



**Ashbrook**  
RESEARCH & CONSULTANCY

**FINAL REPORT  
ENGAGEMENT FOR SCOTTISH TEXTS IN  
ENGLISH COURSES  
November 2012**

**PREPARED FOR:    The Scottish Qualifications Authority**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **Stage 1 Outcomes**

- 3 out of 5 respondents stated their belief that *drama* should include *film and television drama*.
- The largest single proportion of respondents believed that there should be 4 to 6 texts included for each genre.
- The writers and texts in relation to novels and short stories which respondents most commonly believe would be suitable for learners at **National 5** were *Dr Jekyll & Mr Hyde* (Stevenson), *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (Spark), *Laidlaw* (McIlvanney), *Its Colours They Are Fine* (Spence) and *The Changeling* (Jenkins), whilst those which were most commonly believed as being suitable for learners at **Higher** were *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (Spark), *Dr Jekyll & Mr Hyde* (Stevenson) and *Sunset Song* (Grassie Gibbon) and, thereafter, *The Changeling* (Jenkins), *The Crow Road* (Banks), *The Trick is To Keep Breathing* (Galloway) and *Laidlaw* (McIlvanney).
- The selections of poetry most commonly considered to be suitable for learners at **National 5** were by *Edwin Morgan*, *Carol Ann Duffy*, *Liz Lochhead* and *Norman McCaig* and, thereafter, *Robert Burns*, *Edwin Muir* and *Iain Crichton Smith*, whilst those poets for which a section of their poems were most commonly considered to be suitable for learners at **Higher** were *Edwin Morgan*, *Norman McCaig*, *Carol Ann Duffy*, *Liz Lochhead*, *Iain Crichton Smith*, *Edwin Muir* and *Robert Burns*.
- With respect to drama, *The Steamie* (by Roper) was most commonly seen as being suitable for learners at **National 5** and, thereafter, *Bold Girls* (Munro), *Sailmaker* (Spence), *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off* (Lochhead) and *The Slab Boys* (Byrne), whilst the writers

and texts which emerged most commonly as being perceived as being suitable for learners at **Higher** were *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off* (Lochhead), *Men Should Weep* (Stewart), *The Slab Boys* (Byrne), *The Steamie* (Roper), *Black Watch* (Burke), *The Cheviot, The Stag and The Black Black Oil* (McGrath) and *Bold Girls* (Munro).

- In terms of film and television drama, the two selections most commonly perceived as being suitable for learners at **National 5** were *Gregory's Girl* and *Local Hero*, whilst those which were most commonly seen as being suitable for those at **Higher** were *Local Hero*, *Sweet Sixteen*, *Tutti Fruitt*, *Ratcatcher* and *Neds*.
- There was a significant degree of overlap – across all four genres – in terms of the writers/texts which were seen as being suitable at **National 5** and **Higher**.
- The largest single proportion of respondents believed that the list of Scottish texts should be *one list for National 5 and one list for Higher, with some overlap*.

## **Stage 2 Outcomes: Practitioner Focus Groups**

### Suitability of Writers & Texts

- There was a generally positive consensus amongst practitioners regarding the novels and short stories which most commonly emerged as being suitable at both National 5 and Higher, and there was strong support for *The Cone Gatherers* to be introduced to the list of set Scottish texts. However, practitioners had concerns with regard to the *predictability* of the texts to emerge here and also expressed concerns that some may be too challenging for pupils.

- There was a general consensus of satisfaction amongst practitioners with the poets that emerged most prominently as being seen as suitable for learners at National 5 and Higher, although there was a belief that many of these poets did not sufficiently reflect modern Scottish poetry and concerns that many of the poets emerging had already been extensively taught/examined in schools, and that there are potential problems relating to the *selection* of poems to be used by the poets who emerged most prominently.
- No significant *positives* emerged from practitioners in respect of the suitability of writers and texts for drama at both National 5 and Higher. In contrast, a number of *negative themes* emerged in this regard during the focus groups, including that the listing of writers and texts that emerged from the first stage of the research was extremely predictable, that Scottish drama is a weak genre (in comparison to prose and poetry) and a belief that many youngsters will have difficulties connecting with some of the drama options. In addition, it was apparent that there was a significant lack of knowledge of many of the drama options under consideration amongst those participating in the practitioner focus groups and that rural schools have particular difficulties gaining access to theatres.
- Although, again, there were no significant *positive themes* to emerge during the course of the practitioner focus groups in relation to the suitability of writers and texts in the film and television genre, there was support for the inclusion of the Angels' Share as an option.
- A number of key *negative themes* emerged in relation to the film and television drama genre and, in particular, a belief that this genre was weak (even in comparison to the drama genre), that very limited choice would be made by teachers of film and television drama options available to them, and a belief that youngsters outside the Central Belt will not identify with many of the chosen options. These negative themes were allied to concerns regarding the sufficiency of knowledge and abilities of English

teachers to effectively teach in this genre, and concerns regarding the age ratings of some of the potential film and television drama options.

- At a more general level, there was a belief that teachers who had participated in the research had “*played it safe*” in terms of their choices across all four genres, a general satisfaction with the degree of overlap that exists in the lists in all four genres at National 5 and Higher, some concerns that the introduction of a prescribed Scottish text is against the principles of CfE and a general concern with regard to *what represents a Scottish text?*.

### Suitability & Unsuitability

- The three primary factors which it was believed led writers and texts to be considered as being ‘suitable’ were *the familiarity of teachers with texts and writers, the availability of texts within schools and texts that reflect Scottish culture and society*.
- Factors which it was felt made writers and texts to be considered as being ‘unsuitable’ for learners at National 5 and Higher, included *poor quality writing, texts which are too dated or too simple, those that use bad language, texts which have gratuitous content regarding sex and drugs, texts/writers which will require teachers to produce materials themselves and don’t engage young people at an intellectual level, texts with a Glasgow or Central Scotland bias and those with religious content (as noted by a number of teachers in schools in the North of Scotland)*.

### Don’t Know Responses

- Practitioners believed that the high levels of ‘don’t know’ responses regarding many writers and texts noted in the first stage of the research was primarily a function of unfamiliarity amongst English teachers with these writers and texts, particularly those which are *new*. In addition,

secondary factors were cited in this regard in respect of *some teachers not having studied Scottish writers or texts themselves whilst at university and some lacking the motivation, desire or time to explore new Scottish writers and texts.*

### Film & Television Drama As A Separate Genre

- There was a distinct and general lack of support for film and television drama as a separate genre amongst those participating in the practitioner focus groups, primarily due to *a belief that most English teachers would lack the knowledge and skills in this genre to allow them to teach it effectively, the relative weakness of this genre and a belief that this genre does not effectively engage youngsters at an intellectual level.*
- Despite this, there was a degree of support in a number of the focus groups for the film and television drama genre to be amalgamated with the drama genre.

### Assessment Approaches

- Practitioners believed the critical essay approach to assessment to have a number of *positives*, with these significantly outweighing the negatives of this assessment approach. In contrast, the range of *positives* and *negatives* identified by practitioners in relation to the extract based approach to assessment were more balanced.
- There was an overwhelming preference amongst those participating in all of the practitioner focus groups for the critical essay approach to assessment rather than the extract based approach. However, it was clear that many (particularly younger) teachers are not familiar with the extract based approach, that there were some concerns that two critical essays would lead to a predominant choice of Scottish text by teachers, some concerns that having two critical essays would mean the repeating



of the same skillset by pupils rather than the application of two skillsets, and a degree of support for both the critical essay and extract based approach to be adopted.

## **Stage 2 Outcomes: Stakeholder Depth Interviews**

### **Suitability of Writers & Texts**

- Stakeholders were generally supportive of the novels and short stories which emerged as being most suitable during the first stage of the research – at both National 5 and Higher – and, similarly, were generally positive with regard to the overlap of lists at National 5 and Higher, particularly from a resource perspective. However, there was a degree of disappointment with regard to the perceived *predictability* of the writers and texts which emerged here.
- There was very strong support amongst stakeholders for the poets which emerged as being most popular at both National 5 and Higher, and significant support for Burns to be included at both levels. However, there were some concerns about the accessibility for Burns for some pupils and a belief that the range of poets that emerged most prominently in the first stage of the research as being suitable at National 5 and Higher was *relatively narrow*.
- There was also a general consensus of support for the writers and texts which emerged as being most suitable in terms of the drama genre, particularly in relation to Higher, but a belief that the selections were, to some extent, characterised by *low grade and poor drama*, and a concern that the most popular selections could lead to the “*dumbing down of drama*”.
- There were no significant positives identified in respect of the writers and texts in the film and television genre which were seen as being most

*suitable* for learners at National 5 and Higher, with beliefs amongst stakeholders that the most popular choices were *too limited in terms of their intellectual challenge for learners* and that some of the most popular choices “*pander to the lowest common denominator*”. In addition, practitioners had an overwhelming concern regarding the relative weakness of the film and television genre in terms of the breadth and depth of potential writers and texts to be studied at National 5 or Higher.

- On a more general basis, it was apparent from the depth interviews with stakeholders that there was a belief that the writers and texts which emerged across all four genres as being most suitable for learners at National 5 and Higher reflect *a lack of resources in schools, the availability of support and teaching notes and the familiarity of teachers with the writers and texts most commonly chosen and a belief that there is a need to encourage English teachers to keep abreast with emerging Scottish texts and writers.*

#### Suitability & Unsuitability

- Stakeholders primarily believed that the factors which lead writers and texts to be considered to be ‘suitable’ are that *these writers and texts are suitable to the targeted level of learning, the availability of support and teaching notes for teachers, the familiarity of teachers with writers and texts, the availability of texts within schools and a writers being Scottish.*
- In terms of factors which would lead writers and texts to be considered to be ‘unsuitable’, reference was made here to factors such as those which are *‘antiquated’, inaccessible due to language or dialect, ‘boring’ for pupils, focus on a particular audience or part of the pupil base and use bad language excessively or have gratuitous references to drugs or sex.*

### Don't Know Responses

- The overwhelming consensus amongst stakeholders was that the high level of 'don't know' responses with respect to the suitability of a range of writers and texts under consideration during the course of the first stage of the research was a function of a lack of awareness amongst many teachers of new and modern Scottish writers.

### Film & Television Drama As A Separate Genre

- In contrast the outcomes derived from practitioners, the stakeholders participating in the depth interviews expressed *general support* for film and television drama as a separate genre. Despite this, however, stakeholders also identified a number of concerns in this regard and, in particular, *the abilities and 'comfort' of many English teachers in this genre, that there was a potential for there to be a limited demand for texts and writers to be chosen in this genre, the general weakness of this genre and a concern that some pupils may view film and television drama as an 'easy option'.*

### Assessment Approaches

- Stakeholders identified a range of positives and negatives pertaining to the critical essay and extract based approaches to assessment – although a number of *negatives* noted in respect of the latter was significantly greater than in respect of the former. Consequently, there was a clear and distinct preference for the critical essay assessment approach, although there was a degree of support for both approaches to assessment being incorporated at National 5 and Higher amongst stakeholders.

## 1.0 **INTRODUCTION**

This report details findings to emerge from a programme of research undertaken on behalf of the Scottish Qualifications Authority pertaining to the introduction of set texts in English courses at National 5 and Higher.

The purpose of the research was to elicit a range of information from both practitioners (i.e. teachers of English at National 5 and Higher) and stakeholders (i.e. individuals representing organisations with an interest in the teaching of English at National 5 and Higher) and was in two stages.

### Stage 1

The first stage of the research took the form of an online survey. In particular, a link to the online survey was issued to SQA Co-ordinators in all secondary schools across Scotland who were, in turn, asked to make this available to teachers of English within their school.

In addition, the link to the online survey was made available on the SQA website and to English teachers who had attended recent events undertaken by the SQA.

A total of 841 responses were elicited (at the time of data analysis), with these primarily coming from those who had accessed the link through their school's SQA Co-ordinator.

The results presented in Section 2.0 of this report are based on these respondents. A copy of the questionnaire administered is attached as *Appendix I*.

## Stage 2

The second stage of the research incorporated two elements.

Firstly, a total of 8 focus groups were undertaken with teachers of English at National 5 and Higher across Scotland. 7 of these focus groups were on a face to face basis – 6 with teachers of English in 6 schools across Scotland – and one amongst 8 teachers of English across schools in the independent sector (who met collectively in Glasgow).

The one remaining focus group was undertaken on a virtual basis (i.e. by means of a telephone conference) and included 6 English teachers from teachers in the Highlands & Islands, North East of Scotland, Dumfries & Galloway and the Borders.

A copy of the Topic Guide administered during these focus groups is attached *Appendix II*.

