

ENGLISH LITERATURE (ENL315114)

FEEDBACK FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS

This Assessment Report ought to be read alongside the exam paper and the Written Paper and Independent Folio marking tools.

The Written Examination in 2018 stipulated that students answer on 2 of the Modules studied throughout the year. Students cannot answer on the same module in both Section A or B.

Please be mindful that the Examination Specifications and the Course document allow the setting Examiner to specify the Module that must be used in any examination item. In practical terms, if you study more than one substantial text from the prescribed text list for Module 2, you can only answer on this in either Section A or B, but not in both.

Using a single text from the Comparative study of texts (Module 3) to respond to a single-text item will not be allowed in 2019. Teachers and students are strongly advised to check the Examination Specifications for ENL315114 in Term 1, 2019.

533 students were enrolled in the ENL315114 in 2018.

THE STATE BREAKDOWN WAS AS FOLLOWS:

- North: 199 (37%)
- South: 334 (63%)

THE AWARDS IN 2018 FOLLOWED A SIMILAR PATTERN AS PREVIOUS YEARS.

- PA = 46 candidates (9%)
- SA = 96 candidates (18%)
- CA = 206 candidates (39%)
- HA = 119 candidates (22%)
- EA = 66 candidates (12%)

A number of students were either absent from the examination and likewise some 4% of students did not submit an Independent Study Folio.

THE WRITTEN EXAMINATION

Students wrote on the following texts in the 2018 ENL315114 English Literature examination

Section A Question 2 - Module 2	Section A Question - Module 3
69 responses on <i>Hamlet</i>	13 responses on <i>The Narrow Road to the Deep North</i> and <i>The Railway Man</i>
30 responses on <i>Persuasion</i>	7 responses on <i>Regeneration</i> and <i>Arms and the Man</i>
22 responses on <i>Medea</i>	2 responses on <i>Hamlet</i> and <i>The Lives of Others</i>
15 responses on <i>Burial Rites</i>	2 responses on <i>Arms and the Man</i> and <i>The Railway Man</i>
9 responses on <i>Heart of Darkness</i>	1 response on <i>A Streetcar Named Desire</i> and <i>Far from the Madding Crowd</i>
5 responses on <i>Regeneration</i>	1 response on <i>King Lear</i> and <i>Blue Jasmine</i>
4 responses on <i>The Age of Innocence</i>	1 response on <i>Persuasion</i> and <i>Elizabeth</i>
3 responses on <i>King Lear</i>	
3 responses on <i>The Lives of Others</i>	
1 response on <i>The Narrow Road to The Deep North</i>	
1 response on <i>The Seed</i>	

Section B Questions 4 & 5 - Module 2	Section B Questions 6 & 7 - Module 3
<p>103 responses on <i>Hamlet</i></p> <p>34 responses on <i>Regeneration</i></p> <p>31 responses on <i>Burial Rites</i></p> <p>17 responses on <i>Persuasion</i></p> <p>10 responses on <i>King Lear</i></p> <p>9 responses on <i>The Lives of Others</i></p> <p>6 responses on <i>Frankenstein</i></p> <p>6 responses on <i>The Seed</i></p> <p>5 responses on <i>The Age of Innocence</i></p> <p>2 responses on <i>Medea</i></p> <p>2 responses on <i>Last Cab to Darwin</i></p> <p>1 response on <i>Heart of Darkness</i></p> <p>1 response on <i>The Narrow Road to the Deep North</i></p> <p>1 response on <i>Arms and the Man</i></p> <p>1 response on <i>Her</i></p> <p>1 response on <i>The Railway Man</i></p>	<p>39 responses on <i>Burial Rites and Medea</i></p> <p>33 responses on <i>Hamlet and The Lives of Others</i></p> <p>28 responses on <i>King Charles III and Last Cab to Darwin</i></p> <p>23 responses on <i>Burial Rites and The Lives of Others</i></p> <p>22 responses on <i>The Narrow Road to the Deep North and The Railway Man</i></p> <p>21 responses on <i>Hamlet and Last Cab to Darwin</i></p> <p>14 responses on <i>Regeneration and The Railway Man</i></p> <p>11 responses on <i>King Lear and Blue Jasmine</i></p> <p>10 responses on <i>Arms and the Man and The Railway Man</i></p> <p>9 responses on <i>Regeneration and Arms and the Man</i></p> <p>9 responses on <i>Persuasion and Elizabeth</i></p> <p>9 responses on <i>A Streetcar Named Desire and Far from the Madding Crowd</i></p> <p>7 responses on <i>Frankenstein and Her</i></p> <p>7 responses on <i>Frankenstein and Last Cab to Darwin</i></p> <p>1 response on <i>The Narrow Road to the Deep North and The Lives of Others</i></p> <p>1 response on <i>Hamlet and the Age of Innocence</i></p> <p>1 response on <i>Hamlet and Frankenstein</i></p> <p>1 response on <i>Hamlet and The Railway Man</i></p>

It is important for candidates to read the entire exam paper carefully and only answer what is asked of them. This is, after all, what an examination is about. It is unwise to go into the Examination room having decided on which Questions you are going to answer without reading and considering the suitability of all seven Questions. This presupposes that all candidates must be prepared to answer all seven Questions.

