Candidates whose answers were not really focused on the extract were consequently unable to discuss language, technique and style; or, if they did, they did it in very general terms, without giving examples and without showing how literary tools are used to shape meaning.

C. Organization and presentation

The weakest aspect of the candidates’ performance: in the majority of cases there was limited evidence, or none at all, of a planned structure – no clear links between the ideas, no precise and pertinent illustrations – and the comments lacked focus with the exception of a small group of very good candidates who achieved high marks in all criteria.

D. Use of Language

Generally clear though not always fluent and fully appropriate in lexis and register.

Individual Oral Presentation

A. Knowledge and Understanding of the work(s)

The knowledge and understanding of the works studied appeared to be in many cases (about 38%) incomplete and superficial, generally confined to the subject matter of the works, and even that not exempt from blunders and misunderstandings. A slightly inferior percentage (about 37%) reached an adequate level, being able to discuss some of the implications of the works, and only one quarter of the candidates ranged between good and very good.

B. Presentation

Again a weak aspect: more than half of the candidates’ performances (56%) ranged between mediocre and poor. The two questions that define this criterion – “how much attention has been given to making the delivery effective? To what extent are strategies used to interest the audience?” – would both receive a negative answer: very little attention or none at all, to a minimal extent or to no extent.

C. Language

More or less the same as the Individual Oral Commentary

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

Since by definition there is no teaching for the self-taught, I cannot address my report to the teachers, but to candidates and schools. Since it is not easy for the candidates to access IB documents – guides, instructions, regulations etc. – it is the schools' responsibility to ensure such access. I hope this is done, and I also hope that this report will be circulated among the self-taught students. I stress again, as I did last year, the important role of IB coordinators, teachers and tutors in following the candidates' preparation step by step, in order to make sure that they actually read the books they are supposed to study, and do not just rely on summaries and commentaries from school textbooks or the Internet. Finally, the bad habit of using extensive notes and even reading aloud from them is highly discouraged, and I think schools and supervisors have the duty to ensure that that "the notes taken into the final assessment room must be brief and in point form, totalling no more than one side of A4 paper".

Higher level written assignment

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 6	7 - 9	10 - 12	13 - 15	16 - 18	19 - 20	21 - 25

The range and suitability of the work submitted

The work submitted was generally suitable (except the reflective statements, see below), the aspects chosen were appropriate though at times too vague or too ambitious. The range of books used by the candidates was often limited: in large entry schools the candidates' choices often fell on the same work, almost ignoring the other books included in the programme.

Candidate performance against each criterion

A. Fulfilling the requirements of the reflective statement

As I have already pointed out, the reflective statements were rarely satisfactory: no more than one fifth deserved the top mark in this criterion, contrary to the expectation that, "if candidates answer the question on which the reflective statement is based honestly and fully, then they should be able to achieve the three points" (IB notes for Examiners 2013). The problem is that most candidates did not answer that question (namely, "How was your understanding of cultural and contextual considerations of the work developed through the interactive oral?"), not even when they wrote it on the top of the page. Is it conceivable that in some schools a proper interactive oral did not take place? In that case the above question would have been obviously unanswerable. Coming back to the actual reflective statements that have been submitted, they can be roughly be grouped into five categories:

- Summaries. Surprising though it may seem, there have been candidates who wrote mere summaries – paraphrase, narration of the plot – of the books they were going to analyse;
- Abstracts. Others wrote a sort of "abstract" of their assignment (some even titled it as such, writing

- “Abstract” at the top of their page);
- Personal comments. Some wrote personal comments on the works, perhaps not irrelevant but not focused on the “cultural and contextual elements” and not related to the interactive oral; these candidates must be reminded that “Reflective should be understood, not as a personal or rhetorical response to the literary work or the interactive oral, but as a way of demonstrating that the candidate’s sense of the culture and context of the work under consideration has evolved through the oral presentation” (IB Examiner instructions 2013).
 - No development. Those who made some hints to the cultural and contextual elements of the works and to the interactive oral, but did not explain if and how their understanding had developed through the discussion, still fell short off the target;
 - Correct and comprehensive. The three points were only achieved by those whose statements accounted for a development of their understanding of the cultural and contextual elements of the works through the interactive oral; these candidates were a minority, around one out of five.