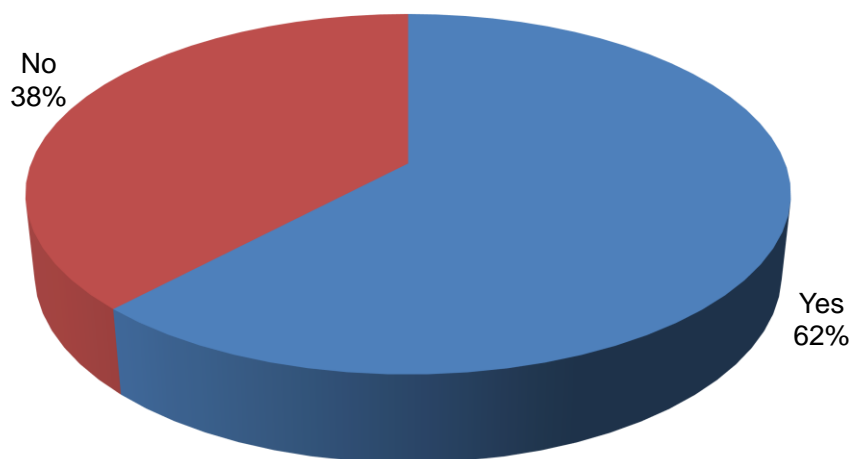
The second element of Stage 2 of the research took the form of in-depth interviews with individuals representing four stakeholder organisations. Again, a copy of the Topic Guide administered during these interviews is attached as *Appendix II*.

## 2.0 **STAGE 1 OUTCOMES**

### 2.1 **Inclusion of Film & TV Drama In Scottish Texts**

*“Scottish texts will include prose, poetry and drama. Should drama include film and television drama?”*

**Figure 1: Should Drama Include Film & Television Drama?**



From Figure 1 it can be seen that – on the basis of respondents being informed that Scottish texts will include prose, poetry and drama – 3 out of 5 (62%) stated their belief that *drama* should include *film and television drama*.

## 2.2 Number of Texts That Should Be Included In Each Genre

*“SQA is committed to providing learners with breadth and choice. However, question papers need to be manageable for both centres and learners. Given these factors, how many texts do you think should be included for each genre?”*

**Figure 2: Number of Texts That Should Be Included In Each Genre**

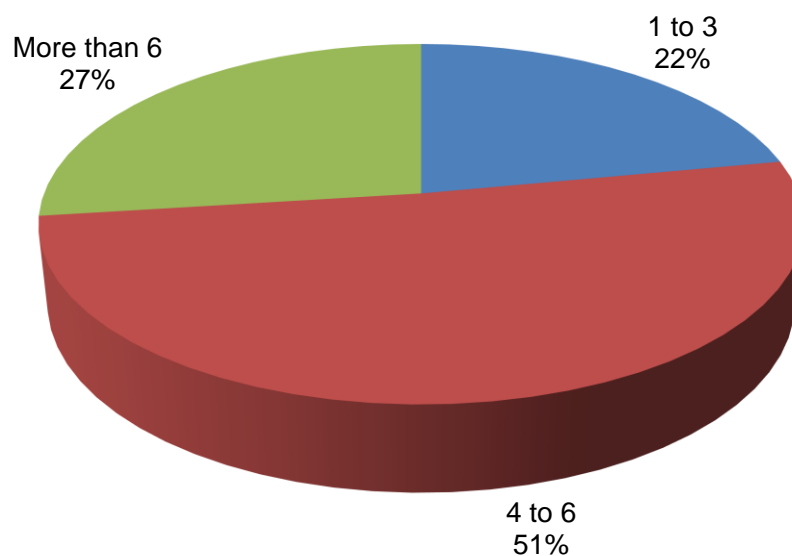


Figure 2 indicates that – on the basis of SQA’s commitment to provide learners with breadth and choice, allied to question papers needing to be manageable for both centres and learners – the largest single proportion of respondents (51%) believed that there should be 4-6 texts included for each genre.

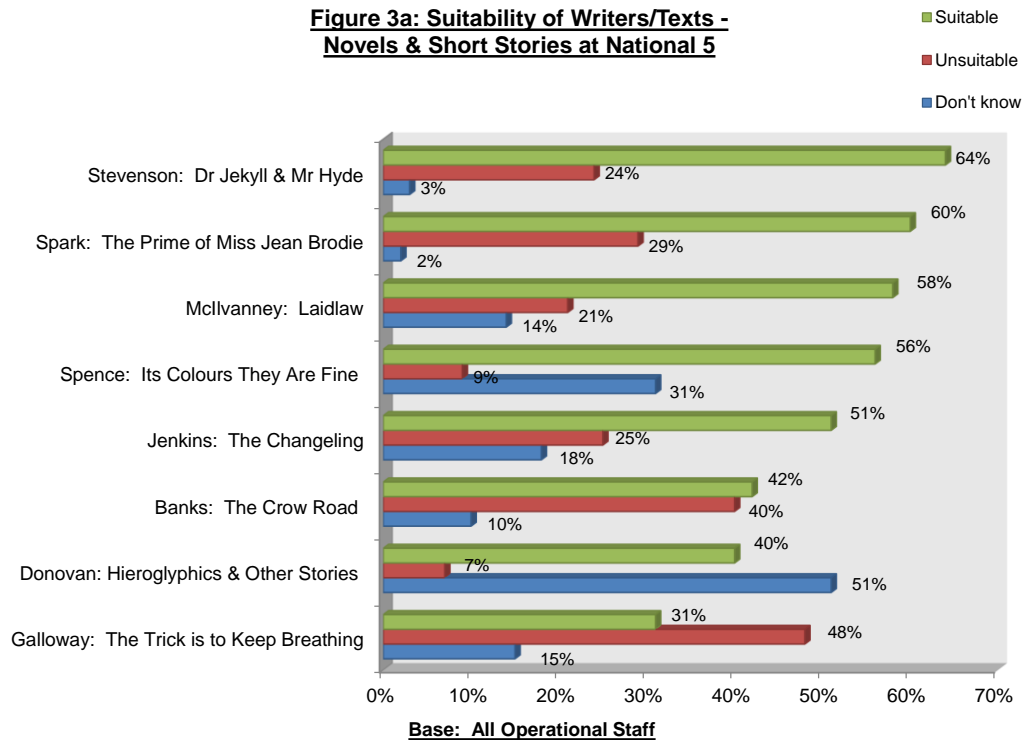
Thereafter, respondents were relatively evenly split here i.e.:

- 1-3 texts for each genre (22%)
- More than 6 texts for each genre (27%)

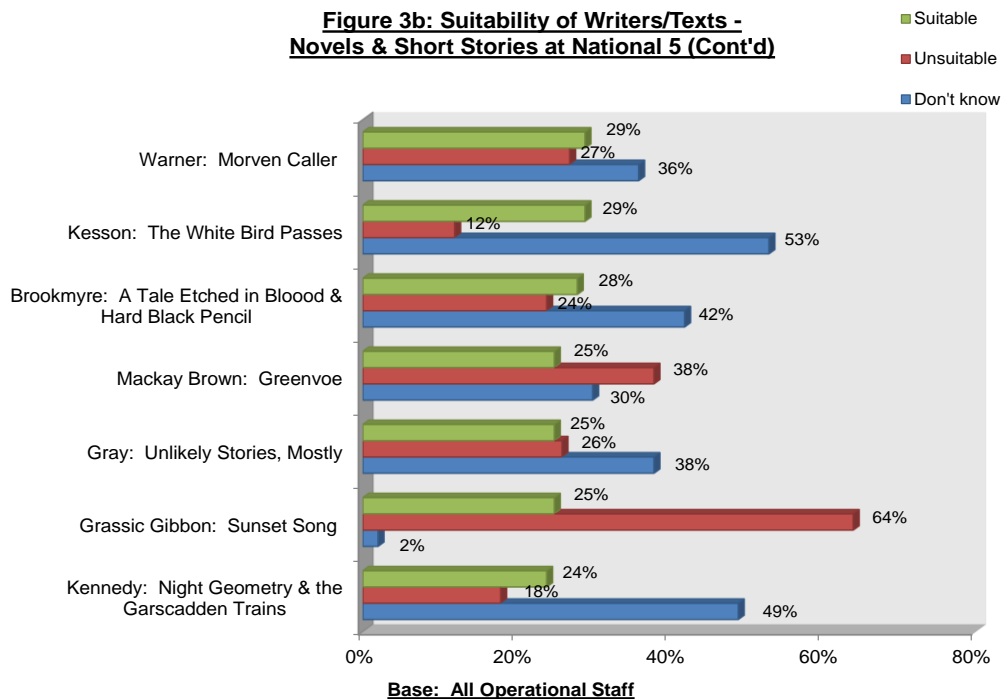
## 2.3 Suitability of Writers/Texts: National 5 & Higher – Novels & Short Stories

*“On a scale from 1 to 5 – where ‘1’ is ‘highly unsuitable’ and ‘5’ is ‘highly suitable’ – how suitable do you believe the following writers and texts would be for learners at National 5? Please select ‘don’t know’ if you feel unable to comment about any text”*

**Figure 3a: Suitability of Writers/Texts - Novels & Short Stories at National 5**



**Figure 3b: Suitability of Writers/Texts - Novels & Short Stories at National 5 (Cont'd)**





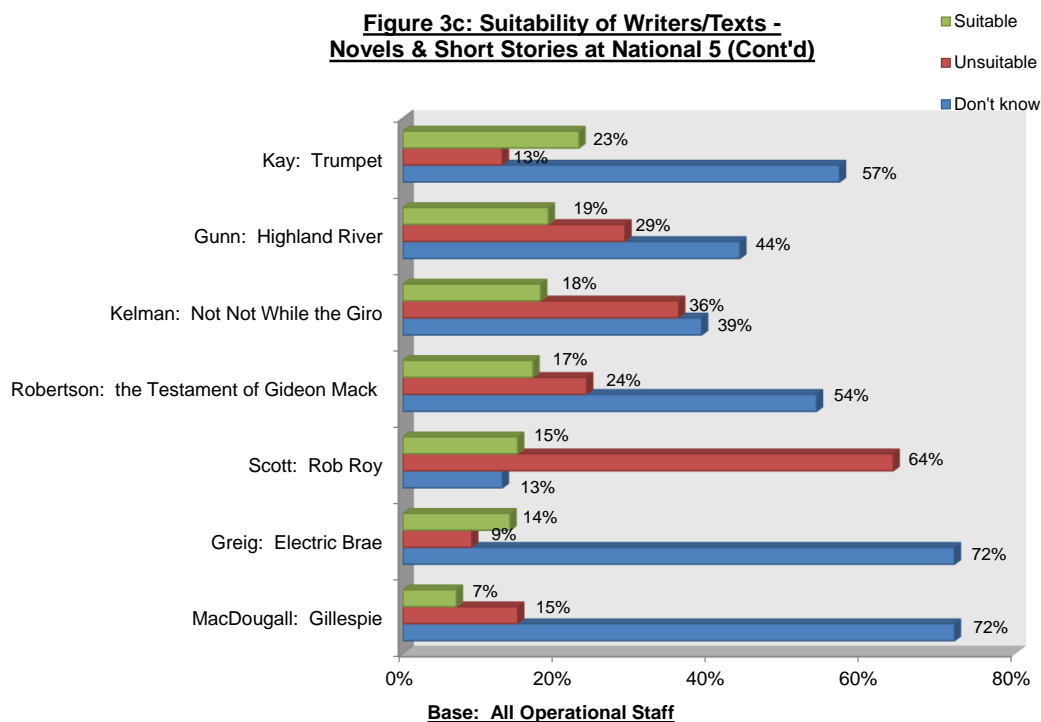


Figure 3a indicates that the writers and texts which respondents most commonly believed would be *suitable* for learners at National 5 were as follows:

- Dr Jekyll & Mr Hyde (64%) – Stevenson
- The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie (60%) – Spark
- Laidlaw (58%) – McIlvanney
- Its Colours They Are Fine (56%) – Spence
- The Changeling (51%) – Jenkins

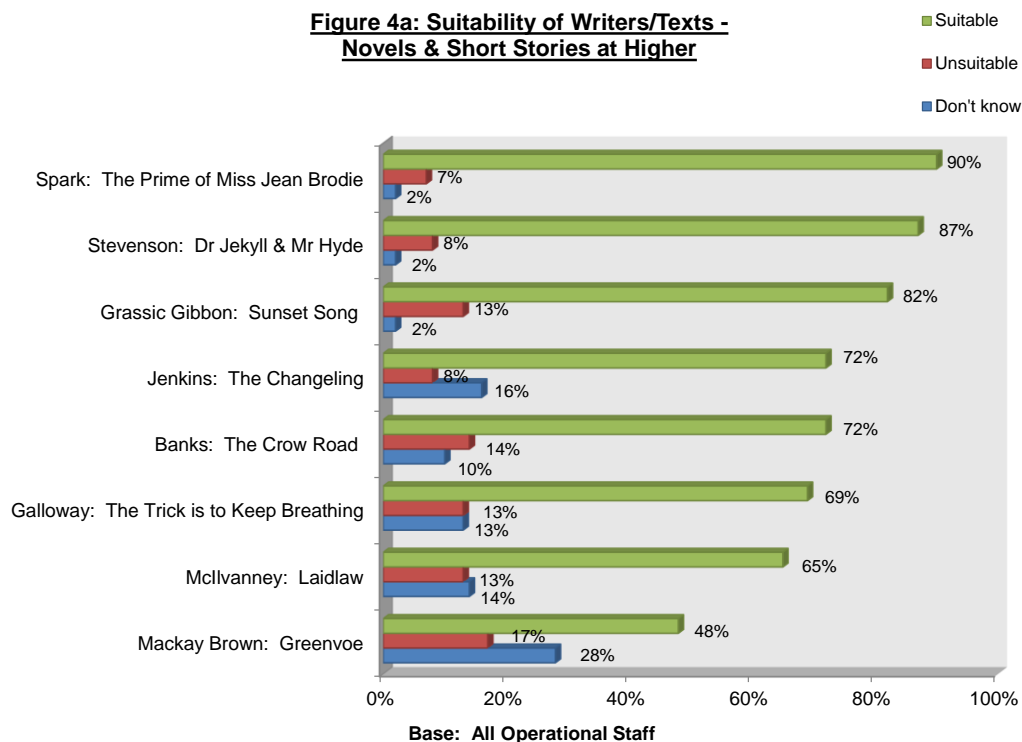
Figures 3a to 3c also indicate that those writers and texts which were most commonly seen as being *unsuitable* at National 5 were:

