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Moderators' Report/ Principal Moderator Feedback

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In English Literature (4ET1)

Paper 03

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Introduction

Students responded to two coursework assignments, which were either self generated or devised by their teachers.

Assignment A was based on a modern drama text chosen from the list in the Specification. The assignment was assessed for AO1; for which students demonstrated a close knowledge of the text and presented an informed personal engagement. Students were also expected to analyse language, form and structure used by the writer to create effect as stipulated by AO2.

Assignment B was based on a Literary Heritage text chosen from the list in the Specification. In addition to being assessed on AO1 and AO2 students were expected to demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between text and its context in the form of AO4.

General Comments

Considering this is a new course and it is the first moderation of this specification, all moderators were impressed, and one said 'inspired and humbled' by the quality of the responses, as well as the range of tasks set by the centres. Many noted that at its best the coursework allowed the candidates a degree of autonomy, creativity and independence.

Setting a task

Where the responses were particularly focused was when the question and task in hand itself had a clear focus. Some good examples from this year's cohort of the type of task setting which elicited sound and well-focused results are:

How does Miller use language and structure in the play to chart Eddie Carbone's descent into despair and death? (Assignment A – Modern Drama)

How does the playwright use features of detective fiction in 'The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time' to engage the audience? (Assignment A – Modern Drama)

"Unnatural deeds breed unnatural trouble" (Act 5 scene 1). How is this idea explored in Macbeth? (Assignment B – Heritage Literature)

Less successful responses were often as a result of an unfocused question. Some centres just gave the title 'Eddie Carbone' as a base for discussion. One centre had offered the topic of: *Explore how Priestly presents ideas about gender to reflect the inequality of Edwardian society.* All but the most confident candidates focused on the interpretation of the text within the context of Edwardian society as opposed to the language, form and structure in Priestly's play.

Conversely there were questions which appeared to limit the range of ideas and interpretations. One centre set a task for all the candidates: *How is Dramatic Irony used in Macbeth?* Lower ability candidates appeared to struggle with a

suitably developed response.

Some titles did not lead to a good coverage of AO2 especially those based on character or theme alone. Questions which gave more focus to AO2 worked well: *How does Priestley create dramatic tension in the play?*

Another centre offered: *"Here's much to do with hate but more with love". How does Shakespeare present love and hate in Romeo and Juliet? You must consider language form and structure and refer to the context of the play.* Although this is quite a wordy question, it does focus on the task in hand and allows the candidate to engage with all the Assessment Objectives.

A number of centres opted for exam-style tasks: *How does Sheila develop during the play?* or *What is the significance of Gerald Croft?* These type of questions did not always lend themselves to an in-depth analysis of AO2 in particular. One past exam question which did lend itself as a suitable coursework assignment was from *Pride and Prejudice: With reference to language, form and structure and the context of the novel, explain the significance of letters in 'Pride and Prejudice'.*

Candidate Performance

Assignment A

By far the most popular texts for Assignment A were: *An Inspector Calls* and *A View from the Bridge*. There was a range of questions set looking at the presentation and the importance of themes and characters for both texts. Here is an example of a top level candidate who had incorporated both AOs in the response to the question *'Catherine and Beatrice both bear part of the blame for the tragic outcome of the play. How far do you agree?'* Note how the candidate has referred to Miller's stagecraft to develop a point:

Miller goes on to emphasise that Catherine could perhaps be guilty of encouraging Eddie's feelings for her... Miller employs skilful stagecraft to hint to the audience about Eddie's and Catherine's repressed feelings. CATHERINE: "Here! I'll light it for you" (page 15). This implies that she is interested in him because in old-fashioned Hollywood films, it was clearly suggested that if a woman lit a cigar for a man she could be flirting and attracted to him. It seems as if Catherine desires and encourages... Eddie. This response scored full marks.

A sound response in which the candidate discusses Priestley's presentation of the Birling family offers some comment on the language used:

Mrs. Birling's speech is nearly the same as her husband's, always showing off her husband's power and his social class: "You know of course that my husband was Lord Mayor only two years ago and that he's still a magistrate." ... Mrs. Birling used the direct address "you" and also the imperative to show her high social class and to give a command telling the audience and the inspector to treat Mr. Birling with the respect she feels he deserves. This response was a borderline level 3/4 and scored a mark of 19.

