EXAMINING OF THE NOVEL IN THE SENIOR SECONDARY PHASE (ENGLISH FIRST LANGUAGE HIGHER GRADE)

A STUDY OF CONFLICTING AIMS

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ABSTRACT

This study deals with the problems of external examining, the inflexible demands of which dominate and dictate to literature teaching in South African schools today. The aims of teaching literature are discussed, and it is suggested that the negative attitudes among pupils resulting from the present examining system defeat many of these aims.

The opportunities for the enjoyment of literature are minimised by the process of preparation for external examinations. Creative teaching methods are abandoned in favour of coaching for specific types of questions, which are determined and limited by the practical constraints of a mass external examination. In catering to the demands for admininstrative reliability and efficiency, the educational validity and efficiency of the examinations are sacrificed.

In Britain the Newbolt and Bullock Reports, among others, have made forceful recommendations for alternative approaches to external examining. Subsequently, much experimentation with internal examining, course-work and open-book examining has followed, aspects of which are discussed in this study.

There has been limited experimentation in these areas in South Africa. The TED conducted a successful internal examining experiment in English literature, the results of which are considered in this thesis. The national

English Olympiad open-book examination is a further example of the success of an alternative approach. By contrast, a comparison of examination papers set by the JMB and CED over the last ten years, shows clearly that the stated syllabus aims of teaching literature and the aims of examining the subject were wholly incompatible.

Recommendations are made for the adoption of alternative examining strategies in order to address the shortcomings identified.

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years English teaching has faced the challenges of many innovative ideas regarding approaches to the subject in the classroom, particularly as far as language study is concerned. At the same time, there have been attempts to focus literature study on genuine personal response, the development of critical thinking, and the encouraging of pupils to form and express their own views. When one looks at the aims of literature teaching, as set out in the various departmental syllabuses for English First Language Higher Grade, one sees that they take into account the value of literature for the intellectual and moral growth of the child, as well as the opportunity it offers to increase self-knowledge and understanding.

And yet, pupils emerging from their high school experience of literature invariably have negative and unsympathetic attitudes to it, (See Chapter 2) which suggests that these aims are not being achieved, for various reasons. Factors such as choice of texts, teaching methods and attitudes of teachers, play a fairly significant part, but even where there is an ideal combination of these factors, a major stumbling block remains. The most enthusiastic teacher, using the most innovative methods, and fortunate enough to have challenging and enjoyable set works to deal with, faces a serious limitation in the form of the external examination.

The external examining of literature has been condemned by various people over many years:

In 1921, the Newbolt Report noted that "We have heard over and over again that answers to examination papers give much evidence of unassimilated and therefore insincere criticism" (Newbolt ,1921, p.118).
Only a decade later, L.C. Knights, writing in "Scrutiny", said:

> Any English master interested in education who has prepared a school certificate form knows that bitter feeling of waste ... Since the damage done to education by external, 'standardising' examinations is so gross, obvious, persuasive and inescapable, the time has come to press, firmly, for their abolition.
> (L.C.Knights, 1933, pp 57-8)

Winifred Whitehead felt that the trouble with external examining "lies in the examiners' failure to grasp the very nature of their task, or even, as their questions and comments would suggest, to understand what is really involved in the critical approach to literature."
(Whitehead, W., 1957, p.147)

Frank Whitehead criticised the indirect influence of the external examination, because

> they set the pattern, naturally enough, for the vast majority of internal school examinations, even those taken by secondary school pupils with a very much lower level of ability. Yet their influence is one which the best teachers of English view with acute uneasiness. And no wonder. The fact is that all past experience suggests the existence of a deep and inherent incompatibility between external examinations as we know them and the essential aims of good English teaching.
> (Whitehead, F., 1966, p.233, Italics mine)

Michael Paffard added to this by saying

> The essence of the incompatibility is this: the discipline of English lies in thoughtful reading and re-reading and thoughtful writing and rewriting. The good student has learnt the difficulty of writing anything precise at first draft or of drawing worthwhile conclusions about his reading without reflection and re-reading: his training may have put him at a positive disadvantage in the race against the examination-room clock.
>
> (Paffard, M., 1978, p.89)

Christie & Preen also talk of "our national examining style, the style of 'stand and deliver against the clock' (in Dr Leavis' memorable formulation)" (Christie, & Preen, 1974, p.50).

The problem is not confined to Britain, however. South African comments in journals like Crux have noted, for example, that "the peculiar situation in the field of literature is that many of the questions fail completely to test the candidate's real knowledge of the subject. Some do not even establish whether he has struck up a casual acquaintance with the works prescribed". (Thompson, J.B., 1968, p.24. Italics mine).

And Marie Dyer, giving an examiner's point of view, states that:

> Examinations in any institution, in any subject, can never be seen as more than a necessary evil ... Nobody enjoys them, looks forward to them, or is excited by them. Setting them, writing them, marking them are all tasks which are almost uniformly disagreeable. And more particularly in literature, examinations can become a disintegratingly analytical process, taking to pieces what should be alive and whole in the readers' minds. We as examiners, perhaps more than anyone, 'murder to dissect'; and one often

> does have the sense in dealing with exam papers that one is confronting rows and rows of portions of dismembered imaginative corpses, lined up neatly to be marked out of 4. This little verse may be old and obvious:
>
> > Fair spirit, shall I call thee bird
> > Or but a wandering voice?
> > State the alternative preferred
> > And reasons for your choice.
>
> but it gives an uncomfortably accurate reflection of the effect of examiners on the poetic imagination. (Dyer, M, 1977, p.43)

These comments point to some of the many problem areas involved in the external examining of literature which will be considered in the course of this dissertation. Firstly, there are the aims of literature teaching and the aims of examining, which appear to be in conflict. The question arises as to whether, with the inherent limitations that an external examination has, the two are compatible at all. Taking just one of those limitations, the time factor, into account, one can see how it goes against the aims of studying English.

> Does the conventional paper meet these aims and promote them in candidates? The 45 minute essay is quite alien to normal procedures in writing. Drafting and re-drafting is the <u>normal</u> procedure, not least among the writers whose works are studied. Reflective concern for clarity in communicating one's ideas (and further clarifying them in the process) is intrinsic to the discipline of English.
> (Christie & Preen, 1974, p.51)

Instead of serving the aims of literature teaching, the external examination very often ends up dictating to them, and encouraging unsound teaching methods - a second and major problem area. Peter Mullineux's recent

study of the external examining of Shakespeare in schools concluded that the "examination appears to dictate what is taught and not vice versa" (Mullineux, P., 1988, p.88). His findings certainly indicate a need for further research into this area. One must question seriously the value of a system which promotes the channelling of energy into drawing up chapter summaries and character sketches, and the rehashing of other people's opinions, usually the teacher's. Jonathan Paton (1978) mentions several cases where pupils and students have passed examinations without ever having read the set texts, simply by having an 'informed opinion' after reading what other critics have had to say. This sort of thing makes a mockery of the stated aims of evoking "genuine personal response". And when one looks at what is happening in a classroom of pupils preparing for the final external examination, one very often finds a teacher, who might otherwise be enthusiastic about his subject, but has instead become little more than a predictor of examination questions and a mouthpiece of accepted views - "too often external examinations turn him into a tired purveyor of information" (Whitehead, W., 1957, p.151).

The all too familiar classroom question - "Do we have to know this for the exam?" - shows to what extent pupils are influenced by the examinations in determining what is important for learning purposes. Indeed, the fact that a subject is examinable gives it a certain status that non-examinable subjects lack.

> While I know that literature can provide the child with a whole new rich world and while I know that examining can undermine this capacity, I am not so naive as to believe that the exam. can be dispensed with. An adequate substitute has not emerged. Liberating literature from the exam. shackle would be wonderful in an ideal world. But this is not, alas, an ideal world. Immunity from assessment in practical terms can only be at the cost of the subject's prestige. (Consider the status of non-examinable 'subjects' like Religious Instruction and Physical Education)... Examinations are a necessary evil.
>
> (Lemmer, A., 1979, p.59)

> But for good or ill the examination system is with us. To exempt Literature alone from its scope would simply exclude the teaching of Literature from a number of schools ... under the present regime, a subject that is not examined is likely to disappear speedily from our teaching curricula.
>
> (Newbolt, 1921, p.301)

Given these factors, and the reality that society itself demands some kind of assessment system, one obviously cannot simply plead for the abolition of examinations. They do fulfil an important function, and condemning the external examining of literature does not mean that literature cannot be examined at all. As the Newbolt Report pointed out, if it is not examined, it probably will not be taught. But it does seem fair to say that if literature is examined externally it will more than likely be taught badly. What needs to be explored are the alternatives to the present system of examining, such as course-work and the open-book examination. The former can be used in conjunction with the external examination, which if it is to be retained, may fulfil its function better if it took on the form of the open-book examination.

> Given then that the examination is unavoidable, our task must be to devise 'an examination which will bring out the very best ... and ... minimize the inhibiting effect which examinations, by their nature, have upon the exploration of experience'.
> (Lemmer, A., 1979, p.61)

In order to consider these two very important aspects of assessment, this investigation will be looking in some depth at the system of examining literature in Britain, where there has been considerable experimentation and success with alternative methods of evaluation.

Following that, the system of examining literature in South Africa will be looked at, concentrating on the external papers of the CED and JMB over the past ten years. Instances where alternatives in examining have been experimented with, such as the English Olympiad Examination and the Transvaal internal examining, will also be considered.

For the purposes of this research, the study has been confined to the examination of <u>literature</u> <u>only</u>, and does not include the vast concern with the examining of language competence. (It is of course difficult to separate the two, as any meaningful expression about literature presupposes a necessary amount of language competence.) The focus has been further narrowed to the genre of <u>the</u> <u>novel</u>, particularly for the purpose of studying the external examination papers of the past ten years. However, all conclusions made about the examining of the novel would not be restricted to this genre. The

general principles apply to all genres.

Finally, although the immediate focus is on the external examination and therefore, in this country, on the matriculation year at school, it must be stressed that its effects are not limited to Std 10. The demands of the external paper tend to affect or set a pattern for internal examining from at least Std 8, sometimes as early as Std 6. When pupils enter the secondary school, they find that 'reading' and 'studying' literature become two different concepts.

> Studying is a dangerous word. To study a novel may sound a quite distinct activity from simply reading and enjoying it. Studying can suggest a need to acquire facts about novels, their authors and backgrounds, or to make generalizations about style and agreed judgements. When teachers talk of studying fiction, their subconscious model may be drawn from memories of undergraduate work, with a strong emphasis on learning about literary criticism. Indeed, with the best of intentions they sometimes stress how different work in the fifth or sixth form will be from what has preceded it (and) a general liking for fiction diminishes once it becomes the subject of an examination.
> (Protherough, R., 1983, p.139, Italics mine)

Instead of doing all in their power to encourage reading and an appreciation of literature, teachers end up destroying it for the already reluctant teenage reader. And, by constantly focusing attention on the final external examination - often done because teachers see their primary task as getting their pupils through that examination - the response to literature which may have arisen is suppressed and crushed, and the high symbols which are being aimed at by this drudgery become more and

more impossible to achieve.

> Teachers tend to see the role of fiction in school and the pleasures it offers differently from the majority of their pupils. The evidence seems clear that for most children the school is not a favoured place for reading, that books encountered there are less popular than their own choices, and that the methods commonly practised do little or nothing to arrest the decline of fiction among teenagers. The examination study of novels frequently has a deadening effect, and the washback influence on teaching methods can be damaging. Restricting students to the minimum number of books, taking them line- by-line through the texts and basing all their work on previous examination questions, may not only cripple their literary development but may also be ineffective in obtaining good grades for them.
>
> (Ibid., p.147)

2. THE AIMS OF LITERATURE TEACHING

In order to understand why there has been so much criticism aimed at the examining of literature, one needs to look at the aims that underlie the literature syllabuses in schools. Why is it necessary or important to study literature? What aims are teachers trying to achieve with their pupils? In order to carefully analyse these aims, the views on the value of literature that form the basis of any statement about aims will be considered briefly.

Literature has always been an important part of any educational curriculum, based on the assumption that literature has something of value to offer in the child's development. Through the experience of literature, the child's vision of life, of self, and of the world around him, both past and present, is gradually extended - the literature itself providing the opportunity to see these things. However, all this has very little meaning to the child if it is only presented as a body of knowledge to be acquired. "Mere literary knowledge is of slight importance ... Literature only exists to express and develop that imaginative world which is our life, the kingdom which is within us" (Whitehead, A.N., 1917). In order to develop this imaginative world within the child, personal, creative responses to literature need to be encouraged. Thus the aim of literature teaching cannot merely be to expose the child to the considered 'great works' in English Literature and to convince him that

they are such. This does nothing whatsoever for his personal growth and development. L.C. Knights, writing in 1968, offered a very sound reason for teaching literature, taking the idea of the imaginative world into account:

> Why do we teach literature? To which the short answer is, so that as many people as possible shall share the imaginative life that is 'stored' in the great masterpieces, so that their own imaginative-creative life may be quickened. Obviously what is in question is not 'knowing about' the masterpieces, but a genuine response from a personal centre - the only way in which great literature can become part of our own lives. That is easy to say: the difficult thing is to make it a reality... remember you can't make people see; you can only provide opportunities and ... prompt them to do their own seeing.
>
> (Knights, L.C., 1968, p.5)

Knights focuses on the importance of a personal response, and on the child being given the opportunity to experience literature for himself. He makes it clear that "great literature" cannot become part of our lives by simply "'knowing about' the masterpieces" - it depends instead on a "genuine response from a personal centre". If one goes back to some of the traditional ideas behind the aims of teaching literature, one soon becomes aware of the context in which Knights made such a statement.

In the time of the ancient Greeks, where education was based on close knowledge of the works of Homer and early dramatists, one finds the traditional idea, still prevalent today, that literature teaching preserves culture and values and is therefore essential for the

maintenance of a civilized society. In the early Athenian curriculum, it is interesting to note that literature and music were closely bound up. It followed that the emphasis in literature study lay on the harmony and aesthetic aspects of the subject. Then, with the teaching of the Sophists, reason became more prevalent. Literature itself became a more distinct subject, less closely bound with music. From there, the Sophist beliefs were refined by Socrates and further developed by Plato and then Aristotle, each proposing an educational system which would "remedy the declining ideals of citizenship" (Durham, K., 1969, p.20). Literature was seen to play an important part in the curriculum in order to fulfil this goal.

Moving into the Roman era in education, pride of place was gradually given over to grammar, with literature being used as illustration. Instead of emphasizing the aesthetic aspect, stress was laid on the close, analytical study of literary works.

> (It is) clear that linguistic discipline was beginning to take precedence over literature as it had been presented in Athenian times, and that Aristotle's idea of aesthetic education as an alliance of pleasures serving basic human needs was already lost. Roman education, though derived from the Greek, had assumed a different spirit. System, discipline, practical usefulness and the analytical approach took over from the imaginative, subjective, aesthetic enjoyment of the beautiful and good as immediate pleasures in themselves.
>
> (Ibid., p.22/3)

In England, it took several centuries for the study of Latin literature to be replaced with that of the vernacular. Matthew Arnold, writing in 1871, criticised the elementary schools for ignoring English literature - the secondary school curriculum scorned such an idea for much longer. And to make matters worse, in the early 19th century, the idea of the acquisition and storage of 'useful knowledge' became popular. The spirit of literature in schools could hardly thrive amid such an atmosphere - a state of affairs which Dickens attacked in his satirical novel, Hard Times.

From the 1860's, Arnold and other commentators began to protest more and more about the neglect of English Literature. In his influential position as Inspector of Schools, Arnold did much to reform and re-vitalise elementary education in particular. He was able to see to it that English Literature became a vital part of the school curriculum because, as he put it, "what is comprised under the word literature is in itself the greatest power available to education" (Arnold, 1871 Report). Arnold saw its importance as a 'humanising' influence on a child and he saw "culture as the great help out of our present difficulties" (Arnold, 1869 Report). A knowledge of literary tradition was seen as a means of guarding against vulgarity and barbarism. This view, with its roots clearly based in the customs of the ancient Greeks, had been supported by the subsequent works of poets such as Sidney and Wordsworth.

Arnold also echoed Plato's belief that literature is "an important formative influence on the young mind" (Durham, K., 1969, p.35), but this cannot occur if it is conveyed as knowledge only. Arnold points out that the teacher's aims in the instruction of literature should be, by some means or other, to call forth in a pupil "a sense of pleasurable activity and of creation", anything that introduces any "creative activity to relieve the passive reception of knowledge is valuable" (Arnold, 1882 Report).

