Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2016

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

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General Comments

In general terms the paper performed very well and it was clear in the quality of much of the work seen that centres had taken on board the comments made in the previous Principal Examiner's Reports. Aspects of improvement included better use of supporting reference, including use of less obvious, more accurate quotation. This is a skill that lends itself to Level 4 and 5 criteria but sound evidence of the application of support was also seen at Level 3. Level 2 answers tended to approach the question from a more general perspective or to use quotation sporadically in answers. Personal engagement was a strength at all levels of ability this year and could be seen in the application of skill to study of some of the less popular texts in the specification. 'Henry V' and 'Nineteenth Century Short Stories' enjoyed broader take up than in previous series. Answers from Level 3 upwards reflected lucid and well-organised structure in their writing. This enables more sophisticated and complex ideas to be clearly conveyed. Examiners reported seeing much less use of narrative recall than in previous series and evidence that only film versions of texts had been studied were few and far between. Structure of whole essays and indeed at sentence and paragraph level was more tightly controlled by a larger number of candidates, enabling arguments to be more logical and ultimately sophisticated. Some candidates approached the use of technical language for literary analysis very well with others adopting a rather more unfocused approach. This feature proved discriminating in some answers.

'A View from the Bridge'

Questions 1a and 1b attracted a significant number of answers. In terms of the 1a question, most candidates showed knowledge and understanding of Alfieri, with many writing confidently about his role and characterisation as separate literary entities. Some very astute answers used specific and focused textual detail to build perceptive and original arguments. 1b was less popular than 1a. It required an exploration of ways in which the play's ending draws together themes for the audience, essentially requiring engagement with the play's structure. The element of 'how far do you agree?' challenged the most able to write poised and well-referenced arguments. Many of these referred to the importance of the ending as a means of drawing together themes of love, tragedy and violence.

'An Inspector Calls'

2a was an extremely popular question and most candidates were confident in writing about Eva Smith/Daisy Renton. Some genuinely original

discussions emerged with ideas such as the daisy being a common but beautiful flower, often overlooked, but fresh and life affirming, like Daisy Renton in the play. Structural details included the fact that Daisy/Eva does not appear in the play but is arguably its most important character. A number of candidates worked through a straightforward character study with varying degrees of success and detail. These tended to remain in Levels 2 and 3. There were some very clear analytical responses to this question with little evidence of narrative recall, or reliance on film versions, as an approach. 2b invited some interesting and varied responses with the best candidates using the stimulus quotation and 'how far do you agree?' element as a conduit for exciting and well-developed arguments. Most made reference to the Inspector's socialist morality and some related this to the legal situation.

'Henry V'

Answers to questions 3a and 3b were seen more often in this series. There were some extremely effective and impressive responses to 3a. Knowledge of the play's characters and structure was effective and supported by integrated, relevant and accurate quotation. Most candidates chose Fluellen, but there were focused answers on the Dauphin, Canterbury and the Chorus as well. Answers tended to be well-developed with excellent personal engagement. Less successful answers were less consistently supported or only partially developed. There were fewer answers on 3b, but once again, some very detailed and exacting responses. Some genuinely superb contextual knowledge and understanding informed convincing arguments about history and Henry's past. Some candidates referred to the 'Henry IV' plays and there was some good use of the role of the Chorus as a touchstone for the past in the play.

'Much Ado About Nothing'

4a enjoyed greater popularity this year. Don Pedro answers were clearly written and supported by argument and a clear analytical approach. Candidates clearly felt confident writing about this character. 4b asked candidates to consider the presentation of evil in human nature. Answers to this question were very rarely seen.

'Romeo and Juliet'

Question 5a was extremely popular with 5b less so. The full range of ability and achievement was reflected in performance of candidates. Candidates

working at Levels 1 and 2 often worked through a straightforward account of Juliet's relationship with her mother, Lady Capulet. The use of supporting quotation and reference was particularly noticeable here, with the best candidates selecting and using an impressive range of supporting detail. 5b was slightly less popular and reflected a broad base of interpretation by candidates. Some dealt with power of fate and love while others used the role of the Prince to build answers focused on state power. The power of patriarchal society was well handled by several excellent candidates.