B. Knowledge and understanding

As usual, the knowledge of the works was generally adequate but the understanding superficial: the candidates’ assertions were not always supported by effective textual evidence; in some cases candidates inserted quotations whose relevance to their arguments was unintelligible. As to insight, defined as the ability to “to relate the detail of the point made to a reading of the work as a whole, going from the particular to the broader meaning” (IB Examiner instructions 2013), it was rarely to be found.

C. Appreciation of the writer’s choices

The appreciation of the writer’s choices is the least satisfactory aspect of all, possibly also because this requisite did not exist in the former World Literature and students still have to get accustomed to it. However this may be the effects of the literary features in the works and the way they were used in the text to shape meaning were generally disregarded.

D. Organization and development

It seems that some progress has been made in this area, at least as far as organization and development of ideas are concerned. On the other hand, the way references to the works (quotations) were inserted was not fully satisfactory: they were not always placed in their context (e.g., if a part of a dialogue was quoted, it was not always made clear who the characters were and who was saying what) nor were they smoothly incorporated in the candidate’s argument.

E. Language

Language was generally adequate, sufficiently clear and fluent, not without several lapses of spelling and grammar. Anyhow, in this criterion candidates achieved their best average result.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

- In the reflective statement, candidates should understand clearly the demands of this part of the examination and address them properly. An essential prerequisite is that the interactive oral has been effectively conducted. I hope the list of inaccuracies and misunderstandings I have made in the third section of this report might help candidates to avoid in the future such mistakes.
- Special attention must be paid to literary technique and stylistic features, particularly to the way the writer’s choices shape meaning. It is worth noting that this criterion is now common to all the

components of the examination.

- The techniques of selecting and inserting quotations as supporting evidence for the candidates' arguments and interpretations must be continuously trained and improved.

Standard level written assignment

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 6	7 - 9	10 - 12	13 - 15	16 - 18	19 - 20	21 - 25

The range and suitability of the work submitted

Assignments were on the whole appropriate and investigated pertinently but topics were often predictable and not very original. A few candidates submitted papers without the Reflective Statement. A few papers did not have a clear title for the assignment but simply recorded the title of the book and the author on the cover page, with no indication of which aspect was going to be explored. Some Written Assignments were not in the format of an essay but in the format of a journal, complete with dates, summary of the chapters, with brief, personal observations. The work was graded for content and not penalized for format on this occasion as students were probably not guided correctly.

Candidate performance against each criterion

A. Fulfilling the requirements of the reflective statement

This was the most problematic as many candidates failed to show how the interactive oral helped them reach a better understanding of cultural and contextual elements. The format itself, in which the Reflective Statement was handed in, suggests that the students did not understand the function and nature of interactive orals. In most Reflective Statements reference was made to class discussions or accounts of personal contact between students and teacher or even their first-person experience with the text but did not dwell on what emerged.

B. Knowledge and understanding

Knowledge of literary texts was satisfactory. The topics selected were usually appropriately interesting and at times personal. Arguments, on the whole, were developed convincingly. In a minority of presentations the discussion of the topic was superficial and mainly factual. The weaker responses tended to summarise plots but writing skills, in general, were quite strong and students who wrote valid papers tended to demonstrate a high level of linguistic competence. In most cases references and quotes were precise and correct even if not always fluently incorporated into the essay.

C. Appreciation of the writer's choices

This remains an area of difficulty, as in previous years. The majority of candidates are mainly concerned with content while language, style, and techniques were treated in a sparse or superficial manner. There was mention of literary techniques but insufficient development and analysis often lead to limited appreciation of how the writer's choices shape meaning.

D. Organization and development

While organization and development could always be more solid, poor performances in this respect were not common. Suitable structures were usually adopted and ideas were organized in a satisfactory way.

