

Examiners' Report/  
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2016

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE  
in English Literature (4ET0)  
Paper 01

Edexcel Certificate  
in English Literature (KET0)  
Paper 01

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## **General comments**

The full range of achievement was seen across the paper with examiners reporting some genuinely outstanding achievement at the upper end of the range. Thorough answers featured particularly well-referenced support this year with some instances of original use of quotation and less obvious choices of lines selected. Candidates working at levels 2 and 3 were more confident in their application of support with improvement seen in the spread of support across answers.

The usual texts were very popular: 1, 2, 5, 9, and 11. Sometimes candidates showed good knowledge and understanding of the text but did not explicitly deal with the terms of the question. There were also instances as I have seen in the past of students answering a question but on a different text. The most successful candidates kept the question in clear view as they constructed their arguments. Candidates who were aware of the form in which a text was written were more successful than those who did not. For example, those who were aware that a play is a drama to be performed on stage, rather than a book, tended to engage more with the effects of writer's craft and were more effective in terms of personal engagement. References to staging and audience response often proved differentiating factors in the quality of answers. Less successful responses relied on narrative response or commentary or tended to refer almost exclusively to film versions of the texts. Better candidates were able to write analytically, using carefully chosen quotations to build effective and relevant arguments. The quality and selection of support was often a clearly discriminating factor.

## **'A View from the Bridge'**

Questions 1a and 1b enabled candidates to refer to a wide range of different ideas and offered opportunities for personal engagement that many candidates engaged with effectively. 1a was more popular than 1b by a considerable amount. Both questions offered opportunities to choose with 1a asking students to select and write about a character that they sympathised with. Some candidates who chose to answer on numerous characters did so to the detriment of their overall achievement, but there were others that related answers to several characters with detail and depth. Beatrice was a popular choice with alternatives including Eddie, Marco and Catherine. 1b offered candidates the challenge of writing about the theme of change. The broad brief attracted a range of specific and analytical discussions with effective support. The question required discussion on choices in the play. Some approached this from a character point of view while others built an argument around episodes in the play. The use of different approaches to the question enabled achievement at all

levels of ability. Specific key events such as Eddie's choice to report Marco and Rodolpho and Catherine's choice of Rodolpho as her husband engaged lively debate.

### **'An Inspector Calls'**

2a was an extremely popular question and most candidates were confident in their approach to the Inspector and Mr Birling as opposites. The question invited lively engagement from candidates of all abilities with some of the best answers comparing characters and reaching deeper aspects of analysis, even though comparison is not required in the terms of the question. A number of candidates worked through straightforward character studies with varying degrees of success and detail. Stronger answers used evidence related to social and historical context to build their answers. Most gave equal attention to Birling and the Inspector. The terms of the question led to positive responses across the ability range as candidates were able to consider these characters as foils and contrasts. 2b was less popular with the least successful answers working through character studies of the different women in the play. Better responses engaged with the roles of different women in the play and how Priestley presented them to attract a particular audience response. Social, cultural, historical context use was often a differentiating factor in these answers as was the ability to integrate relevant quotation. Eva, Edna, Sheila Birling and Sibyl Birling all featured as examples of women from different social classes.

### **'Henry V'**

Answers to questions 3a and 3b were seen more often this series and it was clear that many of those who studied the play knew it well. 3a was more popular than 3b and invited students to argue about the nature of Henry's character. The best of these used the stimulus quotation to develop insightful arguments. The quality of support varied but was extremely impressive in the top levels. There were some very effective and impressive responses that looked at different aspects of Henry's portrayal with analysis and scholarly confidence. There were fewer answers on 3b, but, once again, some detailed and focused responses. Some genuinely superb context knowledge and understanding informed convincing arguments about religion while less successful answers wrote about the Archbishops and their motivation exclusively.

### **'Much Ado About Nothing'**

4a and 4b were seen in relatively small numbers but the quality of responses was notable as candidates chose villains, including the obvious Don John and Borachio to write about, but also less obvious choices such as Leonato and Claudio. Analytical approaches were frequently seen with some helpful focus on detail of writer's craft from some responses. 4b on the theme of reputation led candidates to use often sound or better knowledge and understanding to discuss the shaming of Hero, status of Don John and wider social, cultural and historical issues.