A small number of centres offered *Kindertransport* and *A Curious Incident of the*

Dog in the Night-Time. The centres that had studied *Kindertransport* offered some thoughtful and interesting discussions on character presentation and the question of identity around Eva/Evelyn. Thoughtful responses were offered by centres that had studied *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* discussing Christopher's condition and how that would influence the form and structure of the play; or analysing how the playwright used features of detective fiction to engage the audience.

Assignment B

Macbeth and *Romeo and Juliet* were by far the most popular texts for Assignment B. There were some thoughtful and interesting contextual points made across the levels and these were often woven into the responses. The following extract shows how a top level candidate has integrated the context into the response and has demonstrated the relationship between text and context. The response analyses love in its various forms in the play.

Juliet and her mother have a formal relationship which seems to lack closeness. It is clear that the love between them is more about duty than affection. A mother of Lady Capulet's standing would be quite distant from her child; she is even vague about Juliet's age: "A fortnight and odd days." (Act 1 Scene 3)...she hardly remembers her daughter's birthday...When Lady Capulet suggests marriage to Juliet it seems more like a business deal... (which) suggests that the love between Lady Capulet and Juliet is not as important as reputation and a marriage to a successful and well-regarded groom. This response had been awarded full marks.

A level three response in which the same theme of love is discussed, and although relevant, the AO4 element is less confidently and subtly presented:

In rich Elizabethan society, it was rare to marry for love; instead you married for wealth, to legitimise your children and for social standing...If you happen to be a daughter in a noble family, like Juliet was, your future husband was not for you to choose. Your father would instead choose and you were expected to accept whatever choice he made. This response had been awarded a mark of 16

With reference to both Assignments A and B, and particularly where candidates offered both on Drama, Modern and Heritage, many moderators felt that there did not appear to be a close enough focus on dramaturgy and stagecraft. It was felt that these texts had possibly been taught as if they were prose and this sometimes hindered the responses. One centre's candidates included a reference to the staging and direction of the Baz Luhrmann film version of *Romeo and Juliet*'s first meeting, to support comments about Juliet's purity, which, whilst unusual showed they were considering the text as a piece of visual drama.

Other texts offered included *The Merchant of Venice* which discussed gender roles, power and analyses of Shylock. Of the prose texts *Pride and Prejudice* proved popular with questions about wealth and marriage. One centre offered, quite successfully, last year's examination question on the significance of letters in the novel. *Great Expectations* was also offered, but many of these responses tended to be chronological and narrative descriptions of Pip's development.

However, there was one candidate who offered a very thoughtful comparison between Pip and Joe, around the concept of '*what makes a true gentleman.*'

Administration

With regard to administration, it is important to remember that moderators do have to check the candidates' names, numbers and marks against the mark sheets, so it is helpful that the folder cover sheet is fastened on the very top of the folder. Many moderators expressed their frustration at having to chase up centres about submitting folders with the highest and lowest marks, even if these are not specified in the sample required by the exam board. This is an examination board requirement.

Attaching the exam board's mark scheme, relevantly highlighted to indicate where marks were awarded was also appreciated.

Many centres displayed clear evidence of robust internal moderation and most marked accurately according to the criteria and highlighted where the AOs had been covered. Some centres, however, tended to over-reward and sometimes quite substantially at the 24/25 borderlines, or indiscriminately awarding full marks, often resulting in the folders having to be re-marked in full by the moderator.

Some of the more confident centres displayed a reluctance to award the highest grade when the candidate's work merited it. It seems that some centres are still assuming that a highest grade script must represent a perfect response, whereas the mark scheme does not require that. Some responses achieved the highest grade and some would have scored much higher than the maximum theoretically.

A brief summary

It is important that the tasks set are sufficiently challenging and related to all the assessment objectives. Assignment A is assessed for AO1 and AO2. Assignment B is assessed for AO1, AO2 and AO4.

It is important that candidates are presented with a range of topics and ideas and are encouraged to choose one that appeals, thus encouraging a sound personal engagement.

It is important that all drama texts, for both assignments focus closely on dramaturgy and stagecraft.

It is also important that AO4, the relationship of text to context relates fully to the question set. Substantial biographical detail on any of the writers is irrelevant and detracts from the task in hand.

The guidance for each assignment is 600 – 1000 words. Some responses were over 2500 words long. Quantity does not always mean quality and often narrative, or historical detail detracted from the core of the response. On the other hand to cover ALL the Assessment Objectives in sufficient depth and detail responses need to be developed and sustained.

All moderators without exception commented on how rewarding it was to see the strong personal engagement of the candidates with the texts and how they enjoyed reading some of the interesting, thoughtful and sometimes unusual interpretations.

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