Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2017

Pearson Edexcel IAL
In English Literature (WET02)
Unit 2: Drama

Edexcel and BTEC Qualifications

Edexcel and BTEC qualifications are awarded by Pearson, the UK's largest awarding body. We provide a wide range of qualifications including academic, vocational, occupational and specific programmes for employers. For further information visit our qualifications websites at www.edexcel.com or www.btec.co.uk. Alternatively, you can get in touch with us using the details on our contact us page at www.edexcel.com/contactus.

Pearson: helping people progress, everywhere

Pearson aspires to be the world's leading learning company. Our aim is to help everyone progress in their lives through education. We believe in every kind of learning, for all kinds of people, wherever they are in the world. We've been involved in education for over 150 years, and by working across 70 countries, in 100 languages, we have built an international reputation for our commitment to high standards and raising achievement through innovation in education. Find out more about how we can help you and your students at: www.pearson.com/uk

Introduction

The 1701 series is the first since the adjustment to the distribution of assessment objectives and marks available for Section B. To summarise, the previous distribution of marks was 30 for Section A and 20 for Section B. The revised distribution is 25 marks for Section A, and 25 marks for Section B. The new weighting reflects the additional work required on Section B in terms of AO3: students must now contextualise the post-1900 drama.

Overall, the work done in this series represents a modest improvement on that seen in 1606 series. There were fewer instances of brief answers, and contextualisations for the Section A texts were more relevant to the specifics of the questions asked than in the 1606 series.

Section A

Othello remains the most popular text choice, with almost half of the cohort choosing this text. The remaining half of entries opted in roughly equal numbers for *She Stoops to Conquer, Twelfth Night* and *Doctor Faustus*. There were no entries for *The Rover*.

Answers in this section were on average somewhat longer and offered more textual detail than in 1606. Another welcome development was the more judicious selection of contextual support. One candidate answering Question 9 accounted for Cassio's despair on losing his reputation by observing that 'in the 1500s in Venetian society, honour was often linked to status or rank in the military'; another noted that 'the upper classes at the time Shakespeare wrote *Othello* followed a strict code that controlled their behaviour, morals and etiquette and any change or corruption of this could lead to their collapse in society'. Although a little general, these contextualising arguments, being relevant to the question and used to sophisticate specific textual analysis, were rewarded. (Both of these candidates were placed in Level 4.)

The contextual evidence provided again tended to be largely socio-economic, however. There was very little awareness of reception history, in terms of directorial choices or contemporary or modern reviews. No candidate in the 1701 series referred to a stage production they had witnessed. There are now opportunities online to view filmed stagings of several of the set plays for WET02, and it is recommended where possible for candidates to encounter a production, in either a live or mediated setting.

There are still some candidates who neglect AO3 entirely in Section A. This was particularly marked in answers on *She Stoops to Conquer* and *Twelfth Night*. Answers to Questions 3 and 4 in particular demonstrated some excellent, relevant knowledge of the text in fluent, controlled prose and thus scored highly on AOs 1 and 2, but the lack of AO3 contextualisation made the achievement of high level 4 or level 5 scores impossible.

While there was a good deal of successful work on AO3 elsewhere in Section A, AO5 was comparatively neglected. Some candidates who did attempt to meet the AO5 criteria provided quotes from critics, but the evidence was not always relevant to the specific question asked. Relevance is vital for achieving a top Level answer. Another vital aspect of a high Level response is showing that the variant critical interpretations have assisted the formation of one's own judgement. To achieve a Level 5 score, candidates must do more than regurgitate critical opinions; they must also be, as the marking scheme states, "evaluative", and in terms of AO5 specifically, a candidate is expected to apply "a sustained evaluation of different interpretations and alternative readings of texts". This is achieved by the sophisticated application of alternative interpretations to illuminate the candidate's own critical position. Few candidates were able to show that they could use the information they had remembered to inform their own personal response.

As in the 1606 series, most candidates made some attempt to engage with the AO1 and AO2 requirement to display knowledge and understanding of literary techniques and the writer's craft, using such terms as metaphor, simile, symbolism, tragedy, comedy, soliloquy; too often, however, such terms were used in what seemed to be pre-planned statements rather than as reflexive responses to the specific demands of the question asked. Centres are advised to ensure candidates are adequately prepared to use relevant terminology in service of an answer to a specific question.

Section B

The most popular text selection in Section B was, again, *A Streetcar Named Desire*. More than half of the 1701 cohort opted for this text, with a smaller number choosing *Death of a Salesman* and *Waiting for Godot*. Very few answers were seen on *Top Girls* and *Raisin in the Sun*.

Some excellent work was produce, and the best answers successfully integrated personal and critical responses, attending fully to the requirements of the question. Most candidates had a thorough knowledge of the plot of their chosen play, and key aspects of theme and characterisation, though relatively few were able to give a full sense of the dramatic qualities of the play, as a piece of staged theatre.

The new requirement to produce contextual support for answers in Section B produced some impressive work. Many candidates for question 17 produced relevant evidence of the changing class structure of the mid-twentieth century United States, and some for Question 18 related the question focus on sex as a destructive force to the biography of Tennessee Williams. However, a minority of candidates did not take full advantage of the marks on offer for AO3.

Paper Summary

Based on performance on this paper, future candidates are offered the following advice:

- Use a range of literary terminology to identify ways in which writers create meaning; discuss the effect of these techniques on the reader or audience.
- Remember that the texts you are studying are plays: demonstrate your knowledge of theatrical terminology and refer where possible and relevant to specific productions.
- Don't just copy out lots of contextual material or quotes from critics or reviewers or directors; make judicious selections from such sources to support what you are saying about the play, and tailor it to the precise terms of the question.
- Read the exact wording of the question carefully and answer this question, rather than one you practised before the exam.
- Enjoy your writing and share your enthusiasm with the examiner.

Grade Boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:
http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx