

Examiners' Report Summer 2009

GCE

GCE English Language & Literature (6EL02) Paper 01

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GCE08 English Language & Literature: 6EL02

Centres coped well with the demands of preparing their candidates for a new specification. Many candidates showed real enjoyment of the texts studied and enthusiasm for their chosen topic and tasks.

Topics and texts

Nearly all centres opted for a common topic, within which candidates could take individual directions. The most popular were Gothic and the Supernatural, Dystopia and Entrapment; the topic of Journeys and Pilgrimages was chosen by a number of centres, but Women's Lives proved the least popular option.

Bibliographies and references in commentaries showed that most centres chose the core prose fiction text to study with their candidates. For Gothic and the Supernatural, '*Dracula*' (Bram Stoker) was the most popular; for Dystopia, '*The Handmaid's Tale*' (Margaret Atwood); for Entrapment, '*The Collector*' (John Fowles). There was some variety in the poetry or drama texts chosen for these topics, with many opting for poems by Edgar Allen Poe and Christina Rossetti, and drama by Dario Fo. Wide reading included contemporary popular fiction, film and media texts on the topic, as well as style models for genres chosen for texts for a Listening audience, such as dramatic monologues or speeches.

Genres chosen for texts

By far the most common choices of genre for candidates' own writing were narrative fiction for a Reading audience and a dramatic monologue for a Listening audience. Centres should bear in mind some potential pitfalls with this particular combination:

As literary genres, both involve sophisticated skills and much trial and error to achieve a degree of effectiveness.

It was common for narratives to be from a first person perspective and voice, thus using very similar style and techniques to a monologue, which must use first person perspective and voice. The requirement to write for different audiences is, in effect, the requirement to display the ability to write in a variety of styles. Candidates should consider ways of avoiding such overlap between their two texts, for example, by writing the narrative from a third person perspective.

Candidates needed more exploration of the Dramatic Monologue genre, in particular an awareness that the 'drama' need not involve horrific incidents suffered by the protagonist. Their study of the genre might develop an understanding of dramatic irony: the gap between what the speaker and the listening audience understand from their account of the situation. Candidates should also demonstrate a clear idea of the context for their monologue, whether staged for a live audience or recorded for radio or film / TV. The script would need stage directions to indicate these aspects of visual or sound effects. Ideally, writers should test their work on a listening audience. The feedback from this process generally leads to effective redrafting and interesting commentaries.

Listening audience texts

Although centre marks tended to be homogenous, texts for a Reading audience were generally more effective, as candidates were writing in more familiar genres. There were a variety of lively ideas for genres for a Listening audience, eg. audio guides and speeches. In these cases, candidates need to consider the context carefully. Often, the audio or guide or speech was clearly fictional, ie. not for a real place, person or situation. It was necessary to bear in mind the actual context for the text as part of a fictional work, intended to be broadcast on radio, stage or TV. This, in turn, impacts on the purpose and audience, no longer serving the informative or persuasive function of a real-life spoken event.

Centres should warn candidates that scripting for film or TV may be outside the scope of a Language and Literature course, as it relies so heavily on visual and sound effects.

Another issue to bring to candidates' attention is that of 'scripting the unscriptable': interviews on radio programmes and TV chat shows do not involve a writer, even though each participant may have prepared what they wish to say in broad outline. As with the audio guide or speech, a scripted interview might form part of a fictional literary text. Its role, in this case, should be explained in the commentary.

Commentaries

Although there is a strict word limit for commentaries, candidates managed to work within these constraints, with very few instances where the 500 word limit was exceeded. Centres are reminded that the moderator does not read beyond this limit. It was generally the case, however, that candidates had covered the main points required in the Assessment Objectives by this point.

Commentaries tended to be marked leniently, however, and were the main cause of adjustments to centre assessments. The descriptors for top band marks require a detailed exploration of the influence of stimulus texts. In some folders, the candidates' own texts were of interest and worthy of credit, but the influence of literary texts was not apparent. It is the mark for the commentary that is affected in these cases.

This unit requires a combination of literary and language skills. It is necessary, not only to be able to write a narrative or dramatic monologue, but to display appreciation of or skills acquired from the study of literary texts. Candidates should avoid using the topic as a general starting point for writing about something that has always interested them. The study of literary texts should suggest directions in which they might explore thematic aspects. The influence of literary representations is inevitably stronger in some topics: The Gothic and Supernatural and Dystopia. Candidates should ensure that their ideas for writing on the topics of Entrapment, Women's Lives, Journeys and Pilgrimages show the influence of their reading. Some centres used a variety of techniques for transforming the stimulus texts: missing chapters; other perspectives; and so on. It is not necessary to keep such a tight focus on the literary texts, provided their influence is apparent.

This influence should be the primary focus of the commentary, leading on to some analytic comment on the candidates' own writing in the light of this. It is better if candidates maintain some sense of the literary influence throughout the

commentary. Some candidates briefly referred to stimulus texts in the opening paragraph of their commentary; others acknowledged a series of writers in the final sentence. Occasionally commentaries only referred to films or popular fiction, ignoring core literary texts. It was not uncommon for there to be no mention of any stimulus text in the commentary.

Bibliographies

Centres should also remind candidates that a bibliography is a requirement in their coursework folder: this was frequently missing. The specification recommends the use of the Harvard system for presenting bibliographies. Examples can be found in various publications provided by Edexcel, eg. the 'Getting Started' Booklet, pages 29 -30.

Centres are to be congratulated on their careful preparation of candidates for this new coursework unit. There was much evidence of thoughtful research and varied preparatory reading. This is all excellent preparation for the more advanced skills of research and the greater scope and independence offered for coursework at A2.

6EL02 Grade Boundaries

Paper No	Max Mark	A	B	C	D	E
01	80	69	60	51	43	35

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