- Sunset Song (64%) – Grassie Gibbon
- Rob Roy (64%) – Scott
- The Trick is to Keep Breathing (48%) – Galloway

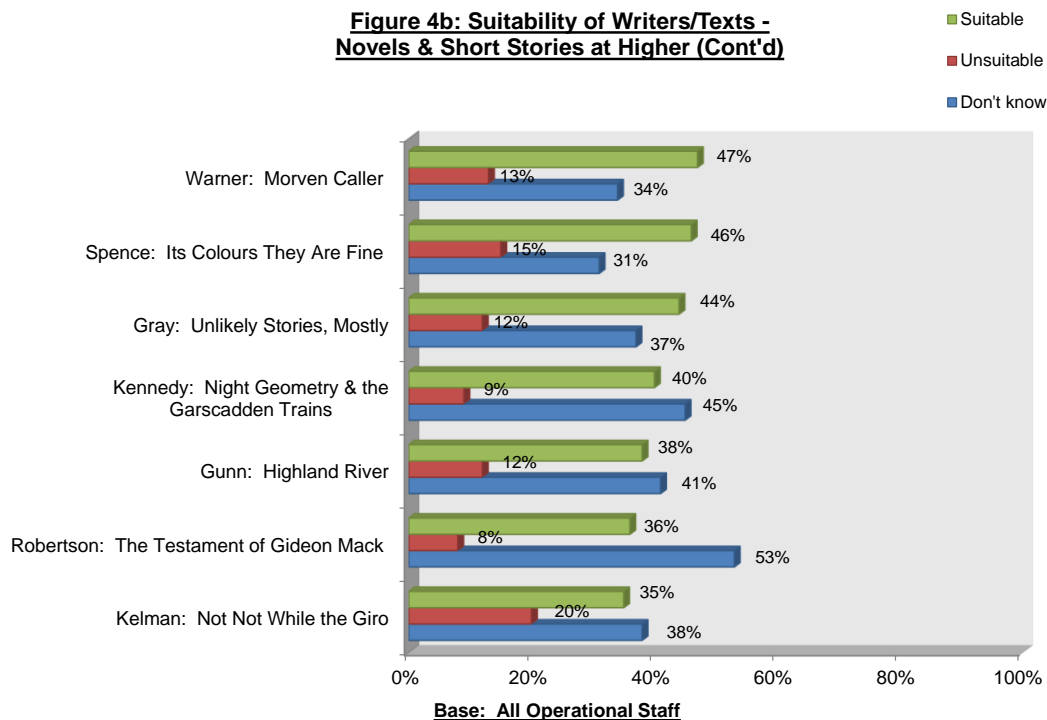
Finally, Figures 3a to 3c indicate that there were relatively high levels of ‘don’t know’ responses in relation to a number of the writers and texts under consideration here, including:

- Gillespie (72%) – MacDougall
- Electric Brae (72%) – Greig
- Trumpet (57%) – Kay
- The Testament of Gideon Mack (54%) – Robertson
- The White Bird Passes (53%) – Kesson
- Hieroglyphics & Other Stories (51%) – Donovan
- Night Geometry and the Garscadden Trains (49%) – Kennedy

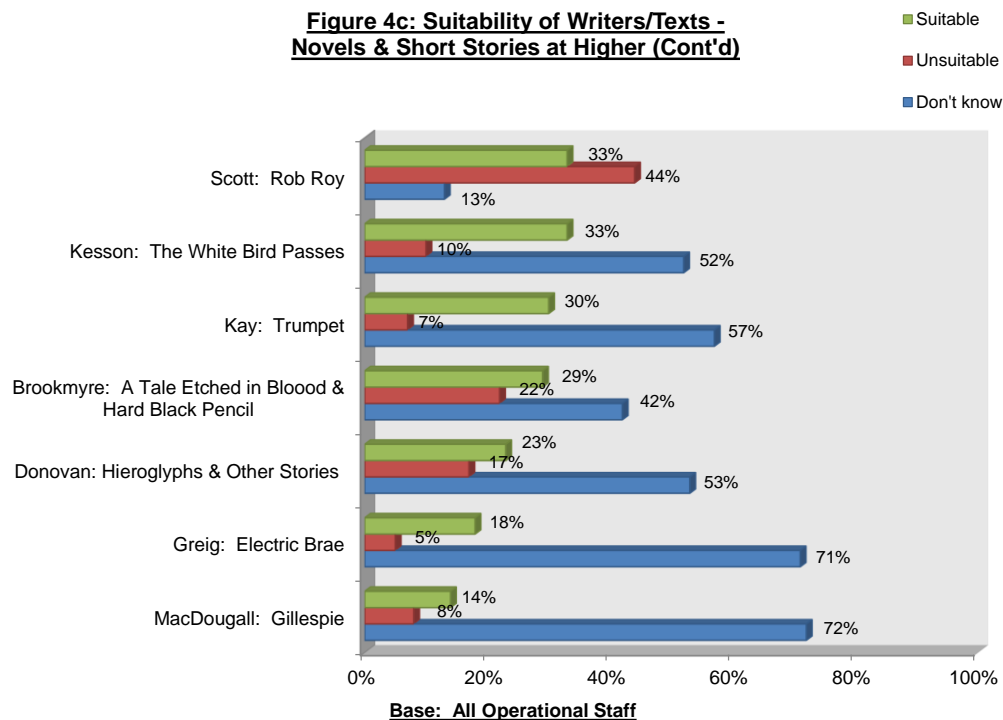
*“On a scale from 1 to 5 – where ‘1’ is ‘highly unsuitable’ and ‘5’ is ‘highly suitable’ – how suitable do you believe the following writers and texts would be for learners at Higher? Please select ‘don’t’ know if you feel unable to comment about any text”*



**Figure 4b: Suitability of Writers/Texts -  
Novels & Short Stories at Higher (Cont'd)**



**Figure 4c: Suitability of Writers/Texts -  
Novels & Short Stories at Higher (Cont'd)**



From Figure 4a it can be seen that the novels and short stories most commonly considered to be *suitable* for learners at Higher were:

- The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie (90%) – Spark
- Dr Jekyll & Mr Hyde (87%) – Stevenson
- Sunset Song (82%) – Grassie Gibbon

Thereafter, four other novels and short stories emerged with greatest prominence in this regard, namely:

- The Changeling (72%) – Jenkins
- The Crow Road (72%) – Banks
- The Trick is to Keep Breathing (69%) – Galloway
- Laidlaw (65%) – McIlvanney

It should be stressed that there is a significant degree of overlap here between the novels and short stories that emerged as being most suitable at National 5.

Figures 4a to 4c also indicate that levels of *unsuitability* of novels and short stories here were relatively limited, but most notable in respect of Rob Roy (44%).

Finally, Figures 4b and 4c indicate that with respect to the suitability of a number of novels and short stories for learners at Higher, a significant proportion of ‘don’t know’ responses were noted, including in relation to:

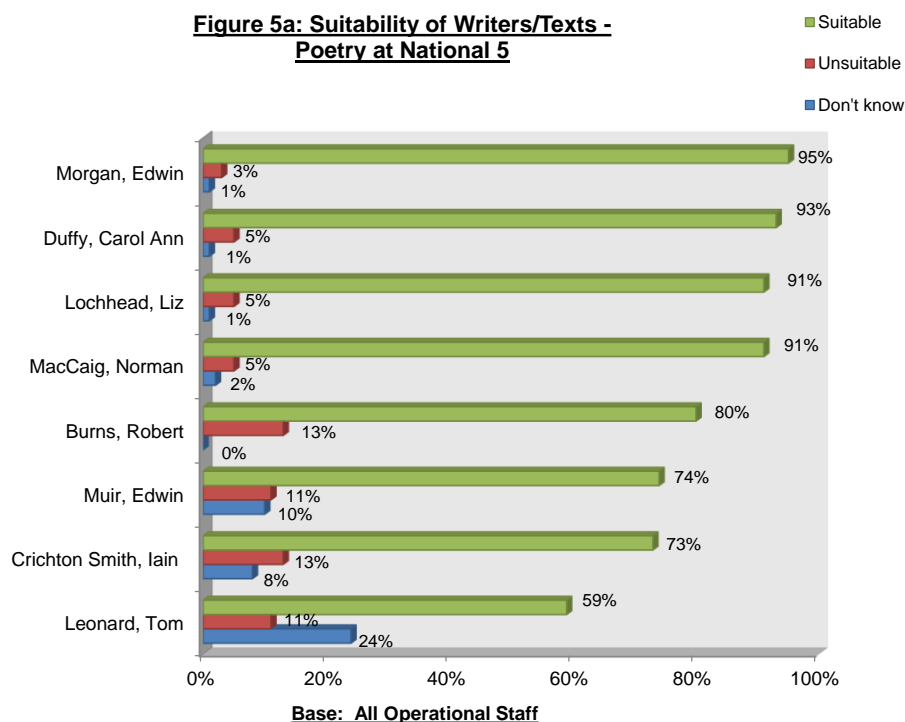
- Gillespie (72%) – MacDougall
- Electric Brae (71%) – Greig
- Trumpet (57%) – Kay
- Hieroglyphics & Other Stories (53%) – Donovan
- The Testament of Gideon Mack (53%) – Robertson
- The White Bird Passes (52%) – Kesson

At the end of this section of the questionnaire, respondents were asked – on an unprompted basis – if there were any other texts that they would suggest. On this basis, the principal suggestion made was *The Cone Gatherers* (by Robin Jenkins). Thereafter, other unprompted suggestions were made, including:

- Consider the Lillies (Iain Crichton Smith)
- The Wasp Factory (Iain Banks)
- The Private Memoirs & Confessions of a Justified Sinner (James Hogg)

## 2.4 **Suitability of Writers/Texts: National 5 & Higher – Poetry**

*“On a scale from 1 to 5 – where ‘1’ is ‘highly unsuitable’ and ‘5’ is ‘highly suitable’ – how suitable do you believe the following writers and texts would be for learners at National 5? Please select ‘don’t know’ if you feel unable to comment about any text”*



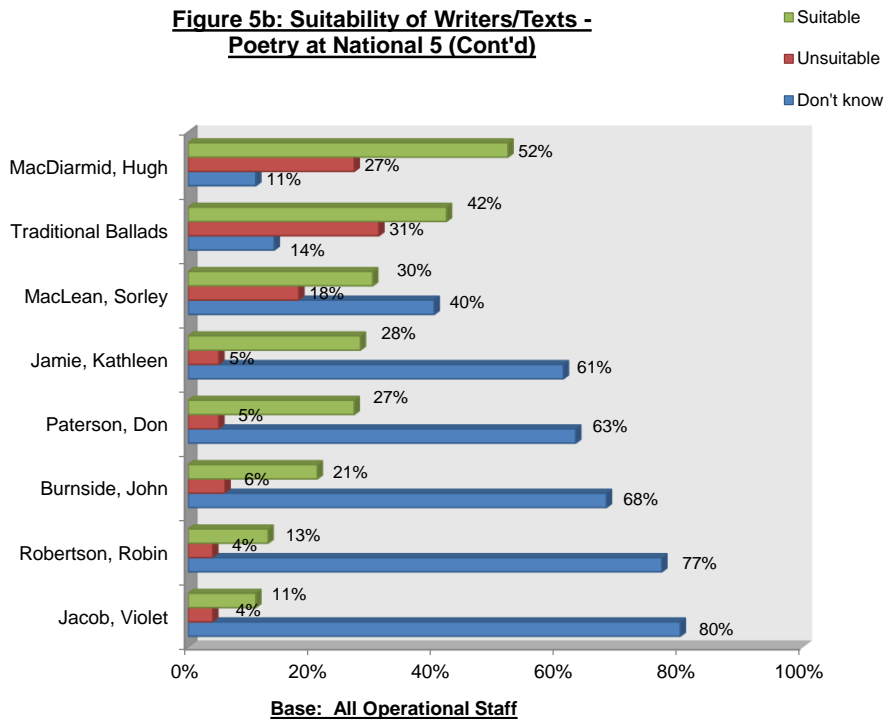


Figure 5a indicates that selections of poetry from the following writers were most commonly considered to be suitable for learners at National 5:

- Edwin Morgan (95%)
- Carol Ann Duffy (93%)
- Liz Lochhead (91%)
- Norman McCaig (91%)

Thereafter, selections of poetry by three further poets emerged with most prominence here, namely:

