

Though the IOC at standard level will be largely the same as it is now, teachers need to take into account that the total time has been reduced to 10 minutes (8 minutes of commentary and 2 minutes of subsequent questioning) and that the extract length has been reduced to 20-30 lines. Two works will continue to be studied in Part 2, both chosen from the PLA and each of a different genre. Extracts from either work can be used for the commentary.

Teachers also need to look closely at the new SL descriptors for the IOC as they are now unique to Standard Level and are weighted towards Criterion A: Knowledge and understanding and Criterion B: Appreciation of writer's choices.

Although "context" is no longer mentioned in the criteria, the *Language A: Literature guide* indicates that candidates should "situate the extract as precisely as possible in the context of the work (or in the body of work, in the case of poetry)," but that the focus should be "on the extract itself."

#### **For all candidates:**

Candidates should know their works well; there is no shortcut here. The reduced number of works to be studied at HL should make it easier for candidates to know the works intimately.

Teachers must make the oral commentary a central aspect of teaching the programme; candidates need to be thoroughly comfortable with the oral examination format long before the day when the IOC is to be recorded.

Teachers need to familiarize themselves with the new Internal Assessment requirement for 2013. A close study of the *Language A: Literature guide* and the relevant materials from the *Handbook of Procedures* should precede the teaching of this component. The OCC and *Language A: Literature Teacher Support Material* (TSM) will also be helpful to teachers. Where there is more than one teacher in a centre, those teachers should practice together using the descriptors to discuss the exemplar materials

Teachers should try to write comments that support or explain their assessment in the comments box on the Internal Assessment Record Form.

Now, more than ever, candidates must identify themselves at the outset of the recording by their name and candidate number. At higher level teachers should announce both the ending of the commentary portion of the IOC and the conclusion of the discussion so that there is a formal ending to the recording.

For teachers who have been informed in past feedback that they have deviated from one or more of the IB rules and regulations, this will be a good opportunity to begin to approach the oral commentary in a different spirit, with the recognition that careful attention to IB guidelines is ultimately in the candidates' best interest.

## Higher level paper one

### Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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**Mark range:** 0 - 3    4 - 7    8 - 10    11 - 13    14 - 16    17 - 19    20 - 25

## General Comments

To some extent, the fact that the May 2012 paper represented the last examining session for the commentary in its current form (see further comments below) means that it would be more useful to focus the remarks in this Subject Report on aspects of the task which will remain key pointers towards success for candidates attempting Paper One in the Group 1 Literature programme in May 2013.

Much of what follows, whether as general observations about the performance of candidates, specific problems encountered, or highlighting aspects of excellent response, has been collated from the reports submitted from the team leaders who assisted with the marking of the paper and saw a range of scripts in their own right. This report could also be read in conjunction with the 2012 Paper One report for TZ2, which contains many useful parallels in terms of comments and advice.

Examiners were divided on whether the prose passage or the poem encouraged better answers, as both proved challenging for candidates in different ways. Candidates seemed unsure of how to read the prose passage and, by the same token, seemed determined to either read too much into the poem, or to misinterpret key points (for example, by deciding that the poem dealt with owls rather than owl butterflies).

In both texts it was important to see the story, recognize the speaker, and reflect on the structure of the piece in order to produce a good commentary.

Many candidates had obviously been prepared for the task through regular practice which had equipped them with both a set of skills to “unlock” literary aspects of the writing and the confidence to use them, and these candidates made appropriate and often perceptive comments about the extracts. Candidates who carefully read the text and took the time to organize their thoughts clearly performed strongly. Those who made connections between different elements of the text arrived at insightful awareness of the deeper implications of both extracts.

As usual, there was plenty of excellent writing to give pleasure to the examiners. The best answers entered into the true spirit of a successful commentary, providing lively, thought-provoking ideas and strong personal insights.

Weaker papers still appeared to be the result of not knowing what a commentary should look like.

## Candidate performance against each criterion

### A: Understanding of the Text

Most candidates achieved at least a 2 for Knowledge and Understanding and there were perhaps fewer instances of mere summary and paraphrase: in some ways, neither text lent itself to this kind of treatment in an obvious way this year.