E. Language

Despite a general lack of appropriate technical terminology, candidates were able to use language adequately with clarity and attention to register suitability.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

A particularly strong recommendation to schools with one or only a few candidates is to make sure that they get the proper guidance and information in order to correctly tackle the Written Assignment component.

Continue to encourage students to adopt a more personal approach, based on a personal reading of the books and to continue to practise the techniques of essay-writing with particular attention to the selection of ideas and structure.

Higher 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

General comments

The overall performance for Paper 1 HL was good; there were no poor or very poor commentaries and some mediocre essays were largely compensated by several very good and excellent pieces of work.

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

A general difficulty lies in the very approach to the literary commentary: on the one hand, some candidates tended to paraphrase or summarise the text, without providing an interpretation of its meaning, while on the other hand, some candidates tended to put forward general interpretations that were not justified by a thorough analysis of the extract. In several cases, potentially acceptable statements did not result convincing because they were not presented as the conclusion of an argument based on a sound analysis of the text; if the analysis and the argument are lacking, the statement itself sounds arbitrary. Also, in some cases the interpretation proposed was not rooted in the text and showed a substantial misunderstanding (some candidates, for example, relying upon the

date of publication of the work and on its general feeling of abandonment and decay, based their entire prose commentary on the theme of the effects of World War I on the Italian society). Several candidates also encountered difficulties in analysing and appreciating the writer's choices. Quite a number of candidates made a list of the stylistic features they had identified, including it within the body or at the end of their commentaries, as a separate section, without any link to the meaning of the passage and its interpretation. Students should be aware that such a display of purely terminological knowledge will not earn them high marks. Some candidates were not able to recognize the literary devices correctly and many of them did not explain the effects of such devices on the reader and/or show how they shape the meaning of the text, which is the essential requirement of the Assessment Criterion B.

Furthermore, candidates were often unaware of the distinction between the real author and the narrator/"io lirico"; they tended to confuse and identify the two notions and functions, thus penalising their critical approach. Some went as far as referring to the poem's speaker with the actual name of the poet, saying, e.g. "Vittoria Aganoor appears at her window" and such like. For poetry, metrics is a particularly relevant issue; some candidates either completely neglected its analysis or attempted a metrical analysis of the poem without having the necessary background, thus including invalid comments in their essays.

As to the organization of the commentary, many students struggled with transition between paragraphs and did not pay enough attention to coherence and development, thus failing in connecting logically the points made and building a solid argument. This is apparently due to bad planning, which is also mirrored by the fact that several students did not manage to comment on the last part of the extract and/or did not write a proper conclusion.

Quotations are another important matter: an adequate technique of quotation is often lacking. The most common faults are:

- The phrase quoted is badly cut, so that its grammar is defective (e.g. subject or verb missing etc.) and the meaning unclear;
- The phrase is not appropriately modified with square brackets in order to clarify it and/or better integrate it into the body of the commentary;
- The phrase quoted is clumsily incorporated in the commentary, for example by putting it between two full stops or without linking it to the argument;
- When two or more lines of a poem are cited, they are not separated with a comma that should indicate the ends of verse lines written continuously;
- The line numbers, whether it be prose or poem, are not indicated;
- Quotations are at times too long.

As for the use of language, the main difficulty lies in the use of terminology. Many candidates used the literary terminology incorrectly or neglected to refer to it.

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

In general, candidates showed a good grasp of the meaning of the extracts. Most candidates were able to identify in the texts one or more significant themes by referring to relevant details and images. Full misinterpretations were rare; in most cases, even if some parts of the extract were misunderstood or interpreted arbitrarily, the candidates were able to focus and comment on the core of the text in an adequate way.

Even though, as mentioned in the previous section, many candidates were not always able to make effective use of their knowledge, most of them proved to be familiar with the major figures of speech and literary devices and could recognise them in a correct way.

Even though organization and use of language should be improved, cases of mostly unclear and illogical structure and inappropriate style were rare. In general, students were sufficiently accurate in the presentation of their ideas, which appeared clearly defined and expressed in a comprehensible and generally correct way.