It is thus clear that, if one aims in literature teaching to add to the child's formation and development, the methods one uses are of utmost importance. Literature alone cannot achieve these goals. Peter Abbs, writing in 1976, felt that it was the role of the English teacher, mainly through the medium of literature, to "create the child's cultural world and endow him with the cultural heritage and sense of identity that will enable him to develop as a whole person". (Abbs, P., 1976, p.21).

If this is the case, then it would seem that the English teacher has an awesome responsibility as teacher of literature. Most likely, they "do not in general see themselves in quite such a heroic light." (Reid, J., 1982, p.22).

> Any teacher who has worked in an ordinary classroom would concur with these doubts about the more extravagant claims for the cultural and moral value of literature lessons. And yet, if literature is to be worth teaching, worth its place on the timetable, it must be more

> than a matter of reading a text, learning the salient facts and passing an examination on it, and many teachers and educationists have spent much time trying to identify and clarify the purpose of teaching it." (Ibid. p.22)

In 1975, the Bullock Report emphasized the value of literature in terms of the extension of personal experience for the adolescent. Rather than merely conveying a literary and cultural heritage, literature was seen to be important in helping the child to adjust to the world in which he lives.

> Literature brings the child into an encounter with language in its most complex and varied forms. Through these complexities are presented the thoughts, experiences and feelings of people who exist outside and beyond the reader's daily awareness. This process of bringing them within that circle of consciousness is where the greatest value of literature lies. It provides imaginative insight into what another person is feeling; it allows the contemplation of possible human experience which the reader himself has not met ... it confronts the reader with problems similar to his own, and does it at the safety of one remove. He draws reassurance from realising that his personal difficulties and his feelings of deficiency are not unique to himself; that they are as likely to be the experience of others.
> (Bullock Report, 1975, p.125)

Following this, an extensive study was conducted in Britain into the role of English and communication in the classroom - the Schools' Council English 16 - 19 Project. It summarised the views of a cross-section of teachers who participated in a national workshop for the project. Their views echo those of the Bullock Report, but offer additional aspects as well. The aims of literature

teaching, according to these teachers, included:

1) widening understanding of the human state;
2) increasing pupils' understanding of themselves and their place in the world;
3) developing awareness of their own experience and that of others;
4) appreciating the complexities of life.

> The encounter with literature, then, is seen as a 'meeting of minds' which modifies our 'personal understanding' of the world we meet through the writer's meditation, and our awareness of the world we live in.
> (Dixon, J., 1979, p.46)

The central concern of teachers was with the relationship between the written text and the perspective on human experience that it offered.

> The complex language of the text is valued because it renders some aspect of experience with new penetration and insight; the vision of the writer, because it disturbs, challenges and at times inspires. And, in some way, a relationship can be set up between this imaginary experience, the actual experiences of daily life and the language used to construe them both. (Ibid., p.47)

Interestingly, teachers felt that all these aims could be realised. Dixon thus felt that teachers were obviously setting very high targets and expecting a lot of any system of assessment. At the same time, the value of literature, as shown here, implies that much is expected of the teachers themselves.

Edna Freinkel, writing in South Africa in 1988, stresses

the aim of encouraging critical thinking as an important aspect of literature teaching, with teachers being "entrusted with opening children's minds to Truth, to courageous questioning..." (Freinkel, E., 1988, p.15). She points out that many children today are deprived of seeing their parents as role models, because they spend so little time sharing together, with all the pressures of parents working and modern life in general. As a result, "the teacher is becoming the surrogate parent and has to be prepared to show how 'literature' can uplift, guide, destroy or inspire" (Ibid., p.16).

South Africa, in its present state, more than ever before, needs critical thinkers. Pupils need to be encouraged to question and probe in the quest for truth, guided by someone who encourages independent thinking. Freinkel asserts that it is not literature alone that can do this, but the way it is taught. Until pupils learn to approach a piece of writing critically, literature alone can only have limited value for them. Thus the aims of <u>teaching</u> the subject are of critical importance, and, closely tied up with this, is the <u>way in which it is taught</u>.

From these various perspectives on the value of literature and what it can achieve, the aims of teaching it can be seen to include the handing down, and thus the preservation, of a cultural and literary heritage. Then, through discovering insights into the lives of others, pupils can gain understanding of others, and, at the same

time, of themselves. Along with this, teaching literature can also develop moral awareness and a sense of values. And, finally, a major factor is the development of the pupil's capacity for critical thinking. They must therefore be encouraged first to enjoy reading, and then to appreciate literature and learn to discriminate between good and bad.

With these aims in mind, what are the syllabuses focusing on? Do they take the same points into consideration? The following examples should provide answers to these questions:

1) The A level syllabus in England (G.C.E. Examining Board, 1983)

According to Helen Lewis Butler, the aim of English Literature at A level is:

a) 'to encourage an enjoyment and appreciation of English Literature based on an informed personal response and to extend this appreciation where it has already been acquired'.

In addition, the following 'skills' are to be tested:

b) knowledge and understanding of the set texts;

c) candidates' sense of the past and tradition;

d) expression;

e) 'the ability to recognise and describe literary effects and to comment precisely on the use of language', and 'the capacity to make judgements of value'. (Butler, H., 1987, p.39, Italics mine)

These aims do not take into account the value of literature for providing insight into the experience of others as a basis for understanding both other people and themselves - unless it is implicit in the phrase "informed personal response", which is vague enough to encompass all sorts of things. (It is also very questionable whether a response that is "informed" is still a "personal" one.) Furthermore, the whole area of developing moral awareness and a sense of values is excluded. Instead the focus is more on precision of knowledge and expression.

> ... the overwhelming impression ... is that to most Chief Examiners literature does not represent an experience for the reader but an objective entity to be discussed ...
> (Ibid. p. 40, Italics mine)

2) The Cape Education Department syllabus for English First Language Higher Grade, 1986:

As part of its general goal, the syllabus emphasises the principle of 'enjoyment' as an important prerequisite:

> If teachers can help pupils find enjoyment in reading they will have done them a lasting service. Without some pleasure from and active participation in literature, the other goals cannot be achieved effectively.
> (CED Syllabus, 1986, p.20)

The syllabus lists six specific goals for the teaching of literature:

a) Gain enjoyment from and skill in reading;

b) Appreciate literature and read with discrimination;

c) Develop the capacity for critical thinking about, and the ability to form and express their own views on literary works;

d) Increase their self-knowledge and self-understanding;

e) Gain some knowledge of basic literary genres and the techniques appropriate to each;

f) Develop some understanding and appreciation of their literary heritage.

(CED Syllabus, 1986, p.3)

Here again, the aspects of understanding and insight into the experiences of others, and the development of moral awareness, are excluded from the specific goals of teaching literature.

3) The Joint Matriculation Board syllabus for English First Language Higher Grade, 1984:

The aims of 'Reading and Literature Study' are almost identical to those of the CED Syllabus, with two exceptions. Point (f) of the JMB syllabus includes the words "and cultural" in "literary and cultural heritage". Rather than offering an alternative goal, it can probably be seen as simply a further clarification of the one stated by the CED. More significant, is the additional aim that this syllabus includes, namely that pupils "expand their experience of life,

gain empathetic understanding of other people and develop moral awareness".

(JMB Syllabus, 1984, p. 8)

To extend this point further, it also offers the following comment:

> Besides the intensely personal response to literature in which pupils see their own experiences reflected, they must be encouraged to extend their experience through facing ideas and feelings which are new to them, in order to develop an understanding of the world around them and an awareness of their own potential as human beings. (Ibid. p 9 -12)

This also mentions the importance of the "personal response", which the CED syllabus appears to ignore.

It would seem, therefore, that while each syllabus has taken into account <u>most</u> of the points that make up the considered views on the value of literature, the goals of the Joint Matriculation Board encompass the widest variety of elements in the value of literature. Each goal is defined clearly enough to make it possible to translate it into the actual method of teaching literature.

But the problem lies in testing whether the aims have been achieved. Does the examination succeed in doing this, or do its effects not in fact undermine and contradict these aims? Any doubts in this regard are clearly exposed by the following statement of the Bullock Report concerning the effects of examinations on literature teaching:

> The influence of examinations on literature has come in for a good deal of assault ... Sampson, writing in 1921, said, 'If in any school something called literature is systematically taught, the efforts will usually be found to be directed towards literary history, or "meanings", or the explanations of difficulties, or summaries of plays and stories or descriptions of characters ... all of which are evasions of the real work before the teacher responsible for literature.' And Aldous Huxley ... wrote that examinations in literature encourage pupils to 'repeat mechanically and without reflection other people's judgements'. C. Day Lewis saw the process as a threat to a true and sincere response ... The explanations and the summaries have expanded to take-over point; the literature has receded. We must seriously question what is being achieved when pupils are producing chapter summaries in sequence, taking endless notes to prepare model answers and writing stereotyped commentaries which carry no hint of a felt response.
> (Bullock Report, 1975, p.130)

As a result, many high school pupils develop negative and unsympathetic attitudes to literature, and it would appear from the evidence that this is most likely a result of their experience in preparing for an examination. The aims of literature teaching seem to be cast aside and "the interests of education are sacrificed to the exam" (Reid, J., 1982, p.120).

Marie Dyer points out that the book being studied "is logically regarded as subordinate; studying it can be conducted as a means to an end", so the aims of literature teaching are sacrificed for the examination.

> (The set book) becomes nothing but a source of possible answers; a receptacle full of characters to be sketched, events to be recounted, 'relevant' quotations to be repeated, themes to be stated; raw material, in fact, for the pupils to rework into forms which may well bore or bewilder themselves, but will, it is hoped,

> be pleasing to the examiner; whose ideas and attitudes, if they can be guessed or predicted, become far more important than (the writer's). This is the death of education; a travesty of reading; a disaster for writers. And the pupils, intimidated by the mark-and-certificate system but obscurely aware of what they are doing, can justifiably respond with apathy, dislike, mindless repetition, garbled rehashing, sycophantic and hypocritical praising of the author, all to be thankfully forgotten on the first day of the holidays.
> (Dyer, M., 1977, p.44)

If we want pupils to 'develop the capacity for critical thinking and the ability to form and express their own views' then model answers and meaningless summaries and 'stereotyped commentaries' have no place at all. The emphasis on content and knowledge <u>about</u> literature does very little to expand pupils' 'experience of life' or to 'increase self-knowledge and self-understanding'. Instead, pupils seem to complacently accept other peole's judgements and have no faith in their own responses at all.

If this is what examinations are achieving, then one must conclude that instead of serving the aims of literature, they are instead dictating the way the subject is taught. The only way out of this problem is to keep in mind constantly:

a) What is it we are trying to test?

and b) do the questions that are set reflect this?

3. LIMITATIONS OF THE EXTERNAL EXAMINATION

3.1 The effects on teaching methods, types of questions and selection of texts:

In his unpublished thesis in 1969, Ken Durham concluded that the teaching of literature in South African schools, particularly in the middle and senior secondary school phases, is "largely dominated by the inflexible demands of prescribed syllabuses and external examinations" (Durham, K., 1969, p.176). He highlighted the main objections to the external examination, and saw its limitations in terms of three largely interdependent areas. Each of these will be considered in some detail, but as Durham summarises them, they are as follows: (Order slightly changed.)

1) "To out-wit the external examiner, or rather, to please him with the desired set of answers, literature lessons become ... a deadly serious business. ... Months, or even terms before a final examination is written, a feverish round of non-literary activities begin. Pupils and teachers make summaries, revise all the texts over and over again, work through previous examination papers, copy out model answers, acquire second-hand opinions and potted answers from published pamphlets described as 'aids'."

2) "External examinations have been designed to fulfil a mass predictive function (which is in conflict with the aims of English teaching). Many thousands of candidates write the same paper and answer, within prescribed limits, the same questions. A high degree of consistency and reliability in marking can be maintained only when an arbitrary set of standardised opinions or easily distinguishable facts has been drawn up."

3)"External examining is linked with prescription. Consequently, not only does the examination in its present form promote bad, unimaginative teaching and the repetitive, mechanical routines already described, but also the rigidity of its partner, the prescribed syllabus, shackles teachers and pupils to a selection of texts which may hold little interest for either teacher or pupil."
(Ibid., p.178/9, Italics mine.)

Thus the external examination can be seen to impose limitations on three areas of literature study, namely:

1) Teaching methods,

2) Types of questions set, and

3) Selection of texts.

3.1.1. Teaching methods:

We have seen how examinations influence a pupil's sense of priorities and for this reason, teachers may see them as a useful teaching aid, a kind of "lever", encouraging more effort and steady application of study in areas which might otherwise be neglected. (Whitehead, F., 1966, p.233). However, one finds that this 'lever' dominates the teaching of English in the senior secondary phase to such an extent that it becomes incompatible with the aims of the subject. In place of lively and informative teaching, the study of literature becomes "a series of practice performances in examination techniques" (Chater, P., 1984, p.144) which inevitably kills all interest in the subject. Particularly in the Std 10 year, pupils and teachers become locked into some kind of 'model answer syndrome' with tremendous energy going into the drawing up of summaries, model answers, repeated text revision with attention to every minor detail, and going through old examination papers, until the students KNOW all about the set texts but are absolutely incapable of making any personal responses to them, largely because they regard the literature with nothing but distaste and contempt. With the methods described having been extensively used, it is hardly surprising.

In the early part of this century, A.N. Whitehead voiced his strong opposition to the external examination, saying that it greatly complicated the problem of sound and effective teaching.

> In education, as elsewhere, the broad primrose path leads to a nasty place. This evil path is represented by a book or set of lectures which will practically enable the student to learn by heart all the questions likely to be asked at the next external examination. And I may say in passing that no educational system is possible unless every question directly asked of a pupil at any examination is either framed or modified by the teacher of that pupil in that subject.
> (Whitehead, A.N., 1962, p.70).

And Michael Paffard, writing in 1978, felt that external examining was harmful in terms of its influence on the teaching of English literature and eventually on English as a whole. He felt that "any important public examination is bound to have a significant 'backwash' effect in schools and testing devices will dominate teaching methods leading to endless classroom practice of stereotyped examination tasks. (Paffard, M., 1978, p.88.)

Frank Whitehead's criticism can also be added here:

> If we may judge from the content of best-selling English course-books, it is clear that in all too many secondary classrooms, too, what we shall find, masquerading under the guise of teaching, is no more than a prolonged repetitive practising of examination tasks which are artificial, limited and trivial. Admittedly the good teacher, if he has steady nerves and confidence in his own powers, may be able to keep these pressures within reasonable bounds... All the same, given the prestige and the material advantages conferred in our society by examination success, one may suspect that his values and goals will often be distorted, unconsciously, to a far greater extent than he would care to recognise.
> (Whitehead, F., 1966, p.236)

Whitehead makes a very valid point here. In our competitive Western society, examination success reflects

very positively on a school and on the teachers. It is all too often the case, therefore, that the teacher channels so much of his energy into ensuring good examination results, because it means prestige and recognition. It follows, then, that in the classroom he justifies his "feverish round of non-literary activities" in terms of the results to be gained. As Jane Reid so succintly put it, "the cart leads the horse, and the necessity of passing the examination dictates the method of teaching." (Reid, J., 1982, p.97). The whole process becomes a kind of game, where teachers and pupils work slavishly at preparing for and guessing the content of the examination paper. The teacher, probably without realising and more certainly without admitting it, is adopting an approach which can be summed up as follows - "You're going to learn to play a game, and together we're going to beat the examiner at it." (Dixon, J., 1979, p.40)

One of the main rules of this game seems to be to find an accepted, standard response to a work of fiction; thus the emphasis on prepared 'model' answers in the methods of teaching. Personal reaction and response has to be controlled, and a carefully learned technique of judgement must replace this. "The emphasis is on uncovering an 'authoritative' view of the text, on developing the ability to write critical essays in an accepted style, and on avoiding idiosyncratic responses in favour of agreed ones." (Protherough, R., 1983,p. 55).

In preparing a class for an external examination, then, the aim of the work is to eliminate personal and subjective responses and replace these with a standardised opinion. So the teacher presents model answers of 'appropriate' responses, gleaned from a study of established critics, and the pupils are expected to adopt and reproduce these views. And therein lies the reason for Huxley's objection to the external examinations - that they encourage pupils to repeat 'mechanically and without reflection other people's judgements' (Bullock Report, 1975, p.130). Clearly, this is in conflict with the stated syllabus aim of the CED and JMB in this country - that pupils "develop the capacity for critical thinking about, and the ability to <u>form and express their own views</u> on literary works". (Italics mine)

> If students really hold a view, then what are we asking them to do? To pretend not to believe it, and to parrot an interpretation they do not actually hold?
> (Protherough, R., 1983, p.143)

Aside from the damage done to the appreciation and enjoyment of literature, are we not also, in teaching our pupils to accept uncritically the views of others, discouraging them to think for themselves; thereby sending them out into a world as potential victims of any philosophy and point of view that they may be exposed to? If so, then we are not providing anything resembling 'education'. And we are wasting the opportunity which a subject like English lends itself towards, namely that of

critical discussion with an open and honest exchange of views between teacher and pupils.