SECTION A

QUESTION 1 – Texts in Context (Module 1)

The 'Poetry of Love' was studied by 445 students and 'Poetry of Loss' by 98.

290 students answered on poetry - 255 students on 1B (love) and 36 on 1A (Loss)

This was a very straightforward question that asked students to compare **how** the poets of two poems studied show that 'loss/love' is a **timeless theme** regardless of historical or cultural period.

In answering this, students were directed to refer to the literary language and conventions, structures and stylistic features used in the two chosen poems and explain the influence of the poets' historical and cultural contexts.

Student and teachers should be mindful that the setting examiner could choose to specify that students answer on poems from different historical periods or, indeed, different forms.

Some unevenness in the quality of students' essays in Q1 was demonstrated. Both poems must be treated in-depth if students are to score well.

Defining the different type of loss in the two poems was a characteristic of A-range responses. Unfortunately, many candidates answering on 'Love' did not bother to define the different types of love which are communicated in the two poems.

Again, as in past years, students are advised to read the question very carefully and to ensure that they have used all keywords in their response. Only the very able candidates defined 'timeless' which was a vital component of the question.

Stronger responses used poems from contrasting eras which enhanced the cohesiveness of their argument, demonstrating changing ideas and values.

Stronger responses demonstrated how an understanding of context enabled the reader to gain a greater appreciation and understanding of the timeless nature of love/loss and their impact on individuals. These responses also discussed the literary language and conventions, structures and stylistic features used by the two poets to convey their ideas.

Again, as in past years, some information about context was superimposed on the discussion instead of arising out of the close detail of the poems.

Weaker essay responses displayed an imbalance between the various elements of the Question. Many also showed an imbalance in the treatment of the two poems.

Weaker essays also had difficulty identifying the correct historical context for both Love and Loss. Wyatt and Keats did not write in the Victorian Era.

The lack of convincing and judicious quoting from the two poems was a striking characteristic of a good number of responses in both Sections of the examination. Providing textual references is not optional, and candidates cannot hope to score well without this.

Examiners commented that students need to be more explicit when analysing the form of the poem. A good number of responses failed even to identify the poetical form used by the two poems. Similarly, it is essential to identify poetical techniques as used by the two poets and suggest how these can inform the reader about the importance of context.

By far the biggest problem commented on by examiners was the lack of discussion pertaining to values in the two poems. Candidates are reminded that to score well they must **interrogate** connections between the construction of the two poems and poets' ideas and values.

QUESTION 2 (MODULE 2)

163 students answered Question 2.

Question 2 asked candidates to examine the ways the author of the text studied in Module 2 **has created characters** who have **competing ideologies, hopes or dreams**.

Strong essays addressed the question by choosing either 'ideologies' or 'hopes and dreams'. When attempting to include all three elements many essays became confused and the arguments convoluted.

Clearly identifying characters in the topic sentence helped provide a clear structure. Weaker essays ignored the word 'competing' and went on to describe characters without comparing them or explaining the ways their ideologies or hopes differed.

Many students, particularly those writing about *Hamlet* were very strong on understanding the author's historical and cultural context but found it difficult to meld it into a response to the question. Students memorised historical details but perhaps didn't understand how these related to the ideas/characters in the text which gave the essays a sense of being pre-prepared.

There were many excellent responses able to blend all three aspects of the question, demonstrating an understanding of how the author's context affects characterisation and literary choices made. These included some discussion of other compositional features.

Knowledge of the text rather than just historical detail made for strong responses, particularly those that used judicious and well-placed references.

Texts which were handled well included *Persuasion*, *Burial Rites*, *Hamlet* and *Medea*.

Disturbingly, some essays were similar in structure and content, suggesting that candidates from the same college, maybe using 'practice' essays instead of responding to the set examination question.

Candidates wanting to improve their result must provide a much more cohesive essay structure. This requires using the essential word/s of the question, topic sentences and providing quotations as evidence. The composition of a sharp and clear thesis in the introductory section of the essay is an essential element of an essay.

Most candidates needed more textual evidence. Weaker answers simply resorted to retelling the plot and were limited by being often two and a half pages in length.

The lack of convincing and judicious quoting from the various texts was a striking characteristic of a good number of responses in both Sections of the examination. Providing textual references is not optional, and candidates cannot hope to score well without this.

QUESTION 3 (MODULE 3)

33 students answered Question 3.

Most candidates were able to successfully discuss the importance of the historical and socio-cultural context of the two texts in their analysis.

Although this may appear to be a difficult question, a little bit of effort in the planning stage of the examination produced some exceptional results.

Less effective responses struggled to structure their answers clearly in a way that adequately covered two substantial texts and failed to explicitly identify why their respective character (s) in the two chosen texts were not in control of their own lives.

A marked imbalance in the treatment of the two texts was also a characteristic of C-range responses.

The lack of convincing and judicious quoting from the two texts was a striking characteristic of many responses. Providing textual references is not optional, and candidates cannot hope to score well without this.

