General Comments

In this of LITA2, many features which influence success are those which have been with us for many years, though it is important to make the first point in this report about something which has been creeping in for the last two or so years and which was not such a big issue in 2009: attention paid by schools and colleges to candidates’ performance levels in written English within AO1 has grown increasingly erratic. For the prose assignment AO1 is heavily weighted being worth 12/30 and infelicities in writing will reduce reader confidence. Poor control of AO1 was also evident in the Drama assignment: candidates who cannot write a grammatically accurate sentence or who cannot spell certain words in one assignment will be unlikely to be able to control their written English more perfectly in the other – but errors are less serious in Drama where AO1 is only worth 6/30. Examples of poor English this year included candidates confusing “less” and “fewer”, “uninterested” and “disinterested” but, in particular and overwhelmingly, candidates not knowing the difference between “woman” and “women”. Candidates’ punctuation of titles is also often error-prone. A candidate who does not know how to punctuate titles is not performing at the very top of AO1 and cannot realistically expect to be awarded Band 4 marks for this AO because such work is clearly not “well-organised”, “stylish” or “controlled” and rather than “giving pleasure to the reader” will be more likely to disappoint the reader. The correct use of the apostrophe still confounds many candidates. Other AO1 errors reported by Team Leaders included examples of poor proof-reading in collision with apostrophe misuse: ‘see’s’, ‘try’s’ and so on. Noticeable this year was an erroneous and seemingly random identification of word classes. Since this is coursework, it is expected that candidates will take the opportunity to check their work to a high standard. Candidates make mistakes but schools and colleges need to draw moderator attention to the fact that the errors have been noted and most importantly that candidates’ work has been marked with those errors in mind.

What seems to have improved this year is the standard and quality of internal moderation. Moderation within schools and colleges was rigorous and accurate; consequently few mark adjustments were made.

FEATURES OF SUCCESSFUL WORK
Candidates:

• demonstrated a very clear understanding of how writers’ choices of form, structure and language shape meaning.
understood genre.

used short, integrated quotation as evidence and were not reliant on using quotation as a form of narrative padding. The best quotation is enlivened by analytical comments that explore the form, structure and language used by the writers. In particular, if a candidate can use evidence to show, for example, how a character’s language changes throughout a novel then she will also demonstrate a very high level of understanding of that novel’s structure.

signposted their way around their chosen texts so that character development, plot and structure were demonstrably understood. For example, Alec’s character does not remain static in Tess of the D’Urbervilles; as his character changes so his language changes. Alec the Religious Maniac is not Alec the Seducer and candidates who understood that these manifestations of character occurred in different phases of the novel did far better than candidates who wrote as though Alec remained the same whether we met him in early, in the middle or towards the end of the novel.

negotiated individual tasks and texts with their teachers which took due notice of how the Assessment Objectives operate across both components and how the AOs were weighted. Such candidates therefore understood the key importance of both parts of AO3 (worth 15/30) in the drama task and compared and contrasted texts informed by interpretations of other readers.

worked successfully and coherently within the 2,500 recommended word limit.

understood that successful transformational writing needed a very clear grasp of a writer’s style and that the task needed to be specific.

understood that in the drama response they needed to “disagree as well as agree with critical views” to get a band 4 reward in AO3.

FEATURES OF LESS SUCCESSFUL WORK

Candidates:

• did not understand how the Assessment Objectives break down across both tasks.
• wrote about drama as though it were an alternative form of prose.
• did not use signposts even at the simple level of beginnings, middles and endings of texts.
• reworked the narrative of their set texts without exploring form, structure and language.
• wrote about characters in literature as though they were real.
- wrote essays which were broadly similar to their classmates’. Some schools and colleges gave all the candidates exactly the same question and thereby made it more difficult for their students to achieve marks at the top of band 4 in AO1 which calls for the demonstration of a “confident, challenging and original personal voice.”
- exceeded the recommended word limit. Schools and colleges must understand that their candidates are not penalised because they exceed the word limit but because, in many instances, those candidates who exceed the word limit do so because they do write “cogent”, “coherent” and “well-organised” responses – all features of top quality work in AO1. Handing in work of an appropriate length is an integral part of drafting and proofing so vital within AO1.
- did not understand that successful transformational writing needed a very clear grasp of a writer’s style and needed to be driven by very specific circumstances.

Commentary on Prose Assignments

Schools and colleges which have spent time ensuring that their candidates understand the form, structure and language (AO2) of their set prose text invariably succeed to a far greater level than those which treat it as a form of creative writing.

