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Moderators' Report/ Principal Moderator Feedback

November 2021

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

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Introduction

Candidates produced two coursework assignments, the titles of which were self-generated or devised by their teachers.

Assignment A (Modern Drama)

This was based on a modern drama text chosen from the set list in the specification. Two Assessment Objectives were equally targeted:

- AO1: Candidates demonstrate a close knowledge of the text and maintain an informed, critical personal engagement (15 marks)
- AO2: Candidates analyse language, form and structure used by the writer to create meanings and effects (15 marks).

Assignment B (Literary Heritage)

This was based on a Literary Heritage text chosen from the set list in the specification.

- Candidates were assessed on AO1 and AO2 (10+10 marks)
- Candidates were also expected to show an understanding of the relationships between texts and their contexts for AO4 (10 marks).

The guidance for length of assignments was 600 to 1000 words for each one.

General Comments

There was a range in the quality of the responses as well as the tasks set by centres. The best responses were those where candidates showed a degree of independence and developed their own personal response to texts. It was gratifying to see evidence of this even during the difficult time of Covid restrictions. However, there was also evidence of some very narrative responses which did not cover the required Assessment Objectives and had been over-rewarded by centres.

Setting a task

The choice of title set by the centre was often seen to affect the outcomes of the candidate: titles which led them to consider the writers' craft and set a challenge led to a more perceptive critical style and personal engagement. Where the task set had a clear focus which was not too broad the candidates found it easier to avoid descriptive and narrative responses.

Some good examples from the November cohort of the type of task which elicited well focused responses were:

- 'How does the writer use language, form and structure to present fear in Kindertransport?' (Assignment A - Modern Drama)
- 'Explore the ways in which Priestley uses dramatic devices to present the mysterious inspector in 'An Inspector Calls' (Assignment A - Modern Drama)
- 'Taking into consideration the relationship of the play and its context, explore the ways in which Shakespeare presents Macbeth's changing relationship with his wife' (Assignment B – Literary Heritage Texts)
- 'How does the playwright build up dramatic tension during the conflicts shown in Romeo and Juliet?' (Assignment B – Literary Heritage Texts)

Less successful responses were often as a result of an unfocused question which did not lead to the candidate covering the set Assessment Objectives.

Titles such as: 'How capitalism failed the working class' (Assignment A Modern Drama – Priestley) and 'Do you believe Eddie Carbone was immoral?' (Assignment A Modern Drama – Miller) elicited good personal responses but did not lead to effective coverage of AO2 (language, form and structure) which is worth half of the marks.

Vague, descriptive titles like 'Young love in Romeo and Juliet' (Literary Heritage Texts) and 'Ambition in 'Macbeth' (Literary Heritage Texts) tended to produce a narrative response as the candidates struggled to maintain a critical approach.

It should be noted that the use of tasks taken from the alternative exam unit (4ET1 02) such as: 'Explore the theme of loyalty in Romeo and Juliet' or 'To what extent are lessons learnt in 'An Inspector Calls'?', whilst perfectly adequate for a 45 minute exam response, may not lend themselves to a sustained analysis of AO2 which is expected in the coursework unit where candidates have more time to develop their critical skills and cover the relevant assessment objectives in a much more thorough and considered way.

Assignment A

The most popular texts chosen for Modern Drama were 'A View from the Bridge' and 'An Inspector calls.' It was refreshing to see one centre choose 'Kindertransport' to good effect. Many responses appeared to be based on past examination questions, which, though adequate, did not always challenge the candidates sufficiently. Tasks which asked 'How' the writer achieved effects produced responses more focused on AO2 e.g., 'Explore the ways in which Priestley uses dramatic devices to present the mysterious inspector in 'An Inspector Calls'. This is more focused than the question 'Is Marco a character for whom we have sympathy?'

Effectively analysing the playwright's methods and considering the audience reaction should form part of AO2 analysis for play scripts and stronger responses were those where the text was seen as a performance with dramatic techniques being considered.