When reading responses to this question it became apparent that students are merely memorising critical interpretations of others for the sake of an exam rather than enhancing their understanding of the text. While it is essential for students to have an understanding that texts can have a range of interpretations, merely memorising the quotes from other critics is not an effective way of showing their knowledge if these interpretations are not used to enrich the candidate's understanding authentically. The same critic quotes are repeated repetitively in class groupings.

SECTION B

All questions in Section B asked candidates to “refer to the critical interpretation of others **to support** your own understanding”. This is a compulsory aspect of the Course and will remain in place in 2019.

As stated previously, critical interpretations of others must support the idea being discussed and therefore deepen the analysis. At times interpretations were included in the response without evaluating how this endorsed the reading of the text being presented. Better answers used the ideas of others to extend their interpretation by including supporting views and those they rejected. This is within the spirit of the Syllabus and is an essential requirement of C.I.

Criterion I requires a strong personal response that is supported by an examination of the compositional features of the text. The use of the first person is perfectly acceptable in this section as is a third person response; however, the marker needs to be able to identify the candidate's position without the need to extrapolate. Where this occurs, it is indicative of a poorly structured response that lacks clarity and cohesiveness.

The most striking aspect of essays in Section B, particularly those belonging to weaker candidates, was the scant consideration paid to the phrasing of the set questions, and the failure to respond to all aspects of the set question consistently, evenly and explicitly.

QUESTION 4 (MODULE 2)

186 students answered Question 4.

Candidates were asked to analyse **how** the author of the text studied in Module 2 sought to present **new ideas or ways of thinking**.

For the last four years, Question 4 has identified the specific compositional feature/s to be discussed. The format changed this year; instead of naming the ideas to be addressed (“new ideas or ways of thinking”), allowing students to choose the compositional features to support their argument.

Some texts were ideally suited for this question. Successful candidates who chose to write on *Regeneration* discussed the meaning behind Sassoon’s Declaration and his opposition to the prolonging of the war in contrast to the British War Office’s position. This naturally led into a discussion of how Barker constructed her characters to challenge the traditional definitions of masculinity and femininity. Able candidates also contrasted Rivers and Yealland’s approach to treating their patients to show the changing attitudes towards mental health.

Burial Rites was also well suited to this question. The weaker responses did not refer to Kent’s purpose in providing a more ambiguous account of Agnes Magnúsdóttir and giving a voice to the voiceless. More successful candidates examined the challenge to traditional notions of justice, truth, patriarchy and class, showing how privileging the minority voice is still a new idea. More successful candidates supported their discussion with appropriate plot detail and quotations, referring to Kent’s use of narrative voice, primary sources and language devices to support their argument.

The majority of students chose to write on *Hamlet* with varying degrees of success. Successful candidates discussed Renaissance Humanism as a new way of thinking in the Elizabethan era as distinct from medieval thought. Despite some of this detail pertaining to criterion 2, markers deemed this inclusion appropriate concerning the demands of the question and the choice of *Hamlet* as a text. Character foils of Hamlet and Laertes were discussed in relation to the emergence of new ideologies and differing approaches to revenge.

Students also discussed the new Protestant thinking in contrast to the Old Faith, the newly emerging secular thought about the afterlife and the challenge to authority seen in the erosion of the Divine Right of Kings, referring to characterisation, soliloquy, symbolism and language devices.

The question stipulated that critical interpretations of texts should be referred to; however others' views must extend the personal analysis, as a strong personal response is required for criterion 1.

Literary critics were used by more successful candidates to support their responses whereas weaker candidates used quotes from reviews, often from media sources such as *The Herald Sun* that was not connected to their argument. Literary critics should be referred to by their full name in the first instance and if referred to again, only by their surname.

Literary readings were used successfully by abler candidates to support their own argument. Weaker students demonstrated a lack of understanding of these readings, using erroneous phrasing; "Ophelia and Gertrude are constructed through a feminist lens". Such wording implies not only that Shakespeare was a feminist but also reveals the student's misunderstanding, as it is the reader that interprets a text through a specific literary perspective. Character and author perspectives and the values they represent are also valid ways of addressing criterion 1, and these can also be used effectively to extend a personal position.

Criterion 1 requires an analysis of the ideas in the text from a personal perspective, BUT this does not extend to justifying own context which pertains to criterion 6.

To satisfy the demands of criterion 4, the markers were looking for the logical progression of an argument in response to the question, evidenced with examples from the text. Students were rewarded for a clear introduction that addressed the question and presented a robust personal position on the topic, clear and relevant topic sentences, a logical progression of paragraphs that included examples and analysis and a strong conclusion that summarised the main points of the argument.

The directive to, "Analyse how..." indicated that compositional features needed to be explicitly addressed. Successful candidates included a range of appropriate compositional

features and textual evidence to support the new ideas and ways of thinking that they had identified. Weaker students identified ideas/themes without referring to whether they were new ideas or what made them new. These students used some plot detail to evidence their responses but often did not refer to compositional features and did not use quotes from the text.

Sometimes the quotations used were recognisably inaccurate and students often resorted to significant retelling. Those who explained how the new ideas differed from what had come before were more successful in addressing the question than those who avoided any discussion of the past. Those who discussed the author's intention in presenting new ideas also aptly addressed the question.

Less successful students used phrasing that did not show any understanding of texts as constructs, with no reference to the author's role and intention e.g. "Hamlet lived in Denmark with his family, his stepfather and his uncle", continuing to tell Hamlet's story as if he was a real person.