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

Candidates chose the prose and the poem in almost the same proportion, with a slight preference for the prose passage. In spite of its apparent transparency, some parts of the poem – especially the speaker’s reverie between the second and third stanza – gave rise to various misunderstandings. Furthermore, the ways the structure and development of the poem shape its meaning were often ignored. Another critical issue in the treatment of the poem was its conclusion; several candidates did not even comment on the character of the blind musician and many of them interpreted it arbitrarily. However, most candidates were able to identify a significant core theme within the text and commented effectively on its atmosphere and tone. The key feelings and ideas of the poem were generally adequately perceived.

As for the prose passage, it was basically understood in its themes and key literary devices. Most candidates were able to identify fundamental elements and images, such as the narrator’s point of view, the descriptions of the landscape and female characters, the meaning of space. However, many candidates did not fully appreciate the rich imagery and stylistic subtleties of the text; especially as far as style is concerned, most of them were not able to go beyond some general remarks such as “the style is simple”. Also, the supposed “simplicity” of the extract led several candidates to focus mainly on paraphrase and summary.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

- Students should be encouraged to start from a careful reading of the text, ensuring that a sound comprehension of its literal meaning has been achieved before going on to further analysis and interpretation. Any interpretation or statement should be closely linked to the text and justified by quotations, examples, details and a coherent argument development.
- Students should be taught not only to recognize correctly the literary features of a passage, but also to understand their function in shaping the meaning of the text. In particular, future candidates should learn to focus on the interplay between form and content, on the effects of the literary devices on the reader, on the critical and independent evaluation of the writer’s choices. In particular, the candidates should be trained to distinguish between author and narrator/“io lirico”; if such functions are identified, this should be explained and justified in relation to the text.
- Teachers should encourage the use of an appropriate terminology, register and style and invite their students to plan their work before starting writing. Planning should focus particularly on a coherent and logical development of the essay.
- The technique of quotation should also be the object of specific teaching and training.

Standard level paper one

Component grade boundaries

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

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

The tendencies, the difficulties, the strengths and weaknesses of standard level candidates did not usually differ much from those of their higher level peers. This year however, their task being somewhat different – as they had to address expressly the guiding questions to produce not a commentary but a guided literary analysis – standard level candidates were somewhat prevented from indulging into some traditional bad habits, such as the eagerness to reach at all cost a definite interpretation of the passage. Yet, the preference for clear-cut, simple interpretations has not been fully restrained and affected to a certain extent the candidates' analysis, preventing them from appreciating the complexity of a text.

Another consequence of the change from commentary to guided literary analysis was that weaker candidates, addressing each guiding question – one focused on content, the other on literary features – often produced two separate sets of comments – one on the themes, one on the formal aspects – without being able to merge them. As a result, they often did not succeed in showing effectively how “language, structure, technique and style shape meaning”, as requested by Criterion B (Appreciation of the writer's choices).

This difficulty can be overcome by accurate planning and effective structure of the answers, by which content and literary aspects are treated not separately but side by side. This, however, proved to be difficult for most candidates.

Finally, quotations were still a problem for some candidates who were unable to reference them properly and incorporate them correctly into their argument, so as to fit its grammatical structure.

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

Candidates were generally able to identify the main themes of a passage, although their interpretations were at times either superficial or subjective, not adequately supported by textual evidence. In many cases they showed a fairly good knowledge of literary features and figures of speech and were able to identify them correctly but, as I said above, did not always manage to show how they shaped meaning. The language used was generally clear with not too many lapses.