This is an example of a level 5 response to 'A View from the Bridge' showing cohesive evaluation of language, form and structure, including consideration of dramatic effects:

'Eddie's incestuous feelings for Catherine, his niece, are highlighted through the use of props such as a cigar when Catherine offers to "light it for (him)". The affectionate act between niece and uncle that gives Eddie pleasure carries phallic connotations, disconcerting the audience as the unsettling relationship is uncovered. Furthermore, Miller's careful use of stage directions creates irony after Eddie is hugged and "is affected by her but smiles his emotion away". However, the connotation of 'away' is temporary relief, foreshadowing the fact that Eddie's inappropriate love will return and cause his own downfall. His denial of his inappropriate feelings towards his niece is a sign of his hamartia that is his fatal flaw, perfectly fitting Aristotle's criteria of a tragic hero.'

Many candidates covered AO4 (context) for the Modern Drama response, although this is not required. This can lead to a greater understanding of the

writer's intentions but it is important that any AO4 comment in assignment A is made relevant to the task and not used as a historical introduction.

This is an example of a level 5 response to 'An Inspector Calls' where knowledge of historical context has been used effectively alongside analysis of AO2 to further exhibit assured knowledge and understanding of the text:

'Priestley's juxtaposition of the words 'hopes' and 'fears' and again 'suffering' and 'happiness' reflects the contrast in society between the positions of the lower and upper classes between the two World Wars. Eva Smith is one of the lower class females ergo her power in society is even lower than lower-class males. Mr Birling's patronising and superior speech shows how he exploited lower class female workers: "We were paying the usual rates and if they didn't like those rates they could go and work somewhere else". Because she is female, Eva's request for more pay is judged by him as insubordinate, and she would be seen as different from stereotypical women of her class in questioning his decision. Priestley suggests that it is Birling himself who is out of touch when Birling reassures authoritatively: "There has been a lot of wild talk about possible labour trouble... don't worry". However, there was a miner's strike in 1912 resulting in the Coal Mines Act which established a minimum wage. The Inspector's speech at the end contrasts greatly with this earlier one of Birling: "We don't live alone. We are members of one body. We are responsible for each other". Priestley's use of three short impactful sentences clearly sends the audience the message that businessmen like Birling are not working for the greater good'.

Assignment B

For Literary Heritage Texts 'Macbeth' was the most popular text choice followed by 'Romeo and Juliet'. A few centres chose 'Pride and Prejudice' and 'Great Expectations' and one centre offered 'The Merchant of Venice'. Where two plays were chosen for study, the lack of AO2 coverage, particularly dramatic techniques, became more noticeable. Most candidates wrote more successfully about narrative techniques in prose texts when these were chosen for study.

Most candidates produced thoughtful responses and attempts were made to link the text with context to cover the requirement for AO4. There were, however, some responses which included substantial biographical detail on Shakespeare which was irrelevant to the task in hand and not integrated into the main body of the response. Often the comment on context (AO4) was not integrated well and served as a biographical or historical introduction rather than being detailed and sustained.

Here is an example of a level 5 response to 'The Merchant of Venice' where the relationship between text and context has been integrated convincingly alongside analysis of AO2:

'Portia's freedom is restricted due to the bonds of her father's wishes, and she is largely portrayed as a source of wealth for potential suitors. Shakespeare's description of Portia's desires being 'curbed by the will of a dead father' emphasises the injustice of a 16th century society in their repression of women. The adjective 'curbed' conveys the idea that her thoughts and feelings have been suppressed and disregarded, a situation faced by many women of that

time. A 16th century audience may feel sympathy towards Portia as she struggles against her bonds but Shakespeare's purpose here is ambiguous. The 'will' of her father could be a reference to the legal bond or physical will made on his death, but it could also be a pun on her father's wishes or his mental will in which he seeks to incarcerate her after his death and leave her to the dominance of future husbands who unlock the riddle of the caskets. To a 21st century audience it may appear that Shakespeare is shining a light on social injustice of the time but the double meaning of the word means that there is also humour in the way Shakespeare presents her struggle and may also be used for comic effect'.