Weaker students included generalisations in their responses that were not backed up with textual evidence: e.g. "Ophelia disregards orders by sleeping with Hamlet".

QUESTION 5 (MODULE 2)

48 students answered Question 5.

Only a small number of students chose to respond to this question. Most candidates answered Question 4.

Students were asked to explore **how** the author has employed **narrative voice** to **enlighten and guide, or mystify and mislead**, the reader in one substantial text from Module 2.

Some terms used in the body of the question proved problematic.

The question assumed that all prescribed texts were equally amenable to an analysis of narrative voice. Students who had studied texts, e.g. novels where authors clearly employed a narrator, were significantly advantaged over those who had studied texts such as plays including Shakespeare where the narration was not overt.

Many students argued that soliloquies, e.g. Hamlet's soliloquies, constituted a form of interior narration and therefore satisfied the requirements of the question given that Shakespeare is, to a significant degree, speaking through his characters. It is the case, of course, that the soliloquies are not just narratives but often deep and profound philosophical musings reflecting the state of mind of characters like Hamlet.

Some students appeared confused by the notion of the narrative voice attempting to characterise the utterances of individual characters engaged in dialogue with other characters as 'narrative voices'. This question refers to the use of the author's narrative voice and not as was answered. The question was handled more appropriately in texts such as *Persuasion* or *Frankenstein* where the narrative voice is clear. Overall it appears some students confused the phrase 'narrative voice' with the word 'narrative' meaning story.

Secondly, the phrase 'to enlighten and guide' (the reader) concerning the author's use of narrative voice is an obvious combined function of narration and easily demonstrated, it is not the case that the terms 'mystify and mislead' are inexorably linked. Narrative voice can be used by authors to mystify readers without misleading.

QUESTIONS 6 AND 7 (MODULE 3)

111 students answered Question 6.

142 students answered Question 7.

Question 6 directed students to **Compare** the **representation and function of a villain or antagonist** in two substantial texts studied from Module 3.

Question 7 directed students to explore how **alienation** is a product of the world in which a person lives in reference to the 2 texts studied in the comparative Study.

The standard of responses for this section of the exam was either very strong or very weak. There were very few mid-range/B responses while the wording of the questions did not suit all candidates, those who were prepared dealt with the challenging nature of the questions.

There were 18 configurations of texts in Module 3 which suggests that some candidates obviously invented pairings of texts in the examination and possibly have not written on such pairing before. Teachers are to direct students to write on the comparative texts studied in the module. While there are deep thematic connections between works of literature (such as mortality and humanity), the questions did not necessarily suit addressing these thematic connections.

Most students responding to Module 3 did so in Section B of the examination which is a wise decision.

Students and teachers are advised that Module 3 involves the study of TWO substantial texts in a comparative manner. Learners must analyse and evaluate how shared, or common ideas are developed in the two texts. A text selected from the prescribed text list for use in Module Three cannot be used in isolation to respond to a Single Text item in the external examination.

In this Module, learners will engage with two or three substantial texts. Learners will evaluate and reflect on:

- how the interpretation of texts vary over time
- the impact of the use of literary conventions and stylistic techniques
- a range of critical interpretations.

Students must read each question carefully and decide on its suitability for the texts they had studied.

Some texts did not have an obvious villain or antagonist (for example last cab to darwin) so choosing to answer question 6 was perplexing.

STUDENTS SCORING IN THE A RANGE FOR QUESTION 6 AND 7:

- Explored perceptively the extent to which the 'stated perspective' aligned with a personal understanding of the substantial text(s) studied. Students who used the work of others in an evaluative manner, as directed to do so, produced very sophisticated responses.
- Used judicious references from the substantial texts to substantiate their own claims. Students are reminded not merely to drop these but to meaningfully and purposefully integrate them into their discussion. Some students who were less prepared could only provide textual references that did not involve either the antagonist of the text or alienation.
- Examined the compositional features of the prescribed texts critically, paying attention to how the language, in a particular medium, is used by the author to communicate ideas.
- Constructed a considered argument using language appropriate to audience, purpose and form. As part of their considerate argument, more able students were able to analyse and evaluate connections/ interrelationships between ideas and values in texts. The analytical essay in both sections was clearly structured, coherent and cohesive and included a clear thesis, flagging all components of the argument, at the outset.

