

ENGLISH FIRST LANGUAGE HG PAPER 2

In numerous schools, the techniques of literature-essay writing and contextual-question answering need to be much more rigorously taught. This can make a significant difference to the marks of candidates of any and all levels of potential. Indeed, educators should ask themselves whether the ways they teach and test grades 10 and 11 learners prepare their charges for the Senior Certificate examination.

How to respond to the requirement to 'justify' or 'explain' needs to be taught. Furthermore, when justifications were offered, they were frequently based on material outside the extract and not on the cited portion of text.

Many candidates did not know how to work systematically through a figurative expression so as to show what is being suggested and how it is being suggested. 10.5 is an example of a question that required such focus.

The basics must not be forgotten: this year, for instance, numerous candidates thought that 'chides' is an abstract noun.

All too often, there were signs that teachers had either not taught a poem or had taught it carelessly. Patterns of wrongly answered questions often ran in centres. It was clear, for instance, that educators in a number of schools had not focused efficiently on the closing couplet of the Shakespeare sonnet.

Markers gained the impression that in a number of schools the novel had been cursorily taught.

However, it is obvious that very fine work is being done at many schools. This year, we had the pleasure of rewarding significantly more distinction-level scripts than ever before. There were even a few candidates who achieved 100%.

Definition of an essay worth 100%: as good as we can reasonably expect from a grade 12 learner in the here and now, bearing in mind the specific provisions of the applicable marking grid (i.e. 'perfection', whatever that is, is not the criterion); moreover, one needs to remember that some essays are worth 'more than 100%', as it were, and that essays not as good as the very best might still qualify for 30 out of 30.

We had fewer personal diatribe essays than in earlier years. We hope that there is no relapse.

Finally and very importantly, educators are urged to read the examiner's reports from previous years.