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Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

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In English Literature (4ET0)

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The paper worked as expected and questions attracted a range of responses across the levels. The most successful answers explored the text in relation to the question with use of well-chosen, relevant support and thoughtful personal engagement. It is clear that centres have learnt the lessons of previous series and there is very little evidence of aspects such as film versions of the texts or baseless narration. The best answers offered poised literary criticism and analysis with lucid insights into aspects of language, form and structure and the context in which texts were written or set.

Individual questions

A View from the Bridge

1a) This question led to some storytelling with some candidates omitting to write about the author's craft or the language. In some instances, candidates moved away from discussing Catherine when introducing Eddie's influence and role in Catherine's changing character, and then lost focus on the question. However, we saw many responses where there was a secure understanding of the character of Catherine and a clear idea of how and why she changed throughout the play.

We saw some thought-provoking responses, drawing on ideas about the role of women in this era and the social and historical context. Some candidates wrote about how Catherine changes, considering the different influences in her life. This included the impact of the arrival of Rodolfo in her home and how he offered the chance to embrace the 'new society' and the opportunities it held, leaving the old way of life (represented by Eddie) behind.

1b) Most responses considered the scenes and locations and how they were symbols of the time and place in which the play was set. This was generally deftly handled and candidates paid attention to theatricality and representation, including exploring how the apartment block is presented as 'skeletal' and perhaps provisional, whilst the bridge appears to be a permanent feature, joining the cultures and the old and the new ways of life.

There were also some answers where the time and place was interpreted as 'the social and historical setting'. In these responses, candidates explored the interplay between the themes and ideas and the locations of the streets of Red Hook, the apartment, Alfieri's office, the telephone booth and the Brooklyn Bridge. Interesting comments were offered about the moment in history; for example, the rigid expectations of Italian society versus the freedom of choice that is offered to the immigrants in their lives in the new environment of America. Many of these responses revealed deeper understanding and well-informed views.

An Inspector Calls

2a) There was a wide variation in the quality of responses to this question. There were successful explorations of how Goole represented Priestley's views and acted as an agent of Priestley's purposes; speaking his words and asking his

questions in a dynamic way. We saw some poignant interpretation of the intended audience response. In less successful answers, the candidates swerved away from the question of 'typicality' and narrated the events with some attempt at linking the Inspector's words and behaviour with social and historical context. There was detailed knowledge of the text demonstrated in the vast majority of the responses.

2b) Where the response called upon knowledge of a range of characters, this was more successful. Responses that focused narrowly on Mr and Mrs Birling missed the opportunity to discuss the whole Birling family, the Inspector and Eva Smith and to compare and contrast how characters are presented as wealthy or otherwise. Narrative-type answers were fairly prevalent, as were answers that moved into discussing 'money' rather than 'wealth'. There were a number of answers in which 'class' was equated with 'wealth' without enough justification or explanation. It is possible that candidates found the idea of 'wealth' to be less tangible than 'money' or 'class', so reverted to a discussion of these ideas because it gave them a more secure standpoint from which to discuss the play. Observations about the stage set, the representation of the Birling family and its aspirations and the divisions in society caused by wealth or lack of it were all highly relevant.

Henry V

3a) No answers were seen to this question.

3b) A few answers were seen to this question. The theme of violence was considered, perhaps unsurprisingly, in the context of war with some effective points made by a couple of candidates about the violent language of Henry at the Siege of Harfleur and the contrasting end of the play where his language is that of courtship and reconciliation.

Much Ado About Nothing

4a) Answers on the character of Leonato tended to be focused and knowledgeable, acknowledging both his role and his character. Discussion of patriarchy in Elizabethan society informed much of the discussion with some effective exploration of his relationship with Hero and his attitude to her during the accusation at her marriage to Claudio. Some candidates criticised his treatment of Hero while others saw it as understandable in the context in which the play is set. A number of responses related to Leonato's warmth as a host and his dealings with Don Pedro and Don John. Some considered his dismissal of Dogberry and the Watch as an error that nearly led to disaster.

4b) 'Different kinds of love' gave candidates an opportunity to discuss a range of love; romantic, patriarchal, false, true, traditional, unconventional and filial. Generally, the answers showed a depth of knowledge of the plot and the characters. There were some strong contrasts made between the types of love and some powerful and thoughtful comments were made that showed insights into the representations of genuine love in its many forms.

Many responses were seen where the pairings of Claudio and Hero, Benedick and Beatrice were set alongside each other and discussed as polar representations of love. Although often thorough, these direct and more obvious comparisons

lacked consideration of the range of types of love presented more delicately through these relationships and across other relationships in the play. Some candidates showed a depth of insight, comparing as well as contrasting how these couples are presented rather than seeing them as 'representative types'. I enjoyed some less conventional thinking, such as the candidates who included Don John and Borachio (or Don John and Don Pedro) in their exploration of how love between friends (or half-brothers) is represented.