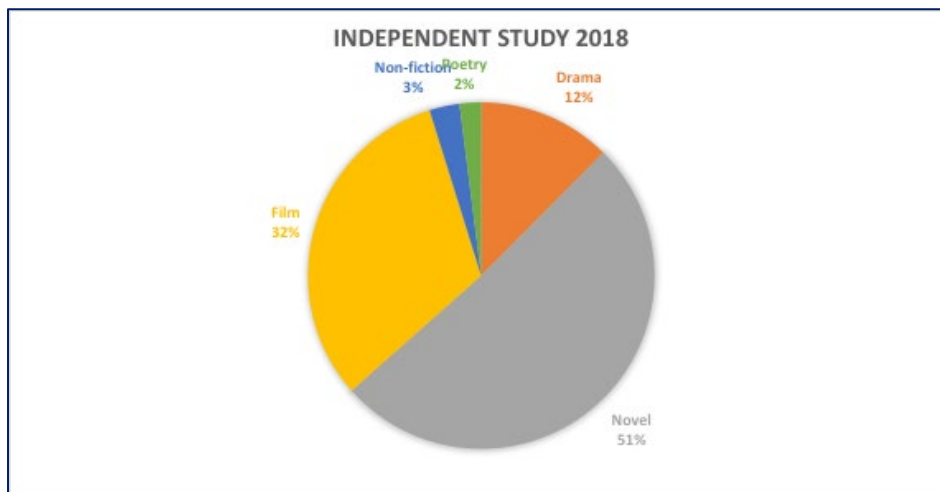
- The length of the essays varied, but most candidates scoring in this top range were able to write at least five pages. The metalanguage used in the analytical essays was appropriate, particularly regarding the form of the substantial text(s). For example, using drama discourse when talking about Shakespearian tragedy or cinematic terms when analysing a film.
- Very few students included a discussion of the aesthetic and artistic qualities of the paired texts and this is something that must be addressed by teachers in the process of teaching.
- Students in the A-range wrote lengthy and well-structured essays which demonstrated a perceptive understanding and nuanced appreciation of alienation and how this is a product of the world a person lives. In fact, a couple of erudite students even challenged the phrasing of the question and talked about 'the world that a character inhabits.' Great responses in this range referred to 'a range of/critical interpretation of others and used appropriate textual evidence to support their claims.

MODULE 4: THE INDEPENDENT STUDY (FOLIO)

Candidates completed their Independent Study on ONE text from either the 2018 Prescribed Text list OR from the List of Additional Titles for Module 4. Students were only allowed to choose one text to use for their Independent Study in 2018. This will continue for 2019.

Twenty-one students failed to submit an Independent Study folio.

Candidates chose the focus of their Independent Study from a wide selection of prescribed texts as indicated below, graphically:



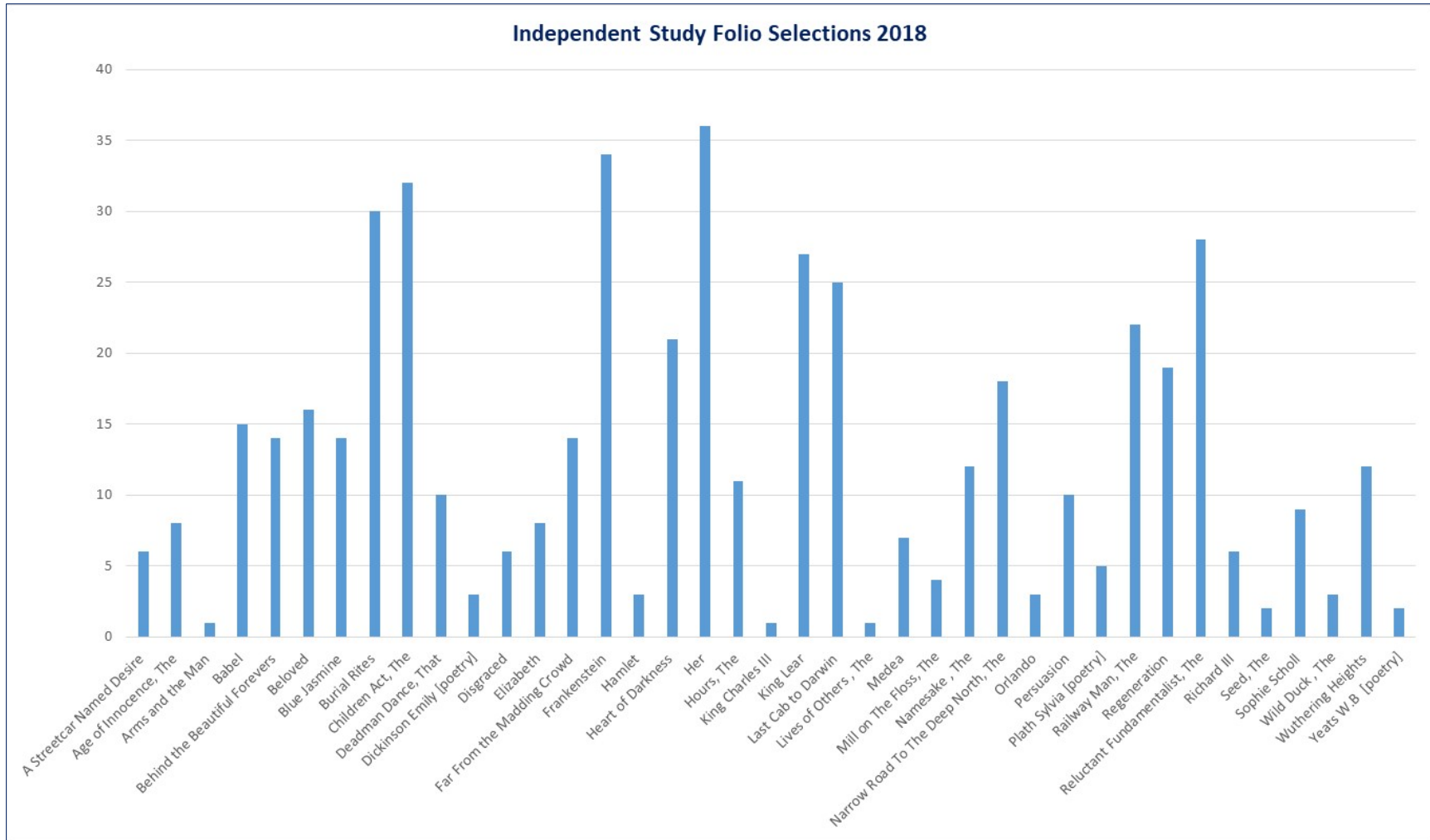
There were some very strong Independent Studies which were a delight to mark because the students were personally invested in their topics and texts. The more successful students demonstrated a high degree of academic rigour and attention to detail. However, many students are still ignoring the finer points of the Independent Study guidelines.

