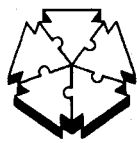




GCSE

English

Session: 1994 June
Type: Report
Code: 1510



MEG

MIDLAND EXAMINING GROUP

**GENERAL CERTIFICATE OF
SECONDARY EDUCATION**

**Report on the Examination
in**

ENGLISH

Syllabus Code 1510

SUMMER 1994

This Report on the Examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the syllabus content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

For each subject the Midland Examining Group has a Chairman of Examiners who is responsible for the maintenance of standards in the subject. For each syllabus there are a Chief Examiner, teams of examining personnel, a Question Paper Evaluation Committee and an Awarding Committee. The Report which follows has been prepared by the Chief Examiner(s), Principal Examiner(s) and Principal Moderator(s) and approved by the appropriate Awarding Committee(s) and the Chairman of Examiners.

ENGLISH

(Syllabus Code: 1510)

The percentage of candidates awarded each grade was as follows:

Standard Tier

Total Candidature: 20395

	C	D	E	F	G	U
Percentage in Grade	4.4	28.3	45.0	19.5	2.7	0.0
Cumulative Percentage in Grade	4.4	32.7	77.7	97.2	100	100

These statistics are correct at the time of publication.

Higher Tier

Total Candidature: 60600

	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	U
Percentage in Grade	2.2	15.6	31.1	32.5	14.8	3.4	0.3	0.0
Cumulative Percentage in Grade	2.2	17.8	48.9	81.4	96.3	99.6	100	100

These statistics are correct at the time of publication.

The total entry for the examination was 84060.

General Introduction

For many Centres this year's examination caused genuine concern, mainly in the compiling and assessment of coursework and because of the unfamiliarity of a formal examination.

Most candidates approached the papers well and responded with a clear understanding of what was required. Centres will, however, no doubt wish to continue to develop examination techniques such as time management and how to identify and address the focus of a question.

An example of the latter is in the way candidates answered the tasks based on the pre-released material. Centres had obviously prepared their candidates to very different extents and there was a problem in achieving a balance between under and over preparation. Some candidates appeared to tackle the material unseen, while others were very dependent on notes which they had remembered and then repeated without responding to the direction in which the tasks led them. As a rough guide, it is expected that Centres would spend no more than four or five sessions working with the material.

Centres did not appear to find the content of the coursework folder unduly restrictive and there was a wide range of approach. As a general rule there is no need to put more than five or six pieces of work in a folder for English, even for the best candidates. Candidates are sometimes disadvantaged by the inclusion of too much work, especially when completed early in the course. Maturation is not the issue: the folder needs to show the best that the candidate can produce.

As a result of the teaching of the National Curriculum there has been an increase in the amount and quality of work in the classroom on the study of language. This was evident both in coursework and in examination scripts, and there was generally a greater understanding shown by candidates of how language works.

The 1994 procedures for the marking of coursework are at present under review, and it is the Group's intention to simplify them in time for the 1995 examination. As in past years there will be two marks only. One will be for Speaking and Listening and the other for Reading, Writing and Presentation. Details will be issued to Centres once final approval has been given.

PAPERS 1 (1510/1) and 3 (1510/3) – NON-LITERARY AND MEDIA TEXTS

Paper 1 (1510/1)

Section A

The Source Material

The theme of juvenile crime was chosen for this paper, since it reflects a current problem and was likely to provoke a lively response. The material consisted of a pensioner's letter, a table of statistics and a recent article from 'The Guardian'.

Task 1 A summary based on the newspaper article

This task provided few problems with understanding and generally allowed all candidates to make a confident start. In responding to this type of task, writers must demonstrate that they can understand and use the material. The best answers were clear, concise and in their own words. As quality decreased, lifting became more apparent; some answers had merely regurgitated large chunks of the article and there was therefore little evidence of its having been understood.

Some responses had been planned and executed with such great care and in such great detail that they clearly took a long time to complete; the rest of the paper, therefore, suffered in the ensuing rush.

Task 2 A letter to the editor

This task caused the most problems and, therefore, acted as a successful discriminator. It was structured to enable candidates to show understanding of the reading material and then to proceed to matters of personal and general concern. The assimilation and synthesis of material from three separate sources was not easy but the best answers achieved this, were written in rôle and used an appropriate register and tone.

Middle range answers tended to use the material rather mechanically but did provide evidence of having understood it. Weaker answers did not write to the editor, merely repeated the pensioner's letter or gave the writer's views with no reference to the letter, survey or table.

Letter layout is still taught better in some Centres than others – the use of either a conventional or business layout is acceptable, as is open or closed punctuation provided that it is consistent.

Section B

Candidates reacted well to the stimuli offered in this section. They all seemed to find a title which they were comfortable in responding to, and produced a good variety of answers. Overall, there were as many intelligent, thoughtfully written essays as there were unstructured, poorly sustained arguments. The best attempts came from those who bothered to plan their work and based it on their own experiences.

Task 3 The Generation Gap

This title produced some pleasing personal writing, often with good characterisation and realistic detail. Many candidates wrote with affection about old people whom they had met under a variety of circumstances. Those who attempted to write a story generally fared worse, and found it hard to create characters which were not stereotypes, but the general tone of understanding and conciliation between generations was encouraging.

Task 4 Not Guilty!

Since the majority who answered this popular question had either been accused of something which they had not done or had chosen to take the blame to protect others, this title gave rise to some lively and committed responses. Informed accounts of miscarriages of justice were also written; the Craig and Bentley case was perhaps the most common, whilst television watchers were provided with ammunition by such programmes as the 'Rough Justice' series.