Romeo and Juliet

5a) Candidates showed a depth of knowledge of the play. The question was helpful in giving candidates a structure for their answer. Fewer candidates narrated the events than explored how the characters were presented. The 'compare and contrast' that was made possible with this question allowed candidates to use their knowledge of the characters to construct stronger answers. Quotation and close reference were both used effectively in support of comments and observations.

Answers tended to deal equally with both characters but subject knowledge was more secure in terms of Mercutio than Benvolio. Some responses said that Benvolio was Romeo's brother while others commented on his warlike nature, mistaking him for Tybalt. The most effective answers considered the importance of both characters in tandem, steering clear of simple character studies and focusing on their importance to themes, plot and the fate of Romeo himself.

Most who answered on this were secure in their knowledge and understanding of the character of Mercutio, expressing views about his friendship with Romeo and his importance to the play's tragic outcome. Most considered his comedic lines with the best seeing the tension that this creates alongside the tragedy.

5b) Absence of textual reference in support of points was something that kept candidates from accessing the highest level of marks. Candidates tended to reference settings in a broad way without drawing on knowledge of the detail, such as how the setting was representative of a theme, event or emotion in the play. The balcony, where Romeo and Juliet's most famous scene takes place, was absent from many responses.

Understanding what 'setting' means was a stumbling block for some candidates who wrote about themes rather than locations and their associated ideas and events. There was a smaller number of responses to this question than expected.

The Importance of Being Earnest

6a) It was good to see this question being chosen. Candidates showed a good knowledge of the characters, how they are presented as individual characters and how they function and interact as an eccentric couple. Many candidates expressed their understanding that these characters represent hypocrisy, absurdity and much that was open to criticism in Victorian society. Others went on to present detailed discussions of how the characters represent contradiction and self-deception through their words and actions on stage.

6b) Although there was plenty of material to discuss, most candidates struggled with making an explanation of how humour is used in the play. Bringing forward

examples was relatively easy; making the link between the humorous example and its purpose was challenging to articulate.

Attention was paid to the comedy of the Bunbury situation, the absurdities of many of the aspects of plot and characterisation and the language of the play which is entertaining and outrageous. Most candidates attempted to associate humour with Wilde's intention to ridicule the behaviour of the English aristocracy, some more explicitly and cogently and others less clearly.

Our Town

7a) There were very few answers to this question. Candidates were able to see the importance of mothers and wrote about Mrs Gibbs and Mrs Webb, interestingly drawing on the changing role of Mrs Gibbs after death when she guides Emily in the afterlife.

7b) No answers were seen to this question.

Pride and Prejudice

8a) The question invited a considered response, which it received from many candidates. There were some good insights and an understanding of the satirical intention involved in presenting Mr Collins as Charlotte Lucas's choice of husband. Some candidates moved on to the next level by discussing the effect of presenting this choice and how Charlotte's pragmatic approach is offered to the reader as an example to consider.

Many candidates wrote about Charlotte Lucas as if she was a person rather than a fictitious character. This missed the opportunity to do as other candidates were able to do and discuss the pairing as social commentary and an example of the kind of choice that could have been made by young women of that era. Some comments were judgemental and ignored the historical context by suggesting that Charlotte was pragmatic and 'wrong' to marry in these circumstances, which reveals a solely modern approach and a lack of appreciation of the circumstances of the novel or of Austen's intentions.

8b) This question attracted a range of responses with answers using purposeful reference to the influence of context to inform their arguments. An example of this is in the entailment of Mr Bennet's property and the significance of this to the wider plot and themes of the novel. Mr Darcy's and Mr Bingley's incomes were considered at length with reference to their eligibility as suitors and the role of love in relation to their wealth.

A number of candidates considered the importance of money while others wrote more generally about instances where money is a significant factor. The best answers related their perceptive and well-supported arguments to aspects of form, structure and language, such as one of Austen's most famous lines: 'It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife'.

To Kill a Mockingbird

9a) Great responses to this question regarding the Ewells. There was occasionally too narrow a focus on Bob Ewell and his daughter, Mayella. But even

with this focus (which neglects the finer details of the Ewell children's behaviour, reported or represented in the novel) candidates were able to explain the link between the presentation of the Ewells as the 'white trash' and toxically racist members of the Maycombe community, and the author's intention. Candidates articulated the idea that the Ewells were representative and stood for all that was wrong in the community. They were at the centre of an unfounded and vindictive allegation against Tom Robinson and their dishonest actions led to his death.