THE COVER PAGE

Attention to detail was often missing on cover pages with missing questions, IR titles and forms. This is unacceptable given that the requirements are made quite clear in the IS guidelines. There were instances where candidates chose to ignore word limits by providing inaccurate word counts or indeed accurate word counts that were over or under 3300. Students are reminded that markers can check the word counts of studies. (C 7)

Please use the newly-formatted 'ENL315114 IS cover page 2019'.

STUDENTS COMPLETED THEIR STUDY OF MODULE 4 ON THE FOLLOWING TEXTS:



GENERAL COMMENTS

Candidates who performed well expressed their focus as a study question and showed an authoritative understanding of Criterion 6 and 7.

As in the past, there were many impressive and excellent Independent Studies this year, although some examiners expressed the opinion that, overall, the quality of the Independent Study folios was not as impressive as in previous years.

High-scoring Independent Studies included:

- sophisticated third person and first-person critical responses
- clever, imaginative responses with strong links to the critical focus
- insightful, reflective statements which provided relevant personal context.

The MLA 8 Referencing System was used in 2018 by the candidates with varying degrees of success. The majority of candidates demonstrated an understanding of the importance of meticulous referencing to address many of the pieces of evidence of criterion 7. Of particular concern was those who chose to include extensive bibliographies and no in-text references. Some candidates are still failing to reference their chosen text.

Failure to use this Referencing system correctly compromises the grade awarded for C7.

However, for many candidates, even some of the outstanding ones, there was a reliance on less 'reputable' sources of information, e.g. *Schmoop*, *Literature Charts* and the like. A useful bibliography and reference list should demonstrate sound researching skills and extensive reading. Students should aim to utilise some scholarly sources. Those who did evidently benefitted from engaging with them.

Another major problem is the annoying use of cover pages for each different component of the folio. Students who continue to do so will be penalised on C7 in 2019.

Other presentation conventions stipulated in the Independent Study Guidelines including font size and line spacing must be adhered to. Even though MLA8 specifies a point 2 spacing, 1.5 is recommended for students to use because this makes it easier to read on an iPad.

Many candidates had carried out careful research on their text and author and used this research in a scholarly and enlightening way to support their interpretation and focus. A number, too, had thought carefully, but with a sense of daring, about what form would best allow them to explore their focus in the Imaginative Response; given that this must be print-based. A refined focus question is crucial – it is best to be precise and not too wordy. Solid focus questions usually refer to values to reflect upon and explore, cultural contexts to interrogate, and compositional features to analyse, which are utilised in the creative response. Students who had chosen broad statements to discuss rather than inquiry questions were less successful in addressing Criterion 6.

THE INQUIRY QUESTION

Successful candidates chose inquiry questions that enabled them to incorporate their own personal context in the Reflective Statement and in the Critical Essay. Some students had decided to focus on a particular literary reading such as postcolonialism, or feminism and their personal perspective was evidenced in a sophisticated manner through their third person discussion.

The most notable weakness in the folios were those who did not address the inquiry questions candidates set for themselves. Candidates must be encouraged to craft an inquiry question which allows them to address C6 while focusing their responses on manageable ideas. An inquiry question which attempts to address all of the “themes and issues” in a text will not allow candidates to respond in detail to their own ideas and the ideas of others. It is vital that students identify their area of enquiry and create a ‘useable’ question that connects to their area of study and that also gives them the opportunity to address criterion requirements. Many issues arose from the type of question that students framed their responses around including:

- Questions that weren’t questions, but in fact were statements about the text and some of the ideas encountered in the text. Many of these were up to 100 words in length. General statements, instead of particular questions, do not provide enough direction to focus on particular aspects of the text, develop an argument or compare own with others’ ideas.

- Questions that didn't allow for the requirements of C6, specifically to consider the perspective of the individual within the folio. For some folios such as these, it was challenging for students to attain grades that correlated with their achievements for C5 and C7 as the assessor had to painstakingly search for any of the students own (and sometimes others) perspectives.
- Several Independent Studies lacked a question altogether! The question was not identified on the cover page or within the body of work. This will incur a penalty in 2019.
- Naming particular ideas in the question provides a strong focus and addresses Criterion 6, Element 1.
- Referring to one or more compositional features in the question is an excellent way to address the influence of own ideas of language in the text (Criterion 6, Element 2).
- Integrating the personal pronoun "I" into the question is a good way to prompt the articulation of "own ideas, values and perspectives" (Criterion 6, Element 3).
- Building on the question a comparison between the presence, absence or transformation of ideas from the context of the study text to own context is the right way of addressing Criterion 6, Element 4.