Candidates must remember that even when they are writing from their own experience, their ultimate audience is the Examiner. The opening line will not impress if it reads 'Me and my mates', or 'Me, Fay, Bay and Day'!

Task 5 If I could change the law

Candidates were asked to write a talk and given an audience – too many, however, did not use an oral register. This task required planning and logical reasoning and some convincing responses were noted. In other answers plenty of changes were suggested but many writers failed to justify them. Few candidates took a middle course; the liberal element appeared to be trying to fill our roads with drunken juvenile car drivers, whereas hard-liners urged draconian measures. One Examiner wrote that he hoped never to face a bench of magistrates made up of candidates who sat this examination!

Some weaker responses merely recycled answers to tasks one and two. Such an approach gained little credit.

Presentation

In general, spelling was of good to mediocre standard although there were careless and avoidable errors such as 'could of' for 'could have', 'their' for 'there' and 'an' for 'and'. There was encouraging evidence of sensible redrafting and proof reading and the handwriting of most candidates was legible. It is important to remember that ten marks are available for presentation and attention to this on the part of candidates can make a difference to their level of achievement.

Paper 3 (1510/3)

Section A

The Passages

The magazine article on dogs was designed to provide a relatively simple and friendly opening to the paper. It was plain, factual and presented candidates with few problems. The article 'Meet Colin, Male Chauvinist Pig', from 'The Independent', was easy to follow because of its narrative structure but was long, multi-layered and provided the opportunity to set the more searching Task 2.

Task 1 A 200–300 word summary describing the responsibilities of dog and pet pig owners

Most candidates found the information on dogs quite easily, but only better answers used and synthesised details from both sources. The article on pigs was more complex and the points had to be rooted out. The word limit in this type of question is only a rough guide but a good answer will reveal understanding and selection of relevant material and its use in a summary. Those who generalised, failed to use their own words or expanded upon the original material often wrote at great length, thus putting themselves under time pressure later in the paper.

Task 2 An analysis of the article on pot-bellied pigs, dealing with layout, presentation and language

Task 2 was structured to enable candidates to deal with the more simple journalistic features first and then proceed to more testing areas. Most writers understood the concept of layout and many made relevant comments on presentation. It was pleasing that so many candidates enjoyed the article and were able to explain their reaction clearly and analytically. Those who found the article unsuccessful for whatever reason were rewarded for their independent judgement, especially if they supported their opinion by the use of quotation and close reference.

The analysis of the use of language was the element which was designed to discriminate, and it did so very well. Weaker scripts used description rather than analysis, while those in the middle range noted puns, plays on words and distinguished between the literal and the metaphorical. At a high level responses included references to personification, irony, anti-climax, variety of tone and such features as alliteration and onomatopoeia.

This type of question measures not only the quality of the writer but also the ability of the teacher. Some candidates did not know what layout or presentation meant, and were clearly handicapped by the lack of a critical vocabulary. Work from a majority of Centres, however, indicated that teachers are coming to terms with the KAL strand element of English teaching and that examination performance in this area is improving.

Section B

The intention of Section B was to enable writers to choose a genre with which they were comfortable and in which they could offer a lively and original response. Quality rather than quantity is the key to this section; excessive length does not guarantee good marks.

Task 3 'You are not bringing that into my house'

The responses to this title depended on whether 'that' was human or animal. Some dramatic accounts of family reactions to mixed race relationships were produced, and also many descriptions of adult reactions to undesirable boyfriends and 'bad influences'. A wide variety of injured animals and birds entered the home, usually temporarily! The abduction of young flea infested hedgehogs is a national pastime!

In general this question led to competent answers, some with a degree of power or poignancy.

Task 4 'The British Devotion to Pets'

Whilst 'write a talk' or 'write a speech' is a rather artificial instruction, it does provide the opportunity to write personally and rhetorically. The best responses showed a clear sense of audience, developed logically and demonstrated a feeling of structure leading to a powerful climax. Less convincing attempts tended to ramble or to discuss the subject generally with no sign of an oral register.

Task 5 'It's a Dog's Life'

Most candidates repaid the freedom which they had been given here. Memorable stories were written; powerful descriptions were common as were varied views about life in general. Better scripts often used mordant humour to make ironic comparisons between a dog's life and the writer's own. There was even a plaintive plea from a female writer who was irritated by being labelled an 'Essex Girl'.

Accuracy and Presentation

Most writers demonstrated control over sentences and paragraphs, although Examiners still agonise over the misuse of the comma. The most common error now seems to be the use of 'could of' or 'should of'.

Presentation varies very much from Centre to Centre – most scripts were carefully and neatly written. Candidates paid great attention to spelling and large numbers checked their scripts and eliminated first draft errors. A majority of Examiners feel that a gradual improvement is taking place.

PAPERS 2 (1510/2) and 4 (1510/4) – LITERATURE

Introduction

The Standard and Higher Tier papers both contained material that had been issued to candidates in advance of the examination. This enabled a greater range of writing to be available than would have been possible in the limited amount of reading time possible in an examination and afforded candidates an opportunity to demonstrate how well they could respond to both previously studied and unseen material. Many Centres had clearly prepared their candidates very thoroughly, studying the pre-released material from a variety of viewpoints so that they were well prepared in the examination to adapt what they had already discovered and the judgements they had already formed to the requirements of the task set. Some candidates did this more successfully than others who reproduced rehearsed and learned comments which were not always relevant. There was plenty of evidence of teacher-input, but the best candidates absorbed this and produced responses which were substantially their own, coherently presented and substantially supported by well-chosen evidence from the texts, while the majority clearly found it gave them the confidence to write in ways which would not have been possible without such guidance. Of course, there were candidates who reproduced garbled and distorted versions of what they had not clearly understood in class discussions but even they, on balance, had clearly benefited from them. In both tiers, candidates' familiarity with the pre-released material frequently led them to write too much on the first task and in questions requiring a balanced discussion of familiar and unseen texts to devote too much of their answers to the former.

