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Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2022

Pearson Edexcel Level 3 Advanced Subsidiary
GCE

In English Language and Literature (8EL0)

Paper 2: Varieties in Language and Literature

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Section A:

Due to the shifting nature of text choices in centres, there were limited entries for Love and Loss, Encounters and Crossing Boundaries; the majority of responses this series focused on Society and the Individual. Overwhelmingly, candidates responded to the question on The Great Gatsby (Question 1). Due to the disruption to learning over the past couple of years, this series was markedly different to previous series. Candidates were able to engage with the focus of the questions but were often unable to successfully negotiate all of the demands of the task: the extract, wider novel, contextual factors and discussion of the writer's craft. This led to a lack of balance across the response that often restricted candidates from reaching marks in bands 4 and 5.

Candidates displayed a strong knowledge of the text and were able, in the main, to select relevant material for discussion. The various themes in the extract allowed candidates to explore the text from different angles and there were some interesting discussions put forward. Some candidates were limited by using prepared material in response to the question. This often meant that elements of a candidate's answer were not directly applicable to the question asked of them, or tenuous links to the question were being made.

For many candidates, the author was largely absent from the response. Many responses did not engage with the text as a construct which impacted the depth of analysis that was present. It was also noted that the range of linguistic and literary terms being discussed was limited. Whilst feature spotting is to be avoided, it is vital that candidates are able to confidently discuss the writer's craft and how this is demonstrated in the extract, and wider novel. Candidates who do not manage this often miss the potential to move up through the levels as they do not achieve highly in terms of AO1 and AO2. Similarly, many candidates took a literary approach at the expense of using both a literary and linguistic lens. This also led to a more limited response by the candidates.

Candidates predominantly focused on the American Dream and Fitzgerald's biography when discussing contextual factors. The selection of these was pertinent to the question and were largely integrated to relevant facets of the candidate's answer.

Section B:

Often candidates felt more secure in their responses to Section B. Candidates were able to use a range of approaches to answer the question and relevant material was selected to support the points the candidates were making. Candidates need to be mindful that AOs 1, 2 and 3 are still assessed on this question and that their responses need to be consistently analytical as well as utilising relevant content from the text. Candidates handled contextual information well and were often able to integrate this into their answer to support the arguments being made.

Candidates would benefit from a greater appreciation of the genre of the text they have studied. Many candidates do not consider staging or form when discussing plays and poetry. It is important that the medium the writer chose is considered when responding to the question set. At times candidates commented on the rhyme schemes of individual poems but this tended to be descriptive rather than analytical.

As with Section A, candidates who came into the exam with a prepared response in mind tended to be self-limiting in their answer as their points often strayed away from the focus of the question. Lengthy introductions also often limited a response as they tended not to contain much in the way of rewardable material.

Question 9:

The majority of responses for this question were on Othello and The Whitsun Weddings. Responses on Othello tended to focus on the duplicitous relationship between Iago and Othello and the contrast with the friendship between Desdemona and Emilia. Context was stronger for this text as many candidates were able to successfully draw on aspects of gender and racial politics. Submissive vocabulary was also often touched upon in the candidate's answers.

Many responses that utilised Larkin referenced Mr Bleaney as one of the main poems for discussion. The absence of friendship was the focus here. The range of poems chosen for Larkin could be broader as it would allow candidates to unlock a range of different points that could be discussed. However, gaps in learning are likely to have contributed to this.

Candidates who responded to the A Raisin in the Sun were able to identify a range of significant friendships in the play; specifically, those highlighting Beneatha's cultural explorations, Mama's pride and Walter Jnr's misplaced trust. Candidates would benefit from being more analytical in their discussions and focus on the dramatic genre.

Question 12:

Candidates need to ensure that they are fully engaging with the question. Many candidates lapse into discussing the concept of 'crossing boundaries' without focusing on the wording of the question and therefore limit their response by selecting material that is not relevant to what is being asked of them. This is a key issue for this question.