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# Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

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In English Literature (4ET0) Paper 1

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## **General comments:**

This relatively small entry provided a good range of responses to different texts and there was clear evidence that feedback from previous reports had been taken on board by centres. Most texts attracted at least some responses and the full range of achievement was seen. *A View from the Bridge* and *Of Mice and Men* were the most popular texts. Most answers tended to respond to the specific focus of a question. Some candidates working at lower Level 3 and below presented more general responses, only intermittently focusing specifically on the terms of the question. Some relied on narrative retelling with various levels of relevant selection. Better answers selected support judiciously, whether by reference to specific episodes or by apt quotation. The most successful candidates developed their answers effectively as they expressed sensitive and interesting arguments. Those candidates who applied personal engagement to a secure structure were most successful while those who wrote more rigidly formulaic responses often missed opportunities to develop individual views. Candidates who were aware of the form and context in which a text was written were more successful than those who did not. At the top end, some genuinely original and scholarly work was seen. Analysis of aspects such as structure, imagery and characterisation led to a number of mature responses. Quotation and reference to texts demonstrated the extent of candidates' knowledge for the most part. Well-integrated quotation was increasingly in evidence and reflected the ability to select and use support to develop arguments.

## **SECTION A**

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

1a This was the most popular drama question and attracted answers from across the achievement range. The question required candidates to explore the relationship between Catherine and Eddie. Answers varied with reference to how far Catherine encourages Eddie's interest in her with some going so far as to implicate Catherine in the seduction of Eddie. Others saw the innocence of a naïve girl and argued strongly against Eddie's unnatural attraction and indulgence of taboo feelings. Details used included the reference to Louis, Catherine lighting the cigar and her sitting on the bathtub in her slip while Eddie shaves. Overall, there was a sincere understanding of the play as a drama with reference made to aspects of staging and dramatic characterisation. Most candidates explored the change in dynamic of Eddie and Catherine's relationship when Marco and Eddie arrive in Red Hook. Some good use of integrated quotation was made, with candidates in Levels 4 and Level 5 selecting judiciously to illustrate their arguments.

1b was considerably less popular than 1a but a reasonable range of achievement was seen in outcomes. There was some variation in what candidates considered to represent family in the play. Some took the view that this related largely to marriage, while others took a broader view. There were some interesting arguments relating to Eddie and Beatrice taking on Catherine after Nancy's death and the loyalty of Marco to his

family back home in Sicily. One or two good answers considered the family as it relates to the code of honour in the play.

### An Inspector Calls

2a was a reasonably popular question and required candidates to write about the view that Sheila and Eric offer hope for the future. A range of achievement was seen with candidates working at lower levels presenting straightforward character studies and making little or no reference to the idea of hope. Most candidates who addressed the issue of hope agreed that these characters do offer hope. The contrast with those in the older generation provided a way in for a number of diligent answers, with some focusing on Sheila's allegiance to the Inspector. Some referred to Sheila's immaturity at the start of the play and the changes that come about to her character because of the Inspector's visit. Some candidates struggled to identify with the text as a play, with some referring to it as a novella. A few deviated from the question by focusing too much on the play's wider context, but the best answers used these aspects to support increasingly sophisticated arguments. There was some effective reference to stage directions, particularly in candidates working at Level 4 and above with the reference to Eric being 'half assertive'. One impressive answer referred to Sheila's increased empowerment when she is able to finally reject Gerald's offer to take the ring back in Act 3.

2b attracted a similar number of answers to 2a. Candidates were required to write on the theme of social class. Some answers represented general exploration of the social and historical context of the play with little use of details from the play itself. The best answers combined an exploration of the theme of social class in the play with analysis of the drama and characterisation. Some misunderstood the position of Gerald in the social hierarchy. Views on the social class of the Inspector himself varied between the idea that he stands outside class to him as a representative of the middle classes. Most candidates understood the plight of Eva Smith/Daisy Renton in her position as working class and some successful personal engagement explored the relationship between her fate and the divisions in class that existed at the time the play is set and when Priestley was writing.

### Henry V

There were no answers to Question 3a. Very few candidates responded to Question 3b on the theme of loyalty. All answers seen used the stimulus quotation with relevance and demonstrated pertinent knowledge and understanding of the play. Reference was made to disloyalty as well as to loyalty as a means of exploring the theme.

### Much Ado About Nothing

4a and 4b attracted a small number of answers. 4a required an exploration of the characters of Hero and Beatrice. Most answers tended to offer a balance between the two and explored the relationship between them as well as their individual characters. Development tended to be well-focused and effectively supported in these answers.

4b on the theme of deception elicited some interesting answers with a couple of responses considering the positive deception that leads to Benedick and Beatrice marrying. The fake death of Hero was also considered a positive deception, a means of protecting her while the plot of Don John was exposed.

### Romeo and Juliet

5a asked candidates to consider whether Romeo is a hero. This prompted some very interesting answers. Most argued that Romeo is not heroic overall, citing his murder of Tybalt in a fit of rage and speed in committing suicide as evidence for this view. One interesting and successful argument commented on Romeo's portrayal early in the play as pensive and aiming to be a heroic lover rather than actually being one. Most explored the initial interest in Rosaline with some suggesting that Romeo is a hero to Juliet at least. Arguments related to Romeo as a fickle and immature character contributed to some well-formed discussion. Candidates working at Level 2 tended to offer narrative answers with some better attempts selecting their episodes well but still not addressing the question. One candidate said that Romeo was 'every woman's dream man'. 5b attracted too few answers to comment productively on performance.