Also common to both tiers is the syllabus requirement 'to refer to the texts in support of their insights and opinions'. This needed to be done by a combination of quotation and close reference to specific details which illustrate the judgements or statements being made. The best candidates used frequent and brief quotations which were clearly shown to be relevant to their discussion of the text; less satisfactory were those answers containing a series of long quotations in which the relevant phrase was not apparent or in which many random quotations, without accompanying explanation or comment, left little room for the candidate's own thoughts and opinions. Good candidates ranged freely backwards and forwards in the texts to illustrate what they had to say with neatly summarised detail; scripts which took the reader through the text from beginning to end were able to include some useful comment and highlight illustrative detail but inevitably contained irrelevant material and tended to adopt a narrative rather than analytical approach.

A third requirement of both tiers is a 'sustained evidence of personal response'. Many candidates described their thoughts and feelings evoked by the passages, preferably in the course of their detailed responses to the tasks or in a paragraph at the end, and showed themselves to be sensitive, responsive and open to the stimulus of language. It is important, however, that such personal response should arise directly from the text and be closely linked to it. In some cases, candidates wrote lengthy sociological treatises about old age, society's treatment of the deprived or the plight of the homeless, which took the reader a long way from the text and sometimes became a substitute for any detailed discussion of it.

Specific to the Higher Tier is the syllabus requirement to use an 'appropriate critical vocabulary', and there was some evidence that this was a helpful tool for some Standard Tier candidates too. Many were able to use terms like simile, metaphor, irony, imagery, or personification to sharpen their critical writing and provided satisfactory examples to show their understanding of them. Others could not really understand them or even spell them correctly, but Examiners were tolerant of such mistakes where they did not obscure real insights and responses, and are anxious that teachers are not discouraged from teaching such terms for fear that their misuse will be severely penalised.

In both papers, Section B contained a choice of tasks offering opportunities for imaginative writing linked to the passages studied in Section A. It was here that candidates' writing skills were principally assessed against criteria laid down in the National Curriculum statements of attainment at various levels. Examiners considered the overall impact of the piece, the degree of audience awareness (where this was relevant), its narrative and descriptive qualities, the competence demonstrated in paragraphing and organisation, the choice of vocabulary, the accuracy and variety of syntax, grammar and punctuation, and the appropriateness of the style to the task. Spelling competence was separately assessed, together with handwriting, as part of the EN 4/5 Presentation criteria. It is important to note that the discursive and analytical writing skills evidenced in Section A were also taken into account in assessing the level of writing competence achieved on the paper as a whole, just as the degree of empathy with the texts apparent in Section B contributed to the assessment of candidates' reading skills.

Paper 2 (1510/2)

<i>Texts:</i>	'An Old Woman and her Cat' (Doris Lessing) 'Decomposition' (Zulfikar Ghose) 'Heat and Dust' (Ruth Praver Jhabvala)	pre-released pre-released
---------------	--	------------------------------

<i>Tasks:</i>	Section A: 1 Compare Hetty's and Tibby's lives before and after the move across London, and explain why they were happier in their new home. 2 Compare the poem and the passage about the beggar woman. Consider the way the beggars are described, people's attitudes towards them and how the language brings to life what is seen and felt. Section B: 3 As one of Hetty's children, describe a visit you make to her. 4 As a voluntary aid worker, write a letter home describing your experiences among the beggars of India.
---------------	---

Section A

Task 1

This story had clearly been understood and enjoyed by the majority of candidates. The task asked them to write a comparison between the lives led by the old woman and her cat before and after the move. The best candidates selected details from one life and then the other to show how the changes had been an improvement for them. These answers showed in their careful selection of detail and judicious use of quotation their full understanding of the nature of the change that took place.

Hetty moved from a high-rise council flat in a crowded urban community to a single room in a condemned slum dwelling in a semi-rural landscape, adjacent to derelict gardens and a canal. Her income as a rag-trader improved because of the proximity of a wealthy neighbourhood so, although she dared not continue to collect her pension, she no longer owed rent or TV payments and with the little money she got from selling the television set felt altogether more prosperous in her rent-free home, and happily relied on a little radio for entertainment. No longer plagued by disapproving neighbours or council officials who wanted to enforce a 'no pets' rule, she felt more at home among the handful of old ladies who shared her house, and above all found friendship with a widow who, like herself, had lost contact with her children. Indeed, in her grumbling, kindly treatment of a family who also shared the house, she found some substitute for her own. Tibby's situation similarly improved. Although he had been cared for and fed by Hetty in her flat and found an occasional pigeon on the streets, which they shared, he was in poor condition and found life a struggle and intensely competitive amidst the large population of pedigree cats in which he was very low on the social scale. At his new home he found a fine hunting ground and flourished in an environment where there was more space and less competition. Safe from the danger of being put down, he dominated his feline community, produced many kittens and was able to contribute more substantially to Hetty's diet.

Very many candidates decided to give a detailed account of their life in the flat followed by another of their experiences in the slum, and it was not until they reached the second stage that they began to make, or imply, comparisons. This was an acceptable approach, but it did often result in a lot of irrelevant detail being reproduced from the first half of the story and, in many cases, the temptation merely to copy out the text was too strong. Examiners found themselves waiting for long periods with pen poised to reward the first comparison, noting details of her first life which may or may not be contrasted with those selected by the candidate from her second. When, at last, the move across London was reached, the better answers did relate the details of her new life to those already mentioned so that specific comparisons could be credited; weaker ones left the reader to infer the comparison from their selection of detail and, at worst, did little more than re-tell the story. But most candidates were able to make some attempt, at least, to respond to the task with two or three well-made contrasts and the best were able to make many more and highlight the most important change – the end of her loneliness – to point out the parallel between Hetty's and Tibby's improved circumstances, and to understand the paradox that her happiness and well-being improved despite the decline in her social status and material situation.

There was plenty of evidence that the passage had been carefully studied and prepared. Given their familiarity with it, however, it was disappointing that so many candidates were unable to organise their writing more effectively or adapt their knowledge of the piece more readily to the needs of the task.

Task 2

To assist them in making a comparison between the poem and the passage, candidates were given three guides around which to organise their writing. The most successful answers used these sensibly to write a paragraph about each.

Both beggars were – or looked – very old and wore filthy clothes and rags. The man had painfully thin limbs and was so exhausted that he remained lying in one place; the woman's weakness was apparent in her shuffling gait but she had been in different locations before she lay down motionless and apparently near to death. In both pieces, the indifference of the passers-by was apparent, and good candidates were able to illustrate it with quotations from the poem and selected details from the passage. The attitudes of both writers underwent a change. The poet describes how he felt guilt at having regarded the beggar merely as a picturesque subject for a work of art but is now conscious of him as an individual whose posture suggests his inner suffering. Ruth Jhabvala also takes her beggarwoman for granted but becomes more concerned for her and at length makes strenuous efforts to help her (unlike the poet) although her fear of contamination and feelings of revulsion have to be overcome.

Most candidates made some attempt to compare the texts in these two respects. The weakest were able to make some comment on the beggars' appearance and most described in more or less detail how the general public rejected or ignored them. Many were able to follow the development in attitude of the writer of the passage, but it was disappointing that so many could not see the change in the poet. The poem had been studied and this was, after all, the 'point' it makes – even in the punning title. There was a similarly disappointing response to its language among the comparatively few candidates who made a real attempt to follow the third guide and write about the way language brought the pieces to life. Few had anything to say about the effectiveness of the imagery in verse two or could select phrases to illustrate what for them had been most striking about the way it was written. There was, generally, a more confident note about candidates' attempts to write about the language of the passage; some were able to quote specific details which vividly convey the deprivation and squalor of the beggar's situation, comment on the simplicity of the language which gives an immediately clear picture to the reader or draw attention to the effectiveness of the abrupt ending.

In contrast with the careful preparation of the story, there was much less evidence here of teacher influence. Apart from the failure to respond to various elements of the poem already noted, there were many candidates who confused the pavement trickster with the beggar. A surprising number ignored the rubric and wrote a comparison between Hetty and the beggar-woman. Were they so unprepared that they tried to avoid the poem at all costs? One of the objects of the pre-release material is to make available to candidates a wider range of slightly more demanding – and rewarding – literature which, given time and opportunity, they should be able to read with profit and enjoyment.

Section B

Task 3

This task produced much writing that was descriptive, reflective; had pace and variety, contained convincing dialogue and was generally full of interest – if not always written as carefully or accurately as one would like. Some candidates chose to visit their mother in her council flat and produced telling accounts of the concrete jungle in which it was situated. Others clearly imagined the atmosphere of decay and captured the feeling of the quiet backwater in which her second home was situated. In many cases it was not clear which of her homes was in the writer's mind, but the journey to it was usually the occasion for some good descriptive writing, often clearly arising from the candidate's own experience. Those who chose to end there, with the knock on the door, deprived themselves of opportunity to explore more fully the mother/child relationship and to produce the lively and interesting dialogues, full of tensions and often subtle insights, which others created.

Some candidates began in the present tense which the rubric uses but then changed into the past or, worse, mingled their tenses in a very confused manner. A consistent present tense can give immediacy to a narrative, but is difficult to sustain. Many were able to describe and elaborate on their feelings of guilt and reminisce eloquently about their childhood in these re-discovered surroundings and about their mothers' heroic efforts to provide for them. Ingenuity and invention were displayed in inventing details of their remembered life which were consistent with the picture of Hetty in old age. Less convincing were those accounts which led up to a 'happy ending' with Hetty in a home or a granny flat and Tibby either killed off or living in pampered luxury. These may have appeased the consciences of the children, but they were not in sympathy with the spirit of the passage, whose Hetty would have firmly rejected any such retreat into respectability.

Task 4

This was a difficult choice for some candidates, who clearly had no direct experience of a Calcutta street and were unable to take details from the texts and develop them in convincing ways. Their letters may have had a foreign address but could have been written from the back streets of

Birmingham or Manchester for all the local colour they were able to include. They often spent much of their time in greetings, gossip about family and friends and news of their diet and bowels, leaving little that was relevant to the task of 'describing your experiences among the beggars of India'. On the other hand, some candidates were able to use the details of the poem and passage as stimuli to their imaginations and some clearly had direct experience of such scenes in visits to India. Examiners looked for a real sense of commitment in the persona of the aid worker and there were good scripts which expressed feelings of indignation, compassion, humility, and admiration for the uncomplaining poor, in wholly convincing language. Others went too far in their efforts to demonstrate the right attitudes, and their letters were filled with platitudes, generalities and wildly unrealistic schemes of rehabilitation, re-housing and the transformation of Indian society.

Alone in an examination, the candidate is faced with a choice of tasks. With hindsight, many of those who chose this task may have regretted a choice which required them to place more reliance on the studied texts and to put themselves into an unknown situation and environment. Examiners were aware of this difference in the nature of the tasks, and did their best to ensure in their comparatively modest expectations of the degree of empathy which was demonstrated, that candidates were not disadvantaged by their choice.