Candidates explained how the Ewells epitomise all that is anti-educational, uninformed and unfair in Maycombe society and detailed the ways in which Lee presents this through Burris Ewell, Mayella Ewell and Bob Ewell. Strong responses tracked the Ewells' contribution to the plot and gave a detailed evaluation of how they were the evil heart of racist bigotry and cruelty (Bob) and representative of the denial of opportunity (Mayella and the other children).

9b) Another question that received a vigorous response from candidates who brought forward numerous examples of courage in the novel. These ranged from the more obvious courage shown by Atticus when he took Tom Robinson's case, knowing he was 'licked' from the start but doing the right thing anyway, through to discussion of Mrs Dubose's and Boo Radley's courageous choices. Examples also included Atticus's defiant decision to bring up his children in the way he believed best in defiance of the expectations of society and family and Miss Maudie Atkinson's stoicism and courage following the house fire that consumed her entire home and possessions.

The quotation provided a structure and a starting-point for candidates who used it well, moving out from a discussion of Atticus - his dislike of guns but skilful use of one when making the street safe from a rabid dog - on to the wider discussion of examples of fortitude and moral courage in the novel. Where this was also drawn into an overview of the author's intention, candidates reached the highest level of marks.

The English Teacher

10a) Many narrative and accurate responses were seen across the range of answers. More accomplished responses saw detailed discussion of the function of the character, rather than a description of what Leela did, said and experienced.

Candidates saw Leela as a character who influences her parent and forms a bridge between her parents. She is therefore a powerful influence on the plot and a means of Krishna learning and growing.

10b) This question invited candidates to use the theme of 'journeys' to consider the novel and to think about why these different types of journeys are important. Not surprisingly, candidates gravitated towards exploring the spiritual journey experienced by Krishna and many related the other physical journeys (from the school to a home with Susilla and Leela, for example) to this journey.

For some candidates, the spiritual journey was their only focus. This neglected the part of the question that asked them to address 'different types of journeys'. Where candidates recognised the journeys as part of Krishna's spiritual progress, this brought successful responses. A few candidate drew on the circular nature of the plot to show that the writer intended the reader to witness a 'journey' in

which Krishna begins and ends as a teacher but is a different person entirely because of what happens through his spiritual growth.

Of Mice and Men

11a) Candidates had a great opportunity to showcase all they knew about Curley and how he was presented in the novel. Subtle detail was drawn upon, such as his reaction to his wife's death, to give a well-rounded analysis of his character.

Where responses were most accomplished, Curley was discussed as a character and his role and function within the plot was analysed. Candidates described how he influenced the plot and what he represented.

11b) Where the candidate traced the theme of death through the novel and made a clear attempt to respond to the stimulus statement, the responses were successful. 'All' for some characters meant all characters, including the mouse, Candy's dog and the puppy that Lennie crushes to death as well as the more obvious deaths; Curley's wife and Lennie.

There were a fair number of candidates who were convinced that Lennie had killed a girl in Weed. They were mistaken about this but made the comment assertively, nevertheless. This also made it hard to explain why George decided to shoot Lennie on this occasion as it would be harder to justify why George had not acted swiftly at the previous 'fatal' incident.

Roll of Thunder, Here my Cry

12a) Examiners saw more of these than expected as the text seems to have enjoyed a resurgence of popularity. It was a question that allowed candidates to tell Stacey's story and some fell into a narrative approach that lacked the necessary discussion of how Stacey is presented as a character. There was a lot of detailed knowledge of the character and the novel.

Bringing in comparisons to TJ was helpful in exploring how Stacey was presented in the novel because candidates could compare and contrast the characters, how they were presented to us and how we, as the readers, feel about them.

12b) 'Family' is a theme that allowed candidates to discuss the relationships between the Logans as well as their wider family and friends in the community. Candidates tended to extend the remit of 'family' beyond the discussion of how Uncle Hammer was part of the family, although he did not live with them and was not strictly-speaking, a part of their family. Candidates acknowledged that the wider community was part of 'the family' which came to mean the society, community and group they all belonged to and related to as their family.

By further extension, treating others as 'family' was successfully related to the social and historical context of the Civil Rights Movement, where the black minority stood up collectively against oppression and injustice.

Nineteenth Century Short Stories

13a) Very few candidates answered this question with those that did presenting largely focused and effective responses. The story, *Hop-Frog or The Eight Chained Ourang-Outangs*, was paired with *An Arrest* in most cases. In most

instances, candidates showed detailed knowledge and insight into the theme of revenge and how it is applied in each story. Some original and perceptive personal responses were seen.

13b) This question was less popular than 13a and very few answers were seen. Danger as a theme was covered well in relation to *The Stolen Bacillus* with candidates exploring key details of the narrative to illustrate points about form, structure and language. Other stories seen in conjunction were *An Arrest* and *The Adventure of the Speckled Band*.

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