> English literature is sometimes taught as if it were an inert body of knowledge composed of facts which must be learnt ... and about which students must repeat the accepted opinions of literary authority if they want to pass their exams. ... English literature should never be taught like that. It is one of the few subjects affording endless opportunity for critical discussion, and where pupils and teacher can meet on equal ground. There are no single right answers in English literature. The teacher can point things out, guide from the vantage of his past learning and experience, but there is no intrinsic reason why his judgement should not be overruled by a pupil's.
>
> (Reid, J., 1982, p.30).

What makes his judgement valid, is the fact that the pupil has experienced a piece of literature for himself, and responded to it himself. This does not mean that the views of others have NO value. The fact that there are other views means it is important for them to be consulted and compared. But these views - whether they be those of teachers or critics - should not be to tell the pupil how to respond. They merely tell how they have responded. However, this knowledge is meaningless if the pupils cannot first enjoy a novel and respond to it in a natural way. If the method of teaching, in preparing for an examination, does not allow for personal response, but stresses instead knowledge about literature and about other people's opinions, then the destruction of enjoyment is inevitable. And, in A.N. Whitehead's words, those who are responsible are guilty of "soul murder".

Harry Blamires also pointed out that English teachers should not be in the business of turning out "generations of literary critics".

> Nevertheless, we continually make the mistake in schools - and our examination system has hitherto encouraged us in our error - of trying to convert growing children into immature critics. It is not a mistake that we make in other subjects. In teaching art, we teach children to appreciate the work of great masters and to paint themselves - certainly not to write aesthetic criticism. SImilarly, in the teaching of music we teach appreciation, and then harmony and counterpoint or the piano - certainly not the art of tossing off a few journalistic phrases about Beethoven's Ninth.
>
> (Blamires, H., 1951, p.60, Italics mine)

One might argue that the effect of examinations on teaching methods can be lessened, depending on the types of questions used. Some unimaginative questions have a distinctly harmful influence on classroom teaching, encouraging spoon-feeding and "the whole pigeon-holing, categorising approach" (Lemmer, A., 1979, p.58). Other more innovative questions could avoid this, BUT the problem lies in the fact that the types of question set are dictated to by the restricting factors of the external examination. In turn, the questions determine the approach to the subject in the classroom. It soon becomes a vicious circle.

3.1.2. Types of question:

Presumably, an examiner setting questions for a literature paper would bear in mind two main points - What is he aiming to test, and is the test actually measuring this? If it is merely knowledge about literature that he is testing, then this will be an easy task. But the aims of teaching the subject do not limit themselves to this aspect.

> The teaching of literature (means) essentially the sympathetic, creative, appreciative treatment of literature. To examine on this was very difficult. It was certainly not to be done by finding out what a boy did not know... The examiner is bound to ask for knowledge, but it must be knowledge which matters, which counts towards seeing a work as a whole.
> (Newbolt, 1921, p.306/7)

This is a far more difficult task for the examiner, especially when he has to also attempt to set questions that are suited to a wide range of pupils who do not have the text with them when they answer the paper. Further, in looking for "knowledge which matters, which counts towards seeing the work as a whole", is it realistic to expect any pupil to offer evidence of his appreciation of a major work of literature in the confines of a forty-five minute question? Can any one question measure that appreciation anyway?

The whole question of validity will be considered in the next section, but firstly, the types of questions that are being set in examinations will be looked at.

Peter Mullineux's recent study of the use of the contextual question in examining Shakespeare's plays revealed that a popular type of question was what he termed the 'rote recall' question, defined as one which "requires little more than that the candidate remembers something and is able to communicate that information somehow". (Mullineux, P., 1988, p.29). The same applies to contextual questions on the novel, the emphasis clearly being on content recall and 'factual' answers. The reason for setting such questions is more than likely a practical one.

> Factual answers are easy to mark and moderate: no nonsense about subjectivity. So many points must be given, and the marker can go tick, tick, tick down the side of the page; and add up the marks at the end. Some questions even go so far as to indicate to the candidates the number of points they must make in order to achieve full marks ... It is almost as convenient as multiple choice - and once again the interests of education are sacrificed to the examination.
>
> (Reid, J., 1982, p.119/20.)

And R. Protherough, commenting on questions set on the novel in examination papers in England, notes that they "seem designed to discover whether candidates can rehearse specific details to be found 'in' the text rather than in the less controlled and predictable quality of an individual's response to it." (Protherough, R., 1983, p. 140.) A typical question set on a novel will present some critic's point of view on the work and ask the pupil to consider whether or not he agrees with it.

> The point at issue is not whether questions like these are good or bad of their kind, but whether they form an adequate test of response to the novels in question. ...The chief skills that seem to be tested are acquired technique in answering questions against the clock and the ability to memorise and to deploy relevant arguments and quotations. These are not unimportant abilities ... (but it) is what has to be sacrificed in genuine personal response that is most worrying. Tentativeness must give way to assertion, personal feelings to agreed opinions, enthusiasm to wariness. (Ibid. p.141)

Helen Lewis Butler strongly disapproved of the type of question which asks a pupil to discuss the critical view of some other reader. The point she makes is extremely valid - that "it is the experience of another reader on which they are being asked to comment, not their own. Unless their experience of the text is similar, their attention may be deflected from their own reading of the text" (Butler, H.L., 1987, p.40). Very often, such a question imposes a 'correct' evaluation of a piece of literature. For example, "Discuss the view that 'The Dead' is the finest story in Dubliners. Comparing it with other stories in Dubliners bring out the qualities you think might justify such a description."

> Even if they do not agree that 'The Dead' is the finest story in Dubliners, they are required to stifle that response and hunt for reasons to illustrate and justify others' judgements. ... Such questions make the Examiners' denial that candidates are expected to agree with any of the critical comments given for discussion sound a little disingenuous and indeed (suggests) that in practice 'judgements of value' can mean agreeing with the examiners... The process of response, released in the moment to moment activity of

> reading, seems unimportant: it is the end product, 'appropriate reactions' and understanding of the text in terms of the question given that matter. (Ibid. p.45.)

An offshoot of this can also be seen in the emphasis that is given during teaching to preparation of 'model answers' - simply because pupils do not trust their own judgements. The examination questions dictate that they put such opinions aside. In cases where personal comments and views are reqested, they generally form a small part of the answer (See examples in Chapter 5), and there is little assurance that the pupil will not be penalised if the examiner disagrees with his ideas.

Another major problem that faces the setting of questions is that of determining whether the actual texts being examined have been read. Thus one comes across the sort of question which asks the candidate to 'Outline the contents' or 'Narrate the story of' a novel or section of it; or, similarly, questions requiring some discussion of a character or theme. The main objection to such questions is that, in trying to determine whether a novel has been read or not, the question can in fact be well answered by someone who hasn't read the work at all.

> The lazy pupil should be able to extract at least 40 per cent of the information required from the 'study-aids' that are so readily available. A more serious injustice is that the pupil who has read and understood and enjoyed the works may well be penalized for confusion about what happened to whom and when - the sort of details upon which the lazy one will probably have concentrated exclusively. In any case why shouldn't one forget the story? Many teachers of literature are surprised and

> sometimes needlessly dismayed to discover how little they remember of works in which they were very deeply immersed a few months earlier. The point is that their experience of those works has eliminated some blind spots, has somehow changed their perceptions, their sensibilities, their values, and this benefit, though it does not lend itself to measurement or publicity and is often imperceptible, is nevertheless lasting. And the incidental, easily-forgotten details of the story are ultimately unimportant.
>
> (Thompson, J.B., 1968, p.24)

Clearly, the types of questions that candidates are generally faced with, do not allow for expression of personal responses, and do not measure what the experience of literature has meant for them. Given the examiners' restrictions in the context of the mass external examination, one cannot blame them for failing to set questions that test what really matters. Any questions that may ask for a more directly personal or creative response cannot be answered within the confines of the traditional limited-time examination, and without the set texts at hand.

> The absence of the text in the exam room further encourages an excessive degree of memorising, especially among weaker candidates, as a substitute for understanding, and renders almost impossible any fresh response to the text.
>
> (Daw, P., 1986,p.65.)

The restrictions that apply pose even further problems when one considers the suitability of the texts selected to the variety of students concerned.

3.1.3. Selection of texts:

A major problem of all mass examinations is that, in selecting texts, very general assumptions have to be made about the interests and background of thousands of candidates. It is inevitable that no given text will be equally appealing to all the pupils required to study it at one and the same time. Any teacher will vouch for the difficulty of finding one such work which is suited to 30 or more pupils in the same class.

Furthermore, when texts are set by an external body, teacher and pupil have little or no responsibility for text, and following that, none for the type of questions to be asked. "Their joint role is reduced to answering an external demand." (Dixon, J., 1979, p.153).

> If the texts for study are determined externally this will have serious consequences for the kind of learning that goes on, and the aims that can be fulfilled. It is as if the student were given a cultural chaperone who decided which minds it was proper to meet. The chaperone's choice may be excellent, but one thing is certain: the students have no scope for learning to choose. They may well learn that texts chosen for them have a great deal to offer, but they will never learn this way how little or much there might be in the texts they themselves would choose.
>
> (Ibid. p.50)

This has serious implications when one considers that after their final external school examination, very few of the total number of candidates will study literature any further. If they have not had the opportunity to develop a critical faculty of their own, with an understanding of their personal preferences based on

reason and discussion, then what are their chances of continuing to encounter meaningful literature that will enrich their lives? The wasted chance is not limited to the school experience.

Furthermore, although books may be chosen in the hope that pupils will enjoy reading them, the ensuing demands and limiting effects of the examination itself would seem, albeit unintentionally, to ensure that they do not.

Another problem in the selection of texts by an external examining board is that they often select texts which are "clearly beyond the reach of many adolescents". The difficulties that are encountered then encourage the preparation of "uninvolved memorised answers" because the pupils are out of their depths and find the works they are faced with too remote from their experience of life or literature (Daw, P., 1986, p.64).

An additional limitation with the system of a small number of set texts is that it does not encourage wider reading. This is left to the teachers to do, but the examination structure itself does not take any responsibility for this vitally important aspect of the study and appreciation of literature.

> Some texts certainly need to be studied very closely, but the course needs also to embrace the less detailed scrutiny of a large number of texts if it is to lead to pupils developing a love of reading which they will carry into later life. (Ibid. p.65)

Again, the long term effects of the external examination and selection of texts makes its limitations even more serious. By way of contrast, in an internal examination system, where at least some of the texts for discussion and study are self-selected, John Dixon suggests that students are seen to have a "positive adult role".

> They may discover in the process that some of their proposals turn out to be less good than they seemed at first. Equally, they may find that others are very rewarding, for the teachers as well as their peers. As a result, the teachers, too, are in a significantly different position in making further suggestions; there is a sense of reciprocity, of challenging and being challenged, of a mutual response to enthusiasms and discoveries.
>
> (Dixon, J., 1979, p.49.)

3.1.4. Conclusions:

The external examination system clearly imposes serious and far-reaching limitations on the teaching of literature. In the classroom, it would appear that most teachers are forced to abandon creative teaching methods in favour of drilling and cramming for a final examination, on which lies the total evaluation of a pupil's appreciation of literature and ability to express it. Personal responses have to be suppressed in favour of 'standardized' and 'accepted' ones, and enthusiasm quickly gives way to boredom and frustration.

Perhaps this is painting an exaggeratedly negative picture, but even in the classroom where the teacher insists on maintaining a creative approach and an emphasis on personal response, some amount of exam-oriented activities will occur. And as the examination comes closer, there will be more and more of this. The teacher has a responsibility to prepare pupils to answer certain types of questions, the nature of which is dictated to by the practical constraints of a mass external examination. Generally pupils are faced with a test of their knowledge about the set texts, and the degree to which they have benefited and learned from their experience of literature becomes less important, if not ignored.

Finally, teachers have a very limited say in the choice of texts to be studied, and pupils generally have no say at all. Inevitably, a large portion of the candidates

find no personal enjoyment or relevance for themselves in the texts that are prescribed. Their encounter with literature at school is thus deficient and the chances of it being an enriching experience are severely limited.

3.2 The problem of validity and reliability:

In a chapter entitled "Can literature be examined?" Michael Paffard questions whether examinations can test whether "students have got out of the study of literature what we intend. Are examinations valid in testing what we want tested and are they reliable in fairly and objectively discriminating between the candidates?" (Paffard, M., 1978, p.87). While there may be no problems examining candidates' knowledge about literature, this is not what we are really trying to achieve.

> ... knowledge about literature is subsidiary to appreciation, taste, the ability to read perceptively, and personal judgement and discrimination. Whether valid and reliable means of testing these capacities can be devised is a much more doubtful matter." (Ibid.)

Firstly, considering the validity of an examination, one needs to look at the extent to which it tests what it means to test. As an example, the CED syllabus claims that examinations should test "how far the stated aims of the syllabus have been attained" (CED syllabus, 1986, p.7). But is it possible to measure these aims? How, for example, does one measure "enjoyment" or "moral awareness"? With the aims themselves being difficult to measure, the examiner's task is a very complex one.

In providing an answer to the question of the examiner and the examination being able to test the capacities that the subject aims to teach, the comments of several critics and examiners will be considered, both in South

Africa and Britain. Dr Louis Herrman, who set the matriculation papers for JMB for several years, made it clear that the setwork papers had two aims: firstly, "to determine how far the candidates have made themselves familiar with the contents of the setbooks" and, secondly, "to determine to what extent they have understood what they have read" (Italics mine). These aims were to be achieved by "setting a series of questions on each work demanding brief and concise answers on the matter and on the interpretation thereof". The criticism that arose from teachers was essentially that these means of testing took "too poor and mean a view of so powerful an engine (sic) of literature".

> No teacher of English with a love for his subject and a proper estimate of his duty to his pupils will be content so to confine his teaching that it does no more than enable the candidates to answer questions suggested by these ends. He will at least strive to foster their interest in worthy literary works, to stimulate their appreciation, to arouse their enthusiasm, and even to cultivate in them a passion for good literature, using the prescribed works as a means to those ends. He does these things. Is he therefore justified in feeling that his labour has been in vain when he finds that the nature of the examination paper gives his pupils little scope for expressing their thoughts and feelings about the works they have read? ... (It) is not that the examiner despises the more generous ends of literary studies, it is that it has proved impossible to test by examination the candidates' real appreciation of the prescribed works.
>
> (Herrman,L., 1963, p.170/1, Italics mine)

Some years later, Andre Lemmer, an examiner for the CED, makes a similar point:

> The essence of a subject like English has little to do with testability. ... the essence of literature, in particular, transcends mere skills: it rests in another, a more rarefied dimension - in a capacity for sensitive living engendered by the kind of empathy provided by literary experience of a certain quality. And you can't catch that with marks any more than you can measure love with a computer.
> (Lemmer, A., 1979, p.59)

Ken Durham explored this question of the testability of English in terms of a 'torchbeam' analogy. At the narrow end of the beam, where the light is concentrated, there are the empirical, easily examined parts of the syllabus of any subject. This area is popular with examiners because it is so reliable and easy to test, and a vast amount of "curriculum knowledge" falls into this area. At the other end, where the light is less bright and yet extends further and covers a wider area, is the whole creative spectrum, involving feelings, emotions, imagination, opinions, beliefs, experiences - all of which are difficult to examine in the conventional way. The problem that arises in the examining of literature is that the means from the narrow, empirical end are being used to examine the aspects from the broader imaginative end of the torchbeam.

Protherough, writing from the British experience, also questions whether an examination can really measure the 'understanding' of a set text, because:

> In reading a novel, we are simultaneously 'understanding' it in the light of our structures of experience, and being freed from the limitations of those experiences by entering imaginatively into another world.
> (Protherough, R., 1983, p.145.)

It is thus clear why Paffard comes to the conclusion that it is unlikely that a literature examination can ever be really valid - on the basis that it "seems impossible to test the central concerns of literature teaching; enjoyment, personal imaginative response, taste and discrimination" within the confines of an examination paper, and especially so in the case of a mass external one. In this "age of wonders", he says wryly, this cannot be tested "by measuring glandular secretions, rate of respiration, blood pressure or electro-encephalograph, let alone by formal written papers" (Paffard, M., 1978, p.91).