As in assignment A, titles which were focused on the writer's craft and were not too wide, proved most successful. Titles such as: 'How does the author make a memorable character?', 'Was Macbeth really a tyrant?' and 'Fate in Romeo and Juliet' are too wide ranging for the candidate to focus specifically on the relevant AOs and led to descriptive answers lacking in a discriminating and perceptive critical style.

Less successful responses used over long quotations to support points and lacked close analysis of AO2 (language, form and structure) as shown in this extract from a level 3 response on 'Macbeth':

'When Macbeth committed the murder and became the king of Scotland, Banquo felt terrible but did nothing about it. He just said passively aside: 'New honours came upon him like our strange garments, cleave not to their mould but with the aid of use'. The imagery used here by Banquo is a metaphor showing that he preferred the rule of Duncan and that he felt Macbeth was not at all suitable to become king of Scotland. Macbeth had shown himself to be a brave warrior in the in the battle: 'Brave Macbeth, well he deserves that name!', but later Banquo shows he suspects him of murdering Duncan: 'Thou hast it all now: king, Cawdor, Glamis, as the weird sisters promised and I fear thou playedst most foully for't. This leads to Macbeth fearing Banquo who used to be his friend and he says: 'our fears in Banquo stick deep' which leads to him plotting Banquo's murder'.

However, the knowledge and understanding of the texts studied (AO1) was often a strong point even in weaker candidates and centres should be congratulated on this during times of remote learning and self- isolation.

Administration

Most centres included the necessary paper work with their sample of scripts: EDI print out, front cover sheet (signed and annotated with marks awarded and summative comments) and authentication sheet (signed), which made the job of moderation run more smoothly. Moderators do need to check details against the information on Gateway so it is important that the folder cover sheet is fastened to the front of the work and completed with candidate and centre numbers. The work of the highest and lowest candidate must also be included even if these do not appear on Gateway as part of the sample.

All work should show evidence of teacher marking. Although the majority of centres provided detailed comments on the assignments, there were some centres who submitted clean scripts. The comments, both marginal and summative, should link to the wording of the Assessment Objectives in the mark

scheme. Some centres did not appear to accurately apply the marking criteria to explain how marks were attained. Comments such as 'assured', 'perceptive' and 'sophisticated' were used on level 3 assignments and subjective comments like 'Beautiful summing up', 'Excellent understanding', 'Perfect point! Well done!' appeared on some scripts addressed to the student.

Some centres showed evidence of good practice in carrying out dual marking with two sets of comments appearing on the scripts. Where this was the case, the marking was usually a lot more accurate. A few centres have adopted the practice of highlighting the scripts in different colours to show where they feel the Assessment Objectives have been covered. This is very helpful to show how marks have been awarded but the highlighting must relate accurately to the wording of the mark scheme.

It was rewarding to see some very strong personal engagement across the ability range of the candidates and to read thoughtful responses often produced under difficult conditions. Centres should be congratulated for setting individual tasks which allowed the candidates to choose titles to suit their strengths and knowledge.

A brief summary

It is important that the centres take into account the following:

- The importance of setting a task which is sufficiently challenging and related to all the relevant Assessment Objectives for the assignment
- All questions set should be tightly focused and allow the candidate to develop themes and analyse language, form and structure
- It is important that candidates are presented with a range of topics and ideas, and are encouraged to choose ones that appeal, thus encouraging personal engagement and independence
- The analysis of drama texts should focus closely on dramatic techniques, audience reaction and stagecraft
- It is important that AO4 (the relationship between text and context) is well integrated into the response and 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. Quantity does not always mean quality, and unnecessary narrative or historical detail can detract from the core of the response. However, in order to cover all the Assessment Objectives sufficiently responses need to be developed and sustained.
- The best practice is to internally standardise all marking even if there is only one teacher teaching the specification. Small centres in the same geographical region should share good practice.
- Scripts should show evidence of teacher marking with comments that relate to the wording of the marking criteria and refer to relevant Assessment Objectives. Looking at the Board's exemplar scripts for this unit should provide greater guidance for small or new centres.
- All folders should be submitted with the centre's EDI printout and signed authentication form.

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