THE REFLECTIVE STATEMENT

Nearly all candidates wrote between 450 - 600 words and recognised that the Reflective Statement is NOT part of the word count.

Many students wasted the gift of 600 words in the Reflective Statement. Some students' Reflective Statements were very brief while others were clearly first drafts and were full of errors of expression and syntax. In some cases, the quality of the expression in the Reflection Statement and the rest of the folio, particularly the critical response, was so varied that it prompted the examiner to ponder if the same candidate wrote it.

The marked unevenness of expression, complexity and sophistication between the Critical component and the RS suggests that too many candidates are still rushing their reflective statements, seeing them as less important than the other two components. This also flagged some concerns for some markers that possible undue assistance may have been provided for different sections of the Independent Study.

Successful candidates identified from the outset at least one way in which the study text had influenced their thinking on a topic, idea and shaped thinking and values. Articulating the way the focus text had changed thinking was a compelling feature of strong Reflective Statements.

Explaining how the CR and IR are connected does not necessarily mean that they should be discussed in the same sentence. Successful candidates were able to tell how particular ideas from the CR were further developed in the IR and how they had manipulated specific features of the IR to highlight the augmentation of meaning.

Many neglected to identify essential potential elements including (as for example):

- how the text had an impact on them
- how the ideas/circumstances from the text are evident in/absent from their own world
- the connections between their imaginative and critical pieces.
- why the ideas in their text are important to consider in the world in which we live.
- outlining their intentions for the pieces.

All Reflective Statements were written in the first person as instructed. Unfortunately, many Reflective Statements did not follow the instruction to:

- give markers an understanding of your intentions for your chosen focus
- explain the relationship between your stated focus and both the imaginative and critical responses
- outline the way(s) in which your imaginative response relates to the critical response

- analyse the influence of chosen text(s) on your own ideas, values and perspectives
- outline any independent investigation/research you may have carried out as part of your Independent Study.

As a consequence, they did not support the Critical and Imaginative as comprehensively as it could have been possible.

Most candidates utilised the Reflective Statement as a platform for Criterion 6 to good effect. Most candidates outlined their focus area and linked their imaginative and critical response effectively. Three examples of how students tackled C6 are included for your consideration.

It is important to be explicit about the form of the Imaginative Response in the Reflective Statement. Most candidates explained how the Imaginative and Critical Responses connected regarding the commonality of ideas and sometimes setting, but few specified form. In some cases, discerning the form was difficult, even after reading the piece.

THE CRITICAL RESPONSE

The CR was, typically, the most substantial piece in the Independent Study which suggests that the time allocation given to all three pieces was uneven. The object of the critical response is to express a personal position and examine your own ideas, values and perspectives and those of others by critically reflecting on the text(s). Writing in the third person does not preclude you from doing this.

Having the question stated at the beginning of the section was useful rather than having to go back to the cover sheet. Do NOT, however, include a question as a header because this becomes annoying.

A carefully phrased question is essential for a successful critical response. To evaluate textual integrity as part of a critical reflection, an analysis of compositional features is required; to express a personal position, candidates needed to reflect on the influence of the text on their own ideas, values and perspectives. The most successful questions made specific reference to both of these components. This often involved a two-part question.

Critical components that showed understanding of texts as purposeful constructs were outstanding and sophisticated. These candidates were able to use present tense when discussing characters and plot as constructs, and past tense when referring to historical and cultural contextual information relevant to their text. Such sophisticated critical writing showed candidates' understanding of the complexity of the issues explored and how composers can create characters to highlight such issues. There were some outstanding critical components written in the third person which were complemented with reflective statements explaining personal contextual information resulting in the position adopted in the study. Such positions included literary perspectives such as Feminist and Marxist readings.

The way in which the stronger Critical Responses moved so effortlessly between textual analysis and their own response to the text, each helping the other to reach a new level of understanding, was impressive. There were many remarkable critical responses in both the first and the third person, and both were equally acknowledged and rewarded for the insight of their analysis. Those candidates who wrote using the more traditional third-person ensured that a personal interpretation and position was discernible in their writing.

Other observations about the critical Responses included the following from markers:

- A balance between “own and others’ ideas” also means providing judicious textual evidence and then analysing the meaning and significance of that evidence.
- A balance between “own and others’ ideas” is necessary. The composer’s ideas and the candidates’ response to those ideas must not be lost in contextual information or the interpretations of critics.
- As well as articulating and responding to the composer’s ideas, candidates effectively developed their view of the text by expressing an interpretive statement, often in the first person, at the end of each body paragraph. These statements of “own ideas, values and perspectives” built incrementally to form an argument which was fully articulated as a compelling interpretation of the meaning and significance of the text in the conclusion.
- Close textual analysis still provides the most effective and original examination of a text. A focus on language was often missing from critical responses in favour of extensive descriptions of events.