Some problems of (mis)understanding arose from being unfamiliar with words such as “wizened” in the poem or “mitigations” in the prose extract.

One examiner remarked that “many candidates appeared to be casual, careless readers”, ignoring tense, change of tense, changes of voice etc. and sometimes such responses suggested that the passage or poem had been read only once (see further comment below). Assertions such as “there is no rhyme” in the poem, missing lines 46-48, appeared to result from this kind of skimming and scanning for meaning without paying detailed attention to the words on the page.

Relatively few candidates tried to superimpose a meaning of their own, although there were attempts to interpret the poem in terms of pollution; government control; the effect of warfare in general and PTSD in particular; (and on a more outlandish note) referencing the story of Adam and Eve

### **B: Interpretation of the Text**

One particular approach involved flattering the writer (in statements such as “The writer does an excellent job....”) – as D.H. Lawrence advised, “show, don’t tell” – the skill of the writing can be elicited by appropriate close reading, quotation and comment. The effect of the writer’s choices seems to be a particularly difficult area for candidates to discuss.

### **C: Appreciation of Literary Features**

Candidates who used a ‘rote checklist’ approach (ie. listing in the introduction that ‘theme, symbolism, diction.... etc’ will be key features to be examined, and sticking rigidly to this formula) often “could not see the wood for the trees” as a result, and failed to link literary effects to the meaning of the passage. The task demands going beyond describing terms and/or telling the examiner that the technique helps us see what the writer is trying to say. Instead, discussion of literary features should be an integral part of the analysis which elucidates or illustrates the meaning of the text as a whole, and demonstrates how that meaning is constructed by the writer.

### **D: Presentation**

Linear/line-by-line structured readings have their own inbuilt limitations, as has been pointed out elsewhere in this report. In addition, candidates need to be able to embed quotations succinctly and fluently into a sentence so as to illustrate the point being made and to contribute to the argument, not interrupt it. On a larger scale, making smooth transitions between ideas within paragraphs and between paragraphs themselves becomes an especially important skill when candidates are writing (and thinking) at speed. All too often paragraphs appeared to be “stand-alone” affairs with the result that the analysis did not build upon itself or gain its own impetus. Writing an effective introduction, as mentioned elsewhere in this report, seems to pose particular difficulties: all too often, these consisted merely of mentioning the name of the author, the title of the piece, and adding a few stock phrases about how the candidate intended to proceed. A better approach can be to begin with clearly expressed “thesis statements”, which can then lead into a well organized (and sensibly paragraphed!) argument.

Conventions of quoting from poems, such as using slash marks to indicate line divisions, is also part of presentation. Using line numbers when quoting anything of substance from the text also helps the reader to “place” the reference more easily.

### E. Formal Use of Language

Generally language was at least “sometimes clear and appropriate” so that there were relatively few scripts where the reader had to struggle to work out what was being said.

Instead, the marks awarded under this criterion were affected by a range of different factors:

- Imprecise vocabulary and/or ideas (e.g. confusing *afflicted* and *inflicted*), which at its worst became merely silly or lazy statements such as “the poem presents the theme of life”; “water carries away all the bad stuff” or “it is clear that this is not your average river or sea”.....
- Using “etc” in a similar way can imply that (in the words of one examiner) “there are other things but I can’t be bothered to think” or indeed “I can’t think of anything else but if I put ‘etc’ the examiner will think that I can”
- Trite statements, such as opining that “life is brief and full of dangers” might be the moral of *Birth of the Owl Butterflies*
- Generalisations about “vivid” or “effective” writing or “positive” or “negative” effects which are both nebulous and unhelpful
- Not being able to spell key terms: as always, “similie” for “simile” was the main culprit here

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

### Prose

Most candidates found the passage accessible to a greater or lesser degree, although candidates who worked through the text in a linear fashion tended to run out of time, especially where ideas had not been fully thought through at the planning stage.

Those who did not organize the reading in a linear fashion often found an approach which worked for them, either taking a thematic approach or using image clusters as the building block. Many candidates who built their response around the imagery of water, or the fever itself (or indeed tried to establish in their own minds how the water related to the fever and the drum in the extract), were able to work with the literary features of the text and were rewarded accordingly.