### **'Romeo and Juliet'**

5a and 5b attracted a significant number of answers with 5b outpacing 5a this series for popularity. 5b focused on the theme of death, drawing keen insights from candidates working at Level 3 and above. As this is a wide area for consideration in 'Romeo and Juliet', the best answers offered impressive and comprehensive analysis of context, settings, quotations and character. The least successful answers worked through the different deaths with a narrative focus or relied on film versions to support their ideas. The death of Mercutio was handled with perceptive sensitivity by those fulfilling Level 5 criteria. Some sophisticated answers considered death as a structural feature of the play with atmosphere and pace changing markedly after the death of Mercutio. 5a responses selected detail about Mercutio's character with the best dealing with his role as Romeo's friend and foil to Mercutio, including Shakespeare's presentation of him. The best of these referred to elements of his dramatic portrayal with some interesting consideration of the Queen Mab speech. This question appealed to all abilities with even the weakest candidates able to draw points of relevance for discussion.

### **'The Importance of Being Earnest'**

Questions 6a and 6b were seen less regularly this series, appearing in smaller numbers than previously. Question 6a on Miss Prism proved straightforward with candidates able to consider her comedic value and role in the play's narrative structure. 6b required candidates to write about imagination. This proved a discriminating question as some candidates working at Level 3 and below worked through different parts of the play where imagination is important. Better answers considered the wider purpose of imagination with sophisticated insight and supporting selection, some offering relevant detail of contextual significance.

### **'Our Town'**

There were insufficient answers on 7a and 7b to comment purposefully on achievement.

### **'Pride and Prejudice'**

Question 8a allowed for a straightforward answer on Mr Darcy and a number of these were seen at Level 3 and below. The best answers offered full and personal exploration of Darcy's power, relating analysis to its extent in respect of other characters. Some very impressive and original answers were seen in response to this question with a number talking about Lizzie's growing power in the novel as events unfold. 8b was less popular than 8a with candidate exploring friendship in a range of situations - Charlotte and Elizabeth; Jane and Elizabeth and the supportive friendship of the Gardiners to the Bennets. The best answers reflected on Regency conventions of friendship with sophisticated awareness of context.

### **'To Kill a Mockingbird'**

Question 9a was more popular than 9b with candidates writing confidently and with personal arguments about Mayella's role and character. Candidates at all levels of achievement formed opinions based on the stimulus, some arguing vigorously for their view. Question 9a attracted a range of views on Mayella's status as a victim and for the most part answers were well supported. It was clear from both questions that the novel engaged candidates drawing a very clear personal engagement. In 9b Candidates proved able to write well about a range of settings in the novel, ranging between Maycomb and its setting in America's Deep South, the courthouse, Mayella's run down shack and The Radley Place to name just four that were used regularly. It was clear that candidates felt strongly about the issues related to the novel's settings and these attracted some committed and often very effective and assured answers. The use of the courthouse where Tom is imprisoned attracted a good deal of intelligent and purposeful response.

### **'The English Teacher'**

10a and 10b were rarely seen. Some less able candidates had studied the text and responses tended to offer a methodical narrative or character study approach. Candidates that responded to 10a on characters that help Krishna wrote about Susila and the Headmaster in answers seen.

### **'Of Mice and Men'**

11a was by the far the most popular prose question with candidates of all levels of ability answering on Slim. There were far more excellent and outstanding answers than seen previously with an increase in the number of Level 4 and 5 answers seen. The success and popularity of this text is testament to its versatility and appeal to students of all backgrounds. Candidates across the ability range were confident when writing about Slim and offered developed analysis in many cases. The quality of textual support was once again a discriminating factor. Some candidates confused Slim and Candy which limited their achievement. Question 11b on poverty also attracted a large number of answers with some candidates tending to focus on a historical discussion of the Great Depression. Some very good responses were seen relating the detail of poverty to aspects of characterisation and emerging narrative. As in 11a and Q9, a strong thread of empathy was evident in answers to this question as candidates analysed the need for dreams and the description of the bunkhouse among other points. The fate of Candy as the novel draws to an end drew comment from many responses.

### **'Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry'**

12a was answered by few candidates who were asked to select the character they most admired to write about. As in other questions involving choice, most wrote with confidence and personal engagement, using apt support to build their arguments. Cassie was the most popular character selected but answers were also seen on Ma and Pa. 12b invited some interesting responses focused on historical context and the recent past of characters such as Big Ma. This was related to the importance of the land and aspects of black history. Very few answers were seen but those who answered were aware of the impact of context on the novel's events.

### **'Nineteenth Century Short Stories'**

13a and 13b were rarely answered with 13a considering 'Van Bibber's Burglar' alongside 'Country Living', 'The Unexpected' or 'Tony Kytes'. Answers seen tended to reflect at least sound knowledge and understanding of Level 3 or above quality. 13b required candidates to write on the concept of bad luck. Weaker answers only wrote on one story or were unbalanced in approach. As in other questions, the quality of support was often a convincing discriminating factor.

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