EN3 Writing

At these levels, the 'skills' criteria are especially important. The best candidates produced very acceptable English, accurate within its limits, showing a reasonably secure grasp of the principles of grammar, sentence structure and punctuation and using a vocabulary which was quite adequate for their needs. Just below these, the Examiners found a large number of candidates who seemed potentially as able but, for one reason or another, failed to do themselves real justice. Sometimes they over-reached themselves and employed a vocabulary which they did not fully understand or attempted structures which were too complex. Much more commonly they paid too little attention to the requirements and conventions of written English. In the classroom their contributions to discussion are probably as full, pertinent and fluent as their more successful classmates, but they lacked the knowledge, or the application or simply did not accept the need to discipline their pens. Punctuation became arbitrary, inconsistent or was virtually abandoned as the mind concentrated on the story to be told. Sentence structures were limited to those used in speech. Dialogue was not paragraphed, and the complexities of punctuation it requires were attempted half-heartedly, if at all. Rarely was there evidence of thought being given to choosing the best word: there was much repetition and a limited basic vocabulary was overworked. Against these deficiencies (which were not, of course, all present in any one script) could sometimes be set qualities in the content and arrangement of what was said that compensated to some extent for them. All too often, at these lower levels, Examiners feel that there is a talent and latent ability in the candidates which is not being displayed, and that the key to this failure lies in their reluctance to recognise or accept the distinction between the spoken and the written word, and the need for self-discipline in the successful use of the latter.

Paper 4 (1510/4)

<i>Texts:</i>	'The Road Home' (Sylvia Fair)	pre-released
	'Old Man, Old Man' (U.A. Fanthorpe)	pre-released
	'It Was Right For Us' (Brian Jones)	

- Tasks:*
- Section A:
- 1 Write about your impressions of Rosie and say how successfully the author describes what it is like to be her. (Five aspects were suggested for consideration.)
 - 2 Compare the two poems. Look at the contrasts between past and present, the relationship of the men with their children, and include your own responses.

- Section B: 3 Write the kindly policeman's version of events and his advice to a new officer about how to treat Rosie.
- 4 Write a story about Rosie as a child.
- 5 As one of the authors of the poems:
either write about your life at home as a child or write about a previous visit to your father.

Section A

Task 1

This engaging story clearly appealed strongly to the candidates, very many of whom were able to produce an analytic response because of the high degree of empathy it engendered. Examiners looked for a clear understanding of what happens in the story (often implicit in the answer as there was no requirement to summarise it), an account of what it is like to be Rosie, and understanding of the ways in which the writing conveys that experience.

As the story had already been studied, many candidates had a clear grasp of its structure and incidents – Rosie's complaint to the police about the boys' attacks, her misunderstanding of their instructions to 'charge' them for assault which results in her butting them like a ram and earning the disapproval of the police, and her return to her lonely life on the mountain. There were occasional mistaken or dubious interpretations – that Rosie invented the attacks, or that the police were wholly unsympathetic to her – but the only major difference arose from the understanding of the nature of the assault. Some candidates – or Centres – decided that it was a rape; others, that it was unclear; the majority, that it was a thoughtless and cruel but not overtly sexual form of bullying. Although the author has stated that the latter is the correct interpretation, candidates were in no way penalised if they saw the attack as more sinister. Indeed, some examined the relevant parts of the story very closely, analysing its detail and imagery in order to justify or reject such a view. The story was written twenty years ago. Perhaps it is a sad comment on the '90's that a misunderstanding of this nature should arise.

The story offers many insights into what it is like to be Rosie. They can be summarised under three headings – her physical disabilities, her limited intelligence and her thoughts and feelings. A surprising number of answers ignored her poor eyesight (stumbling over roots and stones ... seeing vague movements of people dim view of sheep through cracked lenses) and her poor hearing, at least in the one ear which 'wasn't sure'. These disabilities must have played a significant part in her life and should have been included in an account of what it is like to be her. Everyone was able to say something about her limited intelligence; weaker answers often confined themselves to this aspect. Candidates wrote about her inability to do two things at once, her eagerness to seize on familiar ideas but often mistakenly (as in 'charging' or trying 'harder' with her pencil) and being only dimly aware of her own body. Many of her thoughts and feelings can be inferred from the text even when they are not directly stated. She is both angry with and afraid of the boys who attack her; she feels lonely and looks to animals for companionship; she longs for approval, is grateful for warmth and kindness and grievously disappointed when her efforts are rejected. Good answers described these with quotations and reference in support.

Most candidates made some attempt to explain how the writing helped them to understand her mental processes and contributed in other ways to the effectiveness of the story. Nearly everyone referred to the way her wellingtons and beret had a life of their own, but weaker candidates often thought she **consciously** assigned the functions of movement and thought to them, while better answers analysed the phenomenon with greater subtlety. There were references to the use of dialect, to imagery which emphasised her sympathy with animals and closeness to nature, and to many other features of the writing, which were sometimes very sophisticated and perceptive.

