PEARSON Edexcel

Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel International GCSE

In English Literature (4ET1)

Paper 02: Modern Drama and Literary Heritage Texts

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General Observations

This series was the second since the launch of the new specification for International GCSE. It was pleasing to see the full range of achievement on this single tier paper covering the 1-9 grades. On Section A, the best answers used full and deep knowledge of their chosen text to form focused and relevant arguments in response to the question. In these answers, a broad balance between AO1 and AO2 demands was achieved with candidates exploring well-selected techniques and their impact. Candidates at all levels of achievement performed best when they identified with the texts as drama rather than merely texts. This awareness and insight led to some effective and apposite comment on detail such as foreshadowing and dramatic irony. Less successful answers tended to lack a valid structure, which led some to drift away from the focus of the answer. Some also tended to lapse into narration of the plot, thereby limiting themselves to the lower reaches of the mark scheme.

On Section B, the best answers used the question to build well-developed and focused answers that incorporated both AO2 and AO4 aspects with relevance and seamless fluency of structure. Some excellent responses were seen that engaged fully with the question and provided judiciously chosen detail from the text to support their arguments. Less successful answers tended to narrate or describe characters, sometimes interspersing this with relevant argument. Application of both AO2 and AO4 aspects was patchy with some candidates demonstrating no aspects of these skills at all and some paying lip service only to the AO4 element in particular, for example by tacking a general point onto their answer. The best answers used the AO4 elements as inherent to their arguments. It is also important to note that some candidates would be well served by understanding the difference between the context of setting of the text and the context of writing the piece. For example, Lady Macbeth is not a Jacobean woman.

On balance, candidates tended to perform better on the Drama Section of the paper than the Literary Heritage section, perhaps finding the AO4 context element difficult to incorporate, or simply not leaving sufficient time to answer this, the second section of the paper. A small number of weak answers demonstrated little core knowledge of the texts or significantly lacked development.

SECTION A - MODERN DRAMA

A View from the Bridge

Question 1 required candidates to write about Alfieri with most confidently exploring the role and presentation of this character. There was some clear and thoughtful understanding of his role as a bridge between the two elements of the Red Hook community, torn between American and Sicilian values and expectations. Some work was well developed and supported with evidence of effective personal engagement. Candidates working at Levels 4 and 5 tended to engage confidently with the AO2

demands of the question with the most impressive answers dealing well with structure and form through discussion of Alfieri's role in the play. Less successful responses tended to make general comments with little focused development or awareness of effects. Responses to Question 2 were similar in nature to Question 1. Candidates seemed comfortable with the concept of betrayal and wrote largely about Eddie's betrayal of Marco and Rodolfo, including the implications of this to others. It was interesting to see discussion of Eddie's betrayal of his wife as a different dimension to the question.

An Inspector Calls

An Inspector Calls was the most popular text in this Section. Question 4 was twice as popular as Question 3. Question 3 required candidates to write about Arthur Birling from the point of view of his own comment that he is 'a hard-headed, practical man of business' and this attracted some interesting and detailed arguments. Most candidates chose to agree with the comment, backing effective arguments with apposite textual detail. One candidate made the interesting argument that he is not a practical man of business as his dealings with Eva Smith lead to the visit of the Inspector and likely public exposure of his role in her demise. The most successful candidates at all levels of ability really considered the nature of the text as a play and explored aspects of dramatic effects in their AO2 analysis. Question 4 was the classic focus on the theme of responsibility and a wide range of achievement was seen. Candidates appeared confident dealing with this theme and most answers were at least soundly argued and supported by relevant detail from the text. One approach by some candidates was to work through the characters one by one, relating each one to the theme. This strategy tended to respond largely to AO1 with little opportunity to develop AO2 ideas. Some very thoughtful and effective work was seen with candidates presenting original ideas alongside the established view of this theme in the play. One good argument focused on the responsibility of society as a whole and suggested that the characters are merely vehicles for Priestley's message.

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time

This was the second most popular text on the paper. Question 5 on the character of Siobhan was well done and focused on her role and presentation. Work tended to be well structured and developed both AO1 and AO2 aspects. Question 6 on the theme of adventure also effectively explored this idea with valid support applied and a relevant focus on Christopher's adventures. This answer also explored the nature of adventure in a dramatic sense. Candidates engaged at a personal level with both questions.