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

Just under two thirds of the candidates chose to analyse the prose extract, while just over one third preferred the poem; a distribution that roughly corresponds to that of the previous sessions. In general, candidates tackled the guiding questions correctly and were able to identify the main themes and the most significant literary features. The responses to the prose were more satisfactory, inasmuch as, apart from grasping the basic meaning of the passage, many candidates were able to develop its major implications and some showed, in doing so, a perceptive insight. The best candidates were able to link style and content and to show convincingly how the writer's choices shaped meaning. Only a few candidates indulged into subjective speculations of a sociological or philosophical nature, that were not supported by literary analysis or by pertinent textual evidence. The responses to the poem, apart from some very good ones, were overall less satisfactory. Many candidates had the tendency to overstate, to describe as utter anguish a simply melancholic mood and to twist the interpretation of the whole poem according to such negative impression, unsupported by persuasive textual evidence. On the other hand, some significant aspects of the poem (e.g. the metaphor of the child who eagerly awaits the holiday) were by and large disregarded.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

- Practise as much as possible the literary analysis;
- Read carefully the passage, make sure that the literal meaning of the text has been clearly understood;
- Make a plan before starting writing;
- Learn to quote correctly: select, adapt, incorporate quotations;
- Address the guiding questions directly;
- Avoid separating the analysis of content from the analysis of literary techniques and features: the requirement of criterion B is not just to identify literary features (the writer's choices) but to show how they are used to shape meaning.

Higher level paper two

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 3	4 - 6	7 - 10	11 - 14	15 - 18	19 - 22	23 - 25

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

The difficult areas seem to remain unchanged from previous years. Criterion C - Appreciation of literary features - is where candidates encountered most difficulty. The majority of candidates were mainly concerned with content while language, style and technique were treated in a sparse or superficial manner.

Often, students produced broad generalizations on the author's stylistic features/choices. This year, in particular, literary features (as specified in the marking criteria) were only briefly mentioned or indirectly recalled with reference to the plot and characters of a text. The candidates did not always identify and develop the literary conventions with relevance to the chosen question. This kept them from exploring the links between the form of a text and the way it shapes meaning in significant depth.

Criterion B – Response to the question – is a particularly weak area this year. Here, the most critical aspects were comparison and evaluation of the texts. An evaluation of the effectiveness of the texts analysed was explicitly required by most titles, but this aspect was often ignored. There was a tendency to present the texts and analyse them separately, without developing a proper comparison between them, highlighting similarities and differences. Many candidates did not pay attention to the title chosen and neglected some of its aspects. An example is the above mentioned evaluation of the effectiveness of the techniques analysed or the identification of such techniques. This resulted in a penalization of their overall performance. A number of candidates had difficulty in focussing on the response and used the title of the essay as a starting point for a general discussion of a work with little or no relevance to the specific question. The stronger candidates were, however, able to evaluate the works treated in relation to the questions and their implications.

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

This year the candidates were generally well-prepared with knowledge and understanding of the texts. In most cases references and quotes were precise and correct even if not always fluently incorporated into the essay. Some merely paraphrased and summarized content, but those were not the norm. In many cases the candidates managed to select the most relevant aspects of the works for analysis and treatment.

While organization and development could always be more solid, poor performances in this respect were rare. Suitable structures were usually adopted and ideas were organized in a clear way. Despite a general lack of an appropriate technical terminology, candidates were able to use language adequately with clarity and attention to register suitability. Colloquialisms were rare, and wording and sentence construction were usually clear and correct.

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

Q.1 was chosen by ten candidates. The stronger candidates were successful in identifying and defining aspects of everyday life presented in an unexpected light, demonstrating an appreciation of poets' choices. A better awareness of literary terminology would assist candidates to focus on the ways in which a topic is shaped in the texts.

Q.2 was chosen by thirty-five candidates. Generally, there was a good focus on identifying the feelings of disenchantment and despair expressed in the poems studied, although less able candidates had difficulty exploring their effectiveness.

Q.3 which was the most technical was chosen by twenty-three candidates. Generally, the focus on the topic was good, but difficulties arose in focussing on the extent to which the metrical and linguistic choices of a poet reflect his treatment of the themes explored.

Q.4 was chosen by eight candidates. Generally, there was good focus on comparing methods and techniques used to represent the theme of fate. However, not all candidates who chose this question explored the effectiveness of such techniques.