One of the main reasons for this being impossible is the whole area of <u>reliability</u>. Examinations, aimed at being administratively efficient and reliable, sacrifice educational efficiency and validity in the process. Because a large number of candidates are involved, a high degree of uniformity amongst examiners has to be ensured for the examination results to be reliable. But in a subject like English there is little doubt that "examiners' judgements of the same candidate's performance are notoriously variable and, indeed, an individual examiner may not be self-consistent" (Ibid., p.88). If an objective marking scheme is required, then the questions will have to be ones which require facts or standard views.

> The questions capable of being marked reliably which can be asked on a set text are strictly limited and therefore highly predictable.

> Facts and accepted judgements, moreover, can be crammed by the candidate, sometimes at the last moment, sometimes without the text to which they relate ever having been read. The exam, therefore, can become little more than a memory test quite incapable of discriminating between the good candidate and the cunning examinee and the teacher is reduced to a tipster and dictator of specimen answers. (Ibid. p.89.)

For examination results to be consistent and reliable, therefore, questions are set about which examiners can agree among themselves and mark with relative ease. This becomes imperative in the case of an external examination involving tens of thousands of scripts - in a couple of weeks, examiners have to mark hundreds of papers. The inevitable consequences of such a situation were pointed out in as early as 1933, by L.C.Knights, who observed that, under such conditions, standardisation and uniformity of marking could only be achieved by means of 'markable points'. In order for these 'markable points' to be easily recognised and objective enough to ensure uniformity among a large panel of examiners, they would have to appear in the form of <u>facts and standardised opinions</u>.

> Obviously the accomplishments which can be reliably measured in a mass examination of this kind are not those which the good English teacher sets most store by. We value not so much the easily-assessed fragments of knowledge and skill which are common to thousands but, rather, those qualities of observation imagination, perception, and judgment which are individual, which are rooted in the particular boy or girl's own experience and environment, and which relate to the concerns which really matter to him. We are interested above all in those moments when we light on something (a topic, a poem, a story) which engages and interacts with the inner world, so that the

> pupil's whole personality is involved and flowers in a use of language, which is for him a creative act, an enlarging of horizons. It is difficult to see how such moments can ever be planned for, in the abstract, for a faceless multitude.
>
> (Whitehead, F., 1966, p.235)

Again, we must be reminded that in assessing 'understanding' of literature, it is not mere knowledge about literature that is our concern but the extent to which the pupil has experienced and responded to the work concerned. The confusion seems to arise from the mistaken assumption that appreciation, enjoyment, and genuine personal response to a work of literature go hand in hand with knowledge or memory of its contents. What the examination should be testing cannot be determined by standardisation and a search for facts - "'facts' which the examiner's red pencil can tick without any fear of disagreement; consequently memory for facts, even insignificant facts, takes on an absurd importance" (Ibid. p.245).

Because it appears that the examination is not testing what it should be testing, therefore, it is necessary to consider briefly what the real aims and purposes of examining are, and what effect the realities of the external examination have on these aims.

3.3 The effects on the real aim/purpose of examining:

Because the principles and objectives of the examiners are not clearly stated in any of the syllabuses, one assumes that they must be concerned with evaluating whether the given aims of teaching the subject have been achieved, and the extent to which the pupil has benefited from the teaching. But it has already been shown that this, in the case of English literature, is virtually impossible to do. Therefore, there must be other reasons for examining the subject. One which has been mentioned before is the fact that examining literature gives it a certain status as a subject, and serves as an important motivating factor as far as the pupils are concerned.

But considering the aims of examinations in general, one finds several other purposes at work. These include helping the teacher to identify problem areas and deficiencies in teaching methods, and the lack of knowledge and shortcomings of the pupils. It assumes that, if a pupil does well in an examination, then he 'knows' the work that has been covered, and this enables the teacher to move on. In addition to this, examinations can be seen to have a prognostic value, with results being used to predict future achievements, or to determine suitability for entrance to other educational institutions or particular careers. All these factors can be seen operating in the examination of literature, but, particularly in the case of the last one, the problem

that arises is that "the predictive role thus forced upon school examinations is necessarily in direct conflict with educational values - and nowhere more nakedly so than in the sphere of English teaching" (Whitehead, F., 1966, p.234). Thus the aims of examining and the aims of teaching literature appear to be in conflict, with the one undermining the other. But this does not have to be the case. If the examination were handled differently, it could serve a more useful purpose.

> Ideally, perhaps, an examination on a play or novel could be like a conversation between the examiner, the pupil and the author. The questions and suggestions of the examiner could encourage and help the pupil to rearrange his experience of the work in his mind and to reconcile it with his own ideas and concepts; could challenge him to reconsider his responses to parts and wholes of it. If the reading of the (text) has been a genuine and valuable experience for the pupil; if the examiner's questions and suggestions are stimulating; if the exam situation isn't too paralytically agitating; an examination on a work could even be a kind of culmination of the whole process of studying it; an opportunity for the pupil to reveal his own final responses, justify his interpretations, demonstrate his understanding, without fear of interruption or immediate contradiction.
>
> (Dyer, M., 1977, p.45)

It seems, therefore, that an examination <u>can be</u> a useful, educational experience, but what one needs is an <u>alternative approach</u> to examining. Marie Dyer suggests that her proposal is perhaps too ideal a one, but the South African English Olympiad examination has tried and successfully used a different approach. Instead of setting an examination which tries to measure reliably certain amounts of factual knowledge, the aim of this

examination is "the testing of creative and imaginative application of specific knowledge about a text or subject" (CRUX, Vol 17 no 1, 1983 p.9). Through the use of stimulating questions which require creative and imaginative answers, the understanding and appreciation of the set texts is not only tested, but extended - by focusing on personal response and an extension thereof. This will be considered in more detail when the various alternatives to the present system of external examining are looked at in Chapter 5. For now, it suffices to say that there are alternatives, that examining can be done in such a way that it no longer conflicts with the aims of teaching literature.

One final point that deserves mention here, because it relates to the whole concern with the predictive role of examinations, is that of differentiation. Examinations are acknowledged as being measuring instruments for determining suitability for entrance to universities, careers, and other institutions. In the case of university entrance, pupils are required to pass English First Language on the Higher Grade. But the thrust of the final examination in this subject is essentially one which prepares the pupil for further scholarly study in English Literature, and not merely for further study in other fields for which basic language competence would be a prerequisite.

> If the mode of assessment is entirely designed in the interests of the scholarly preparation of the 4 per cent who go on to read honours

> English, they and the remaining 96 per cent stand to suffer from the relative inattention to broader humanistic possibilities in the course.
>
> (Dixon, J., 1979, p.49)

Ruth Pryor also felt that, in Britain, it was "often difficult to distinguish the 'A' level question paper from the university degree finals paper":

> What examiners have forgotten to do, is to maintain their own sense of the simple objectives that apply. In my view, 'A' level candidates should be taught to enjoy reading literature. If the teaching is successful, there will be no need to give further training in answering 'A' level questions. If, on the other hand, they are asked to 'criticise' the writing of Jane Austen, or to 'interpret' the psychological meanings of Shakespeare, they will not only be incapable of doing so without help, they will be damaged by the attempt - perhaps discouraged from reading these and other authors for life.
>
> (Pryor, R., 1985, p.14/15)

This is very often the experience of the majority of candidates for the English First Language Higher Grade paper. They have no intention of studying literature further, but one hopes that they will continue reading and enjoying it. However, if their experience at school does as Pryor suggests, then the aims of teaching literature are utterly defeated. This is not to say that the approach to the subject, including the traditional literary critic approach, must be abandoned altogether. But one has to recognise that the "majority of candidates do not possess the maturity or experience to operate in the analytical impersonal sort of register that is appropriate for this type of essay" (Lemmer, A., 1979,

p.61) and that, in expecting it of them, we run the risk of destroying all possible chances of a love for literature that is so important for the rest of their lives. This sort of thing should be confined to a higher grade paper for prospective university entrants who wish to study English Literature further. Andre Lemmer's call for a "real differentiated examination" to be introduced (Ibid.) needs to be seriously heeded.

The criticisms and appeals such as these have emerged in the contexts of both the South African and British examining systems. Before looking in some detail at the status quo with regard to the examining of literature in South Africa, it is useful from a comparative point of view to note some of the changes and innovations that have taken place in Britain during this century, largely as a response to many of the problems identified in this chapter.

4. EXAMINING IN BRITAIN

The external examination in Britain came under fire early in the 20th Century from many educationists, the most eminent being Alfred North Whitehead. Written in 1917, his essays on education rejected the rigid, external examination system widespread at the time. He proposed instead that schools control their own examinations.

> I suggest that no system of external tests which aims primarily at examining individual scholars can result in anything but educational waste. Each school should grant its own leaving certificates, based on its own curriculum. The standards of these schools should be sampled and corrected. But the first requisite for educational reform is the school as a unit, with its approved curriculum based on its own needs, and evolved by its own staff.
> (Whitehead, A.N., 1917, p.21)

A few years later, in 1921, the Newbolt report on the teaching of English noted the weakness of examination questions in the literature sections to be a concentration on fact and content, and hinted at Whitehead's call for some system of internal examining.

> Purely external examinations in English Literature, in which there is no direct contact between the Examiner and the teacher, cannot ... be approved... Since the style of question set determines the method of teaching, examining bodies usurp functions which properly belong to the school.
> (Newbolt Report, 1921, p.303, Italics mine)

Their recommendation was that "an examination on set books should leave the teacher of literature as free as practical considerations allow to draw up his own

syllabus and to adopt his own methods" (Ibid.). Much later, when the Certificate of Secondary Education was introduced in 1963, the Schools Council recommended in the first examinations bulletin that literature should be set and marked internally and moderated externally.

Frank Whitehead said that the educational needs of English could be fully met by means of a system of internal examinations with external moderation, which, despite claims to the contrary by cynics, he did not see as being impracticable. Instead, he felt that what would be gained was "the liberation of good teachers from externally imposed shackles, and an immense impetus to all teachers to accept a fully professional responsibility for their own pupils".

> It would be worth paying for this by accepting some reduction in the predictive efficiency of the examination results; in any case it should be remembered that the reliability of our present external examinations has never been subjected to any kind of rigorous experimental scrutiny, is almost certainly much less than is commonly assumed, and is probably largely spurious anyway, since it has been gained by concentrating on inessentials (in other words, by sacrificing 'validity')... Given a reasonably thorough co-ordinating system to iron out variations in standard between different schools and different teachers, I can see no reason why internal examinations should not be able to meet this fairly unexacting requirement with enough accuracy for all practical purposes. The real point is that the educational influence of examinations ought to take precedence over their grading, classifying and predictive role.
>
> (Whitehead, F., 1966, p.237/8, Italics mine)

John Dixon, the Director of the Schools Council 16-19 Project, pointed out that for many years English had been

badly examined at senior secondary (16-19) level. The Crowther Report of 1959 noted that external examinations tended to dictate uniformity in the pattern of teaching, and Dixon stated that "bad examinations have encouraged and rewarded bad teaching" (Dixon, J., 1979, p.43). But since then, things have gradually changed. Five years after the Crowther Report, a new system of examining was laid down at 16+ which provided for both internal examining (Mode III) as well as moderation of an internal element in almost every Mode I English assessment.

> Ten years further on, the CSE English panels have consistently carried this provision a step further. Even the conservative GCE boards had almost all mounted at least one experimental syllabus in English with a strong internal element. (Ibid. p.42)

Protherough also noted that many English teachers in Britain had abandoned O-level Literature and sought alternatives in the A-level syllabuses, which "permit the presentation of course work and dissertations, and open-book tests on a wider range of subject matter". (Protherough, R., 1983, p.140).

Before the various options available to teachers in Britain are looked at, the Schools Council 16-19 Project deserves further mention, especially as it has had a profound effect on the British examination system. The Project, having established the need for alternatives to the external examining of English, proposed to accomplish three tasks:

1) to develop a 'common core' syllabus suited to

a very broad range of students;
2) to develop a range of options at A-level;
3) to introduce course work alongside examination scripts as the basis for assessment.

These tasks were clearly linked to the requests from teachers for three essential kinds of change:

> 1) a set book examination in which the texts were available, and questions were specifically designed to promote use of the text in the examination;
> 2) provision for a selection of course work to be examined, and for encouragement to broaden the range of writing in it;
> 3) an extension to the number and range of texts studied, by basing a proportion of the course work on additional texts proposed by the individual department and agreed by the board, and by including an extended essay based on a subject and texts proposed by the individual student in consultation with teachers.
>
> (Dixon, J., 1979, p.66, Italics mine)

Thus several alternatives were considered, with the possibility of internal assessment being done in a number of ways. The examination itself could be retained, but the syllabus and the examination questions would be drawn up by the teachers at each school; or, either in place of, or as well as the examination, work could be assessed continuously throughout the year using a type of course-work approach. Clearly, each option can be used alongside another, but in considering how each one operates in practice, they will be dealt with independently in terms of the following divisions:

1) Internal assessment with an examination

2) The course-work approach

3) The open-book examination

4.1 The internal or school-based examination:

With this method of examining literature, set texts are selected and examined internally and this is subject to the approval of some suitably qualified external moderating board. In England, the CSE and GCE boards offer different options on examination procedures, one of which is the Mode III system, where the school staff provide the syllabus, set the examination and mark the papers, after which the board concerned moderates the work of the internal examiners and awards grades on the moderated results. One of the major advantages of this flexible procedure is the freedom given to teachers to design the syllabus, which can be done for specific groups of pupils and even amended if and where necessary.

Other advantages include:

1. Teachers feel that the assessments have a higher degree of validity than an external examination. "The essence of Mode III assessment procedures is that they should be appropriate to the objectives of the syllabus, to the methods of teaching and to the pupils. Furthermore, the pupils should be assessed on the work they have done and on the way they have done it. The Mode III method provides the teacher with the opportunity to devise assessment procedures which fit all the requirements and the results are therefore likely to represent the pupils' real achievement." (Schools Council, 1976, p.23)
2. It is administratively convenient for teachers in

that pupils can be entered for examinations on different grades and the decision with regard to this can be made much later than in the case of an external examination.

3. It also allows for assessment to be done by course-work in addition to, or in place of, examinations. Most teachers like to retain the final examination, but recognise that it is a fairer assessment if it is not based only on that one test. "Written work, under no time-limit conditions, with reference material available, is considered a fairer test of the ability of many candidates, and oral testing is considered a more suitable method of obtaining a true picture of the attainment of the less-literate element of the school population." (ibid. p.25/6). This comment shows clearly how flexible the Mode III system can be.

There are, of course, disadvantages to the Mode III system as well. For one, it makes heavy demands on the teacher's time and requires a great deal of work in drawing up a syllabus, and setting papers or organizing a programme of continuous assessment. It can also be costly with regard to set books, which would not be prescribed and provided on a national basis, as is the present luxury in white South African state schools. However, teachers from various schools could co-operate with their selection of books and arrange to circulate sets of texts from year to year if necessary. The institution of some kind of co-operative local network would be useful for

exchanging and circulating ideas and examination papers as well.

A further problem arises with pupil mobility. The lack of common ground in educational syllabuses makes it difficult for a pupil to change schools. In several Mode III subjects, a common core syllabus exists and teachers can add other elements of their choice to the syllabus. Such an idea could be used in English literature study, without too much difficulty.

Another problem encountered in the Mode III system was that some teachers lacked confidence in their assessment abilities, and were aware of and concerned about the problems of subjectivity and the difficulty of being impartial with one's own candidates. Despite the moderation process, "injustice might persist" (ibid. p.29), but one is reminded that the external examination does little justice to many of the candidates and that, with its own limitations, the internal examination is perhaps the lesser of two evils.

Because one of the main failures of the external examination is its concentration on content, teachers setting questions for internal papers should concentrate on moving away from that focus and offering questions which invite a personal or creative response, or lead the candidates towards the central experience of a piece or work of literature. Below are some examples of questions

which might help pupils relate works to themselves and are aimed at a 'creative response':

> 'In Lord of the Flies the boys, in the course of the story, become more and more savage and cruel. How does this happen? Do you think if you and your friends found yourself on an island you too would be like this? What would be different?' ...
> 'Write a chapter from Eliza Doolittle's memoirs describing her life before she met Higgins, and/or the way her life was changed by him, showing whether or not she was glad of the change'. (Lemmer, A., 1979, p.62)

The latter example shows the type of question which involves the use of creative writing as part of the process of coming to an understanding of some of the dimensions of literature.

During the research stage of the 16-19 Project, Dixon noted that many teachers they had worked with would have liked to see more imaginative and creative work being recognised alongside the more formal, standard critical responses to a text.