In general, most candidates produced their best work in this task as they had time to study the text and because they found the story itself, and the way it was written, so stimulating. The weaker scripts tended to concentrate on one aspect only (her beret and wellingtons, or her limited intelligence) or tried to reproduce their study notes without adapting them to the question asked. Answers were often padded out with quotations that were too long or had no relevance to what was being discussed, or were not accompanied by useful comment, or by long digressions about the inadequacies of the Social Services or the insensitivity of the police. The simplest responses were those which confined themselves to re-telling the story with occasional analytical comments. Better scripts ranged widely over all three aspects of the presentation of Rosie and her story; they used quotations briefly, frequently and with useful comment and in their personal responses showed a level of understanding of character and appreciation of the story itself which was very impressive. Because they had so much to say, a number of candidates spent too much time on this task. Many of these very long answers were also very repetitive and poorly organised. Others were able to say as much, or more, by organising their answers in clear paragraphs which each addressed a specific theme, and by writing succinctly. A well-made point should be left alone, not repeated in alternative language or returned to later in the answer. The candidate must have confidence that the Examiner will note it. The most important question candidates can ask themselves is: 'What **else** can I say in answer to this question?'

Task 2

This task was in two respects more demanding than Task 1. It required candidates to respond to unseen material and, as the syllabus requires, to 'make detailed comparisons within and between texts'. The highest level candidates showed no difference in quality in their writing about the two poems and were able to compare them in subtle and illuminating ways. Very many middle-level candidates devoted a disproportionate amount of their answers to the first poem but were still able to make some comparisons – largely factual – between the two. The weakest answers found little to say about the second poem and often misunderstood it, while tending to reproduce what they had learned about the first poem with little regard to the requirements of the task.

Opportunity to look for comparisons within the texts was provided by the requirement to consider the difference between the youth and age of the old men. In the Fanthorpe poem, a picture emerges of a confident handyman living in an orderly world of practical tasks, telling jokes, familiar with his part of London, irascible in front of his TV set, who is transformed into a surly, resentful old man, losing his faculties, unable even to wash up properly, widowed – or perhaps simply indifferent to his wife. The contrasts of 'then' and 'now' are equally clear in Brian Jones' poem. The active sailor, full of 'natural charm' and good-looking with his 'fine features', coming home to tell romantic tales of his adventures to his son under gaslight, and struggling to maintain standards of gentility in a rough neighbourhood, has now become very ill, confined to his fireside, ashamed at being reduced to dependence on people whom he would formerly have kept 'sealed' out, and finding a momentary satisfaction in passing on the 'treasure' of his experience to his grandchild.

There are clearly a number of factual similarities and contrasts in these two histories which were implicit in some answers and explicit in better ones. In comparing the relationships of the two fathers with their children, candidates had an opportunity to draw inferences from the poem and to interpret them in more subtle and sensitive ways. Most wrote more convincingly in this respect about the first. The memorable lines '..... not good with daughters/But a dab hand with a Black and Decker' were often quoted to support a picture of a man better with things than with people who, belatedly, was forced by illness and helplessness to accept the love and attention of his daughter, albeit stubbornly attempting still to assert his independence and to suppress his emotions. Perceptive and sensitive readers noted the tone of affectionate mockery in the exaggerations of 'Lord once of shed ... World authority on glue ... connoisseur of nuts and bolts' and the feeling of exasperated, frustrated but intensely loyal and dutiful affection that emerges in the last verses. Those who found in the poem a malicious and revengeful daughter who enjoyed the spectacle of her father's decline as a just

punishment for his former indifference were surely mistaken. The relationships in the second poem were perhaps more implicit but the evidence invited intelligent speculation. Brian clearly visits with reluctance a father who has allowed himself to be sucked into the 'slovenly' neighbourhood outside their square, with its 'flaking dignity', and this reluctance is shared by his wife, Ada, who is wholly preoccupied with protecting their child from being tainted by the local scruffs. Only on this one occasion – 'When it was right for us' – was he able to recapture, in the absence of the invading neighbours, something of the charm and magic of his childhood relationship. But even now the old man ignores him (understandably!) and talks only to his grandchild – perhaps resentful of his son's grudging duty visits and/or ashamed 'of what he's let things come to' – and there is a gentle sadness and emptiness in the conclusion when the son abandons him to his senility and disgrace, in contrast to the daughter whose concluding words were pleas to be allowed to help her father.

In both poems there emerged differences of factual interpretation which did not substantially alter their meaning and which the Examiners felt able to accept. Thus, in the first poem, the identity of the speaker **could** be a grand-daughter, a female friend or even the spirit of his deceased wife – seen 'only as a cloud'. As verses six to eight are all concerned with his loss of memory, it seems reasonable to interpret the phrase about his wife replacing 'on the walls/Those pictures of disinherited children/And you wouldn't know' as another example of his senile confusion about people and the past and his near blindness (together with a rather bitter reference to the children's loss of their father's love – not, surely, his property) but some Centres read it as his still-living wife replacing the pictures he had removed. In the second poem, too, some readers thought that the 'old girl slommucking in curlers' who reappeared 'with half the neighbourhood/And his nightly beer' was his wife. This was an improbable factual deduction, but not one which fundamentally changed the meaning of the poem.

Much more damaging were other mis-readings of the unseen poem which did result in serious misunderstandings. A surprising number attributed Ada's irritation with the local kids to the old man and wrote of **his** fear of catching fleas. Others thought the neighbours' children were his. Some thought he was in some sort of retirement home, and quite frequently the references to a cup of stout and a nightly beer produced assertions that he and the old lady were confirmed alcoholics. Very many thought the 'disgrace' at the end of verse two was his feeling about his illness because they linked it with the fight for breath in the previous line instead of reading on, syntactically, over the verse end to '... of what he'd let things come to'. Here, and elsewhere, many candidates were clearly unaware of the basic requirement in verse to read the sentences as they are punctuated, regardless of line and verse divisions which may, of course, be used to suggest additional or alternative emphases. Omissions in the reading were often significant. Important clues to the old man's personality and his relationship with his son which were often missed were the reference to his 'natural charm' that 'flowers in the peace we brought him' and the description of the 'magic dark' in which, as a boy, he had heard his father's tales. Was the poem too long? It was half the length of the new material provided in the Standard Tier paper, and although it contains a few phrases of the compressed and allusive quality associated with poetry it is essentially a verse narrative in which the verses provide paragraphs to divide it into a sequence of distinct scenes. Most candidates were able to grasp its broad outline where they had not misunderstood it, while the best clearly revelled in its detail and the opportunities for comparison and interpretation it offered.

