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Moderators' Report/ Principal Moderator Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel International GCSE
In English Literature (4ET1)
Paper 3: Modern Drama and Literary Heritage
Texts

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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

There was a range in the quality of the responses, as well as the range of tasks set by the centres. At its best the coursework allowed the candidates a degree of autonomy, creativity and independence as well as a challenge.

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 the January cohort of the type of task setting which elicited sound and well-focused results are:

With close reference to the text discuss how far you think Marco is a victim of circumstances. (Assignment A – Modern Drama)

Referring to language, structure and form explore the way Priestly directs the audience's response to Arthur Birling in 'An Inspector Calls'. (Assignment A – Modern Drama)

With close reference to the text as well as its relation to context discuss how Austen's craft in using the tool of irony adds to the enjoyment of the novel. (Assignment B – Heritage Texts)

How does Shakespeare present Juliet's relationship with her father to the audience. What does this show about the women of Juliet's class in the society Shakespeare describes in the play? (Assignment B – Heritage texts)

Less successful responses were often as a result of an unfocused question. One centre set the candidates' task with the title *Vinney Bolzano* as a base for discussion. This led to a chronological retelling of the plot. A title which could invite more detailed analysis could be: *The incident with Vinnie Bolzano is an example of(betrayal, Family honour, justice). How does this link to Eddie's dilemma and downfall?* Some titles were too vague: A

gentleman called Rodolfo, or Animal Imagery in Macbeth. In such cases the candidates struggled and resorted to a narrative approach.

Conversely, there were questions which limited the scope of ideas and interpretations. *How important is the character of Duncan in the play?* Often resulted in a chronological description of the character. Some titles did not lend themselves to good coverage of AO2, especially those based on character or theme alone. Questions which gave more focus to AO2 worked well at all ability levels. One centre set: *How does Priestly direct the audience's response to Arthur Birling?* This task produced some pleasing results.

A number of centres opted for past exam questions: *How does Lady Macbeth change the play?* or *How significant is Alfieri in A View from a Bridge?* These questions did not always lend themselves to an in-depth analysis of AO2 in particular.

Candidate Performance

Assignment A

An Inspector Calls and *A View from a Bridge* were the only two texts used in this series for Assignment A. 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 *How does Priestly direct the audience's response to Arthur Birling.* Note how the candidate has referred to Priestly's stagecraft to develop a point and has seamlessly incorporated all the AOs within this paragraph:

Priestly goes in to great detail with his stage directions to ensure that even though the audience cannot read them, they are still interpreted as he intended them to be...We are told he has 'good furniture' subtly symbolising his wealth...Priestly goes into great detail about his description of Birling, by characterising his physical appearance and speech. Priestly describes Birling as a 'heavy looking man'. Portraying him as a big intimidating person, determined to get the audience to see Birling as the centre of attention, re-emphasising his narcissistic way of being, as well as constructing a very powerful looking character.

An example of a level 4 response in which the candidate discusses Miller's presentation of Marco and offers some comment on language and structure:

Marco's attitude to Eddie's betrayal is violent and irrational. If he had 'settled for half' like Rodolfo matter would have changed. Marco is a victim of his thoughts and cultural background and here one of Alfieri's opening comments serves as a reminder to him: now we are quite civilised, quite American we settle for half and I like it better'...At the end of the play, the mouthpiece of the play Alfieri in his epilogue gives all his sympathy to Eddie rather than Marco despite that both 'did not settle for half'.

Assignment B

Macbeth and *Romeo and Juliet* were the most popular texts for Assignment B. There were some thoughtful 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 discusses the 'descent of Macbeth into villainy'.

Shakespeare structures the play to open with the witches and their prophecies. He presented them as strange creatures as the stage directions showed them as women who have beards. They are considered the first major factor that affected Macbeth's actions and planned the road he would take. In the early 17th century, at the time the play was presented to the audience, it was suggested that the witches have the ability to change the natural order and foresee what will happen in the future. This is clear from the language used in the opening scene of the play where they are discussing the battle which is being 'lost and won'.

Here is a top level 4 response in which the candidate discusses the relationship of Juliet and her father.

... he is very protective of her as she is the 'hopeful lady of my earth' who he is determined to protect. Capulet's reaction would be akin to those of modern audiences...In contrast audiences of the 16th century would be surprised at Capulet's reluctance to Juliet's marriage as 'younger than she are happy mothers made'. However, regardless of when the play is seen, it is clear that Shakespeare wants to show Capulet as a protective father in this scene.

With reference to both Assignments A and B, and particularly where candidates offered both texts on Drama, Modern and Heritage, it was felt that there did not appear to be a close enough focus on dramaturgy and stagecraft. It is possible that these texts had been taught as if they were prose and this sometimes hindered the responses.

Of the prose texts *Pride and Prejudice* proved popular with questions about wealth and marriage. One candidate discussed Austen's use of irony.

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 and completed with candidate and centre numbers.

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

Some centres displayed clear evidence of internal moderation, others did not, although judging by the size of some of these centres this was not always possible. Therefore it is

very important that responses from such centres are marked accurately and consistently, according to the standards set by the mark scheme. Some centres over-rewarded, often quite substantially at the 24/25 borderlines, or indiscriminately awarded full marks, resulting in these folders having to be re-marked in full by the moderator.

It would be helpful for the moderators to have comments, both marginal and summative linked to the wording on the mark scheme. Some candidates had work where comments such as 'excellent and very mature response' were used on work which was of a level 3.

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.

Some candidates have started using materials from various critical works and citing these using footnotes or a bibliography at the end as in A level coursework. This detracted from the personal engagement and original response asked for in the specification.

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. A well-planned, concise and carefully structured response, within the word limit, can achieve full marks.

It was rewarding to see the strong personal engagement across the ability range of the candidates with the texts and reading some of the interesting, thoughtful and sometimes unusual interpretations.

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