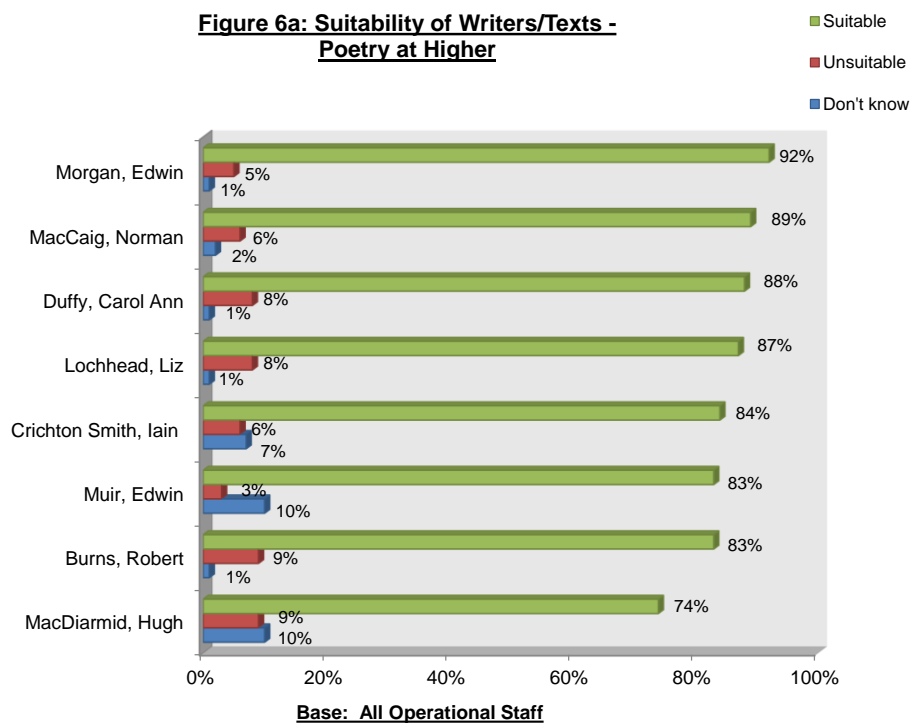
- Robert Burns (80%)
- Edwin Muir (74%)
- Iain Crichton Smith (73%)

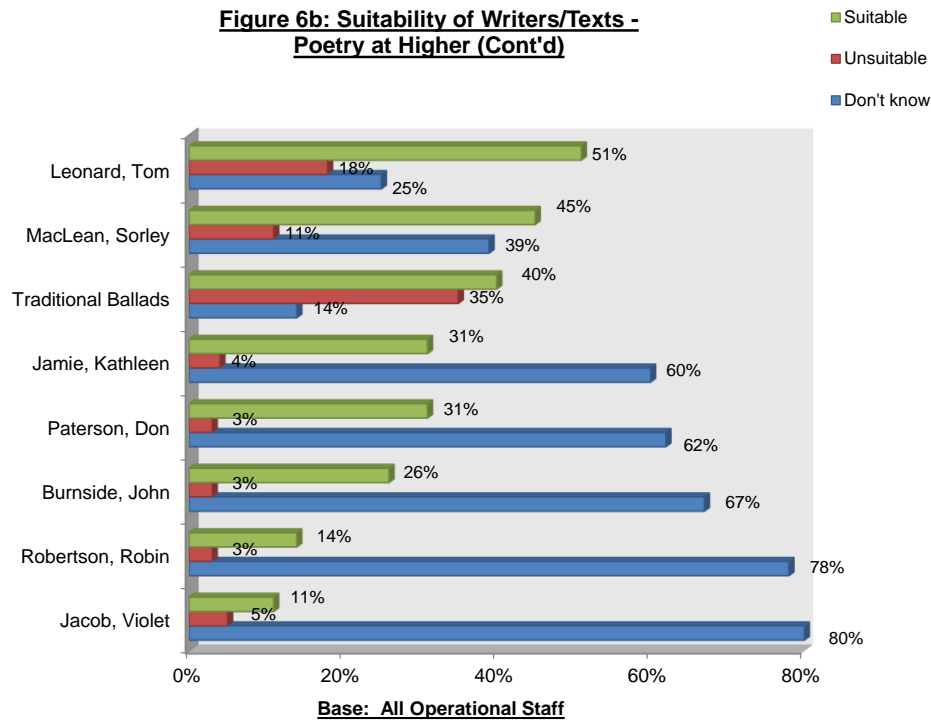
Again, levels of *unsuitability* were relatively limited here, but most notable in respect of selections of poetry by Hugh MacDiarmid (27%) and *Traditional Ballads* (31%).

Finally, Figure 5b indicates that levels of ‘don’t know’ responses here were relatively high in respect of selections of poetry by five poets, namely:

- Violet Jacob (80%)
- Robin Robertson (77%)
- John Burnside (68%)
- Don Paterson (63%)
- Kathleen Jamie (61%)

*“On a scale from 1 to 5 – where ‘1’ is ‘highly unsuitable’ and ‘5’ is ‘highly suitable’ – how suitable do you believe the following writers and texts would be for learners at Higher? Please select ‘don’t know’ if you feel unable to comment about any text”*





From Figure 6a it can be seen that selections of poetry by a number of poets emerged most commonly as being considered to be *suitable* for learners at Higher, namely:

- Edwin Morgan (92%)
- Norman McCaig (89%)
- Carol Ann Duffy (88%)
- Liz Lochhead (87%)
- Iain Crichton Smith (84%)
- Edwin Muir (83%)
- Robert Burns (83%)

Again, it should be stressed that there is a significant degree of overlap here with the poets that emerged most prominently in respect of their suitability for learners at National 5.

Figures 6a and 6b also indicate relatively limited levels of perceived *unsuitability* of the poets under consideration, with this being most notable in respect of *Traditional Ballads* (35%).



Finally, Figure 6b indicates that there were a high level of ‘don’t know’ responses here in respect of selection of poetry by five poets, namely:

- Violet Jacobs (80%)
- Robin Robertson (78%)
- John Burnside (67%)
- Don Paterson (62%)
- Kathleen Jamie (60%)

Again, at the end of this section of the questionnaire, respondents were asked – on an unprompted basis – if there were any other poets they would suggest, with the principal unprompted suggestion being *Jackie Kay* and, thereafter:

- Douglas Dunn
- Robert Crawford
- George Mackay Brown
- Andrew Greig
- Robert Henryson

## 2.5 Suitability of Writers/Texts: National 5 & Higher – Drama

*“On a scale from 1 to 5 – where ‘1’ is ‘highly unsuitable’ and ‘5’ is ‘highly suitable’ – how suitable do you believe the following writers and texts would be for learners at National 5? Please select ‘don’t know’ if you feel unable to comment about any text”*

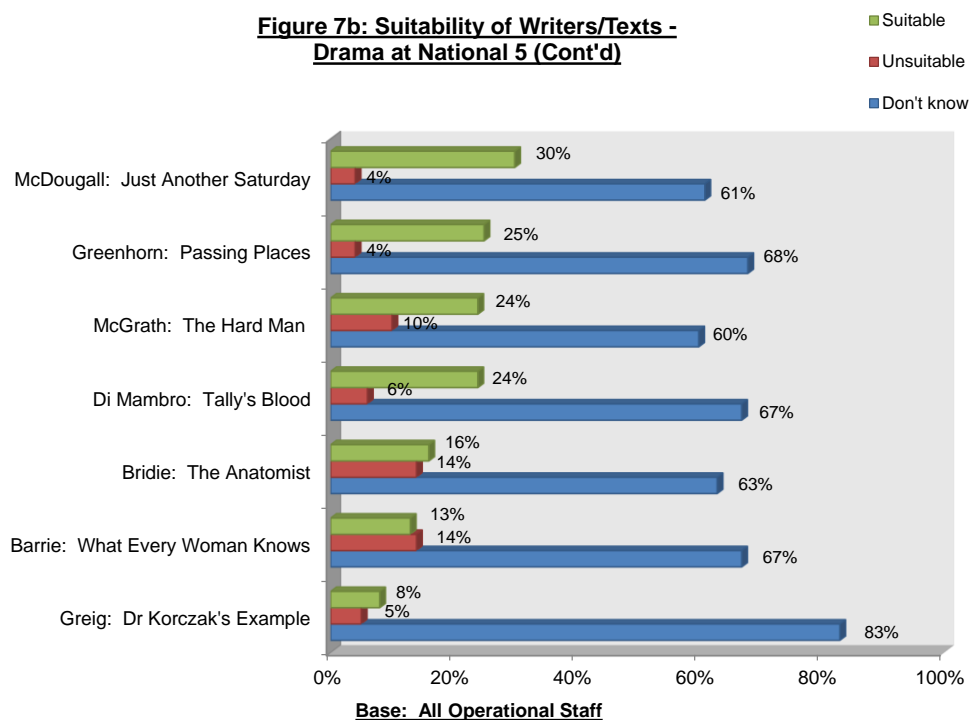
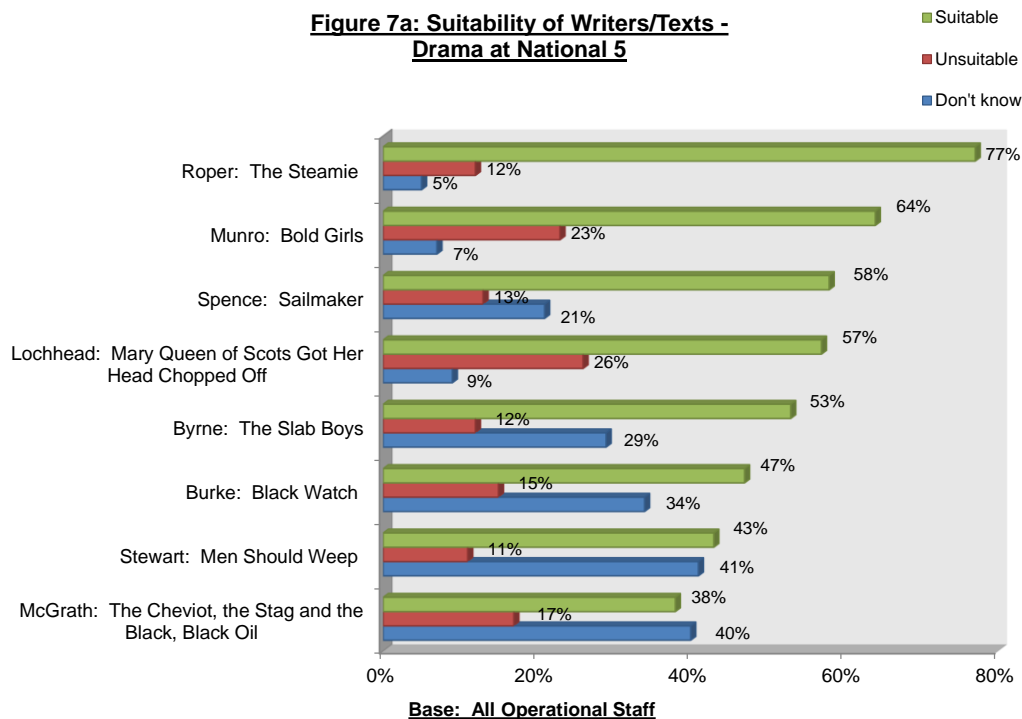


Figure 7a indicates that *The Steamie* (by Roper) was most commonly seen as being *suitable* for learners at National 5 (by 77% of respondents). Thereafter, the most common selections in respect of drama at National 5 were noted for:

- Bold Girls (64%) – Munro
- Sailmaker (58%) – Spence
- Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off (57%) – Lochhead
- The Slab Boys (53%) – Byrne

Again, levels of *unsuitability* were relatively limited here in respect of the writers and texts for drama at National 5, but most notable for:

- Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off (26%) - Lochhead
- Bold Girls (23%) – Munro

Finally, Figure 7b indicates that levels of ‘don’t know’ responses were high here across a number of writers/texts here, including:

- Dr Korczak’s Example (83%) – Greig
- Passing Places (68%) – Greenhorn
- Tally’s Blood (67%) – Di Mambro
- What Every Woman Knows (67%) – Barrie
- The Anatomist (63%) – Bridie
- Just Another Saturday (61%) – MacDougall
- The Hard Man (60%) – McGrath

*“On a scale from 1 to 5 – where ‘1’ is ‘highly unsuitable’ and ‘5’ is ‘highly suitable’ – how suitable do you believe the following writers and texts would be for learners at Higher? Please select ‘don’t know’ if you feel unable to comment about any text”*