A common problem arose from the tendency of candidates to equate 'compare' with 'find similarities in'. In their determination to do so, they were forced into misinterpretation and distortion of the second poem in order to discover similarities in relationships. Conversely, others distorted the meaning of one or other of the poems in order to produce a series of neat contrasts. Candidates should be made aware that texts should initially be evaluated separately and that the exercise of comparison involves looking for points of similarity and of contrast. Candidates should also be discouraged from excessive speculation about the biographical details of the characters described; wild and improbable assumptions were often asserted as probabilities or even facts, and the subsequent analysis of the poem was seriously distorted by them.

Section B

Task 3

This task produced a very wide range of responses. Many lower level candidates chose it as perhaps a more straightforward one than the others since some of its content could be based quite closely on the passage and they felt more at ease in a role-play situation which required a spoken idiom (although the difficulties inherent in reproducing this accurately in written English were often too formidable for them). They were able to describe the interview in the police station and the 'charging' episode from the policeman's viewpoint with reasonable competence and detail, and included some reference to his feelings about Rosie and his part in the episode and some simple advice about speaking slowly and handling her with sympathy. More ambitious answers gave the narrative some setting by establishing the characters of the two policemen, introducing dialogue, developing a relationship between them and producing a suitable and consistent 'voice' for the kindly officer. If the chosen voice register restricted the range of syntax and vocabulary which the candidate could demonstrate in this section, Examiners looked for evidence of consistency and originality and authenticity in the chosen voice, and referred to the writing in Section A for confirmation of the candidates' ability to use a wider range of linguistic resources when the task enabled them to do so. This attempt to 'extend and develop' sometimes produced rather crude, naive or improbable results. There were officers whose unaspirated and illiterate speech derived from some antiquated stereotype of the village bobby rather than from any reality within the candidates' experience; sometimes a combative relationship, influenced clearly by TV series, developed between the officers and became the main focus of the narrative, with Rosie relegated to the background. Answers which showed real empathy with the officer introduced elements of humour and pathos, added imaginative details to the incidents of the story he described, gave a convincingly complex account of his mixed feelings about Rosie and in the course of his advice to the other officer on how to treat her showed a full and subtle understanding of her characteristic behaviour and feelings.

Task 4

Many candidates based their narratives on the reference in the story to Rosie's memory of her schooldays and the unsympathetic teacher who nagged at her to try harder. From this one detail some were able to develop a well-shaped and imaginative detailed short story of their own. The bewilderment and confusion in Rosie's adult mind which the story conveys were re-created with differences appropriate to her childish perceptions. These excellent narratives developed aspects of the story such as her manner of speech, her kinship with animals, her physical clumsiness, her dim perception of her own bodily functions conveyed through the autonomous activity of legs and brain, her sturdy independence, her ability to concentrate on only one thing at a time or her longing for approval which led her to embrace mistaken ideas with tragic-comic results. The very best of these might almost have been written by the author herself, so thoroughly had these candidates absorbed her characterisation and style – even to the extent of including their own figurative language drawn from natural images. The theme of classroom bullying clearly appealed to many candidates who wrote quite interestingly and dramatically more from their own experience perhaps, making fewer and less convincing links with the Rosie of the story. Such anecdotes often contained a more kindly and sympathetic teacher and concentrated heavily on a physical or verbal assault that mirrored the incident at Foxy's Gate and gave an early indication of Rosie's capacity for reprisal. There were many imaginative accounts of her early life not based on school experiences which developed hints about her rural background, her loneliness, her guarded wariness of people or her closeness to animals in subtle and often poignant sketches of a solitary but not unhappy childhood which were very close to the spirit of the text. The least successful interpretations of the task were those which concentrated on the search for a specific origin of her mental or physical disabilities and devoted the whole of their narratives to an account of some near-fatal accident which changed a normal girl into the Rosie of the story.

Task 5

Both these tasks offered candidates the opportunity to develop their understanding of the relationship between father and child in one or other of the poems. The majority chose to write about their childhood experience. Many seized upon the DIY theme in the first poem and gave a convincingly detailed account of a frustrated childhood in which overtures of affection were rejected by fathers too busy in their self-contained worlds to notice or bother with their daughters. The best gave a very sympathetic and subtle account of the child's feelings, characterised the parents convincingly and created a well-shaped, authentic and interesting piece of writing. Weaker answers produced exaggerated stereotypes in which the father's chauvinism became a caricature and the dialogue and incidents were improbable or, at worst, absurd. Only a few chose the second poem as their source, and of these only the very best were able to use the references to 'natural charm' and 'tales I'd heard in the magic dark' to create a totally empathic response. Some, indeed, ignoring the reference to 'clippers', made the father into a wartime sailor and described a childhood in the London blitz or, developing other mistaken interpretations of the poem, an upbringing dominated by a drunkard or in which the father figure was permanently absent. Such narratives were marked, using the full range of levels, for the writing skills they displayed. There was a corresponding lack of empathy in the writing of candidates who chose to ignore the first line of the question – 'Imagine that you are the writer...' – and wrote about themselves as children. Questions must be asked about how thoroughly they had been advised of the requirements of the syllabus and the examination which are quite specific about the empathic nature of the writing in Section B. On the evidence of this writing, some of the candidates may have had childhood experiences of such difficulty that they could not resist the apparent opportunity to write about them. Again, the evidence their efforts provided of their writing and narrative skills was fully assessed.