There was an almost universal awareness of the figurative treatment of the disease and of its self-inflicted and retributive nature. A discussion of elements such as the syndrome of shutting off from each other; selfishness; the fact that the disease doesn’t flush itself out; or

indeed the condition of slavery itself, often enriched the candidate's response and were explored in a thoughtful and effective way.

Many demonstrated a sensitive and thoughtful personal response. The tone of the passage was often especially well handled.

The best candidates did not shy away from offering an interpretation of the final paragraph and there were many confident, carefully considered explanations of the situation which were engaging to read.

The better answers were also alert to the historical clues in the extract (e.g. clothing, medical practices) and used these to present informed and intelligent commentaries. Stronger candidates also tended to consider the viewpoint of the narrator in some detail.

In terms of language and syntax, in addition to those mentioned above, it was important for candidates to have noted, and be able to explore, aspects such as the archaic biblical overtones or the effect of the long sentences marked off with commas.

There was a tendency to focus on socio-historical aspects of the text at the expense of the literary ones, but where candidates found the right balance, the passage was often very well handled, despite its complexity.

### Poem

In the weaker answers there was some basic confusion about the situation in the poem, with some candidates thinking the butterflies were actually birds.

Generally, however, candidates were able to understand the situation described in the poem and to give a more or less complete account of its storyline. The poem produced some original and lively answers, although very few in the top mark band.

The hazards of adopting a line-by-line approach was particularly evident where candidates interpreting the last stanza towards the end of their response had sometimes failed to work out what was actually happening – not having picked up the very clear indication in line (11) that the butterflies were destined for “display.”

Responses to the poem which began “In the first stanza....” or “At the beginning of the poem....” tended to invite the candidate to narrate the content **first** (as noted above) - and fail to notice the death until too late in the commentary. Such responses could have used a holistic reading / overview to inform the analysis throughout, to much better effect.

The stark contrast of the emergence of the butterflies with the father's utilitarian programme was missed, as was the irony of the gentle-fingered hunter or indeed, the title of the poem. Many answers did not make it clear that the father started the process of displaying the butterflies (as set out in line 11) by capturing and killing them.

A different problem was that there were the usual number of candidates so caught up in “telling the story of the birth of the butterflies” that there was little discussion of the poem **as a poem**. Some spent the first couple of pages on the content, and then went back to “track” literary features, an approach which sometimes led to unnecessary repetition.

## Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

To some extent, the fact that the May 2012 paper represented the last examining session for the commentary paper in its current form (i.e. with five assessment criteria) means that it would be more useful to confine advice in this section to aspects of the task which remain applicable in the new 2013 Literature syllabus.

**The obvious and key thing here is to make sure that teachers familiarize themselves with the changes in order to advise candidates to meet the requirements of the new examination.**

Apart from this, the usual advice for teachers would apply, and no apologies are made for repeating key points from previous years' Subject Reports for this component:

- encourage more thought and preparation from candidates at the planning stage – and more **time** spent working with the passage or poem before actually beginning to write the response; this approach produces less 'storytelling' and a better focus on the literary features of the text
- Candidates do need to be made aware of the fact that sometimes poems are about what they say they are about. Candidates should be taught that not everything is an allegory for something else. As one examiner noted when faced with an untenable reading of Sharman's poem, "Why can the butterflies not be themselves?"

### **Candidates should be encouraged to:**

- Understand the nature of the task and practise the task
- Respond to literary texts in a way which recognizes their potential complexity and ambiguity, rather than looking for the "hidden meaning" in terms of solving a puzzle.
- Connect the analysis of literary features to a discussion of ideas
- Read the poem or passage several times before beginning to plan an answer
- Know that paraphrase is not commentary, not even an introduction to commentary, but possibly a warm-up for commentary
- Focus on the text and what the writer might be trying to say – as one team leader wryly observed, "the task is not a springboard for the candidate's own reflections on life, the universe and everything"
- Read exemplar answers and use the assessment criteria to see how these are graded, especially using the new criteria for the 2013 paper