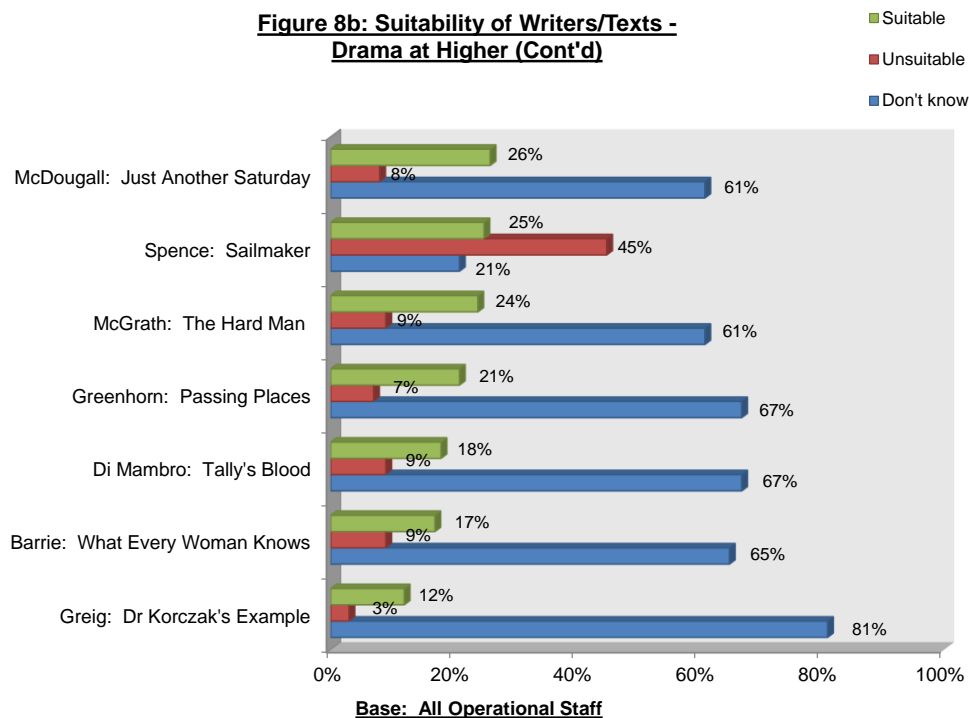
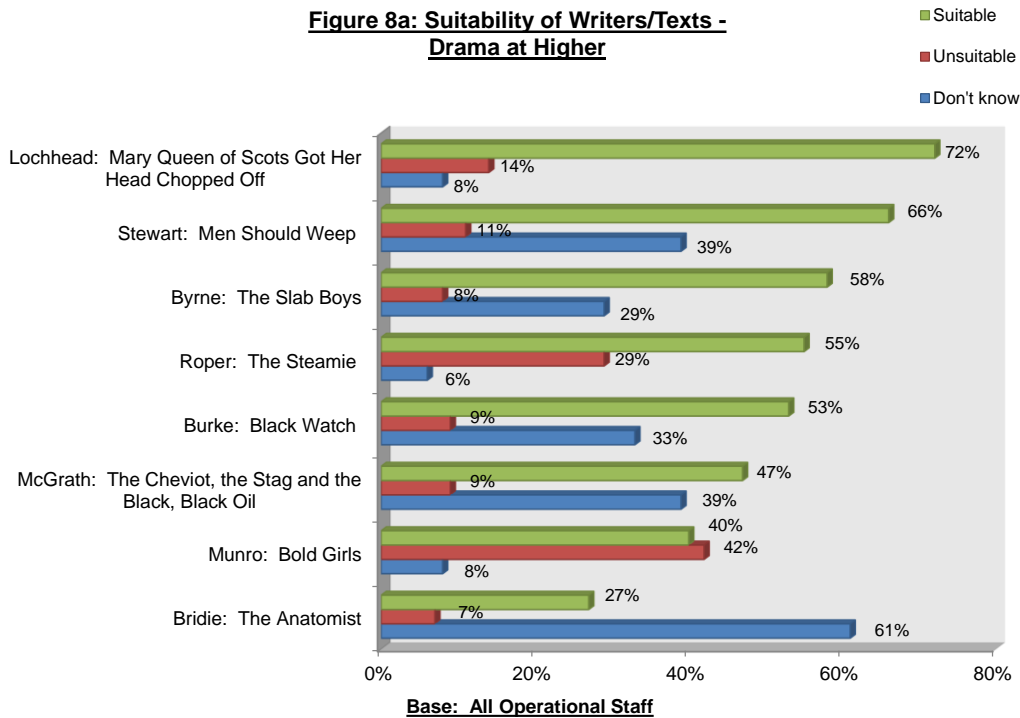


Figure 8a indicates that in terms of writers and texts for drama at Higher, those which emerged most commonly as being perceived as being *suitable* were:

- Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off (72%) – Lochhead
- Men Should Weep (66%) – Stewart
- The Slab Boys (58%) – Byrne
- The Steamie (55%) – Roper
- Black Watch (53%) – Burke
- The Cheviot, The Stag & The Black Black Oil (47%) – McGrath
- Bold Girls (40%) – Munro

Again, it should be noted that there is a significant degree of overlap here with the most common selections noted in respect of National 5.

Although perceptions of *unsuitability* were relatively limited here, they were most notable in respect of:

- Sailmaker (45%) – Spence
- Bold Girls (42%) – Munro
- The Steamie (29%) – Roper

Finally, again – as was the case in respect of National 5 – there are a range of writers and texts in relation to which there were a high level of ‘don’t know’ responses in terms of their suitability for learners at Higher, including the following dramas:

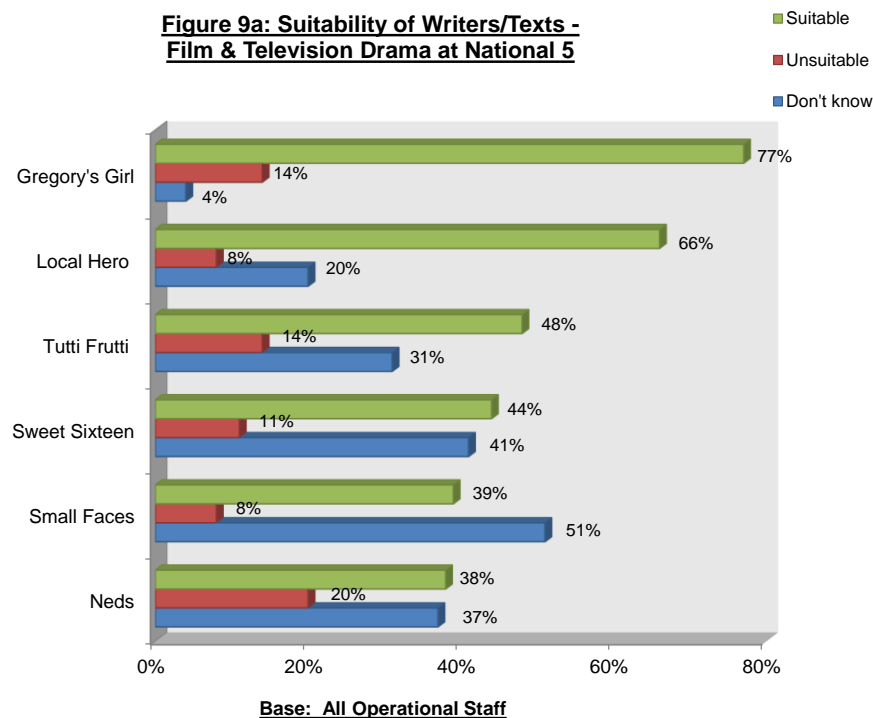
- Dr Korczak’s Example (81%) – Greig
- Tally’s Blood (67%) – Di Mambro
- Passing Places (67%) – Greenhorn
- What Every Woman Knows (65%) – Barrie
- Just Another Saturday (61%) – MacDougall

- The Hard Man (61%) – McGrath
- The Anatomist (61%) – Bridie

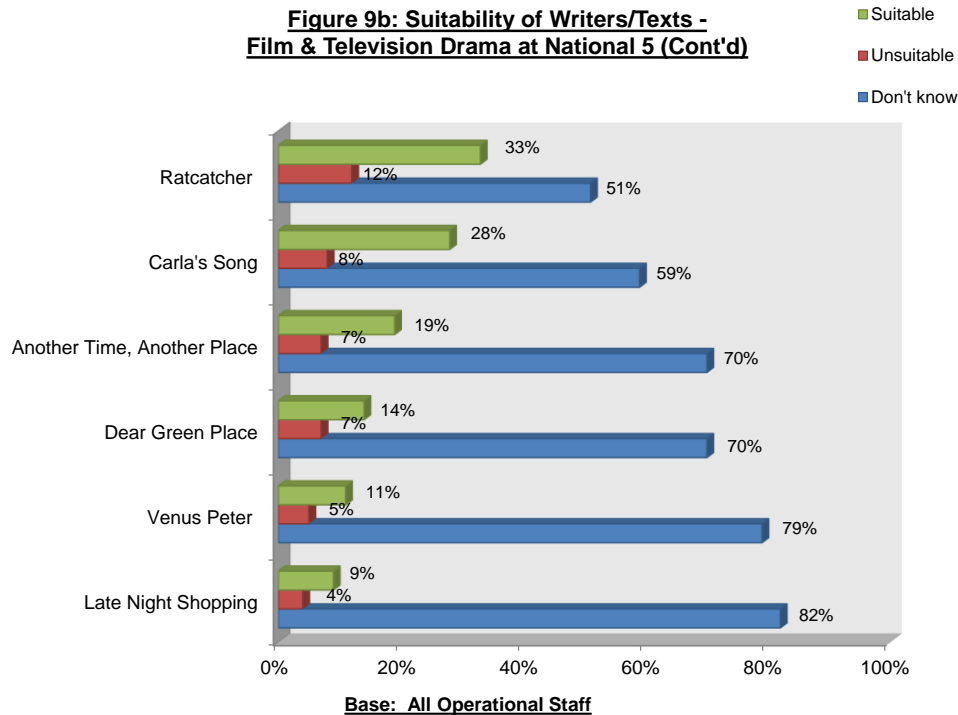
Again at the end of this section of the questionnaire, respondents were asked if there were any other authors that they would suggest, with the principal suggestion being *David Greig*.

## 2.6 Suitability of Writers/Texts: National 5 & Higher – Film & TV Drama

*“On a scale from 1 to 5 – where ‘1’ is ‘highly unsuitable’ and ‘5’ is ‘highly suitable’ – how suitable do you believe the following writers and texts would be for learners at National 5? Please select ‘don’t know’ if you feel unable to comment about any text”*



**Figure 9b: Suitability of Writers/Texts -  
Film & Television Drama at National 5 (Cont'd)**



From Figure 9a it can be seen that in terms of television and film drama, the two selections most commonly perceived as being *suitable* for learners at **National 5** were:

- Gregory's Girl (77%)
- Local Hero (66%)

Thereafter, selections most commonly seen as being *unsuitable* were relatively limited, although this was most prominent in terms of *Neds* (20%).

Finally, Figure 9b indicates that levels of 'don't know' responses here were significant for a number of the options under consideration and, in particular:

- Late Night Shopping (82%)
- Peter Venus (79%)
- Dear Green Place (70%)
- Another Time, Another Place (70%)

*“On a scale from 1 to 5 – where ‘1’ is ‘highly unsuitable’ and ‘5’ is ‘highly suitable’ – how suitable do you believe the following writers and texts would be for learners at Higher? Please select ‘don’t know’ if you feel unable to comment about any text”*

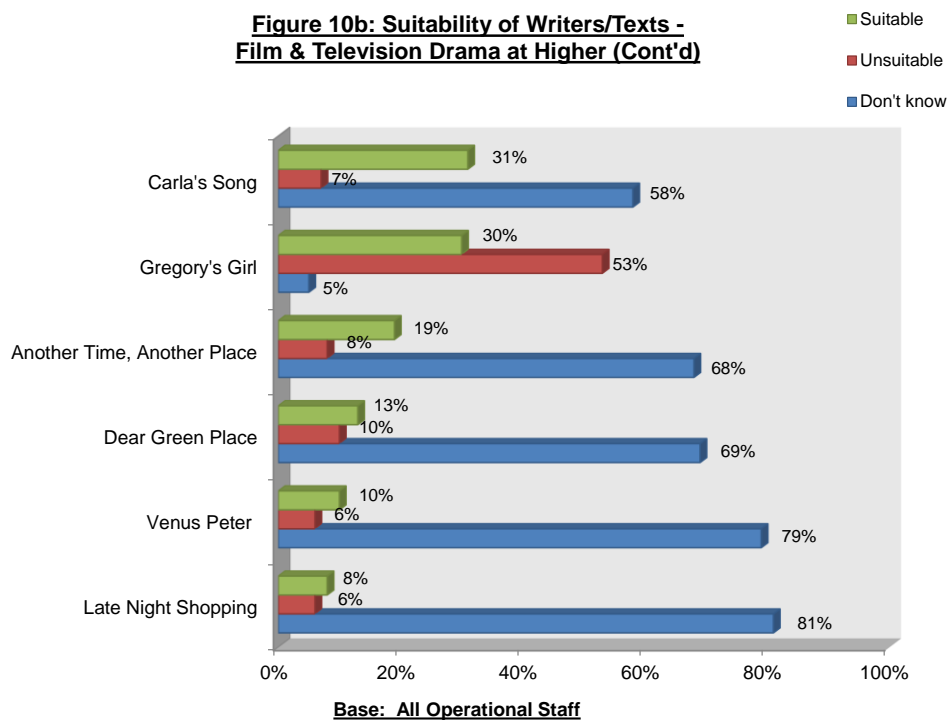
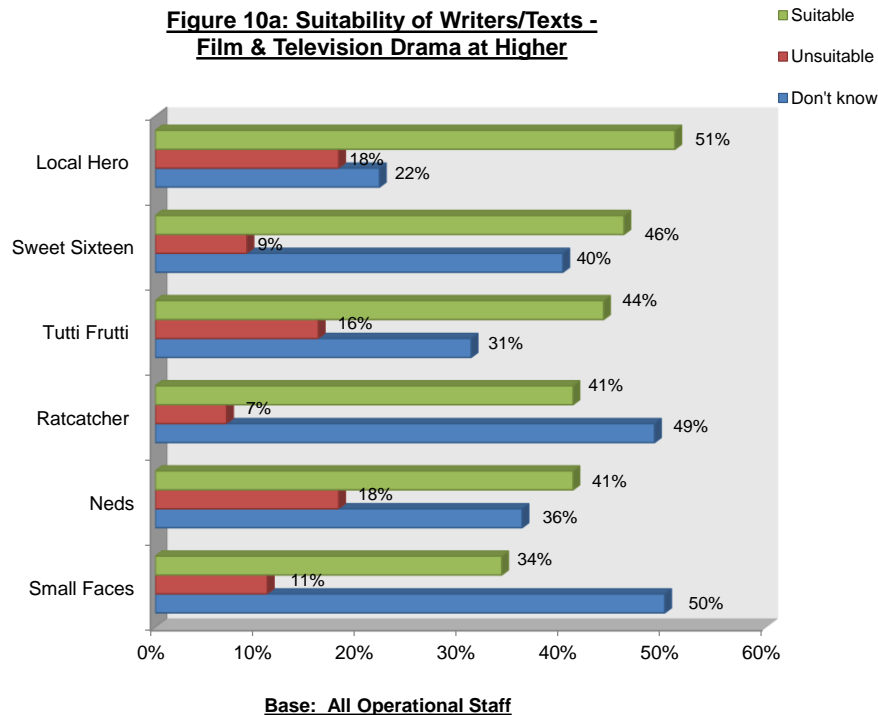




Figure 10a indicates that the writers and texts in terms of film and television drama which were seen as being most *suitable* for learners at Higher were:

- Local Hero (51%)
- Sweet Sixteen (46%)
- Tutti Frutti (44%)
- Ratcatcher (41%)
- Neds (41%)

Thereafter, levels of *unsuitability* of the options under consideration were relatively limited, but most notable in respect of *Gregory's Girl* (53%).