> They are concerned, that is, about the narrowness that has grown up in orthodox essays and the failure to testify to the full range of imaginative comtemplation and reflection that a genuine encounter may give rise to. Within many examination questions they sense a failure to recognise the power and shock that literature has as students become involved in the writer's vision and reflect on that experience. (Dixon, J., 1979, p.66)

As a further example of the type of questions one can set in order to invite a personal and creative response, the Midland Examining Group introduced a paper which they called "directed response to expressive writing".

Essentially this was an exercise in creative writing, but a similar principle can be used for literature study. Of course, ideally, creative writing should be an integral part of literature study, rather than a separate entity. In the Midland examination paper (See Appendix A), one sees how literature can be examined via the 'creative response' to a literary text. Credit was given for the ability to "respond imaginatively to the passages in describing scenes, people, thoughts and feelings". Relevance to the original text was important and examiners were asked to use ticks in the body of the answer to reward aspects of relevance, which "practical experience showed ... to be a surprisingly reliable form of marking". (Sweetman, J., 1987, p.57). Textual relevance is an extremely important criterion in answering this type of question as it will show or imply a pupil's understanding and appreciation of what has been read, without time being spent on senseless repetition of the contents of the passage.

> The mark scheme itself suggested that examiners should look at the continuity of the response in relation to the original together with its overall validity as a piece of writing inspired by the original. These are difficult terms to use and discuss but no more daunting than to suggest that examiners should look for 'evidence of critical insight' which is a current practice in English Literature examinations. (Ibid. p.61)

Finally, it is important to note that in any system of internal examining, the relationship between teachers and moderators would be of utmost importance. Teachers in

the Mode III system expressed concern about the comparability of standards, and this "emphasizes the crucial role of the moderator both in relation to the success of the Mode III scheme and as the link between the teacher and the examining board" (Schools Council, 1976, p.29).

> Certainly examiners must now take more seriously than previously, the inevitable effects on teaching and studying in schools of any testing device just as their teacher-critics need an understanding view of the constraints of the examiner's unenviable task. Both teachers and examiners could do more to maintain that dialogue which is often woefully lacking.
>
> (Paffard, M., 1978, p.92)

4.2 The course-work approach:

As mentioned before, this approach need not be seen only as an alternative to the external examination, because it can be used successfully in conjunction with such an examination. In Britain, it is popularly used with the internal or school-based examination in the Mode III approach to assessment. Like the internal examination, course-work assessment is done internally and then submitted to external examiners for moderation. This approach has become important in arriving at the final results at many universities and colleges throughout the world, and there does not seem to be any reason why its success there cannot be repeated in the schools.

There are a number of advantages to course-work:

1. Each school can construct and direct its own curriculum and at the same time, a wider range of reading can be undertaken as part of the course.
2. Validity is improved since the whole of the syllabus is covered, and a wider range of skills and abilities can be assessed.
3. All written work centres on questions set within the school and this work can be produced without the constraint of time.
4. All initial marking of work can be undertaken by those who know both the pupils and the conditions in which they worked.
5. A sub-standard performance by a pupil on one occasion will not unduly affect his final assessment.

6. Feedback to the teacher on pupils' progress is immediate.

The assessment and moderation of course-work is, however, a complex process and "when not done satisfactorily calls into question the reliability of the whole examination" (Bazen, D. 1979, p.65). It is essential to ensure that teachers in a department discuss standards and criteria for marking, which can be done by group trial markings of assignments, so that some uniformity can be achieved.

> Experience suggests that, where a number of teachers work closely with each other over a period of time, they are likely to build up a consensus over the assessment of their pupils, reaching agreement on assessment criteria and standards. If one considers the problems of unreliability between markers encountered in 'traditional' examinations, then the situation in which scripts are discussed or even marked by more than one person, as they would be for (course-work assessment), would result in the assessment being more reliable.
>
> (Chater, P., 1984, p.153)

This sort of internal assessment is immensely useful for the evaluation of English in general. Restricting it to the assessment of literature only would undermine its value. In a course-work approach there is no need to categorise every aspect of English. They can in fact be inter-related in a very successful way using this approach. Written work, accumulated in a folio by each pupil, can be usefully related to the literature currently being studied, both in terms of literary and creative responses.

In the report on the Schools Council 16-19 Project, John Dixon quotes the viewpoint of a student working for an A-level who gives his opinion on the course-work folder which forms part of their assessment. It is worth reproducing in full as it clearly shows the contrast between the demands of internal assessment and the external examination from a pupil's point of view.

> I am very grateful to be taking the Leicester Syllabus and to have the opportunity of submitting a course work folder, mainly because I feel that the essays I write under exam conditions are not - and never could be - my best. Comparing them to those I write for my folder they really seem absurdly scanty, generally just skimming the surface of the ideas which I have and not because I do not know the particular book or play, nor due to any lack of ideas on my part but simply because 45 minutes seems a ridiculously short time in which to tackle, for example, a question as wide - and interesting - as that of order and chaos in 'The Tempest' ... When writing a course essay you have longer to plan and you can also formulate and clarify your ideas. The books on the syllabus are available for reference and you are therefore able to choose the best quotes to illustrate your opinions. You have more time for the preparation and actual writing of the essay and can write more because of the absence of pressure. More ideas, themes and illustrations can be found and the essay is more comprehensive and thorough. By contrast, the three-hour paper seems extremely restricting.
>
> (Dixon, 1979, p.57/8)

4.3. The open-book examination:

One very effective way of moving away from the content-based questions which tend to plague the external examinations, and may remain part of internal assessment, is the use of an open-book examination. If pupils can take the set text into the examination room with them, there is no need for wasted time spent on "useless memory swotting" (Dyer, M., 1977, p.44). Instead of learning the contents of a novel or play, the pupils would have to recognise that the exercise would involve the sort of personal and creative responses that have been described in the previous sections.

> ... the pupil must have a copy of the text beside him in the examination room when he comes to answer questions upon it. After all, no reputable literary critic or reviewer would ever dream of committing his views to paper without having a copy of the text at hand to refer to and quote from. These are the normal rational conditions for writing about literature - except when writing for an examiner. To reproduce these conditions as nearly as we can is surely the only effective way, in a set-book examination, of taking the emphasis away from memorisation on to that relevant kind of familiarity with the book which makes it possible to turn up the evidence needed to support a statement or opinion.
>
> (Whitehead, F., 1966, p.249)

The open-book examination is not an easier option by any means, and pupils have to know their setworks thoroughly in order to find relevant passages and points. The only limit to prevent unfairness is that the texts they use are to be clean ones, with no pencilled-in comments or underlinings. One of the most advantageous off-shoots of having the book with them, is that pupils feel a little

more secure about the task facing them, and a lot of unnecessary tension about an examination is considerably lessened.

Ken Durham, in an unpublished review of the use of the open-book examination system for English Literature, mentions an example of an "O" Level Literature paper (See Appendix B) that he encountered at the Bedales School near Petersfield, where the following elements appeared:

1. Free (individual) access during the examination to five previously-studied texts (Novel, Poetry, Shakespeare, Essays, Short Stories).
2. Free (individual) use of a dictionary.
3. Flexible examination time (2 - 3 hours) to accommodate "fast" and "slower" thinkers, writers and text-searchers.
4. A very wide choice of high standard literary questions (16 either (a) or (b) type, giving a final choice of 32 questions).
5. An internally designed, administered and marked examination with external moderation on design and marking.

(Durham, K., 1983)

The whole exercise has nothing to do with the meaningless memorising of facts and content and model answers, and therefore this sort of approach certainly does away with all the limitations of the conventional literature examination. In this particular case, the "teachers and pupils involved .. were satisfied - many enthusiastically so - with the flexibility and freedom it offered combined with the quality and accuracy of personal response encouraged by the format" (ibid.).

Durham points out the main aspects of this "flexibility and freedom" which are that:

1. Candidates are given a flexible time period, so that, if necessary, they can do rough drafts of their responses, and then rework them into final versions.
2. Because the full text is available to the pupils, they can support what they have to say with relevant and exact quotations, and, as mentioned earlier, it often means that pupils can approach the examination without undue tension.
3. Pre-examination strain is also lessened, as there is no need to spend hours memorising factual content, or drawing up and memorising model answers.
4. Because the examiner can move away from the "summary-type content-based question", certain scenes or elements from set texts can be focused on.
5. The final point is worth quoting in full:

> If pupils are educated, in the long term, to handle the open book system during their school career (i.e. for projects, course work assignments, internal examinations) the resultant familiarity with this mode of examining is likely to lead to a lessening of pre-examination tension. Furthermore, this examining technique, if used more widely in schools, would help to build up speed and competency in answering O.B.E. questions and would almost certainly groom prospective university students to handle essays and seminar assignments ... with greater confidence, competence and maturity. (ibid.)

Of course, every system that has its advantages is not without its problems. One of the problems that has arisen in this method of examining, according to the Schools Council, is that the availability of the textbook appears to make little difference to the performance of

the best pupils, while the weaker children may waste a lot of time searching for information and may also be tempted to do a lot of unselective copying (Examinations Bulletin 32, 1975). Very likely, this is due to a lack of preparation of the pupils by the teacher for such an examination. Few pupils are used to this alternative system, and have been conditioned into thinking an examination is an exercise in working against the clock and regurgitating the teacher's words and/or notes. The whole approach to teaching the subject must change in the case of introducing the open-book method of examining. More essay questions, group discussions and close looking at the texts would need to be done in class, with the teacher allowing the pupils to explore the texts themselves in order to consider their responses. This should provide the necessary practice for the open-book examination.

In Chapter 5, the open-book examination will receive further attention as several examples of the South African English Olympiad examination papers will be considered. They seem to have moved away, successfully, from the use of content-based questions and concentrate instead on imaginative and personal, and therefore meaningful, responses.

5. EXAMINING IN SOUTH AFRICA

In order to evaluate the system of examining in South Africa, within the confines of a half-thesis, three aspects of examining will be considered:

1) The present trends in examining literature for English First Language Higher Grade. This will involve looking closely at the types of questions set by the two examining departments already referred to in Chapter 2, namely the JMB and CED. The papers to be considered are those that have been set over the past ten years, from 1979 to 1988.

2) Alternative methods of examining, in particular the internal examination, have been experimented with in South Africa, although not on the same scale as in Britain. There are no options available like the Mode III option, for example, referred to in Chapter 4, but the TED has experimented with the option of exempting certain schools from the external examination in Std 10, in particular subjects. Some of the details and findings of their research will be considered.

3) Finally, the system of open-book examining (O.B.E.), which has been used by the South African English Olympiad examiners, will be looked at. What is involved in an O.B.E., its advantages and problems,

have already been considered in some detail, and some examples of the types of questions set will be looked at. These may be compared to those used by the external examiners of JMB and the CED, as elaborated on in 5.1.

5.1 Present trends in examining literature : a comparison of examination papers set by the CED and JMB from 1979 to 1988.

The evaluation of the types of questions set by these departments will be considered under two sections -

5.1.1 Essay-type questions, and
5.1.2 Contextual-type questions.

For each, certain types of questions will be described and then the actual questions set by the respective departments will be categorised according to each type. It is of course difficult to categorise questions into neat compartments; very often one finds that they overlap. In order to develop a set of categories, the questions in the recent examination papers were assessed firstly, and then ideas were taken from categories suggested by David Bazen (1979), for the essay questions, and from Peter Mullineux (1988), for the contextual questions.

5.1.1 Essay-type questions - Definitions and Evaluation:

Bazen bases his categories on an assessment of the types of questions most commonly found in the GCE examinations in Britain (Bazen, D., 1979, p.53). The categories have been adapted slightly to make them more appropriate to the JMB and CED examination papers being scrutinized.

Table 1 (See Appendix C) indicates the number of questions set on each of six categories in the final examination papers for the JMB and CED. Because the totals for each paper differ slightly - two questions set in each JMB paper and four in the CED papers up till 1985, when it changed to two - it is the final percentage figures that reflect the differences between the two examining bodies.

5.1.1.1. Summary-type questions:

Such questions call for a summary or retelling of the events of a part or the whole of the novel. They simply require a candidate to remember something that he has learnt. An example would be the instruction to "relate the events" of a novel from point A to point B.

It is encouraging to note that no examples of this type of question were found in the First Language Higher Grade literature papers of either examining departments. It would seem that this type of question remains a priority only in Second Language examining, as Jane Reid found in her 1982 study.

5.1.1.2. Plot/Character consideration:

In this type of question, candidates are required to consider the plot (or parts of the plot) and/or character, either as elements in themselves or in relation to the novel as a whole. In most cases the question took the form of a statement about the plot

or character, and an instruction to the candidates to comment on it or discuss it in some way.

For example:

a) "'In Northanger Abbey, Jane Austen chooses a heroine who is both naïve and romantically 'silly' - but who, miraculously, wins our affection and even admiration.' Discuss this view of Catherine Morland." (CED, 1980)

b) "'The Mayor of Casterbridge is a study of the survival of the fittest.' Write an essay in which you consider some of the main reasons for Farfrae's survival, and Henchard's destruction." (JMB, 1987)

The majority of questions in both the CED (62,5%) and the JMB (56,25%) papers are of this type. With one exception, all questions related to consideration of character, rather than plot. In many cases, the question took the form of a comment about a character, which the pupils had to evaluate or discuss. This is far more popular than the type of question which asks for the pupil's OWN judgement of a character, and the prominence which the character question is given in the examination papers probably explains the trend in the classroom of doing character studies and constantly referring to other people's appraisals of a character.

5.1.1.3. Critical appraisal:

These questions involve comment on specific aspects of the novel, relating to such things as the technique of writing, the author's purpose, the form, style or themes, whereby the work or the author is viewed as an object. For example:

a) "'Love ... an extremely exacting usurer ... .' Write an essay on Hardy's use of irony to present an unromantic view of love in Far From the Madding Crowd, commenting in detail on the relationship between Bathsheba and Boldwood and between Troy and Fanny." (JMB, 1983)

(This example shows how categories may be seen to overlap. To some extent, it involves consideration of character, but as the emphasis is on Hardy's use of irony, it has been placed in this category.)

b) "'The business of the poet and novelist,' Hardy wrote in his memoranda two days after he had written the last page of The Mayor of Casterbridge, 'is to show the sorriness underlying the grandest things, and the grandeur underlying the sorriest things.' How far has Hardy, in your opinion, succeeded in satisfying his purpose or 'business' in The Mayor of Casterbridge?" (CED, 1987)

These questions formed a small percentage of the CED papers (16,7%) and featured almost twice as often in those of the JMB (31,25%). The most common aspect for focus was the author's purpose. Over the years, however, this type of question has appeared less and less.

5.1.1.4. Interpretation:

Such questions require that the candidate interpret the work, by exploring its meaning and attempting to relate it to wider issues or experiences of which the candidate is aware. Thus the question concerns itself not only with the novel but with its wider, universal significance. In his answer, the candidate is required to go beyond the confines of the novel to show his understanding of the topic. In such questions,

however, personal views are not being sought, although they may be asked for as part of a brief concluding comment. An example of such a question would be:

"'The title Great Expectations presupposes a conflict between one's expectations of life, and life itself. Accordingly, what the novel insists upon is the need for continual reassessment and redefinition of one's priorities and goals, of one's moral values, and of oneself.' Discuss this proposition in the light of your understanding of Pip's experience in the novel." (JMB, 1988)

No examples of this kind were found in the CED questions, and only one in the latest (1988) JMB paper (Example quoted above). This was the first year of the new syllabus for JMB, so whether this will become a trend remains to be seen.

5.1.1.5. Review:

In this type of question, candidates are asked to review a work, in the context of someone else's judgement of it, which they have to discuss or consider. This is distinguishable from examples such as those given for the questions considering character in the sense that this one focuses on an opinion of a work as a whole. Furthermore, it demands a personal viewpoint in return, with justification thereof. For example:

a) "'David Copperfield would be a more convincing novel if it contained fewer happy endings.' Discuss this judgement." (JMB, 1979)

b) "'In this rather rambling and muddled novel (Nicholas Nickleby) one of the most important and unifying aspects is the picture of false,

inadequate and perverted parenthood that it presents.' How far do you agree with this view? Discuss." (CED, 1979)

This type of question has appeared sporadically in the CED papers (only 12,5% of questions), and only on one occasion in the JMB examination, in 1979. The lack of emphasis on personal opinion and response is thus evident, despite the syllabus claims about its importance. In each of the few examples that were seen, a personal opinion was always requested in the light of someone else's judgement, an approach which was previously noted (Chapter 3) to be a detraction from the pupil's own personal response.

5.1.1.6. Creativity:

Creative questions may be defined as those seeking the candidates' personal responses, where the writer's opinions are sought on the novel, or matters of personal experience or social issue arising from the experience of the novel, or "an original piece of writing arising from the experience of literature, regarding what has been read as a stimulus for the reader's own thoughts." (Bazen, D., 1979, p.54).