### The Importance of Being Earnest

6a and 6b attracted a reasonable number of answers. 6a required candidates to write about Algernon's relationships with others. Some excellent answers were seen and performance tended to be at Level 3 and above in most cases. Lady Bracknell and the cucumber sandwiches featured regularly with encouraging signs that candidates genuinely appreciated the wit of Algernon and of the play as a whole. One candidate referred to Algernon as 'the broke boy' referring to his financial situation and built an argument on his need for money. Some Level 3 answers were secure but missed opportunities to develop arguments towards the thorough and thoughtful achievement required for Level 4. A couple of superb Level 5 answers considered how Wilde uses Algernon's relationships structurally to create satirical effects.

6b required candidates to write about the town and country settings in the play. Some used the characters of Jack and Algernon as a way into structuring their answers with varying success. Some referred to town and country as parallels to Victorian morals. A few began to make sound and thoughtful arguments but did not develop their points or make good use of supporting detail. Candidates working at Level 4 and above made salient and sophisticated references to Wilde's use of settings to present his social commentary.

### Our Town

There were no answers on 7a or 7b.

## **SECTION B**

### *Pride and Prejudice*

8a and 8b were quite popular questions. 8a required candidates to write about the character of Jane Bennet. Some candidates wrote basic character sketches and missed opportunities to develop their arguments and personal views. These offered some reference to the presentation of Jane Bennet with some exploring her as a real person rather than as a character. Better answers referred to a greater level of detail including the development of her relationship with Mr Bingley and her close friendship with Elizabeth. Some made the point that Austen presents her as more a caricature than a character and explored the contrast of her portrayal with that of her sisters. The quality of personal engagement was a discriminating feature in several answers.

8b required candidates to explore Austen's presentation of women in the novel. Some candidates working at lower Level 3 and below tended to work through the different female characters in the novel with varying degrees of detail. Some candidates, who were working further into Level 3 and towards Level 4, focused more on aspects of Austen's presentation while the best answers linked the presentation of different women to relevant aspects of social and historical context. Most referred to the need for women to marry well to secure their futures with popular support including Mrs Bennet's desperation to have her daughters well married and Charlotte Lucas's pragmatic choice. Some particularly astute responses referred to the ironic sarcasm of Austen's characterisation in some instances. The very best answers combined excellent analysis with convincing personal arguments.

### *To Kill a Mockingbird*

9b was more popular than 9a. 9a required candidates to explore the character of Jem. Most were confident writing about this character, but the level of detail varied. The best answers considered Jem's role, relationships with others such as Scout and Atticus, and ways in which he changes as the novel progresses.

9b focused on the theme of innocence in *To Kill a Mockingbird* with many using the plight of Tom Robinson, an innocent man convicted unjustly by a prejudiced court, as a way into the question. Some candidates veered off topic somewhat into a fully blown exploration of racial prejudice, which moved their arguments away from the theme of innocence. A couple of Level 2 responses wrote generally about what innocence represents with only sporadic reference to the novel's detail. Some effective Level 4 responses looked at the theme from the point of view of Scout as an innocent child narrator. Some explored the innocence of Boo Radley with some very effective outcomes. In addition, some candidates discussed the significance of the title and its relationship to innocence. A few answers usefully explored the innocence of Mayella Ewell with her geraniums and her desperate loneliness. These comments proved sensitive and relevant.

### The English Teacher

10a and 10b attracted a few answers. 10a required candidates to write about the presentation of parents in the novel. Reference to the benefits Krishna discovers from becoming a parent and family man featured in most answers. A couple of answers focused more specifically on the relationship of Susila and Krishna in their role as parents. Some retained a more implicit link to the question as they wrote about characters who happen to be parents. One or two very astute answers contrasted the presentation of Susila and Krishna with the presentation of Headmaster and his wife. Some reference was also made to both Krishna's and Susila's parents as supportive grandparents.

10b considered the settings in the novel. Answers working at Level 2 and lower Level 3 tended to list some of the settings in general terms, while those working at higher levels delved more deeply into settings used by Narayan to illustrate themes and the impact of the environment on Krishna and others.

### Of Mice and Men

11a was the most popular prose question on the paper. Most candidates who answered agreed that Lennie and Curley's wife are indeed victims and presented coherent and accurate evidence to support their views. Less confident answers tended to narrate aspects of the novel that featured Lennie and Curley's wife. Some less secure arguments suggested that Lennie is a victim of George, with one arguing that Lennie works hard on physical tasks to keep George happy. The best answers considered both characters as victims of the Depression and their circumstances as well as the cruel hand that fate had dealt them both in different ways. Some presented straightforward character studies without considering the nature of their victimhood. The quality of answers was often determined by the quality of support provided and the relevance of personal arguments.

11b was less popular and required candidates to write about the settings in the novel. The best of these demonstrated incisive knowledge and understanding of the novel and focused on the symbolism of the opening and ending in terms of a cyclical structure as well as other key settings. Some candidates struggled to see the difference between the bunkhouse and the barn but most wrote with some confidence about both.

### Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry

12a presented insufficient answers to comment meaningfully on performance but 12b attracted a small number of answers. The theme of respect was dealt with well by most candidates who referred in their answers to the self-respect of the Logans and the lack of respect experienced by black characters at the hands of white characters. One or two candidates explored the respect engendered by land ownership to good effect.

### Nineteenth Century Short Stories

There were no answers to 13a or 13b.

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