- Evidence that students have been introduced to sophisticated concepts through teachers or research, but it is clear from their sentence construction that many candidates do not understand these concepts. Students must be personally invested in their studies. More successful critical components demonstrated sophisticated close reading of the text which evidenced personal position.
- Far too many candidates are not treating characters as fictional constructs of the composer. This led to many pedestrian statements that implied the characters were real people.
- Higher quality responses analyse the construction of the text, e.g. point of view, characterisation, symbolism, etc. (traditional literary criticism) about themes and ideas.
- Many studies seemed unfinished because an interpretation of its concluding section did not support the structural integrity of the focus text and the opportunity to powerfully respond to the final iteration of the composer's perspective was therefore lost.
- Paragraphs were generally accurately structured with clear topic sentences. In-text referencing was usually accurate, but there were numerous Independent Studies without alphabetised bibliographies. Spelling was typically excellent.
- Several high quality 'critical literacy' essays examined the significance of the cultural context relevant to composer and responder. Quite a few alternative and resistant readings offered thought-provoking, insightful and original arguments as they usually go beyond the dominant interpretation. While feminist readings of texts are the most common, text criticism that deconstructs class and/or race also enabled a rich contextual exploration.
- The composer's ideas, values and perspectives must be examined. Successful candidates developed a critical distance and recognised the composer's intentions as constructs within the text, explicitly identified, explained and appraised them; less successful candidates discussed the ideas generally as part of the world of the text.

- The conclusion of the CR should not be a repeat of the introduction; it should be more specific because it clearly articulates the answer to the inquiry question. Whereas the focus of the introduction is on the composer's "ideas, values and perspectives; the emphasis in the conclusion is on the influence of the text on own ideas, values and perspectives.
- The introduction of the CR should signpost the landscape of the essay to follow – clear, succinct and constructing a purposeful thesis. Long introductions highlight lack of clarity and focus, as do bloated body paragraphs. Making connections between paragraphs through transitional links or via the essay focus is crucial to overall cohesiveness. Above all, avoid retelling the narrative. Sometimes it may be necessary to recount aspects of the text and ensure there is analysis and relevance to the focus question. Mid-range folios lose sight of their focus.
- Topic sentences are necessary to build a logical argument and ensure all aspects of the inquiry question are addressed. Topic sentences also help to ensure that retelling the story is avoided.
- Weaker students made generalisations about texts that were not supported with textual evidence. Often such studies lapsed into plot retelling. *Her* and *Railway Man*, on the whole, were less successful studies because of this. Students are warned against choosing a film because it is an easy option. Students who choose a film as their text need to demonstrate close reading skills by referring to film language and need to include quotations just like those students doing a print text.

THE IMAGINATIVE RESPONSE

The Imaginative Response intends to further develop the ideas, values and perspectives in the focus text and the CR, so the implication is that the IR will contain something more.

Retelling the same content, even from a different character's point of view, limits the capacity of the IR to augment the meaning interpreted in the CR.

Candidates in 2018 were well-versed in the need for the imaginative response to relate clearly to the critical response and serve as another way of showing knowledge and understanding of the chosen text(s). Nearly all Imaginative responses were set in the world of the text, as instructed, but unfortunately, many candidates included information which was already available in the text.

Generally, with few notable exceptions, successful Independent Studies used more demanding and expansive texts such as novels, as opposed to films. Some of the latter, such as *Her*; due to their limiting focus tend to inspired independent Studies which all sound similar. This was mainly problematic in the imaginative responses, where many candidates based their response on the character of Amy.

The 1200-word count was taken more seriously this year, and some very sophisticated and engaging responses that strongly resonated with focus topics. Stronger students used their imaginative responses to extend their understanding of the text and to do something fresh and original, whether it was to write from a different character's perspective, to insert a chapter etc. Most imaginative responses were extensions of the texts themselves.

Adaptations of the nominated text are fine and welcomed, but these must be addressed explicitly in the Reflection statement.

What differentiated the stronger responses from, the more pedestrian was the believability of the characters. Weaker students are still changing the very essence of their text's characters which does not make a convincing read! Also transforming the first-person narration of events in a text into the same protagonist's diary entries with very little new material does not constitute a successful imaginative response.

Insightful, creative responses explored minor characters' viewpoints and/or what happened next (using the language and style of the original text). The most successful imaginative responses showed preparedness to 'play' with language and to integrate literary and stylistic features into the piece; for example, writing from a particular character's perspective which endeavoured to capture the voice of the character was rewarded.

For the creative piece, there was far too much bad poetry. A few students wrote clever, lyrical poetry, which was meticulously crafted and very clearly connected to the text; however, many students wrote poetry that was just a collection of ideas, poorly written and without a clear connection to the chosen text.

This has raised the issue of the need to revisit the I.S. guidelines for word counts/lines for poetry. Some students decided to use line counts and in some cases lines only consisted of one or two words which can hardly be understood as substantial lines.

The more successful imaginative components included believable dialogue and characters and nuanced language. The chosen form related meaningfully to the critical response. In some cases, Criterion 6 perspective was also evident.

There was an inconsistent use of tense which impacted meaning in the IR. This often affected the meaning and effectiveness of the IR and hence was assessed on C5.

Students should avoid using first-person narrators who die for obvious reasons.