Q.5 was chosen by eleven candidates. Most candidates produced lively responses generally focussing on the non-conformity of a character, comparing authors, their methods and techniques used to represent the theme. Here again, difficulties arose in focussing on their effect on the reader.

Q.6 was chosen by twelve candidates. Generally there was good focus on which techniques were more effective in constantly keeping alive the interest and participation of readers/viewers. Some difficulty was observed in prioritising the techniques analysed with reference to their effectiveness.

Q.7 was not chosen.

Q.8 was chosen by one candidate.

Q.9 was chosen by one candidate.

Q.10 was chosen by twenty-six candidates. Please note the popularity of the question versus top grades achieved. This question produced the third highest number of top grades, but also the lowest score. Generally, there was good focus on the topic, but there were also difficulties in focussing on the techniques through which the topic is shaped in the works and their effectiveness. Literary techniques were briefly mentioned, but their effectiveness was not explored. Poor submissions here often focussed on a summary of events to illustrate how a character evolved from a positive beginning to a disillusioned soul at the end.

Q.11 was chosen by forty-six candidates. Please note the popularity of the question versus top grades achieved. Overall, the quality of the submissions depended largely on whether the theme was shared with the texts students chose for comparison. Students very frequently appeared to like the title but had difficulty relating them to the texts chosen for comparison. This resulted in a loss of cohesive argument as too many students tried to shape the text to suit the intent of their answers.

Q.12 was chosen by thirty-two candidates. The techniques used by the authors to manipulate the chronological order of the events narrated were identified fairly accurately by the majority of students. However, not all responses to this question explored them in depth.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

- Future candidates should be encouraged to focus more on the connection between literary techniques and conventions of the genre and their relevance to the exam question. In particular, they should be encouraged to highlight the links between the form and content of a text, thus focussing on their interplay in shaping the meaning of a text. Paper 2 requires commentary that relates explicitly to the literary devices used in the works analysed. Students should not simply mention such aspects without relating them to the meaning of a text and the question answered.
- Special attention should be paid to the comparison between the works selected for analysis. Candidates need to identify similarities and differences between the texts in relation to the question. To score high marks, the candidates should work on the evaluation of the texts used to answer the question, for example, in relation to their effectiveness and the effect on the reader.
- In the organization of the essay, it is important to focus on transition between paragraphs and development. Candidates should be encouraged to present their ideas in a coherent and logical

structure, with relevant connections between the points made.

- The use of language should be precise with regard to the technical terminology employed; this will also help the candidates to focus on the literary conventions of the genre. It is advisable to use terms like “narrator”, “character”, “plot”, “flashback”, “figures of speech”, “metrical devices”, “act”, “scene”, etc. As to terminology, many candidates tend to confuse notion and function of the author and notion and function of the narrator/“io lirico”. They should be encouraged to distinguish them and reflect on the relation between the two functions.

Further comments

Two anomalies were found among the 205 responses.

The first anomaly is an essay in response to Q.11, where the intention of presenting two authors is clearly stated in the introduction. The essay then proceeds to focus on one writer only, thus failing to fulfil criterion B - Response to the question – in which points are awarded on how well the chosen texts are compared/contrasted in relation to the demands of the question.

The second anomaly was found in response to Q.10. Two foreign authors were presented instead of two (or more) Italian authors chosen from part 3 of the programme. The candidate, on this occasion, was not penalised as the school seemed to have failed to provide appropriate guidance.

Standard level paper two

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 3	4 - 6	7 - 10	11 - 14	15 - 18	19 - 22	23 - 25

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

Fulfilling the requirements of criterion B – Response to the question – proved a particularly weak area. Here the most critical aspect was comparison of the texts. There was a tendency to present the chosen texts and analyse them separately, without developing a proper comparison between them, highlighting similarities and differences. A number of candidates had difficulty in focussing on the response and used the title of the essay as a starting point for a general discussion of a work with little or no relevance to the specific question. The stronger candidates were, however, able to focus on the specific demands of the chosen question and respond to the main implications with relevant ideas.