### **Candidates should be encouraged not to:**

- Write to a template i.e. where the introduction to the commentary briefly summarises the “plot” of the extract/poem and then outlines the range of literary features which will be employed in the analysis.
- Assert an interpretation without basing it in the text in front of them: in such cases, candidates tend to ignore any aspect of the text which does not accord with their imposed interpretation, inevitably limiting the reward they can receive.
- Limit their response to a linear line-by-line approach which, as one examiner put it, “leads them down the read-and-paraphrase road”
- Use first-name terms for authors
- Assume that the writer or poet is the narrator or persona or the voice of the text
- Refer to other writers or try to establish a connection with other texts with a similar subject. For every candidate who mentioned Plath’s bee poems (in relation to Sharman’s poem) or *Heart of Darkness* as a parallel to the Wideman piece, there were others where the reference was merely name-dropping and added nothing to an understanding of the text under consideration

## Higher level paper two

### Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 - 3	4 - 7	8 - 10	11 - 13	14 - 16	17 - 19	20 - 25

### General comments

The performance on Paper 2 this year indicates that many centres are preparing candidates to meet the demands of the assessment task and therefore are offering candidates a broad, interesting and challenging literature course. In this last year of the current programme, it is heartening to know that the assessment task for Paper 2 in both the new Language A: Literature course and the Language A: Language and Literature course, is similar to the current task and teachers who have worked to refine their approaches do not have to drastically re-think them. In particular, it appears, as usual, that candidates who have been given rich, challenging texts, who have been offered opportunities to explore the texts on their own, who have been encouraged to re-read as much as feasibly possible and have been given specific instruction in how to approach essay questions have had success. Of some concern, however, might be the fact that candidates, in general, still struggle to answer the question at hand, include a coherent discussion of literary features, and engage in thoughtful analysis rather than broad generalization. In the future, Paper 2 in Literature will ask for more pointed focus on generic conventions and Paper 2 in Language and Literature will require more nuanced approaches to contextual issues. Perhaps this future focus, however, will result in more attention and success as opposed to exposing weaknesses. In relation to the forthcoming Paper 2 in Language and Literature, it should be noted that the increased focus

on cultural contexts may do the same: the paper could encourage candidates to be more thoughtful in relation to various contextual issues or the paper could expose weaknesses.

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

As briefly noted above, the greatest weaknesses observed in candidate papers include a lack of focus on the question, a lack of appreciation of literary features and a tendency toward generalization. In terms of the question, some candidates clearly struggle to understand the question they have chosen, others seem determined to present all of the information they have gleaned or have been given about a text and still others seem to be offering prepared responses based on similar questions. At times, terms found in the question are simply tacked onto paragraphs of paraphrase or broad explication. In a similar manner, though many candidates now are sure to at least mention literary features, these features are often misidentified, mentioned without apparent understanding, or not clearly relevant to the discussion at hand. Overall, weaker answers tend to generalize about the texts, their features, the context and the question itself.

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

The strongest area of performance on paper two tends to be in relation to the texts studied. Many candidates are able to show at least an adequate understanding of their works and quite a few demonstrate impressively detailed knowledge and an understanding of the subtleties of the works studied. While this often indicates both close reading and close attention in class, many examiners noted that the variety of details mentioned in relation to texts at particular centres (and surprising and detailed insights in general) indicated a personal engagement with works that comes from re-reading. More importantly, examiners noted that many candidates seem to have enjoyed the texts they studied.

In general, candidates are also well prepared for the writing demands of the essay. Candidates are adept at broad structural elements such as introductions, body paragraphs and conclusions. Candidates also seem more attentive to transitions and to the integration of support within body paragraphs. It should be mentioned here, however, that many examiners have noted the frequency of long unstructured paragraphs or of transition words used haphazardly simply to indicate that a transition has been attempted (“moreover” that doesn’t mean moreover, “In a similar way” when the following isn’t very similar).

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

1. This was a popular question that candidates handled well if they had a clear definition of oppositions or contradictions in mind. Many plays lent themselves to a thorough discussion of oppositions between characters, within characters, between appearance and reality, and so forth. While some teachers noted that the word “contraries” may have caused difficulty for candidates, this did not seem to be the case as candidates aptly found ways to discuss a variety of oppositions.