Finally, Figures 10a and 10b again indicate that levels of 'don't know' responses here were high in respect of a number of writers and texts under consideration and, in particular, in terms of:

- Late Night Shopping (81%)
- Peter Venus (79%)
- Dear Green Place (69%)
- Another Time, Another Place (68%)

Once again, at the end of this section of the questionnaire respondents were asked – on an unprompted basis – if they had any further unprompted suggestions and, in this regard, the two principal suggestions made were *Trainspotting* and *The Angels' Share* and, thereafter:

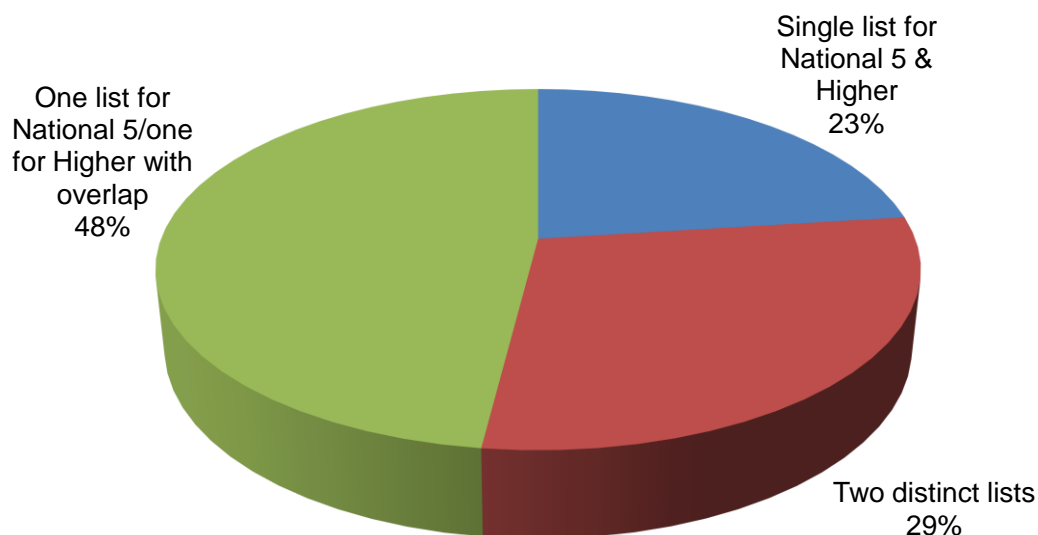
- Whisky Galore
- Shallow Grave
- Orphans
- Red Road

- My Name is Joe
- Leaving
- Braveheart
- Ae Fond Kiss

## 2.7 **Should Scottish Texts Be A Single List to Cover Both National 5 & Higher**

*“Do you think that the list of set Scottish texts should be a single list to cover both National 5 and Higher?”*

**Figure 11: Nature of Lists of Set Scottish Texts**



From Figure 11 it can be seen that the largest single proportion of respondents (48%) believed that the list of Scottish texts should be *one list for National 5 and one list for Higher, with some overlap*.

Thereafter, respondents were relatively evenly split in terms of their preference for the list of set Scottish texts to be:

- Two distinct lists, one for National 5 and one for Higher (29%)

- A single list for National 5 and Higher (23%)

### 3.0 **STAGE 2 OUTCOMES: PRACTITIONER FOCUS GROUPS**

#### 3.1 **Suitability of Writers/Texts: Novels & Short Stories**

##### Positives

The practitioner focus groups highlighted a number of *positive outcomes* in respect of the suitability of writers and texts in relation to novels and short stories, namely:

- That there was a generally positive consensus regarding the novels and short stories that most commonly emerged as being *suitable* at both National 5 and Higher
- There was strong support for *The Cone Gatherers* to be introduced to the list of set Scottish texts – particularly for learners at Higher – on the basis that it is already used in schools and a belief that pupils will engage with this text

##### Negatives

It should be noted, however, that the practitioner focus groups also identified a *key negative* in respect of the suitability of writers and texts of novels and short stories, namely a significant belief that the writers and texts emerging most prominently at both National 5 and Higher were seen as being *very largely predictable* and, in particular, that there was a distinct lack of new or current writers and texts in these choices.

##### Concerns

Finally, a number of *concerns* emerged from the practitioner focus groups here. These related to:

- A belief that both Dr Jekyll & Mr Hyde and The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie would be *too challenging* for many pupils at National 5 due to the nature of the language inherent within both texts
- A concern that Sunset Song would be too challenging for many pupils at Higher due to the dialect within this text, the language that it uses and the number of themes that it contains
- Concerns – amongst smaller and rural schools – that many of the most popular texts would be too challenging for pupils at National 5, particularly in the context of such schools requiring to seek a balance for more and less able pupils as a result of a need for them to undertake *split level* teaching

### 3.2 **Suitability of Writers/Texts: Poetry**

#### Positives

The practitioner focus groups identified a number of *positive outcomes* in respect of the poets which most commonly emerged as being perceived as being suitable for learners at both National 5 and Higher and, in particular, there was a general consensus of satisfaction with the poets emerging most prominently – particularly Edwin Morgan, Carol Ann Duffy, Liz Lochhead and Norman McCaig.

This general consensus of satisfaction was a function of a number of factors, including:

- The perceived reliability and *safety* of the poets emerging most commonly
- A belief that there was a *good mix of poets* amongst those emerging most commonly
- Satisfaction that the most popular poets included relatively modern poets and poems

- A belief that the most popular poets would provide a sufficient range of subject matter and styles for learners at both National 5 and Higher
- A belief that the most popular poets had a body of work from which “*pupils could construct good essays*”

In addition to the above, it should be stressed that there was significant support for the introduction of Jackie Kay to any listing of set Scottish texts.

### Negatives

From a *negative perspective*, however, there was a notable belief amongst many of those participating in the practitioner focus groups that many of the most popular poets did not sufficiently “*reflect modern Scottish poetry*”.

In addition, there was no significant support within the focus groups for the additional suggested poets that emerged on an unprompted basis during the first stage of the research, particularly those which were more *traditional* in nature due to perceived language difficulties for pupils pertaining to work by these poets.

### Concerns

It should also be stressed that the practitioner focus groups identified two key *concerns* in respect of the suitability of writers and texts in relation to poetry at both National 5 and Higher, namely:

- A belief that the poets to emerge most prominently have “*been done to death*” in terms of teaching within secondary schools and, accordingly, there is a distinct *lack of freshness* in this selection.

- Concerns about the selection of poems to be used by the poets to emerge most prominently. For example, it was stated that some poems by Carol Ann Duffy are highly complex, whilst others are very simple, meaning that whilst some may be suitable for National 5 and/or Higher, some may be unsuitable at one or both levels.

### 3.3 **Suitability of Writers/Texts: Drama**

#### Positives

It is of some concern to note that no significant *positives* emerged in respect of the suitability of writers and texts for drama at both National 5 and Higher during the course of the practitioner focus groups.

#### Negatives

In contrast, a number of *negative themes* emerged during the course of these focus groups in this regard, including:

- A significant belief that the writers and texts which most commonly emerged as being perceived as being suitable at both National 5 and Higher were “*extremely predictable*”
- A strong belief that Scottish drama is a weak genre, particularly in comparison to prose and poetry, novels and short stories and a consequent belief that teachers would be less likely to choose a set Scottish text from the drama genre in preference to one from either prose or poetry
- There was little support in the focus groups for the inclusion of Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off as a set Scottish text in drama due to a belief that pupils at both National 5 and Higher will be unlikely to engage with this text
- A belief that many youngsters will have difficulties in connecting with some of the drama options (for example, *Slab Boys* which very

largely deals with a predominance of apprenticeships within the workplace which no longer exists)

In addition, it should be stated that there was very little support for the additional unprompted suggestions emerging from the first stage of the research.

### Concerns

The negative outcomes emerging from the practitioner focus groups in relation to the suitability of writers and texts for drama should also be set in the context of two notable concerns that emerged during the course of these groups in this regard, namely:

- That it was apparent that there was a significant lack of knowledge of many of the drama options amongst those participating in the focus groups – both in terms of writers and texts
- That rural schools have particular difficulties in gaining access to theatres – both as practitioners and for pupils – and, therefore, stated that any dramas included in this genre must have a high quality DVD available that can be used within schools

## **3.4 Suitability of Writers/Texts: Film & Television Drama**

### Positives

Again, there were no significant *positive themes* to emerge during the course of the practitioner focus groups in relation to the suitability of writers and texts in film and television drama, although it should be noted that The Angels' Share – which emerged prominently as a popular additional unprompted suggestion during the course of the first stage of the research – also emerged with a significant degree of



support during these focus groups in terms of its inclusion in the lists for both National 5 and Higher.

### Negatives

It was also apparent that three key *negative themes* emerged during the course of the focus groups here in terms of:

- The film and television drama genre being seen as particularly weak – even in comparison to the drama genre (which, as noted earlier, was seen as being weak in comparison to both prose and poetry)
- A significant belief that very limited choice would be made by teachers of the film and television drama options available to them for learners at both National 5 and Higher
- A belief that many youngsters outside the Central Belt will not identify with many of the chosen options i.e. on the basis of a belief that many of the most popular options had a *Central Scotland bias* in terms of language, themes, setting etc.

### Concerns

Finally, two notable concerns emerged here with regard to the suitability of writers and texts in film and television drama, namely:

- That staff participating in the focus groups believed that they themselves – and, indeed, English teachers across Scotland – would lack sufficient knowledge and abilities to teach effectively in this genre
- Concerns regarding age ratings for some of the potential film and television drama options, particularly those which had received ratings reflect their inclusion of bad language and portrayals of sex and drug use

### 3.5 **Suitability of Writers/Texts: General Points**

From the practitioner focus groups, a number of *general points* emerged, namely:

- A belief that teachers who had participated in the first stage of the research had *“played it safe”* in terms of their choices (i.e. of most suitable writers and texts) across all four genres and that this had been a function of:
  - Their familiarity with the texts chosen (i.e. *“being in their comfort zone”*)
  - Teacher focus on forthcoming CfE implementation and, in particular, a belief that *“teachers don’t want to be dealing with CfE as well as having to learn new texts to teach”*
- That there was a general satisfaction with the fact that there was a significant overlap in the lists in all four genres at both National 5 and Higher, particularly:
  - From a resource perspective i.e. schools will *“already have these texts on the shelves”* and, therefore, will not require to make a significant investment in order to teach these texts
  - The opportunity to build the skills of some pupils through National 5 and Higher through their familiarity with writers and texts
- A concern that the introduction of a prescribed Scottish text would be *“against the principles of CfE”*
- A general concern in terms of what represents a Scottish text i.e. is this a Scottish writer? Is this a text set in Scotland? Is it both?