The transformational option is often a genuinely pleasurable experience for the reader because the best writing demonstrates an understanding that structure and language are linked. The most successful candidates use very careful signposts in their title which orientate the moderator to a specific page or a particular moment in a chapter where the transformational extract would “fit” into the original text. Key to success in transformational writing is the knowledge that early manifestations of characters such as, for example, Bernard and Gilbert from Small Island are different from their later manifestations towards the middle and end of the novel. Due care should be taken of where exactly in a novel the transformational piece belongs: a piece written in Gilbert’s voice about his attitudes to England or about Bernard’s attitudes to women or foreigners will depend upon where we are within the text.

There was little new in terms of text choice within Victorian Literature: Jane Eyre, The Picture of Dorian Gray, Tess of the D’Urbervilles, The French Lieutenant’s Woman, Hard Times and Wuthering Heights are very popular. Moderators reported seeing work on The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Silas Marner and Jude the Obscure. Schools and colleges tend to rework
tried and trusted questions year by year so once again in terms of numbers the major characters from these novels were the subjects of the majority of transformational tasks.

Popular “voices” in World War One Literature continue to be Stephen, Weir, Jack Firebrace, Isabelle and Jeanne in Faulks Birdsong; Sarah Lumb, Rivers, Prior and Sassoon in Barker’s Regeneration; Hilliard and Barton in Hill’s Strange Meeting; Birkin and Moon in Carr’s A Month in the Country. Timothy Findlay’s The Wars seems not to be as popular as it once was but The Return of the Soldier by Rebecca West and A Long, Long Way by Sebastian Barry continue to have a loyal if not numerically large following and both still prove to be very rewarding texts for both transformational and critical responses. Both texts, for whatever reasons, seem to attract a greater proportion of successful answers than for instance Regeneration.

Within The Struggle for Identity in Modern Literature Andrea Levy’s Small Island has made a late comeback after having declined in popularity in 2013 and 2014. Jeanette Winterson’s Oranges are Not the Only Fruit continues to fascinate and is the subject of much interesting work, though less successful candidates struggle with the fairy story elements of the novel and some do not seem to be able to quite grasp the strange evangelical Christianity of Jeanette’s cult. Michael Frayn’s Spies is as popular as ever and its popular “voices” continue to be Stephen/Stefan, Keith, Barbara Burrell, Uncle Peter and Mrs. Haywood. These Centres have moved to other texts. Offred, Ofglen, Serena Joy, Moira and The Commander in Atwood’s The Handmaid’s Tale are still extremely popular but more schools and colleges than usual encountered difficulties in writing transformational assignments in the voice of the enigmatic Nick, who due to his comparatively two-dimensional presentation (he has to remain a mystery) is perhaps more difficult to “pin down” linguistically than characters such as Offred, Moira and Serena Joy. F. Scott Fitzgerald’s The Great Gatsby is also a popular novel and can produce some very good transformational work.

The prose interpretation task proves to be less problematic than the transformational task. As has been reported previously, some of the most successful questions and their variants have been popular since the specification started and schools and colleges have stuck to a winning formula. However, moderators reported mixed levels of performance from candidates who answered on The Great Gatsby. Some work is excellent but the use of various film adaptations may have muddied the waters of candidate understanding. Moderators reported: “Discussion, application, modification and development of the judgement, tested against the original text is essential: but Baz Luhrmann’s film, for example, has Gatsby dying with Daisy’s name on his lips – is this true to the letter or the spirit of the original?” Less successful candidates often offer up something that
happens in a film as something which happens in the novel. For a candidate to claim that in the novel Gatsby dies murmuring Daisy’s name or that will.i.am (not a character in *The Great Gatsby* but a recording artiste) “lays on the music” for one of Gatsby’s wild parties is dispiriting and just plain wrong.

Successful tasks are available in previous Moderator’s Reports which when taken together form a useful resource. Here are examples of some of the successful newer tasks:

- Explore Hardy’s presentation of social class / education / religion / attraction / marriage in *Jude the Obscure*.
- Analyse Hardy’s presentation of Jude Fawley / Arabella Donn / Sue Bridehead / Richard Phillotson / young Jude (“Little Father Time”) in *Jude the Obscure*.
- Explore Stevenson’s presentation of Victorian values / violence / split personality disorder / the duality of human nature / social class / attitudes to crime in *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.
- Analyse Stevenson’s presentation of Mr. Hyde / Dr. Jekyll / Utterson / in *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.
- Analyse (Emily) Brontë’s presentation of the relationship between masters and servants / men and women / religion in *Wuthering Heights*.
- Explore Hardy’s presentation of attitudes to forgiveness in *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*.
- Explore how (Charlotte) Brontë presents ideas about conscience in *Jane Eyre*.
- How does Fowles’ presentation of ideas concerning Darwinism in *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* influence your understanding of the novel?
- Analyse Faulks’ presentation of internal battles in *Birdsong*.
- Explore Barker’s presentation of ideas concerning parenthood in *Regeneration*.
- Analyse how Carr in *A Month in the Country* presents ideas about the importance of restoration and reconstruction.
- How does Atwood’s presentation of conformity and silence in *The Handmaid’s Tale* influence your understanding of the novel?
- Explore how Winterson presents the relationship between different generations in *Oranges are Not the Only Fruit*.
- Analyse how Frayn presents relationships between adults and children in *Spies*.
- Explore how Fitzgerald presents female values / ideas about social class / the importance of consumerism / the relationship between love and money in *The Great Gatsby*.
**Commentary on Drama Assignments**

AO3ii requires candidates to analyse texts taking into account the views and opinions of other readers and candidates need to disagree as well as agree with critical interpretations.

