

Summary report: Scottish Text refresh consultation

January 2017

Introduction

This report details findings which emerged from consultation pertaining to the refresh of the Scottish Set Text list for National 5 and Higher English. On the publication of the original Scottish Set Text list in March 2013, it was stated that the list would be reviewed and refreshed every three years to maintain relevance and to allow new texts to be introduced.

The purpose of this consultation was to elicit views from practitioners and stakeholders on possible ways forward for the refresh of the list. The refreshed list is published alongside this report. In recognition of workload, the decision to delay implementation of the list was made and communicated last session. The refreshed list will become live in session 2018–19. This means that the first question paper containing content from the new list will be in **May 2019**. It was emphasised during the consultation period that this first refresh would be light touch in order to acknowledge and accommodate resource issues.

Methodology

The Scottish text refresh consultation took place in two stages. The first stage took the form of an online survey. A link to the survey was sent to centres on a weekly basis via SQA Centre News. There was further reference to this in the Subject Updates of May and October 2016. In addition, a link to the online survey was made available on SQA's website (via the English subject pages). Just over 1,000 responses were received.

The second stage of the consultation involved discussion by focus groups, including an expert examination group made up of senior examiners on the National 5 and Higher English teams. Following this, the English National Qualification Support Team (NQST) was consulted on survey findings and possible ways forward.

Key findings

Online survey

- ◆ There was overwhelming support for the proposal that the number of short stories should be reduced from six to four at both National 5 and Higher.
- ◆ A clear majority of respondents expressed support for an increase in the number of crossover texts (texts which appear for both National 5 and Higher).
- ◆ There was no clear support for the removal of any National 5, Higher or Crossover writers.
- ◆ From the writers/texts identified in the previous consultation in 2013, *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson was popular again in 2016 at both National 5 and Higher.
- ◆ For National 5 poetry, various suggestions were made for poems by Edwin Morgan. The most popular were *Glasgow 5 March*, *Strawberries*, *Glasgow Sonnet i*, *Death of Monroe* and

King Billy. For Jackie Kay, the suggestions were *Old Tongue* and *He Told Us He Wanted a Black Coffin*.

- ◆ In response to additions/refresh for Higher poetry, suggestions for Liz Lochhead included *Revelation*, *Box Room* and *The Choosing*. For Robert Burns, recommendations included *To A Louse*, *Ae Fond Kiss*, *A Red, Red Rose* and *Such A Parcel Of Rogues In A Nation*. For Don Paterson suggestions included *Rain*, *Leaving*, *The Circle* and *Why Do You Stay Up So Late*. For Sorley MacLean the only suggestion was *Kinloch Ainort*.
- ◆ For crossover poetry, the suggestions for Carol Ann Duffy included *Shooting Stars*, *Stealing*, *In Mrs Tilcher's Class*, *Before You Were Mine* and *The Way My Mother Speaks*. For Norman MacCaig suggestions included *Hotel room*, *12th Floor*, *Brooklyn cop*, *So many summers* and *Toad*.
- ◆ In response to additions/refresh for National 5 short stories, suggestions for Anne Donovan were *Hieroglyphics*, *A Change of Hert* and *The Doll's House*.
- ◆ In response to additions/refresh for Higher short stories, suggestions for George Mackay Brown included *Andrina*, *Silver*, *Celia* and *The Drowned Rose*.
- ◆ In response to additions/refresh for crossover short stories, suggestions for Iain Crichton Smith included *Home*, *Adoration of the Mini*, *An American Sky* and *Napoleon and I*.
- ◆ There were some suggestions for new additions to the list for both National 5 and Higher. Some of these suggestions may be appropriate for the next, perhaps more extensive, revision of the list.

Focus group feedback

- ◆ There was strong support at the focus groups for the reduction in short stories from six to four at both levels.
- ◆ There was also strong support for the increase in the number of **crossover** texts.
- ◆ In general, there was agreement with the popular suggestions made in the survey for prose and poetry.
- ◆ In order to refine the outcomes of the survey, there was discussion of the wider issues of implementation. Considerations discussed included: the availability of texts, the size and manageability of the question paper, the scope for assessable content, and the appropriateness of content for teaching, learning and assessment.

Summary of changes to list

In light of the above findings, the following decisions were taken:

- ◆ The number of short stories has been reduced from six to four at both National 5 and Higher. One of the remaining four stories has been refreshed for each writer.
- ◆ All poets have been retained. Two poems have been refreshed for each poet at both National 5 and Higher.
- ◆ *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* has been introduced as an additional crossover text and replaces *Kidnapped* from National 5 and *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* from Higher (both of which had low uptake).
- ◆ Drama remains unchanged at both National 5 and Higher.