### 3.6 **What Makes Writers/Texts Suitable**

The discussions during the course of the practitioner focus groups indicated that there were three primary factors which led to writers and

texts being deemed as being *suitable* at both National 5 or Higher, namely:

- The familiarity of teachers with texts and writers and, in particular:
  - Teachers not having the requirement to learn new texts
  - Teachers being heavily involved in a range of issues pertaining to the implementation of CfE (and, accordingly, wishing to avoid the “*additional work*” that would be associated with preparing a new text to teach)
- The availability of texts within schools, which was seen as being particularly significant in the current economic climate on the basis that it was highly likely that the most popular texts chosen would already be available within schools
- Those texts that reflect Scottish culture and society, both in the past and at the present time

Beyond these primary considerations, a range of secondary factors were believed to underpin the choice of writers and texts which emerged as being most suitable at National 5 and Higher, namely:

- Texts and writers with which/whom youngsters could *connect* and *relate to*
- Texts which have themes and ideas which transcend time and, therefore, will be *appealing* and *interesting* to young learners
- The appropriateness of texts to the level of study at which they were being targeted i.e. their appropriateness for learners at National 5 and learners at Higher
- Texts of sufficient substance of sufficient quality which have sufficient themes, and contain appropriate stylistic techniques
- Texts which are accessible in terms of language i.e. contain language which will be understandable by learners
- Texts which allow for split level teaching – i.e. within smaller/rural schools where this tends to be undertaken i.e. texts which allow

more able and less able pupils to learn within the same classroom environment (which Dr Jekyll & Mr Hyde being an example of a text which was perceived as being appropriate in this regard)

In addition, other secondary factors which were believed to be of significance here were the desire to include:

- Traditional Scottish writers and texts on the basis of adding the depth and type of texts available for teaching and the extent to which this emphasises the importance of Scottish literature, tradition and culture
- Short novels – particularly at National 5
- Texts from writers that *facilitate* the passing of exams i.e. are likely to promote successful qualification attainment

### 3.7 **What Makes Texts/Writers Unsuitable**

The discussion of factors which were considered to make writers and texts *unsuitable* initially focused around the corollaries to the factors previously mentioned i.e. those that made a text or writer *suitable*. However, there was particular specific reference here to factors such as:

- Poor quality writing
- Texts which are *too dated*
- Texts which are *too simple* – with the example of Sailmaker being noted here
- The use of bad language (with particular concerns both in relation to its impact on learners, but also the potential for this to lead to parental complaints)
- Texts which have gratuitous content regarding sex and drugs – with particular reference being made to Trainspotting in this regard

- Texts and writers which will require teachers to produce materials themselves i.e. for which support/materials are not already available
- Texts and writers that don't engage young people at an intellectual level (with particular concerns being raised in this regard with respect to the most popular choices within the film and television genre)
- Texts with a Glasgow or Central Scotland bias – a factor raised most commonly by teachers in schools outwith the Central Belt – on the basis of a concern that youngsters outwith the Central Belt will not understand or identify with many of the circumstances, situations and themes contained within some of the most popular options within the four genres and, in particular, those within the drama and film and television drama genres
- Texts with religious contents of themes (a factor noted by schools in the North of Scotland)

In the context of *unsuitability*, it should also be noted that there was continued reference during this part of the focus groups to the weakness of the drama, and film and television drama genres (and, in particular, the latter) and, as a result, a belief that the options available to teachers/learners in these genres are *less suitable* than those in the prose and poetry genres.

Finally, in the context of *unsuitability*, a number of those participating in the practitioner focus group made reference to the overlapping lists across the four genres at National 5 and Higher. In particular, a number of those participating in the groups argued that this would be a *negative* for more able pupils, on the basis that they would be *bored*, *not sufficiently stimulated* and *not sufficiently engaged in their learning* if they were required to study texts by the same writer at both National 5 and Higher.

### 3.8 **What Explains High Levels of Don't Know Responses Regarding Many Writers & Texts**

As noted earlier, a notable proportion of those taking part in the online survey (and, in some cases, a significant majority) provided a 'don't know' response – when asked to comment on the suitability of writers and texts – for a considerable number of those under consideration across all four genres.

During the practitioner focus groups, this issue was examined further and it was apparent that it was primarily seen as being a function of unfamiliarity amongst English teachers with many writers and texts, particularly those which were *new*.

It is also apparent that a number of secondary factors were responsible for the high level of 'don't know' responses noted in the first stage of the research, including:

- Some teachers not having studied Scottish writers or texts themselves whilst at university
- Some teachers lacking the *motivation, desire or time* to explore new Scottish writers and texts

In addition, there was a belief that – in relation to poetry – some teachers may have provided a 'don't know' response in respect of a number of the poets under consideration on the basis that they did not know which selection of poems by a poet would be chosen i.e. feeling unable to comment regarding the suitability of a poet due to a lack of knowledge of which poems for that poet would be selected.

### 3.9 Value of Film & Television Drama As An Additional Genre

There was a distinct and general lack of support for film and television drama as a separate genre amongst those participating in the practitioner focus groups. This was a function of three factors:

- A belief that most English teachers would lack the knowledge and skills in this genre to allow them to teach it effectively (leading to a presumption that teachers would be unlikely to choose options from this genre)
- The relative weakness of this genre (particularly compared to prose and poetry) which was allied to a concern that its inclusion as a separate genre would lead to the *dumbing down* of qualifications, particularly at Higher
- A belief that this genre does not effectively engage youngsters at an intellectual level, both in absolute terms and in relative terms (particularly in comparison to the prose and poetry genres)

It should be noted, however, that there was a degree of support in a number of the focus groups for the film and television drama genre to be *amalgamated* with the drama genre. This was based around the rationale that the combining of these two relatively weak genres (i.e. in comparison to prose and poetry) could provide a single stronger genre.

It should be stressed, however, that some – although not many – of those participating in the practitioner focus groups argued that pupils should be given the opportunity to engage in a broad range of media and, accordingly, the film and television drama should be a separate genre, particularly as film and television drama is often accessed and engaged in by youngsters more than prose, poetry or drama in their *day to day lives*.

### 3.10 Assessment Approaches for Scottish Texts: Critical Essay or Extract Based Approaches

During the course of the practitioner focus groups, respondents were asked to consider assessment approaches for Scottish texts and, in particular, their views on the critical essay and extract based approaches to assessment.

#### Critical Essay Approach: Positives

The critical essay approach to assessment was seen as having a number of positive aspects focusing around beliefs that this approach:

- Requires pupils to take a more holistic approach to texts and study them in greater depth
- Promotes the development of writing skills amongst learners
- Develops pupils' analytical skills
- Is easier to teach
- Allows markers to identify more of the *personality* of the pupil
- Prepares pupils at National 5 for progression to Higher

In addition, there was a consensus within the focus groups that the critical essay approach is one with which both pupils and teachers are *comfortable* and *familiar*.

#### Critical Essay Approach: Negatives

In contrast to the range of *positives* identified in relation to the critical essay approach to assessment, only two notable *negatives* were identified in this regard, namely:



- A belief that some pupils at National 5 will lack the *higher level thinking skills* which are required to successfully write a critical essay
- A belief that there is a need to ensure information is used by learners in a relevant way during assignments i.e. during the course of writing a critical essay

#### Extract Based Approach: Positives

The focus groups amongst practitioners highlighted three key positive aspects of the extract based approach to assessment based on beliefs that this approach:

- Breaks texts and assessments into smaller and more manageable units which is more suited to some learners
- Promotes and ensures a greater consistency in the marking of assignments
- Is best suited to short stories and, in particular, poetry i.e. where texts are far more self-contained

In addition, a number of respondents believed that a further *positive* of the extract based approach to assessment was that it builds on close reading skills. It should be stressed, however, that this was seen as being a *negative* of the extract based approach by other participants in the focus groups, due to their belief that this *replicates* rather than *builds* skills.

#### Extract Based Approach: Negatives

The practitioner focus groups also highlighted a number of *negatives* which are associated with the extract based approach to assessment based around beliefs that:

- Many pupils will *struggle* with this approach (which, it was believed, was evidenced when this approach was used previously)
- That this approach limits choice, particularly in relation to the poetry genre
- That this approach is more difficult to use in drama generally – and, in particular, film and television drama – due to issues pertaining to lack of substance and techniques
- That this approach is associated with logistical difficulties for film and television drama

In addition, a number of respondents during the course of the focus groups made reference here to their concerns that pupils can become “*over reliant on what is put in front of them*”.

#### Assessment Approaches: Broad Observations

On the basis of the outcomes of this part of the practitioner focus groups, a number of broad observations can be made in respect of the assessment approach for Scottish texts.

The primary broad observation is that there was an *overwhelming preference* amongst those participating in all of the practitioner focus groups for the critical essay approach to assessment rather than the extract based approach.

Thereafter, a number of secondary broad observations emerged from this element of the focus group process, namely:

- That many – particularly younger – teachers are not familiar with the extract based assessment approach
- That there were some concerns that two critical essays would lead to a predominant choice of Scottish texts by teachers

- That there was some concern that having two critical essays would mean the repeating of the same skillset by pupils, rather than the application of two skillsets – as would be the case if the critical essay and extract based approach were to be adopted
- That there was some support for both a critical essay and extract based approach to be adopted, but that this support was based on the overwhelming preference for the former

#### 4.0 **STAGE 2 OUTCOMES: STAKEHOLDER DEPTH INTERVIEWS**

##### 4.1 **Suitability of Writers/Texts: Novels & Short Stories**

###### Positives

From a *positive perspective* the stakeholder interviews noted general support for most of the novels and short stories which emerged as being most suitable during the first stage of the research – at both National 5 and Higher.

In addition, the stakeholders interviewed were generally positive with regard to the overlap of lists at National 5 and Higher, particularly from a resource perspective i.e. on the basis that this would minimise the costs associated with the procurement of books etc.

###### Negatives

It should be noted, however, that from a *negative perspective* there was a degree of disappointment with regard to the perceived *predictability* of those writers and texts which emerged with most prominence in the first stage of the research across all four genres and, in particular, there was a degree of disappointment that there were “*no real surprises*”.

###### Concerns

Stakeholders noted no significant concerns at this point in the discussion.

## 4.2 **Suitability of Writers/Texts: Poetry**

### Positives

The depth interviews with stakeholders highlighted two *key positives* in respect of the suitability of writers and texts for poetry, namely:

- That there was very strong support for the poets which emerged as being most popular at both National 5 and Higher
- That there was significant support for Burns to be included at both National 5 and Higher, as it was felt that his work was of significant importance to Scotland

### Negatives

The only *negative* to emerge with respect to the suitability of writers and texts in respect of poetry was a concern that some pupils would find the works of Burns to be relatively *inaccessible*, principally due to the language used, but also due to the time at which his works were written.

### Concerns

Finally, the only *concern* to emerge here was a belief that – although supported – the range of poets that emerged in the first stage of the research as being most suitable in respect of poetry was relatively *narrow*.

#### 4.3 **Suitability of Writers/Texts: Drama**

##### Positives

The most significant *positive* to emerge from the depth interviews undertaken amongst stakeholders in respect of the drama genre was that of a general consensus of support for the writers and texts which emerged as being most suitable during the first stage of the research, with this particularly being the case in relation to Higher.

##### Negatives

The only *negative* to emerge here was a belief that there was a prevalence of “*low grade and poor drama*” – although it should be stressed that this was a negative that was raised by only two of the four stakeholders interviewed.

##### Concerns

The only notable *concern* to emerge with regard to the outcomes of the first stage of the research in terms of writers and texts for drama was – again, expressed by two of those taking part in the depth interviews – a belief that some of the most popular selections would lead to the “*dumbing down of drama*”.

#### 4.4 **Suitability of Writers/Texts: Film & Television Drama**

##### Positives

There were no significant positives identified in respect of the outcomes of the first stage of the research in terms of the writers and texts in the film and television drama which were seen as being most suitable for learners at National 5 and Higher, although two of those

interviewed *did* note their belief that some of the most popular choices were “*at least relatively contemporary*”.

### Negatives

However, the depth interviews amongst stakeholders highlighted two significant *negatives* in this regard, namely:

- A belief that the most popular choices were too limited in terms of their intellectual challenge for learners
- A belief that some of the most popular choices “*pander to the lowest common denominator*” i.e. were best suited to “*less able and motivated learners*”

### Concerns

The overwhelming *concern* noted by stakeholders here was that of the relative weakness of this genre (i.e. in comparison to prose and poetry – both of which were seen as being significantly strong in terms of breadth and depth of potential writers and texts to be studied at National 5 and Higher).

## **4.5 Suitability of Writers & Texts: General Points**

On the basis of the depth interviews undertaken with stakeholders, two general points emerged which are worthy of note, namely:

- A belief amongst stakeholders that the writers and texts which emerged across all four genres in terms of being most suitable for learners at National 5 and Higher reflect:
  - A lack of resources in schools i.e. a desire to avoid expenditure in terms of the procurement of texts etc.

- The availability of support and teaching notes for the writers and texts most commonly chosen
- A familiarity of teachers with the writers and texts most commonly chosen
- A belief that there was a need to encourage English teachers to *keep abreast* with emerging Scottish texts and writers in order to promote their study in future years

#### 4.6 **What Makes Writers & Texts Suitable**

During the course of the depth interviews with stakeholders, respondents were asked to consider what they believe had been the factors which made writers or texts *suitable* to be studied by learners at National 5 and Higher and, on this basis, the primary factors identified were:

- That the writers and texts were suitable to the targeted level of learning and, in particular, were sufficiently and appropriately challenging for learners at the level at which they were targeted
- The availability of support and teaching notes for teachers
- Familiarity of teachers with writers and texts and, in particular, those texts which are already taught in schools
- The availability of texts within schools i.e. again from a resource perspective
- A writer being Scottish

Thereafter, a range of secondary factors were identified which, it was believed, contributed to the perceived suitability of writers and texts, namely:

- Those that engage young people at an intellectual level
- Those that contain a range of accessible themes i.e. themes with which learners can engage



- Those which have previously been specified texts
- Writers who have a high profile (for example, Liz Lochhead)
- Texts that are based in Scotland
- Texts which are suitable to be assessed through the critical essay approach

#### **4.7 What Makes Texts/Writers Unsuitable**

In terms of the factors which stakeholders believed made writers and texts unsuitable, reference was made to the corollaries of those outlined previously in Section 4.6.