Examples of questions seeking personal responses are:

a) "Sympathy; Compassion; Condonation; Admiration; Pity; Approval? Condemnation; Horror; Fear; Disgust; Hatred; Revulsion? What is your reaction to the story of Heathcliff? Justify your argument by referring to the text where necessary." (CED, 1979)

b) "Choose one or both of the following characters in the novel and describe how far, and at what points

> and for what reasons you feel sympathy for him or them:
> (i) Angel Clare (ii) Alec d'Urberville. "
> (CED, 1986)

No examples of creative questions were found in any of the JMB examination papers of the last ten years. Only two examples were found in the CED, making up a mere 8,3% of their set questions. In both cases (examples quoted above) there was no 'creative' response being sought as such, merely a personal opinion.

The more 'creative' type of question is very popular with the English Olympiad examiners, and examples of these will be considered in 5.3.

5.1.2 Contextual-type questions - Definitions and Evaluation:

For the categories of contextual questions, I am wholly indebted to Peter Mullineux, who used the following categories in his evaluation (1988) of the contextual questions set on Shakespeare's plays. He divided them into four categories, namely rote recall, comprehension, assumption and deduction, and creativity. These can be applied in a similar way to the questions set in the novel section of the literature paper.

Table 2 (See Appendix D) indicates, in this case, the total number of marks allocated to each of the four

categories of questions in each final examination paper for the JMB and CED. Because the totals for each paper differ greatly - two 40 mark contextual questions for each JMB paper, and two 30 mark contextual questions for the CED papers up till 1985, when only one question per paper was set - it is the final percentage figures that reflect the differences between the approaches of the two examining bodies.

5.1.2.1. Rote recall:

Mullineux defines the rote recall question as one which "requires little more than that the candidate remembers something and is able to communicate that information somehow." (Mullineux, P., 1988, p.29) For the purposes of this study, the sort of question which requires the pupil to place a passage in context has been included in this category. In addition, straightforward questions asking for the meaning of words or phrases have also been treated as rote-recall questions, although, depending on the circumstances, they may fall into another category. They have been treated as rote-recall when the context does not seem to easily provide the answer, and therefore when the pupil who will score is the one who remembers what he was taught during the year.

This type of question proved to be far more prevalent in the CED papers (12,8%) than in those of the JMB (5,2%). However, in both cases, the percentage of the

total was very low. In the JMB papers, the questions related to meanings of words or phrases or to putting a passage into context. The latter also appeared in the CED papers, as well as noticeably more questions asking for details to be recalled in the light of the given text. (For example, "Who was the man (line 2) and why was he being executed?" CED, 1983). In most papers, these questions were the opening ones, presumably providing an aid to the candidate in approaching the questions that followed.

Peter Mullineux, who found that this type of question was used mainly by L2 examiners, noted that these questions "encourage boring teaching". They ignore the 'why' aspects of the text in question, which "leads to the teaching of facts in the Gradgrind fashion." (Ibid., p.30) It is thus encouraging to note their lack of prominence in the examination questions set on the novel, because the habit of 'drilling' pupils on the content of a set book should diminish as a result.

5.1.2.2. Comprehension:

In this type of question a candidate is "asked to find an answer which appears in a given text". (Ibid., p.32). The answers to such questions are available in the given passage or extract. In most cases, wider knowledge of the book will benefit the candidate in his answer, but a perfectly sufficient answer can be

extracted from the given text alone.

These questions were far more popular with the CED (26,7%) than the JMB (10,9%). However, the CED has used them less and less since 1985. The new syllabus, effective from 1986, has clearly changed the emphasis of questioning to those requiring assumptions and deductions. JMB papers show no particular pattern with regard to this type of question, except that on two occasions (1981 and 1985), they featured strongly in contrast to other years when there were very few or none at all.

5.1.2.3. Assumptions and Deductions:

Mullineux's definition of this type of question is that it is one "where the pupil is asked to make assumptions or to deduce an answer" (Ibid., p.33). It means that the candidate is being made to think for himself. In most cases in this study, pupils are being asked to apply something from the passage to the novel as a whole.

These form the majority of questions in both the JMB (79,2%) and the CED (60,5%). In terms of testing understanding of various aspects of the novel, these questions would appear to be very effective. They cannot be answered adequately by a candidate who has not studied the set book carefully and who can make the necessary connections between items of significance in the given passage and the text as a

whole. "These questions are common in literature papers as they are a keen test of a pupil's understanding of the text and the pupil's ability to express himself clearly." However, what they do not test is "the candidate's flair for creative thought or his enjoyment of the text." (Ibid. p.34, Italics mine). This brings one to the final category.

5.1.2.4. Creativity:

The definition for this type of question is much the same as it is for the essay questions. Mullineux states that in answering such questions, candidates must show "creativity in thought" and personal responses are important.

> It is in these questions that candidates are often able to show off their flair for intelligent thought and to entertain the examiner with an answer that is enjoyable to read. ... Answers prepared beforehand will be of little use. Study guides and the teachers' feelings are no longer of importance. The pupil's own ability is being tested. (Ibid., p.37)

The results here are extremely disappointing, but not unexpected. In the contextual questions, the CED use none of this type at all, while the JMB use a mere 4,7%, all of which only fall into this category on the basis that they ask for a personal opinion or response. No essentially 'creative' responses are required at all. Bearing in mind that the syllabuses of both departments emphasise the importance of

personal response, it seems clear that this objective is not a priority when it comes to the examination. It only follows, then, that it ceases to become a priority in the teaching of the subject.

5.1.3 Conclusions

With these findings in mind, one needs to look back at the syllabus aims of the CED (1986) and JMB (1984) in order to determine whether or not the examinations are testing the achievement of these aims.

Both syllabuses stress the importance of the principle of 'enjoyment', the first goal of teaching literature being to "gain enjoyment from and skill in reading". It is significant that this is the most neglected aspect where the examination is concerned, presumably because of the problems of assessment of such questions. (This will be considered in more detail in 5.3 when the creative questions set by the English Olympiad examiners are studied.) The absence of creative questions which test a "candidate's flair for creative thought or his enjoyment of the text" (Mullineux, P.M., 1988, p.34) is thus a cause for concern. No such questions appeared in either the JMB or CED examination papers over the last ten years.

Both syllabuses also require that pupils "appreciate literature and read with discrimination". Because

appreciation of a text depends largely on the extent to which it has been enjoyed, the achievement of this goal must be seen to be reliant on the achievement of the first one. Thus, if the examination is not testing enjoyment of a text, can it really test appreciation?

The third goal for both syllabuses is that pupils should develop "the capacity for critical thinking about, and the ability to form and express their own views on literary works". Again, the percentage of questions asking pupils for their own views was very low - only two examples among the essay questions for the CED and none at all in the JMB. The trend of only giving pupils someone else's view to comment on is a disturbing one simply because "it is the experience of another reader on which they are being asked to comment, not their own" (Butler, H.L., 1987, p.40). Obviously, the pupil's own opinion may still be reflected, (although it is very rarely asked for), but the nature of the question is such that it immediately detracts from the pupil's own response in order to focus on that of another.

Another goal for both syllabuses is that of gaining "some knowledge of basic literary genres and the techniques appropriate to each". This is perhaps the easiest of the aims to examine, because 'knowledge' is more tangible - and therefore more easily examinable - than concepts such as 'appreciation' and 'enjoyment'. The essay questions categorised as 'critical appraisal'

test the pupil's knowledge of techniques, forms and genres. However, while the questions set can be seen to be testing the achievement of this aim, it was also found that this was not a priority in examination questions. Initially more popular with the JMB, such questions have appeared less and less over the years.

The remaining goals for both syllabuses focus on the idea of 'understanding' - understanding of self, and of one's literary and cultural heritage, and (in the JMB syllabus only) understanding of other people and a wider experience of life, including moral awareness. The category of 'interpretation' questions may be seen to be a means of testing whether these aims have been achieved, because the candidate is asked to explore the meaning of a text and relate it to wider, more universal issues. But in the essay questions set in the last ten years, there were no examples of this in the CED papers, and only one in the most recent JMB paper. As far as the contextual questions were concerned, those requiring 'assumptions and deductions' - very prevalent in both departments' papers - were seen to be successful in testing <u>understanding of the text</u>, but that was all. Understanding of the text does not appear as an aim in either syllabus.

It would thus seem that in South Africa the ideals of teaching literature and the realities of the examination are in direct conflict. These findings

concur with those of the Bullock Report of 1975. Instead of the examinations testing whether the aims have been achieved, they rather dictate an approach to the teaching of literature which contradicts the ideals set out in the syllabus under the aims of 'Reading and Literature Study'. In other words, in order to prepare a class for the examination which stresses most of all understanding of the text on its own, and knowledge of a central character, teaching methods must necessarily cast aside the aims of the study of literature and sacrifice the interests of education to the examination.

5.2 Alternative examining methods : the internal examination experiment in the Transvaal Education Department (TED).

The Transvaal Education Department, in particular, has experimented with internal examining in various subjects. In the 1960's, they experimented with internal examining in a number of 'Project schools', and again in 1975, when they introduced a system of exempted and partially exempted schools, such schools being exempted from the final external matriculation examination in some or all of their subjects. These schools would be responsible not only for the evaluation and promotion of pupils from Stds 6 to 9, but also for the evaluation and promotion of their Std 10 pupils. Commenting on this system when it was introduced, the TED Inspector of Education at the time noted the following:

> Continuous evaluation will play an important part in these schools and the mark allocation will be as follows: year mark - 50%, examination mark - 50%. Each school will have its own examination board consisting of the headmaster, the deputy-head, vice-principals and the senior assistants concerned. This board will be responsible for moderating and condoning marks for each subject. These 12 schools will arrange among themselves for the maintenance of standards with regard to examination papers, marking memorandums and the marking of examination scripts. (Hirschorn, S., 1976, p.55)

This internal examination experiment ran till 1985, when it was scrapped. Very little information could be found on the latter part of the experiment (1980 - 1985) or on why it was so abruptly abandoned but, according to

Professor Malvern van Wyk Smith, chairman of the English First Language Committee on the JMB and a member of the TED Project Committee at the time, it would seem that the experiment ran out of steam. Enthusiastic members of the Committee moved on after the first few years and some of their successors lacked the motivation and interest necessary to sustain such a project effectively. Subsequently, the project was taken over by the JMB Core Syllabus Revision Committee. Some of the findings of the TED experiment trickled through into the new JMB syllabus, but in a very small way. However, despite the lack of information available on the experiment, some valuable findings emerged from a syllabus research project which ran concurrently with the internal examining experiment from 1975 to 1979 at six of the partially exempted schools. The project was carried out under the supervision of the Working Committee for English First Language, who submitted a report to the JMB on the results of their research. Their chief aim was to devise an alternative syllabus to overcome the problems with literature teaching which they had identified.

5.2.1 Reasons for and objectives of the project:

An analysis of problems encountered in the classroom with literature teaching revealed a number of shortcomings in the syllabus. (See Appendix E - Report to the Joint Matriculation Board). These included the points that the syllabus "was not specific in its statement or

definition of the subject content", that it "failed to provide criteria for examinations", and thirdly, that it did not "give clear directives to examiners who then, by their own interpretations of the syllabus, tended to determine teaching practice" (TED Report to the JMB, 1980, p.24, Italics mine). The latter point echoes once more the findings of the Bullock Report of 1975 and of the examination questions considered in 5.1, namely that the approach to the teaching of literature is dictated to or determined by the examiners and the realities of external examining.

The Working Committee in the six partially exempted schools selected a number of aspects for consideration in their experiment and those relevant to this thesis will be considered here. Firstly, examination results showed that pupils were not achieving the expected norm in the Senior Certificate examinations, particularly in the Literature paper.

> Because of the importance of the study of literature, the weighting given to it in teaching English and the additional marks allocated to the literature paper, it was felt that an improvement in this section could lead to a general improvement in the results for the subject.
> (TED Report to the Planning and Supervisory Committee, 1980, p.1)

Secondly, the syllabus as a whole had shortcomings. Ways of integrating the various components of English teaching ie. writing, language study and literature, needed to be identified. And thirdly, the committee wanted to investigate the feasibility of introducing a portfolio

system which would provide a "means for continuous evaluation of pupils' writing achievement in the course of the year, and also of ensuring that pupils are examined in a wide variety of writing modes" (Ibid, p.2).

5.2.2 Findings of the Project, 1975 to 1979:

Initially, the Working Committee concerned itself with the development of teaching content and strategies which were aimed at improving the pupils' achievement in literature, without adversely affecting their performance in the remaining two sections of the examinations. At the same time, they tested ways of integrating language teaching and literature study.

In 1976, internal examinations were written for English First Language in Standards 8, 9 and 10. Questions were devised by the Working Group members, but teachers' responses clearly showed a preference for the external examination. Although there was an improvement of 3% in the Std 10 literature papers, schools were concerned because the marks were not "normalised" by the TED (Ibid., p.3). Therefore, in 1977, English was examined externally in Std 10, and results showed a 1,5% improvement on the 1976 paper. However, it was then decided to continue with the external examination for the language and written composition papers, but to have an internally examined paper for literature only. One of the reasons for this decision was to allow for the examining of six prescribed works rather than four, with

the focus on two or three main areas of study, specified for each book. This proved unsuccessful, because "despite their teaching only selected themes from each book, teachers had been under great pressure to complete the six works prescribed in the time available" (Ibid., p.8). Marks for the literature papers dropped by 2,2% as a result, but there remained an overall improvement of 1,3% on the 1977 marks, with significant improvements in the language and writing sections. In 1979, the literature marks increased by 3,5%.

In 1978, a portfolio system was introduced in Standards 8 and 9, as a means of continuous assessment and of examining pupils' work over a wider range of writing. It replaced the year mark, and was instead "based on a portfolio of writing, which would comprise a selection of the best writing in a wide range of modes by each pupil in the course of the year" (Ibid., p.8). The system was well received in 1978, and, "despite the heavy marking and administration imposed on the teachers", it "had led to more purposeful writing by the better pupils (Ibid., p.9). The use of the portfolio was therefore extended to Std 10 in 1979 and included as part of the internal examination mark.

However, in 1979 the portfolio was not successful at Std 10 level. The Committee felt that there were administrative difficulties and problems in the moderation of marks, and noted with disappointment that the system had not led to an improvement in the quality

of pupils' writing. They did not reject it, however, as a means of arriving at a record mark for the pupils, but felt that while less cumbersome means could be used, the portfolio should remain as an optional means.

The Committee's overall conclusions on the examination results are still very encouraging. The experiment showed that results improved in all three standards in the course of the five years, especially in Std 10.

> It is difficult to ascribe this consistent increase to any one specific factor although it is obvious that the fact of teachers' meeting regularly to exchange ideas and generate new enthusiasm cannot but have a salutary effect on their teaching and on the performance of their pupils.

> The improvement in pupil performance can, however, be regarded as an indication of the acceptability of the modified syllabus content and of the effectiveness of the teaching approach suggested in the Draft Course syllabus which was followed by the schools.
> (Ibid., p.13)

These results are reinforced by the fact that six control schools, matching the partially exempted schools in academic achievement and socio-economic background, were set up, with results being monitored and compared in the two groups over the period that the project ran. They found that "the partially exempted schools' achievement in the Std 10 examination, relative to that of the control schools, had shown a steady increase over the four-year period" (Ibid., p.10) and from 1975 to 1979, the results of the partially exempted schools had

increased by 11,3%. This was "regarded as an indication of the success of the innovations and improvements introduced in the course of the experiment"(Ibid., p.12).

5.2.3 Proposed syllabus:

During the experiment, the Working Committee drew up and implemented a draft course syllabus, which aimed at achieving "a more detailed, integrated and purposive syllabus", by providing for "teaching, in an integrated fashion, of the four modes of language ... listening, speaking, reading, writing" (Ibid., p.6). The draft course syllabus was favourably received in 1978 and revised and adapted "to incorporate the findings of the teachers in the classroom as well as the research and experience of the members of the Working Committee" (TED, Report to the JMB, 1980, p.25).

The main features of the proposed syllabus are described in Appendix D, but for the purposes of this thesis it is significant to note that the "format of the examination has been radically changed to provide for the writing of integrated examination papers, a logical extension of the integrated classroom teaching by the syllabus" (Ibid., p.26). For the Std 10 examination, about 43% of the total mark is derived from a record mark, partly oral and partly written. The written record mark may include "marks awarded for a portfolio of the pupils' own writing, evaluated and collected in the course of the year" (TED, Proposed Syllabus, 1980, p.16). The end-of-

year examination mark is made up of three Integrated Papers, all of which include questions on the prescribed works. These papers are to be set and marked internally, subject to the final moderation of the TED.