Criterion C - Appreciation of the literary conventions of the genre - proved the least satisfactory areas this year, less seriously than at higher level only because at standard level the emphasis is not so strong. Many candidates were mainly concerned with content, while language, style and techniques were often treated in a sparse and superficial manner.

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

This year the candidates were generally well-prepared and confirmed good knowledge and understanding of the texts. In most cases references and quotes were precise and correct even if not always fluently incorporated into the essay.

While organization and development could always be more solid, poor performances in this respect were not common. Suitable structures were usually adopted and ideas were organized in a satisfactory way. Despite a general lack of an appropriate technical terminology, candidates were able to use language adequately with clarity and attention to register suitability. Occasional colloquialisms were still found, but overall wording and sentence construction were usually clear and correct.

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

Q.1 was chosen by three candidates. The stronger candidates were successful in identifying and defining aspects of everyday life presented in an unexpected light, demonstrating an appreciation of poets' choices. A better awareness of literary terminology would assist candidates to focus on the ways in which a topic is shaped in the texts.

Q.2 was chosen by eight candidates. Generally, there was a good focus on identifying the feelings of disenchantment and despair expressed in the poems studied, although less able candidates had difficulty exploring their effectiveness.

Q.3 which was the most technical was chosen by four candidates. Generally, the focus on the topic was good, but difficulties arose in focussing on the extent to which the metrical and linguistic choices of a poet reflect his treatment of the themes explored.

Q.4 was not chosen.

Q.5 was chosen by five candidates. Most candidates produced lively responses generally focussing on the non-conformity of a character, comparing authors, their methods and techniques used to represent the theme. Here again, difficulties arose in focussing on their effect on the reader.

Q.6 was chosen by seven candidates. Generally there was good focus on which techniques were more effective in constantly keeping alive the interest and participation of readers/viewers. Some difficulty was observed in prioritising the techniques analysed with reference to their effectiveness.

Q.7 was not chosen.

Q.8 was chosen by one candidate.

Q.9 was chosen by one candidate.

Q.10 was chosen by seventeen candidates. Please note the popularity of the question versus top grades achieved. This question produced the second highest number of top grades. Generally, there was good focus on the topic, but there were also difficulties in focussing on the techniques through which the topic is shaped in the works and their effectiveness. Literary techniques were briefly mentioned, but their effectiveness was not explored. Poor submissions here often focussed on a

summary of events to illustrate how a character evolved from a positive beginning to a disillusioned soul at the end.

Q.11 was chosen by forty-two candidates. Please note the popularity of the question versus top grades achieved. This question produced the highest number of top grades. Overall, the quality of the submissions depended largely on whether the theme was shared with the texts students chose for comparison. Students very frequently appeared to like the title but had difficulty relating them to the texts to which they compared them. This resulted in a loss of cohesive argument as too many students tried to shape the text to suit the intent of their answers.

Q.12 was chosen by fourteen candidates. This question, together with question10 produced the second highest number of top grades. The techniques used by the authors to manipulate the chronological order of the events narrated were identified fairly accurately by the majority of students. However, not all responses to this question explored them in depth.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Recommendations can be easily inferred from the previous comments. Summing up the main points:

- Special attention should be paid to the comparison between the works selected for analysis. Candidates need to identify similarities and differences between the texts in relation to the question. To score high marks, the candidates should work on the evaluation of the texts used to answer the question, for example, in relation to their effectiveness and the effect on the reader.
- In the organization of the essay, it is important to focus on transition between paragraphs and development. Candidates should be encouraged to present their ideas in a coherent and logical structure, with relevant connections between the points made.
- The use of language should be precise with regard to the technical terminology employed; this will also help the candidates to focus on the literary conventions of the genre. It is advisable to use terms like “narrator”, “character”, “plot”, “flashback”, “figures of speech”, “metrical devices”, “act”, “scene”, etc. As to terminology, many candidates tend to confuse notion and function of the author and notion and function of the narrator/”io lirico”. They should be encouraged to distinguish them and reflect on the relation between the two functions.