'The Importance of Being Earnest'

Questions 6a and 6b were seen a little more regularly this series. 6a on Jack Worthing was well-handled by most candidates and a range of approaches were used to build focused and well-referenced arguments. There were relatively few answers and most who attempted this demonstrated high levels of engagement (mostly L4 and L5). 6b responses were few in number but engaged those who responded to it. Original and sophisticated approaches were seen for the most part with interesting development of personal arguments.

'Our Town'

There were very few answers on 'Our Town'. Within the small number of answers seen to 7a, the character of George Gibbs was carefully considered with achievement evident in the middle to upper end of the range.

'Pride and Prejudice'

Answers to 8a and 8b were rarely seen this series. Of the very few seen, approaches tended to be focused on Elizabeth's relationship with Lydia with only some passing mention of the other sisters named in the question. This approach restricted achievement to an extent as candidates who took this approach were only able to focus on one area. Question 8b was similarly rarely seen but those who answered knew the play and attempted to consider the structural role of the letters with varying success. Achievement seemed to range between Level 3 and 4 for the most part.

'To Kill a Mockingbird'

Question 9a attracted some very effective and assured answers. Most candidates were confident writing about the character of Dill and answers

showed impressive use of integrated quotation. The question differentiated well as it could not be answered simply by narrative recall but required candidates to consider Dill's role and relationships with others in the novel. Question 9b attracted a robust number of answers but, again, these were for the most part focused and detailed in their discussions. Deaths discussed tended to include: Mrs Dubose, Bob Ewell and Tom Robinson with some candidates also mentioning the rabid dog and the death of Scout and Jem's mother before the novel's action begins. Middle range answers tended to work through the deaths methodically while more successful answers linked death to wider themes e.g. death of hope or equality. Again the quality of reference was extremely impressive in most answers.

'The English Teacher'

10a and 10b were very rarely seen. For 10a, candidates tended to see Susila as a positive force in Krishna's life, showing at least sound knowledge and understanding in the Level 3 range. 10b answers were also very rarely seen but those who answered understood the significance of change in the novel and were able to provide salient examples to support.

'Of Mice and Men'

11a was by the far the most popular prose question with candidates of all levels of ability answering on Crooks. The aspect of the question requiring candidates to consider him as an outsider brought another level of challenge that more able candidates rose to with flair. Average and below average responses also found much to say about this character whose role is significant in the novel even though he is not a main protagonist. This question differentiated well across all levels with some interesting consideration of Crooks' past and relationships with others such as Slim and the Boss. Again, quality of supporting reference proved a discriminating factor and context was applied with relevance in many answers. 11b also attracted a large number of answers. Middle range responses were able to apply their knowledge of the novel's episodes to consider the structural elements demanded by the question. Answers at Levels 4 and 5 applied analytical judgements and referred to the cyclical nature of the novel's narrative. The dream shared by Lennie and George featured regularly in answers, as did the dangers Lennie presents to himself (gulping water) and the necessity of being an itinerant worker at this time in history. Steinbeck's description of the pool and resident heron and water snake made an appearance in many answers.

'Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry'

12a was answered by very few candidates. Those seen wrote with at least sound knowledge about the character of TJ, using relevant textual reference to support ideas. Personal engagement was strong here as candidates were able to explore the inconsistencies and paradoxes in his character. 12b was similarly answered by few candidates. Fear of prejudice and the loss of the land featured as significant aspects in the small number of answers seen.

'Nineteenth Century Short Stories'

The short stories have seen a resurgence in popularity, although numbers remain relatively low in terms of answers. In 13a, 'The Woman's Rose' was usually paired with 'News of the Engagement' or 'The Unexpected', but there were also answers on 'The Yellow Wallpaper'. The best answers related specific detail of the text to relevant arguments. Sometimes generic textual discussion detracted from analysis with some candidates relying overtly on narrative recall. A range of achievement was seen in response to this question. 13b responses were of a similar number to 13a. Often, a candidate's success lay in the ability to choose a matching second story to accompany 'News of the Engagement'. Some of the best work took a comparative approach. Although this is not a requirement of the question, these approaches tend to improve analysis. An uneven focus in some answers led to lower to middle range awards in some cases.

Grade Boundaries

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