Although the question of integrating the various aspects of English teaching is not the concern of this thesis, this proposed syllabus still points to the need for an internal system of examining, and the experience of the Working Committee showed clearly that such a system had positive results. It seems unlikely that the results could suddenly have been negative after 1980, and it is a great pity that the project was abandoned, for whatever reasons.

5.2.4 Conclusions:

The experience of the TED internal examination experiment backs up a number of points made in Chapter 4 about examining in Britain. Firstly, there is the point that the examiners interpret the syllabus in a certain way, which then affects the types of questions set, and this in turn determines teaching methods and practice. This premise was the starting point for the syllabus project of the Working Group for English First Language and their experience has shown why an internal element is so necesary in English examining. Similarly, the various British examining boards involved in English syllabus improvements have all experimented with a strong internal element.

Very significant is the fact that the TED's experience of internal and external examining initially showed that internal examining of language and written composition was less popular, but that in the case of literature, the internal examination was far more beneficial.

Secondly, the TED's focus on achieving a more integrated syllabus echoes the numerous overseas calls for more imaginative and creative work being recognised alongside the formal, critical responses to a text, so that literary appreciation and creative writing may be combined. Although there are always fears and concerns about assessment in this area, these were seen to be exaggerated, judging by the Midland Examining Group's experiment with "directed response to expressive writing" (Appendix A, and Chapter 4, pg 60 -61).

Thirdly, the experiment with the portfolio system deserves some comparison with the course work approaches used in Britain. Evidently the TED encountered some problems here but, while saying that it was unsuccessful at Std 10 level, they retained it in their proposed syllabus as an option. As very few details appear in the report on the nature of this portfolio, it is difficult to comment on it, but it appears to have been limited to original writing.

If one recalls the Leicester pupil's comment on the course work folder and its success (Chapter 4, page 65), it would seem that this had far more scope and

incorporated literature study as well as original writing. In view of the TED's emphasis on integrated study, it would be more valuable if the portfolio encompassed both aspects as well. Ideally, (and successfully implemented in the Leicester syllabus schools in Britain), a portfolio should include projects and other written pieces on the interests of the pupil. It follows that he is regarded as the knowledgeable expert on the contents of his folder, which can then be examined orally if necessary.

Finally, the TED asserted that "teachers' meeting regularly to exchange ideas and generate new enthusiasm" (TED, Report to the JMB, 1980, p.26) had such a positive effect both on their teaching and on the pupils' performance. This stresses again the importance of co-operation and communication between teachers themselves, as well as between teachers and moderators or examiners. In addition to this, a situation where teachers are working closely together also builds up a consensus over the assessment of pupils' work, which , as Chater pointed out (Chapter 4, pg 64), helps to deal with problems of unreliability.

5.3 The open-book examination in South Africa

It has already been shown, in Chapter 4, that the use of the open-book examination provides an effective way of moving away from content-based questions in both the external examinations and internal assessment. In preparing for such an examination, pupils would find that learning the contents of a novel or prepared model answers would be useless activities. Instead, they would have to recognise that the exercise would involve more personal and creative responses.

Allowing pupils to take an unannotated primary text into the examination room with them does not make the exercise any easier, nor does it reduce the need to know the text well. In fact, the pupils would need to know their way around the novel exceptionally well to find references they want at short notice.

> But it would totally undercut the kind of useless memory swotting that pupils have a desperate recourse to. Since there would be no point in learning the contents of a (text) that is carried into the exam, pupils - and teachers - would have to recognise that intelligent ideas about, and perceptive responses to, the contents of the play, are what the exercise is all about. Nobody outside an exam would ever try to write coherent comments about a play without having the text at hand; it is what seems to be an artificial and arbitrary withholding of it that can reduce the study of a play to an exercise in mindless memorising.
>
> (Dyer, M., 1977, p.44)

This viewpoint echoes the point made by Frank Whitehead in 1966 on the ludicrous nature of writing criticism

without access to the text in question.(Chapter 4, pg.66)

Examination questions which ask for an appreciation of a text are surely seeking understanding of the text and not memory of it, so there seems to be no reason why the candidates should not have free access to the texts they are being asked to discuss in detail - "texts which will in any case be readily available to them for the rest of their lives and which they will never again be called upon to discuss from memory" (Thompson, J.B., 1968, p.30). Paffard suggests that the "otherwise inexplicable reluctance" on the part of examiners to use the open-book examination is that it would mean that the contextual type of question would fall away. While the context question "may test diligence more effectively than essay questions, preparing for them may destroy enjoyment, deflect attention from what is central, involve a great deal of unprofitable labour in memorizing footnotes and an element of luck may significantly affect candidates' results" (Paffard, M., 1978, p.90). Bearing that in mind, it would not seem to be any loss were this type of question to fall away.

The essay question in the traditional external literature paper poses all sorts of problems for examiners, as John Dixon points out. Students are assessed on several texts in an examination and essays have to be written on three or four texts in three hours or less, and each of these major pieces of literature must be discussed from memory.

> Under these circumstances, knowing that answers will be prepared, the examiner must try to find the one or perhaps two questions on each text that will stimulate the majority of candidates, not reward them for second-hand opinions, not demand too detailed a recall of the text, and not require more than thirty to sixty minutes for a reasonable answer. Common sense tells us it is too much to expect.
>
> (Dixon, J., 1979, p.14)

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the essay questions set in the traditional literature examination are of such a limited nature. Perhaps the more 'creative' questions set for an open-book examination are a better alternative.

However, a further reservation about the open-book examination (hereafter referred to as the O.B.E.) may arise from examiners in this regard, namely the problem of marking creative responses fairly and 'objectively'. Obviously there can be no set memorandum for personal responses. Jim Sweetman, a chief examiner for the GCSE examination in Britain, discusses this problem from his experience of examining creative responses to literary texts. He deals with the practicalities of evaluating such responses. In a set question worth 30 marks, for example, 15 would be allocated to textual relevance and 15 to overall impression, mood and tone. "Examiners were asked to use ticks in the body of the question to reward aspects of relevance to the text as they detected them. Practical experience showed this to be a surprisingly reliable form of marking." (Sweetman, J., 1987, p.61). His experience would seem to suggest that the problem is

much exaggerated. The fact that the English Olympiad examiners have used the O.B.E. in South Africa for fourteen years without finding this aspect a major stumbling block also indicates that the reservations about this are unfounded. Since the Olympiad's inception in 1976, all the chief examiners have been in favour of the O.B.E. system. If they have encountered any problem at all, it is the fact that the O.B.E. system is not more prevalent. The examiners' comments on the 1982 English Olympiad, for example, mentioned that a disturbing number of candidates resorted to mere storytelling in their responses. This was, they felt, due to the pupils' unfamiliarity with this type of examining, which has as its "greatest strength", its "forcing pupils to use references and substantiate contentions" (Crux, Feb.1983, p.9).

The Olympiad's stated aim is "the testing of creative and imaginative application of specific knowledge about a text or subject" (Ibid.). Some examples of questions from recent English Olympiad papers follow. They should illustrate how successfully this type of examination moves away from the content-based questions and concentrates on imaginative and personal, and therefore meaningful, responses. In many of them, pupils are being asked to write not as the reader, but to take on a role as an imaginary participant or spectator, or even as a director or a character. This allows for "dwelling on the experience of the text by imaginatively living it through

the role" (Dixon, J and Stratta, L., 1985, p.5) and is surely preferable to writing in the analytic tradition.

1) "Imagine that Geoffrey Chaucer is a modern South African writer, and has joined a group of South Africans travelling from Cape Town to Pretoria to attend a national convention. He does not take long to discover that the group represents a cross-section of South African society. In the spirit of the General Prologue to The Canterbury Tales, write a section of the General Prologue to the modern Geoffrey Chaucer's The Pretoria Tales." (1986 paper)

2) "The pilgrimage to Canterbury is over, and the pilgrims have disappeared into the twilight that is beginning to settle over the town of Canterbury. Here, in this dark, ale-reeking, crowded inn, where the noise of the happily drunk rises with the smoke of the fire into the blackened rafters and thatch, sit three of the pilgrims, tankards of ale and the remains of a leg of mutton and a loaf of bread before them. The Wife of Bath, the Pardoner and the Miller are talking of the trip from London, and, in particular, of the tales they heard. They are trying to decide which of the tales was the best, and their eloquence is being helped along considerably by the quantity of ale they have all consumed. Record the conversation." (1986 paper)

3) "You are responsible for organising a poetry-reading (which should last approximately half an hour) as part of your school's literature society term programme. You have decided to present poems from Voices from Within which explore a similar theme. Bearing in mind who your audience is likely to be, write your script. This must include: an introduction, the names of the poems, the comments you intend to make on each poem, and a conclusion." (1987 paper)

4) "Poetry is often very unpopular in South African schools because pupils (and sometimes teachers) feel that the poems to be studied do not reflect the way they personally experience the world. One can argue that it is poetry like that found in Voices from Within that should rather be taught in our schools." (1987 paper)

5) "'A' and 'B' are arguing. 'A' is making much of the way foils are used to 'teach' both the chief

protagonists of the dramas and the audience that is experiencing them. 'B' replies somewhat antagonistically: "You can't talk about a play as if it's 'a learning experience'. It's about action, passion, human tears and human merriment - it's to entertain us, not preach to us!"
Write an introduction to the Olympiad 1988 syllabus that attempts to reconcile these two points of view, OR Transcribe from your tape-recorder the answer Shakespeare himself gave when you plucked up the courage to dial him." (1988 paper)

6) "You have a dream in which kings and princes are sitting round with goblets of wine after a banquet. They are talking about 'unforgettable characters'. (By the above phrase is meant characters' - fools/foils - unforgettable as people, not as 'clever literary creations'.) Hamlet is present, as is Lear, as is Henry V. So, by a happy chance, are you! Record their conversation, and your own contribution. (Incidentally, it's all charmingly relaxed; nobody is standing on ceremony or bothering about titles, so enjoy yourself!") (1988 paper)

7) "You are a reporter for a South African magazine TV programme. Interview a leading Portuguese citizen, exploring Portuguese reactions to the anthology, Shades of Adamastor." (1989 paper)

8) "In his preface to Shades of Adamastor, Malvern van Wyk Smith indicates that: 'While it is ... impossible that this anthology could please all its readers, I have at least attempted ... not to anger all its readers all the time.' You are the publisher of the book and have been called upon to make a speech at the literary launch. Write your speech, using this statement as your theme." (1989 paper)

Very little needs to be said about such questions - they speak for themselves. Clearly, though, like the more conventional questions, they test understanding of the work studied, but they glean so much more from the pupil than some swotted and regurgitated answer. Appreciation of the text concerned is being both 'tested' and reinforced at the same time, for what pupil would not

enjoy answering questions such as these? And no two answers would be the same - surely an inspiring thought to those who have to mark them!

Finally, two questions in a similar vein from the first English Olympiad examination, written in 1976. The fact that such questions are still being used is obvious testimony to their success.

> "If you were invited to adapt Cry, The Beloved Country for stage presentation, what principles would you be guided by in selecting some 10 or 12 scenes for dramatic representation?"

> "Compose a dialogue of some fifty lines that might have ensued between Jacky and Sponono. Aim, by means of argument to reveal the impassioned attitude of ONE of the speakers. (You may, if you wish, imagine that Alan Paton, as the principal, is present as a listener.)"

In all the Olympiad papers from which these 'creative' questions have been quoted, there are more traditional questions as well, particularly those which Bazen would classify as 'review' or 'interpretation' questions. The important point is, however, that there is such a choice. And because pupils have the text with them, and they cannot churn out answers that have been drilled and prepared before-hand, the examination becomes a more meaningful exercise, a culmination of the whole process of studying and appreciating literature. In the "testing of the pupil's ability to read and respond on his own, independently of the teacher's guidance, lies the key to the examining of 'literature' at all levels" (Whitehead, F., 1966, p.245).

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Conclusions:

It seems quite clear from the accumulated evidence that the inflexible demands and realities of external examinations dominate literature teaching in South African schools today. Many pupils find their experience of school literature study to be a negative one, simply because in the process of preparing for the examination, all chances of enjoying literature are destroyed. This happens when teachers are forced to abandon all creative teaching methods to prepare their pupils for the final external examination, so that they may be able to answer certain types of questions. The nature of these invariably unimaginative questions is determined by the practical constraints of a mass external examination, and the questions inevitably influence the approach to teaching the subject. In both the syllabuses of the CED and JMB the principle of 'enjoyment' is stressed, but this is the most neglected aspect of the external examination in both departments. The syllabus and examination requirements demand that pupils show evidence of having learnt to "appreciate literature", but appreciation must surely depend on enjoyment, and if the examination does not test enjoyment, how can it test appreciation?

Because of the administrative realities of the external examination, the emphasis is invariably on content and knowledge about literature, which does little to expand

the pupils' experience of life or increase their self-knowledge, moral awareness, or understanding of others, all of which are important and stated aims of teaching literature. Furthermore, the syllabuses expect pupils to develop the capacity for "critical thinking", while the examinations have little or no questions asking for the pupils' own views. Instead the emphasis is on a kind of 'literary criticism' approach whereby pupils adopt an 'authoritative view' of a text, learning and reproducing the views of others instead of responding from their own personal experience. Other people's judgements are very often repeated without reflection, which is hardly a way of encouraging critical thinking.

Instead of focusing on testing the aims of literature study, the majority of questions - particularly the contextual questions - test understanding of the text, an aspect which is not a stated aim at all. One can thus conclude that the aims of literature study and the aims of external examining are wholly incompatible. Not only that, but instead of the examinations testing whether the aims of teaching have been achieved, they instead dictate how the subject is taught. If the examinations are to be valid, it is important that they actually test what they set out to test. In the case of the CED, which states that the examinations should measure how far the syllabus aims have been attained, one finds that the examinations are therefore wholly invalid.

Of course, it is clear that the examiner has a difficult task. One cannot measure enjoyment or moral awareness as easily as one can measure knowledge of content. One cannot test the real appreciation of literary works, the enjoyment of them, or personal imaginative response, by means of formal written papers. Thus it seems that the external literature examination can never really be valid, because in order to be administratively efficient and reliable, the examinations sacrifice educational efficiency and validity.

But examinations are still a necessary evil. The fact that a subject is examinable gives it status and is clearly a strong motivating factor for pupils. As far as literature study is concerned, examinations cannot simply be abolished, but the subject can and should be examined in a different way. It is the external examination which cannot measure accurately the response to literature or the experience gained by its study, so it makes no sense to continue examining it in its present form. Other forms of evaluation need to be considered to replace the present examination system.

From the various changes and innovations that have taken place in Britain over the years, it is clear that the calls for internal examining have been the obvious response to the problems of examining mentioned above. The Mode III system has proved to be particularly successful, using internal assessment and retaining the final examination, but having the schools design the

syllabus, set and mark the examinations, and then subject the results to external moderation by the examining board. The option to use course work assessment alongside the examination or in place of it has also been successful and demonstrates the flexibility of the Mode III system. Not all schools would like to adopt internal assessment, and other subjects may not lend themselves to it, as does English literature, but the important point is that in Britain, the schools have the choice.

In South Africa, the experimentation with internal assessment has been far more limited. Nonetheless, the TED found that over a period of five years of internal assessment in English literature, their pupils' results showed a steady increase amounting to 11,3%. And one of their significant findings was the beneficial effect that the regular meeting of teachers had on both teaching practice and pupil performance. The ideas that were exchanged and the enthusiasm that was generated were invaluable. This sort of interaction would be necessary if schools opted for internal assessment, and teachers would benefit from some kind of co-operative local network for exchanging ideas for syllabus changes and improvements, deciding on suitable and popular texts, and even circulating examination papers.

Finally, the flexibility offered by internal assessment could also allow for and promote the use of the open-book examination. This would inevitably mean that examination questions moved away from being content-based and would

look instead for more personal and creative responses. At the same time, this would change the approach to the subject in the classroom, making the study of literature more meaningful.

But in spite of all these claims and of Britain's successes with internal assessment in English, one cannot ignore the fact that in South Africa, there remains a massive distrust of course work and internal examining, particularly among the external education authorities who wield the power when it comes to making decisions about changing anything. It is with this reality in mind that the following recommendations are made.

6.2 Recommendations:

1. Ideally, like the British system of Modes I, II and III, schools should have the option of examining internally, with or without course-work assessment, and the education departments or examining boards should provide external moderation. It would probably be useful to develop some sort of 'common core' syllabus for English as a subject, and include a range of options for literature study and the means of assessing it, preferably using course work alongside an examination as the basis for assessment.