2. This was another popular question. Sometimes “teaching” was reduced to the portrayal of a theme and entertaining was taken for granted but candidates were able to approach a wide variety of texts in relation to this question.
3. This was a somewhat difficult question. Many candidates were successful with a detailed discussion of metaphor or comparison but others struggled to show where poets make connections in their works. Some candidates floundered by explaining a basic progression from a poet’s life to the poem itself rather than looking at how some of the connections could be surprising.
4. This question was handled well by candidates who seemed to have specifically studied structure and form in the works they had studied (or, indeed, lack of regular structure).
5. There was some misreading of this question with candidates discussing internal and external conflict. At the same time, many candidates were able to discuss issues relating to the private desires of characters as opposed to some perceived public interest in works such as *The Awakening* and *1984*.
6. This was an extremely difficult question. Many candidates who attempted this question did not have a clear grasp of its meaning and did not clearly attempt to usefully define terms or parameters. Many candidates were taken off course with a discussion of chaos within the works rather than looking at the role fiction may play in creating some sort of order (even if artificial). At the same time, some top essays engaged interestingly with the artificiality of fiction and the way it orders reality and showed understanding of the subtleties of the works they studied and literature in general.
7. Though very few centres chose to study this option, there were candidates who wrote well about role of a unifying narrative in prose other than the novel and short story. Some candidates usefully discussed the idea of the journey as an overall structure while others suggested that many works of prose can be structured around a key climactic moment.
8. Some candidates struggled to define morality and others simply listed events in their works that were either “good” or “bad.” At the same time, the question offered broad scope and some candidates took advantage of this with interesting discussions of their works.
9. Many candidates wrote well about exaggeration but struggled a bit with the grotesque. At the same time, some candidates had clearly studied the grotesque in relation to Gothic or Southern Gothic literature. Some candidates were willing to label almost any character trait or event as exaggeration and had difficulty making strong points.
10. While candidates successfully defined man-made in a wide variety of ways, some struggled to show how a work was “concerned” with the man-made. Weak responses simply noted the presence of man-made ideas or objects or made vague suppositions

about the importance of the man-made while strong responses showed how a text may engage somehow with the man-made.

11. Candidates who clearly grasped or defined the notion of a "voice" in a work of literature wrote well about this question. Some candidates were clearly prepared to write, for example, about the distinctive voice of a poet or about the many voices (and ways of presenting voices) in a novel by Faulkner.
12. This was a popular question. Weaker responses were willing to call almost any negative event or emotion violence and tended to make a list of almost any emotional moment in a work. Thoughtful responses carefully explored the nuances of a work's "interest" in violence.

## Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Candidates should be encouraged to look at the questions as what one critic calls "authentic interpretive problems." Examiners are asking interesting questions that try to get at the nature of literature and its effects. The questions are an opportunity to engage with a literary problem. Texts in class should be approached in a similar way. Rather than "learning" about texts, candidates should, along with the teacher, question texts and look at places where there are interpretive problems, complexities or conundrums.

Sometimes we forget that standard or long-held views on works are not necessarily "correct." If we teach candidates that *Streetcar* is primarily a social commentary on the conflict between the New South and the Old South, then candidates need to be able to show it, discuss it and not simply state it as fact and as a pat answer to a question. Perhaps the best solution is to look at a text with fresh eyes, to have candidates look for their own interpretive problems, and to come to ideas about a text that lead to a better understanding of the work as well as the operations of literature. Choosing books that are unfamiliar to the teachers (and internet study guide providers) as well as the candidates may help this process of exploration. This would also prepare candidates for a wide variety of questions. And as examiners consistently remark, working with fresh, challenging texts seem to offer candidates the best platform for success.

As always, the more mundane work of practising old questions (with care in relation to the new exam and the focus on conventions), working on seeing the importance of literary features, and practising the basics of essay writing, helps.

## Standard level paper 1

### Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 - 4	5 - 8	9 - 10	11 - 13	14 - 16	17 - 19	20 - 25