The AO2 *genre problem* mentioned in the past is still evident: drama essays which contain no understanding or appreciation of the plays being performed in a theatre, real or imagined, cannot demonstrate a band 3 or 4 knowledge of form or structure. The genre differences between prose and drama continue to confuse less successful candidates who persist in the belief that drama is just an alternative form of prose and write essays which frequently contain no references of any sort to the play in performance.

Candidates who offered two plays frequently performed better than candidates who offered a play alongside a prose text. The most popular Victorian playwright continues to be Oscar Wilde

R.C Sherriff’s *Journey’s End* and Curtis’ and Elton’s *Blackadder Goes Forth* continue to dominate the World War I option but Whelan’s *The Accrington Pals* is also prominent.

Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams are by a considerable margin the most popular dramatists on *The Struggle for Identity in Modern Literature* with *Death of a Salesman* and *A Streetcar Named Desire* the clear favourites. The occasional forays into *The Glass Menagerie, Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* and *All My Sons* were welcome. Friel’s *Making History* and Bennet’s *The History Boys* was an effective combination for the candidates who attempted the comparison. Some intriguing and interesting work was offered on Bennett’s *The Madness of George III* and Shaffer’s *Equus*. Albee’s *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* still proves to be a very rewarding play for those schools and colleges which offer it.

As with prose, the following list features favourite text combinations and successful tasks from this year’s examination:

- Compare and contrast Wilde’s and Brontë’s presentation of ideas about sexual morality in *A Woman of No Importance* and *Jane Eyre* in the light of the opinion that “both writers find hypocrisy everywhere”.
• Compare and contrast the presentation of emerging female awareness in Stoppard’s *Arcadia* and Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House* in the light of the observation that in both texts “awareness for the central female characters comes too late or at too high a price”.

• Compare and contrast the presentation of female characters in Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House* and Wilde’s *A Woman of No Importance* in the light of the opinion that “though Ibsen’s females are more conventional than Wilde’s, Ibsen’s females are ultimately more successful”.

• Compare and contrast the presentation of social divisions in Peter Whelan’s *The Accrington Pals* with the presentation of the same theme in *Journey’s End* by R.C. Sherriff and say how far you agree with the view that “in *The Accrington Pals* social divisions are never overcome whereas in *Journey’s End* they are completely overcome by the end of the play”.

• Compare and contrast the presentation of the relationship between Stanhope and Raleigh in *Journey’s End* with the presentation of the relationship between Blackadder and George in *Blackadder Goes Forth* in the light of the opinion that “Stanhope’s and Blackadder’s cynicism makes it impossible for audiences to feel anything other than utter contempt for Raleigh’s and George’s naïveté”.

• Compare and contrast how R.C. Sherriff and Curtis and Elton present the ways Stanhope and Blackadder show their dislike for their commanding officers and the conduct of the War in *Journey’s End* and *Blackadder Goes Forth*. How far do you agree with the view that Stanhope’s dislike is just as intense as Blackadder’s?

• Compare and contrast the ways Williams and Miller present ideas about the American Dream in *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *Death of a Salesman* in the light of the opinion that “of all the characters on stage in both plays only Stanley and Stella Kowalski succeed in achieving their version of the American Dream”.

• Compare and contrast the presentation of issues of compliance and rebellion in *Top Girls* and *A Streetcar Named Desire* in the light of the opinion that Churchill’s major characters are at heart much more compliant and less likely to rebel than Williams’.

• Compare and contrast the ways Shaffer in *Equus* and Bennett in *The Madness of George III* present mental illness and its treatment in the light of the opinion that “both plays demonstrate that treatment of the mentally ill does not actually seek a cure at all but is merely a cruel attempt to impose a new and more socially acceptable set of values on the patients”.

• “George and Martha in Albee’s *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* and Stanley and Stella in Williams’ *A Streetcar Named Desire* have evaded the ugliness of their marriage by taking refuge in illusion.” Show how far you agree with this opinion by comparing and contrasting how modern marriage is presented in both plays.
Mark Ranges and Award of Grades
Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the Results Statistics page of the AQA Website.

Converting Marks into UMS marks
Convert raw marks into Uniform Mark Scale (UMS) marks by using the link below.

UMS conversion calculator