EN 3 – Writing

The criteria by which candidates' writing skills were assessed are listed in the introduction to this report. Teachers will be only too well aware of the inherent difficulty of balancing these against each other and assigning an appropriate weighting to each. The overall impression made by the piece is very important, and the candidate's style and choice and arrangement of subject-matter will determine its impact. But linguistic skills are equally important, and at the higher levels candidates must demonstrate a wide and apt vocabulary, a variety of sentence structures and a consistently correct use of punctuation, both within the sentence and at sentence joins, which articulates their writing so clearly that their intention is immediately apparent at a first reading. When spelling is assessed separately as a 'presentation' skill, these elements are even more prominently highlighted in the assessment of EN3 and it cannot be too strongly emphasised that correct and varied punctuation is often the hall-mark of the highest level answers in which commas are used to indicate parentheses, appositions and interrupted clauses, to separate lists or to reinforce pauses before some conjunctions, but not as substitutes for full-stops or intruding between subject and verb; in which the full-stop is always correctly employed and varied by the use of colons and semi-colons, which automatically extend the range of sentence structures; and in which dialogue is properly paragraphed and given its full complement of quotation marks, commas, commas of address and question marks. These skills are not cosmetic. They invariably feature in writing which is controlled, precise and almost always imaginative and creative as well. Their absence usually indicates a very significant weakness in the candidates' ability to convey ideas unambiguously and with clarity, however original and imaginative their intentions.

COURSEWORK (1510/51 and 1510/52–54)

Speaking and Listening

Centres produced tapes of five examples of speaking and listening activities. It was left to Centres whether they should submit an audio or a video tape. Most submitted the former.

Any system of moderation of speaking and listening is bound to be a snapshot, as the assessment is carried out over a considerable period of time and involves a wide range of activities. However, the tapes performed their purpose in that they demonstrated the standard of assessment of the Centre. The evidence was best when the tape demonstrated as wide a variety of tasks as possible, going beyond interviews with the teacher and prepared talks into group discussions and responses to stimulus material.

The speaking and listening record was used as a check on the range of each Centre's activities and, together with the evidence of the tape, nearly always allowed an endorsement of the Centre's marks.

There was a considerable variety in the quality of the tapes, but the only real difficulty was in the identification of candidates in group discussion. Moderators would be grateful if Centres could arrange for candidates to state their names clearly at the beginning of the recording and to leave a brief pause for them to register the name and the voice.

Written Coursework

Many Centres submitted a considerable range of work and it was clear that candidates had frequently derived great benefit from the assignments they had been set.

Centres had often given much thought to the content of combined folders and recognised that the three pieces for literature supplemented by two or three well chosen pieces for English, demonstrating discursive and personal writing and using media stimuli, met all of the requirements of the syllabus.

Candidates were thus able to include a range of assignments demonstrating variety of purpose, register and audience, and to present them appropriately.

Centres sometimes included too many pieces in the folder, and there were examples where much of the work was not the candidate's best.

Reading

Many reading lists were extremely impressive showing a considerable range. On many occasions, although this was not required, each title had as evidence of the reading, a brief note or a lengthy review.

Responses showed that many candidates read with a very clear understanding both of the texts and of the use of language in different contexts. Knowledge about language did not have to be demonstrated by a separate piece of writing, although this was frequently the case, but could be shown in a response to literary texts.

Writing

Many of the tasks set produced interesting and varied types of writing. Unfortunately some Centres occasionally seemed not fully committed, perhaps because they were discouraged by the small percentage of marks given to coursework.

Presentation

The presentation of much of the work was excellent with a great deal of care taken during the drafting and redrafting process. Technical and spelling errors rarely led to difficulties in understanding.

Some Centres undermarked their candidates. This was understandable as this element was marked out of a different total from the others. Here, presentation could only be awarded up to level seven, and Centres sometimes used the full range of the marks when their candidates were all, or nearly all, securely in this level. It was therefore reasonable to expect the maximum mark of 70 to be used far more often than it was. It was this mark that was most frequently altered by Moderators, almost always upwards.

Grade Threshold Marks

The written Coursework was treated as a single component for the purpose of determining the grade thresholds. Candidates' marks for the written Coursework – Reading (out of 100), Writing (out of 100) and Presentation (out of 70) were aggregated in accordance with the component weightings (ie in the proportions 4:3:1) to give a total out of 200 for each candidate.

Candidates' performances were assessed on each component. The minimum level of performance (the threshold marks) was determined for each grade. These thresholds are given below as unscaled marks (i.e; the scale of marks used by the Examiners).

The relevant component thresholds were then related to each other in accordance with the component weightings to fix the overall threshold marks for each option. Each overall mark is shown below as a percentage.

Component Threshold Marks

Component	Max Mark	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1 Paper 1	80	-	-	-	50	34	18	6
2 Paper 2	80	-	-	-	46	31	17	6
3 Paper 3	80	56	45	35	29	23	17	-
4 Paper 4	80	59	47	35	28	21	14	-
51 Coursework – Speaking and Listening	100	85	75	65	57	44	32	20
52–54 Coursework – Reading, Writing and Presentation	200	165	147	130	106	90	70	50

Standard Tier

Component	Max Mark	C	D	E	F	G
Components 1, 2 and Coursework	100	70	57	42	28	14

Higher Tier

Component	Max Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F
Components 3, 4 and Coursework	100	87	75	63	52	43	34	26