2. It may be unrealistic to expect that examiners would welcome the idea of the external examination in English literature being scrapped in the near future, but even if it is retained, it could be improved and made more valid and meaningful if it included a course-work component and was conducted as an open-book examination. The success of the South African English Olympiad, which is an external examination, provides much to learn from and draw on for the future.

3. Whatever changes are made to the means of evaluation, any examination system would benefit from some kind of differentiation, so that those intending to study English literature at university may be prepared to do so, while the majority of pupils are simply taught to enjoy reading literature. This would at least ensure

that they go on doing so of their own accord after school, instead of being discouraged for life from reading any of the great authors in English.

4. With reference to the experimentation that has been carried out in South Africa, such as the Transvaal project schools, it is strongly recommended that the experimentation be continued. It is extremely disconcerting that the reasons for abandoning an apparently successful system of internal examining are kept almost secret, when much benefit and encouragement can be gained from their experience. Perhaps one of the other education departments would consider running a similar internal examining experiment, where the teachers involved can co-operate and meet regularly to exchange ideas and experiences.

5. Finally, there needs to be far more dialogue between teachers and examiners if anything is to change. The pressure to alter and improve the examination system must come from the teachers, not only as complaints and criticisms but also in the form of encouragement and constructive suggestions. When good questions are set, or when one feels a particularly good book has been prescribed, and the interests of literature are being served, then the examiners should be informed. In general, there needs to be more direct communication between teachers and examining boards, in both directions.

APPENDIX A : Midland Examining Group's paper, entitled "Directed Response to Expressive Writing"

Neil Miller is alone after the death of his family in an accident. So that when a virulent plague sweeps across the world, dealing death to all it touches, Neil has a double battle for survival: not just for the physical necessities of life, but with the subtle pressures of fear and loneliness . . .

In the following extract, after seeing no living people for days, he finds a deflated balloon with an address written on it. He goes there at once . . .

A sports car was standing outside, its relatively clean windscreen evidence of recent use. Neil parked behind it and climbed out into the hazy sunshine. He ought to have put a sign up outside his own house, he realized. For that matter, he should have thought of something like the balloons. The inhabitant of No.34 was obviously more enterprising.

The front door was latched but not locked. He opened it and stepped into the hall. He called out:

'Hi, there! Anyone home?'

There was no reply. He had a moment's disappointment but only that. At this time of day, he himself would have been more likely to be out than in. The stranger would have his own routine of walks and foraging.

A residue of old habits and etiquette suggested that he ought not to make himself free of someone else's house without the owner's invitation: he should wait on the step or outside in the car. But he realized how silly that was. The old ways were gone; ownership no longer had a meaning.

All the same his exploration was tentative. The Hall, he observed, was quite tidy, and he ventured further to find a kitchen with pots neatly stacked and working surfaces much cleaner than he had left. Cupboards were well stocked with food and a calor gas stove had been imported into an otherwise all electric set-up. Crates of beer stood in a pile against one wall. The whole scene had an organised look.

He went upstairs, noting that the carpet on stairs and landing had been recently swept. An open door led to a large sitting room, equally clean and with the stamp of everyday use. On a desk was a neat pile of papers, each one a sketch roughly drawn in pencil. They must have been done by the person living here because they were post-Plague. That showed not only in the emptiness of the streets but in particular things – a shattered shop window with goods in disarray, a skeleton at a road junction. The sketches were neat and realistic, the work of a draughtsman. Near the window, though, stood an easel, with a half finished oil painting. That was a frenzy of colours and shapes, sharp and blurred; Neil could not tell what it was meant to represent.

There was a bowl of apples on the desk and by them a ledger type book. He opened it to see writing – the handwriting that had been on the card with the balloon – and to recognize it as a diary. As he flicked through he noticed that neatness and legibility seemed to have been despatched with in a desperate desire to communicate. On the mantel an atmospheric clock spun on its circular brass weight to and fro, half a minute to each spin. Someone who wanted to keep track of time, an interest he had long abandoned.

He continued with his exploration. There was a bathroom across the way, again very clean, with a kettle in which hot water had presumably been carried up from the kitchen. The best solution, he decided, would be for both of them to abandon their present dens – to join in finding a place where a full hot water system, perhaps central heating as well, could be run off Calor gas. He was pleased with himself for the thought: he could be enterprising as well.

The door of the next room was ajar. Neil pushed it open and saw that the curtains were drawn and it was in shadow. He saw a bed made up, the whiteness of sheets . . . then the darker vertical shadow that hung in the centre of the room. The rope was secured to an old-fashioned brass light fitting; a chair was overturned on the carpet.

He just managed to reach the bathroom before being sick.

(Adapted from 'Empty World' by John Christopher.)

HOUSE FEAR

Always – I tell you this they learned–
Always at night when they returned
To the lonely house from far away,
To lamps unlighted and the fire gone gray,
They learned to rattle the lock and key
To give whatever might chance to be,
Warning and time to be off in flight:
And preferring the out – to the indoor night,
They learned to leave the house door wide
Until they had lit the lamp inside.

('House Fear' from 'The Hill Wife' by Robert Frost.)

In the second section of the paper candidates were asked to undertake one of the following tasks and to write about 200–250 words.

A continuation of the story from the point when Neil sets out to return home.

OR. Some of the diary entries written by the occupant of the house.

OR. A description entitled 'The Empty House'.

APPENDIX B:

Southern Universities' Joint Board for School Examinations

Ordinary Level ENGLISH LITERATURE

Special Paper for Bedales School

Wednesday A.M. 7th July 1965 2 hours

Write on the answer cover the name and publisher of the dictionary yo use.

Answer four questions. These must be chosen so that you attempt at least one from each of the Sections A, B and C. You are advised to u your copies of the set books for reference but use them sparingly.
[All questions carry equal marks.]

Section A

1. Either: (a) How far do these "Twentieth Century Essays" really reflect the twentieth century?
Or: (b) 'The success of an essayist depends on his use of a really distinctive style.' Is this true? Illustrate your answer from the work of one or two essayists in "Twentieth Century Essays".

2. Either: (a) 'I am Heathcliff,' says Catherine Earnshaw. Why does she feel this and what importance has her feeling in the development of "Wuthering Heights"?
Or: (b) Mr Lockwood is not an actor in the story of "Wuthering Heights". Why is he of such importance in the novel?

3. Either: (a) "Great Expectations" made a very successful film. Suggest why this was so.
Or: (b) Dickens altered the end of "Great Expectations" so as to reunite Pip with Estella. He said he thought the alteration would make the story more acceptable. Do you agree?

4. Either: (a) Some people say that Paul Morel is too sensitive to be quite real. Do you agree with this criticism of "Sons and Lovers"? Give reasons for your answer.
Or: (b) Explain, with special reference to any one character in "Sons and Lovers", how far the life of the mining community affects its members.

5. Either: (a) What impression do you think the reader of "Cider with Rosie" is meant to have of Rosie herself?
Or: (b) The author is looking back, in "Cider with Rosie", on his own lost past. How does he make us feel that all the world is gone forever?

6. Either: (a) Leo Colston says in "The Go-Between" that the discovery of his diary woke in him a sense of despair and defeat. Why was this?

Or: (b) Do you think that L.P. Hartley is successful in his attempt to recreate, in "The Go-Between", the feelings and attitudes of a schoolboy? Give reasons for your answer.

7. Either: (a) Why does Harper Lee give this novel the title "To Kill a Mockingbird"?
Or: (b) Much of the theme of "To Kill a Mockingbird" depends on the idea of being a `neighbour´. Explain how the children come to understand this.

8. Either: (a) Use one of the stories in "Short Stories of Our Time" to explain and illustrate the qualities of a good short story.
Or: (b) `It is impossible to develop characters in a short story.´ Explain how the stories in "Short Stories of Our Time" show this statement to be true or false.

Section B

9. Either: (a) Chaucer´s pilgrims are said to be a representation of the society of his own time. What do you learn about that society from the "Prologue to the Canterbury Tales"?
Or: (b) Which of the Pilgrims would you expect to win the competition in story telling? Explain why and say what kind of story you would expect him or her to tell.

10. Either: (a) How far and in what ways do these Twentieth Century Poets make the sights and sounds of the twentieth century the subject of their poems?
Or: (b) Which of these poets in "Ten Twentieth Century Poets" would you expect to see in an examination syllabus in the twenty-first century? Explain why.

11. Either: (a) There are people who argue that a long poem is not a poem at all - it can only be poetic passages embedded in long, prosaic descriptions. Using one or more of the poems in "Longer Narrative Poems" to illustrate your answer, explain why you agree or disagree with this statement.
Or: (b) Which of the poets represented in "Longer Narrative Poems" would you choose to write a poem about the journey of Man into space? Give reasons for your choice.

Section C

12. Either: (a) A modern audience does not believe in witches or in ghosts. How would you produce "Macbeth" so that the full importance and evil of these characters were felt by such an audience?
Or: (b) `"Macbeth" is a play about the consequences of choosing wrong rather than right.´ Explain what is meant by this statement and how far you think it to be true.

13. Either: (a) Explain how Shakespeare makes us aware of what is going on in Brutus' mind before the murder of Caesar.
Or: (b) Who do you think was `the noblest Roman of them all', and why?

14. Either: (a) `St Joan is really a female Shaw, a mouth-piece of Shavian ideas, and certainly no saint.' Explain how far you agree or disagree with this statement.
Or: (b) What device does Shaw use to show his audience how the various political forces of the time were at work in the condemnation of Joan. Is he successful?

15. Either: (a) Thomas More was, or is believed to have been, a great man and a great saint. Do you get this impression of him from Robert Bolt's play?
Or: (b) Why did Robert Bolt make use of a character called "Common Man" in "A Man for all Seasons"? Does he get the effect he intended?

16. Either: (a) `"Death of a Salesman" is classical tragedy - but about a little, not a great, man.' Discuss.
Or: (b) Write about the way in which Arthur Miller makes use of the resources of the stage itself and its techniques to help his effect in "Death of a Salesman"

APPENDIX C:

TABLE 1 : EVALUATION OF ESSAY QUESTIONS IN JMB AND CED PAPERS

JMB ESSAY QUESTIONS

YEAR	SUMMARY	PLOT/CHAR	CRIT APP	INTERP	REVIEW	CREATIVITY	TOTAL
1979	0	1	0	0	1	0	2
1981	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
1982	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
1983	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
1984	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
1985	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
1987	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
1988	0	1	0	1	0	0	2
TOTALS: No. of questions:	0	9	5	1	1	0	16
%	0	56,25	31,25	6,25	6,25	0	100 %

CED ESSAY QUESTIONS

YEAR	SUMMARY	PLOT/CHAR	CRIT APP	INTERP	REVIEW	CREATIVITY	TOTAL
1979	0	1	1	0	1	1	4
1980	0	2	2	0	0	0	4
1982	0	4	0	0	0	0	4
1983	0	4	0	0	0	0	4
1985	0	1	0	0	1	0	2
1986	0	1	0	0	0	1	2
1987	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
1988	0	1	0	0	1	0	2
TOTALS: No. of questions:	0	15	4	0	3	2	24
%	0	62,5	16,7	0	12,5	8,3	100 %

APPENDIX D:

TABLE 2 : EVALUATION OF CONTEXTUAL QUESTIONS IN JMB AND CED PAPERS

JMB CONTEXTUAL QUESTIONS

YEAR	ROTE RECALL	COMPREHENSION	ASSUM & DEDUC	CREATIVITY	TOTAL
1979	0	8	58	14	80
1981	0	24	40	16	80
1982	0	4	76	0	80
1983	8	0	72	0	80
1984	5	0	75	0	80
1985	0	22	58	0	80
1987	20	0	60	0	80
1988	0	12	68	0	80
TOTALS: No. of marks:	33	70	507	30	640
%	5,2	10,9	79,2	4,7	100%

CED CONTEXTUAL QUESTIONS

YEAR	ROTE RECALL	COMPREHENSION	ASSUM & DEDUC	CREATIVITY	TOTAL
1979	2	20	38	0	60
1980	6	28	26	0	60
1982	4	17	39	0	60
1983	13	17	30	0	60
1985	2	0	28	0	30
1986	2	4	24	0	30
1987	12	0	18	0	30
1988	5	10	15	0	30
TOTALS: No. of marks:	46	96	218	0	360
%	12,8	26,7	60,5	0	100%

APPENDIX E:

REPORT TO THE JOINT MATRICULATION BOARD

SYLLABUS EVALUATION, ENGLISH FIRST LANGUAGE, HIGHER GRADE 1975 - 1979

1. INTRODUCTION

This report covers the syllabus research projects undertaken during the period 1975 to 1979 in Stds 8,9 and 10 (higher grade only), in the partially exempted schools. The work was carried out under the supervision of the Working Committee for English First Language, on which body the JMB was represented by Prof R. Sands.

2. PROBLEMS IDENTIFIED

Analysis of the problems encountered in the classroom with the teaching of the existing syllabus revealed the following shortcomings: the syllabus

- was not specific in its statement or definition of the subject content;
- did not give clear directives to examiners who then, by their own interpretations of the syllabus, tended to determine teaching practice;
- offered little or no guidance to the selection, study or examination of prescribed reading by failing, for instance, to state clearly the specific purpose of each genre;
- left teachers in doubt as to the nature, function and purpose of language teaching - particularly the role of grammar and the need to master a basic terminology;
- propagated an integrated approach to the teaching of English but failed to implement this in its own structure and arrangement;
- imposed inflexible limitations on the Std 10 Literature Examination Paper, e.g. by requiring candidates to choose between contextual and essay-type questions;
- failed to provide criteria for examinations.

3. HYPOTHESIS

It was postulated that if an alternative syllabus, in which these weaknesses could be overcome, could be devised, classroom teaching could be greatly improved.

4. A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT DURING THE YEARS 1975 - 1979

The Working Committee initially concerned itself with the development of teaching content and strategies aimed at

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improving pupils' achievement in literature without adversely affecting their performance in the remaining two sections of the examination. Ways of integrating the teaching of language in the study of literature were to be tested at the same time.

Two further areas of study, those of Listening Comprehension and Film Study, which are scantily treated in the existing Core Syllabus, were later incorporated into the Committee's programme. These studies appeared necessary if the curriculum for English First Language was to realise its aim of preparing pupils for life as sensitive and discriminating members of their community.

In the course of its experimentation the Committee came to realise that, in order to achieve the desirable degree of integration, the existing syllabus would have to be completely redesigned - without radically altering the content - and that the present format of the examination would have to be completely changed.

A new Proposed Syllabus for Stds 8,9 and 10, which aimed at a more detailed, integrated and purposive syllabus, was produced and tried out at the six Partially Exempted Schools during the years 1978 and 1979, and adapted at the end of each year to incorporate the findings of the teachers in the classroom as well as the research and experience of the members of the Working Committee.

The main features of the Proposed Syllabus are the following:

- The subject content has been grouped into the following four categories: listening and reading, the two receptive modes, and speaking and writing, the two communicative modes.

- The content of the language component to be taught is listed separately, but suggestions for the integration of this material occur throughout the syllabus.

- There has been a division between Syllabus Content, which is prescriptive, and Suggestions regarding teaching method and approach.

- Syllabus Content has been separated for each of Standards 8,9 and 10, with provision made for the teaching of material to be carried over from one standard to another when necessary. (This separation of content was undertaken in response to repeated requests from teachers; the detailed and prescriptive nature of the syllabus was similarly felt to be both necessary and helpful, without restricting the scope and function of the teacher.)

- An appendix offering guidelines on the selection of internally prescribed books has been added.

- The format of the examination has been radically changed to provide for the writing of integrated examination papers, a logical extension of the integrated classroom teaching required by the syllabus.

- The prescription, study and examining of one film per year is required in standards 8,9 and 10. The film should, ideally, run for no more than an hour, and should be narrative in style.

5. EXAMINATION RESULTS

The examination results in all three standards at the six participating schools have shown a marked and consistent improvement in the course of the five-year period under review, i.e. from the 1975 position, the year before the project started, until 1979, its final year.

6. FINDINGS

It is difficult to ascribe the improvement in the marks to any one specific factor although it is obvious that the fact of teachers' meeting regularly to exchange ideas and generate new enthusiasm cannot but have a salutary effect on their teaching and on the performance of their pupils.

The improvement in pupil performance can, however, be regarded as an indication of the acceptability of the modified syllabus content and of the effectiveness of the teaching approach suggested in the Draft Course syllabus which was followed by the schools.

The specifically educational findings of the Working Committee are embodied in the Proposed Syllabus for Standards 8, 9 and 10 (English First Language, Higher Grade) which will be submitted to the Syllabus Revision Committee.

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