In addition, however, the stakeholders interviewed also made reference here to other factors which they believed contributed to the unsuitability of texts, namely those that:

- Are *antiquated* and, in particular, have themes and settings with which young learners would struggle to identify
- Are *inaccessible* due to the language or dialect that they contain
- Are *boring* for pupils and, accordingly, would fail to engage them
- Focus on a particular audience or part of the pupil base (with reference being made here to a particular text which, it was felt, would be best suited to female rather than male learners)
- Use bad language excessively or have gratuitous references to drugs or sex (which was not only felt to be unsuitable from a learner perspective, but also it was believed would lead to parental complaints and concerns)

#### **4.8 What Explains The High Levels of Don't Know Responses Regarding Many Writers & Texts**

As noted previously, a notable proportion – and, in some cases, a majority – of those participating in the first stage of the research

provided a 'don't know' response with respect to the suitability of a range of writers and texts under consideration.

When stakeholders were asked for their views as to why this was the case, the overwhelming consensus was that this was a function of a lack of awareness amongst many teachers of new and modern Scottish writers and texts and, in particular, that many English teachers lacked the time to develop their awareness in these regards and some teachers lacked the desire or motivation to do so.

#### **4.9 Value of Film & Television Drama As An Addition Genre**

In contrast to the outcomes derived from practitioners, the stakeholders participating in the depth interviews expressed *general support* for film and television drama as a separate genre, with this being a function of two key factors:

- A belief that film and television drama requires a *different type of study* which is “*a positive for learners*”
- A belief that film and television drama as a separate genre would facilitate drama teachers “*getting involved in this type of teaching*”

Despite their general support for film and television drama to be a separate genre, stakeholders also identified a number of concerns in this regard and, in particular:

- The *ability* and *comfort* of many English teachers in this genre
- That there is a potential for there to be a limited demand for texts and writers to be chosen from this genre
- The general weakness of this genre, particularly in comparison to prose and poetry
- A concern that some pupils may view film and television drama as an *easy option*

It should also be noted – as was the case with practitioners – that there was a degree of support amongst stakeholders for the amalgamation of the film and television genre with the drama genre i.e. to produce a single stronger genre.

#### **4.10 Assessment Approaches for Scottish Texts: Critical Essay & Extract Based Approaches**

##### Critical Essay Approach: Positives

Stakeholders believed that the critical essay approach to assessment has two key *positives*, namely:

- That it provides pupils with the opportunity to develop and demonstrate their extended writing skills
- That it allows pupils to demonstrate their writing skills per se more effectively

##### Critical Essay Approach: Negatives

The only negative identified by stakeholders in respect of the critical essay approach was a belief that it could be *too challenging* for some pupils.

##### Extract Based Approach: Positives

The key *positive* of the extract based approach to assessment identified by stakeholders was that its *small bites approach* could be more attractive to less able and academic pupils.

### Extract Based Approach: Negatives

Finally, stakeholders identified a wide range of *negatives* which they associated with the extract based approach to assessment, focusing around beliefs that it:

- *Dumbs down* the assessment process
- Is too similar to the close writing approach i.e. replicates an existing element of assessment
- Narrows interpretation and expression by pupils
- Narrows the range of texts pupils are likely to study
- Is less suited to novels
- Can be more difficult in relation to poetry

### Assessment Approaches: Broad Observations

The key broad observation that can be drawn from the depth interviews undertaken with stakeholders in respect of the assessment approach for Scottish texts is that there was a *clear and distinct* preference for the critical essay assessment approach. However, it should be stressed that there was also a degree of support for both approaches to assessment being incorporated at National 5 and Higher, primarily due to:

- The opportunity to examine two distinct skillsets amongst learners
- The greater suitability of the extract based approach to less able learners

## 5.0 **CONCLUSIONS**

A number of general conclusions can be drawn from the comprehensive programme of research undertaken amongst practitioners and stakeholders in respect of the inclusion of set Scottish texts at National 5 and Higher. These are as follows:

- Teachers and stakeholders believe that the writers and texts which emerged as being perceived as being more suitable – across all genres – are largely predictable, somewhat dated and generally disappointing. Despite this, there was a general consensus of support for the *most popular* choices.
- There is a general belief that teachers *played it safe* in their choices of writers and texts which were considered to be most suitable at National 5 and Higher, with this being a function of their familiarity with these writers and texts, the availability of books and their primary focus on CfE.
- There was preference and support for overlapping lists for National 5 and Higher.
- There is a degree of support for additional writers and texts to be added as identified on an unprompted basis during the first stage of the research by participants and, in particular, The Cone Gatherers, Jackie Kay and The Angels' Share.
- Even for the writers and texts for which there was the greatest support for their inclusion in the listings at National 5 and Higher, there remain concerns with regard to elements of their suitability. Accordingly, it would be an impossibility to produce a listing of writers and texts across each of the genres which suited all English teachers.
- Drama – and, in particular, film and television drama – are viewed as being weak genres and, accordingly, there is a potential for their aggregation.

- There is a lack of knowledge of new Scottish writers and texts amongst many English teachers.
- The retention of the critical essay assessment approach is seen as being essential. However, there is a concern that if two critical essays are adopted as an assessment approach, this could lead to the predominant choice of Scottish texts.
- There is a degree of willingness to accept the extract based approach to assessment – despite its perceived inherent difficulties – but only in the context of a critical essay also being retained.

It should also be noted that three further more generic broad observations could be drawn from the practitioner focus groups:

- That there was no significant opposition to the inclusion of Scottish writers and texts as options for learners at National 5 and Higher per se, but there was a *general* and *significant* preference for a free choice of Scottish writers and texts rather than a prescriptive approach in this regard
- That there were concerns that the inclusion of a mandatory Scottish text was too prescriptive and narrowed choice for learners
- That there were concerns that a requirement for a prescribed Scottish text to be studied “*reduced the global perspective for Scottish learners in terms of their study of English*”

## ***APPENDIX I***

## Version 2 SQA - Scottish Texts in English Course Engagement Research

We have been commissioned by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) to conduct research relating to the assessment of Scottish texts in the Course assessment of National 5 and Higher English.

In Section 2 of the National 5 and Higher English question papers, learners will be required to answer one question on a Scottish text, from a list of set texts to be provided by SQA. The structure of this question will be an extract from the text followed by a series of questions.

Learners will still be required to answer one critical essay question. As is currently the case, there are no restrictions on the text studied for the critical essay.

This questionnaire includes suggested Scottish texts, which you are invited to consider on the basis of their suitability for National 5 and/or Higher English learners. The final list of set Scottish texts will be confirmed by SQA and refreshed in the future, as required.

The survey will take around 10 minutes to complete.

Before you begin, you need to make sure that your browser is maximised (i.e. that it covers your whole screen). If necessary, you can do this by clicking the maximise button in the top right/left hand corner of your browser. It's easy to navigate through the questionnaire: just click on the answer or answers that apply and click on the "Next" button to move to the next page. Please avoid using the browser buttons. You may need to use the scroll bar if you cannot see the whole screen at once.

If you have any questions or queries about the survey please e-mail [david@ashbrookresearch.co.uk](mailto:david@ashbrookresearch.co.uk)

This survey is purely for research purposes and your responses will be completely confidential. Only anonymous data will be provided to our client, and so your privacy is assured. However, if you would like to view our Privacy Policy [click here](#)

To start click on the "Next" button below.



**1. Scottish texts will include prose, poetry and drama. Should drama include film and television drama?**

☐ Yes

☐ No

**2. SQA is committed to providing learners with breadth and choice. However, question papers need to be manageable for both centres and learners. Given these factors, how many texts do you think should be included for each genre?**

- ☐ 1 - 3
- ☐ 4 - 6
- ☐ More than 6

## Version 2 SQA - Scottish Texts in English Course Engagement Research

The following lists of suggested Scottish texts have been compiled through engagement activity with practitioners and stakeholder groups, and also includes Scottish texts represented in past Intermediate 2 and Higher English critical essay answers.

**3. On a scale from 1 to 5 — where '1' is 'highly unsuitable' and '5' is 'highly suitable' — how suitable do you believe the following writers and texts would be for learners at National 5 or Higher? Please select 'Don't Know' if you feel unable to comment about any text.**

### Novels & short stories

	National 5	Higher
Donovan, Anne: Hieroglyphs and Other Stories	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Banks, Iain: The Crow Road	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Brookmyre, Christopher: A Tale Etched in Blood and Hard Black Pencil	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Galloway, Janice: The Trick is to Keep Breathing	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Grassie Gibbon, Lewis: Sunset Song	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Gray, Alasdair: Unlikely Stories, Mostly	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Greig, Andrew: Electric Brae	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Gunn, Neil: Highland River	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Jenkins, Robin: The Changeling	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Kay, Jackie: Trumpet	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Kelman, James: Not Not While the Giro	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Kennedy, A L: Night Geometry and the Garscadden Trains	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Kesson, Jessie: The White Bird Passes	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
MacDougall Hay, John: Gillespie	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Mackay Brown, George: Greenvoe	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Mollvanney, William: Laidlaw	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Robertson, James: The Testament of Gideon Mack	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Scott, Walter: Rob Roy	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Spark, Muriel: The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Spence, Alan: Its Colours They Are Fine	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Stevenson, Robert Louis: Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Warner, Alan: Morvern Caller	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Are there any other texts that you would suggest?



**4. On a scale from 1 to 5 — where '1' is 'highly unsuitable' and '5' is 'highly suitable' — how suitable do you believe the following writers and texts would be for learners at National 5 or Higher? Please select 'Don't Know' if you feel unable to comment about any text.**

**Poetry (a selection by)**

	National 5	Higher
Burns, Robert	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Burnside, John	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Crichton Smith, Iain	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Duffy, Carol Ann	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Jacobs, Violet	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Jamie, Kathleen	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Leonard, Tom	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Lochhead, Liz	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
MacCaig, Norman	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
MacDiarmid, Hugh	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
MacLean, Sorley	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Morgan, Edwin	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Muir, Edwin	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Paterson, Don	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Robertson, Robin	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Traditional Ballads	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Are there any other poets you would suggest?

## Version 2 SQA - Scottish Texts in English Course Engagement Research

**5. On a scale from 1 to 5 — where '1' is 'highly unsuitable' and '5' is 'highly suitable' — how suitable do you believe the following writers and texts would be for learners at National 5 or Higher? Please select 'Don't Know' if you feel unable to comment about any text.**

### Drama

	National 5	Higher
Barrie, J M: What Every Woman Knows	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Bridie, James: The Anatomist	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Burke, Gregory: Black Watch	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Byrne, John: The Slab Boys	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Di Mambro, Anne Marie: Tally's Blood	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Greenhorn, Stephen: Passing Places	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Greig, David: Dr Korczak's Example	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Lochhead, Liz: Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
McDougall, Peter: Just Another Saturday	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
McGrath, John (7:84 Theatre Company): The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black, Black Oil	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
McGrath, Tom: The Hard Man	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Munro, Rona: Bold Girls	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Roper, Tony: The Steamie	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Spence, Alan: Sailmaker	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Stewart, Ena Lamont: Men Should Weep	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Are there any other texts that you would suggest?

## Version 2 SQA - Scottish Texts in English Course Engagement Research

**6. On a scale from 1 to 5 — where '1' is 'highly unsuitable' and '5' is 'highly suitable' — how suitable do you believe the following writers and texts would be for learners at National 5 or Higher? Please select 'Don't Know' if you feel unable to comment about any text.**

### Film & television drama

	National 5	Higher
Another Time, Another Place	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Carla's Song	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Dear Green Place	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Gregory's Girl	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Late Night Shopping	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Local Hero	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Neds	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Ratcatcher	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Small Faces	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Sweet Sixteen	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Tutti Frutti	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Venus Peter	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Are there any other texts that you would suggest?

**7. Do you think that the list of set Scottish texts should be a single list to cover both National 5 and Higher?**

- ☐ A single list for National 5 and Higher
- ☐ Two distinct lists, one for National 5 and one for Higher
- ☐ One list for National 5 and one list for Higher, with some overlap



**8. Which of the following best describes you?**

- ☐ Classroom Teacher
- ☐ FE Lecturer
- ☐ HE Lecturer
- ☐ Head of department
- ☐ Head of faculty
- ☐ Principal Teacher
- ☐ Other

Please now click the "Finish" button below to submit your response.

## ***APPENDIX II***

**SQA: SCOTTISH TEXTS IN ENGLISH COURSES ENGAGEMENT  
RESEARCH (J740)**

**TOPIC GUIDE (FINAL DRAFT)**

1. Explore the perceived suitability of texts on the SQA long list of set Scottish texts and, in addition, explore the perceived suitability of the principal unprompted suggestions for Scottish texts made during Stage 1 of the research.
2. Establish what features of particular texts make them highly suitable or highly unsuitable
3. In instances where practitioners have responded 'don't know', establish if this is due to unfamiliarity with the text, or other factors.
4. Probe regarding the value of film and television drama as an additional genre.
5. Explore the pros and cons of different assessment approaches for Scottish Texts. For example, critical essay or extract based approaches.
6. Explore whether or not an extract-based assessment is more problematic depending on the genre (ie. prose, poetry, drama or film and television)