Kindertransport

There were no responses to the questions on this text this series.

Death and the King's Horseman

There were no answers to Question 9 but Question 10 on religion was answered. The evidence from responses suggested that candidates struggled with the idea of religion in

the play and there was a tendency to describe and narrate rather than analyse and support.

SECTION B – LITERARY HERITAGE TEXTS

Romeo and Juliet

This was a very popular text on the Literary Heritage Section of the paper. In answers to Question 11, candidates were familiar with the character of Friar Lawrence and a number wrote straightforward character studies with only an implicit nod to his importance to the play. These answers tended to limit themselves to the lower reaches of Level 3 and below. A difficulty here, as in other questions on this section, relates to the variable use of AO4 context points by candidates. The best answers seamlessly included detail relating to context, using these points to support a strategic argument. Less successful arguments offered comment on this aspect as an afterthought or, in some cases, failed to comment at all on any aspect of AO4. As an intrinsic part of the mark scheme, it is important that candidates include reference to some aspect of these elements in their answers. In terms of AO2, some candidates wrote effectively and with analytical view about effects, the best of these considering the friar's dramatic significance to the unfolding tragedy. A wide range of achievement was seen on this question with some candidates writing very little and making it hard to award Level 3 in terms of sound and secure subject knowledge and understanding. Question 12 required candidates to write about the theme of death and attracted some very focused and lucid answers as well as some less successful responses. The best answers took the theme and considered a range of aspects including the feigned death of Juliet, the dramatic significance of the deaths of Mercutio and Tybalt and the suicides of Romeo and Juliet at the end of the play. AO4 was, for the most part, handled better on this question than on Question 11 with candidates finding things to write about historical views on suicide for example. Answers that worked through a narrative recall of different deaths were the least successful.

Macbeth

Question 13 required candidates to write about the theme of loyalty. This was well done by those who considered the theme in its widest sense, discussing in the light of several characters and different episodes. An example would be exploration of the conflicting loyalties of Macbeth (his wife/his ambition/his king/his country). As in some of the *Romeo and Juliet* responses, AO4 was omitted by some candidates. Some wrote convincingly about the loyalty of Macduff and Lady Macduff's questioning of this prior to her murder with some exploring the dramatic significance of this scene. The best answers were well structured and purposeful with effective arguments and relevant supporting detail. Question 14 required candidates to write about the significance of Macduff and his family. A range of answers was seen with some very thorough and thoughtful responses covering the important role of Macduff in Macbeth's downfall and a sense of his family, caught in the crossfire, but providing the catalyst and motivation for Macduff's eventual

victory over Macbeth. A couple of answers were not confident in their knowledge and there was some confusion for one over who Macduff is. The same issues with some candidates not addressing AO4 was seen here too.

The Merchant of Venice

Question 15 was based on the theme of prejudice and used a stimulus quotation to prompt discussion. Arguments tended to focus largely on Shylock with some use of the quotation in wider arguments about racism. Unlike the questions on other Shakespeare texts, here candidates included reference to AO4 in their answers, although there was less evidence of engagement with AO2. Question 16 focused on the relationship between Portia and Nerissa with secure exploration of these characters and their roles in the play. Supporting detail tended to be apposite and well selected.

Pride and Prejudice

Answers to Question 17 on Austen's presentation of Lady Catherine de Bourgh demonstrated engagement with the character and applied relevant detail to arguments. AO2 was handled largely in terms of her role with some candidates referring to her stereotypical and humorous portrayal. There was some inclusion of AO4 in some answers, although application was inconsistent. Question 18 required candidates to write about manners in the novel. Candidates seemed more able to address AO4 here and the best answers considered the effect of manners on the narrative structure as well as characters' expectations and behaviour.

Great Expectations

There were no responses to the questions on this text this series.

The Scarlet Letter

There were several answers to Question 22. Religion was considered in light of the Puritan context of the novel and this meant that AO4 was well covered and inherent in answers. The brutal rigidity of life under the Puritans' law in the Massachusetts Bay Colony was discussed comprehensively and supporting detail was applied appropriately.