

Moderators' Report/ Principal Moderator Feedback

June 2011

GCE English Language & Literature
6EL02

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Outline of unit

Unit 2 provides the opportunity for candidates to experiment with the creative process of crafting an original text. Originality and personal style allow for a genuine range of possible responses which can be considered successful. It is this freedom which makes the unit so exciting and refreshing, appearing to capture the enthusiasm of so many candidates. Certainly, the range and quality of the work present in folders sent for moderation, appears to demonstrate that teachers are embracing the opportunity to give candidates a large degree of freedom within this unit.

Candidates experience the process of creative writing influenced by wide ranging research across the genres. In addition, they have to link their understanding of literary and linguistic theory intricately to their own creative process. Centres have to select carefully a thematic topic as the basis for a collective study of the techniques used by particular authors. From this initial work, candidates are able to select a core, stimulus text to act as the catalyst for their own writing. Two pieces of coursework are then required, differentiated by the intended audience of each; with one piece aimed at a reading audience and the other at a listening audience.

Gothic and Dystopias are the most popular themes. Entrapment also features quite frequently, with Journeys and Women's Life's remaining infrequent choices. There were fewer monologues, than in last year's entry. Instead, scripted work has grown considerably. This has allowed far more creativity and diversity, with dramatic or filmic scripts stimulating some highly original ideas.

Exemplar 1:

Kitchen Sink Drama intended for a listening audience

Izzy's flat, sparsely furnished. Izzy cleaning battered table, knock on door, opens, Mum comes in, sits on sofa.

Carol: Izzy sweetheart, y'know me and Phil have been together for...God what is it now?/ Your last year of Primary wasn't it?

Izzy: Yeah

Carol: Well, neither of us are getting any younger and last week, well...he popped the question?

pause

"Congratulations Mum", "so happy for you", "when's the big day?"

Izzy: I, er...I'm happy for you Mum...really.

*Carol: What? That Jamie being a swine again? I haven't seen you in ages, you never come home, if I don't come round here I don't see you, do me and Phil smell eh? *pause* Izzy, you could at least gimme a smile, wouldn't kill y'know, especially with the big news, silly Mummy, asking for your only child to be happy for you!*

Izzy: Oh shut up Mum! I don't wanna hear it.

Carol: Don't you talk to me like that young lady, I don't know what's got into you, I thought you'd grown out of all this childish bullshit, / apparently not.

Izzy: I'm not a child, / I don't need to explain – just leave it out!

Carol: No, but you're acting like one! Twenty one years old and you're acting like your / seven, really Isabelle, I thought I'd bought you up better.

Izzy: How many times! Leave it out! / You're doing my nut in, y'know that? All this questioning, it's like I'm under arrest!

Carol: Well then how about you stop acting like a child and tell me what's the matter! Is that too much to ask? I am your mother y'know, and he's going to be your new father!

*Izzy: Him?!*laughs* He will never be my new father; my Dad was ten times him – a hundred even. Don't dare...use that word for that...monster.*

Examiner Comment:

The quality of work being graded in the top band is excellent and highly creative. Here the centre adhered to the demands of the specification exactly in terms of making a correct choice of the primary stimulus texts. This produced relevant commentaries linking closely to the requirements of the unit. In these folders commentaries linked intricately with creative work. Commentaries were also balanced in terms of literary and linguistic analysis. Invariably the most successful folders reflected fully committed candidates who had prepared thoroughly with supported wider reading.

Exemplar 2:

Both my pieces were inspired by two different stimulus texts with the theme of entrapment, specifically that of women. My short story inspired by Jean Rhys' Wide Sargasso Sea uses themes of mental illness and broken relationships whereas my "kitchen-sink" drama script was inspired by Caryl Churchill's Top Girls.

Generally work remained sound as ability fell and there were very few poor folders. This suggests a much greater awareness in the centres concerning the general structure of the unit and is really pleasing to see.

Commentaries

Commentaries continue to improve. The main criteria for success remain a candidate's ability to adequately address all the necessary elements required by the syllabus in just 500 words.

Many successful candidates, focused on establishing a succinct style in the introduction to their commentaries. This somewhat formulaic approach seems sensible here. Certainly, discussing with candidates exactly what the

requirements of the commentaries are and helping them to produce a 'check list' of aspects they must include, helps candidates avoid missing out key elements.

Exemplar 3:

(Commentary for Reading Piece)

The audience for this is the general public. It will appeal to those in the same situation, job and age as the main character 'Becky, and to the older generation as it includes 'Doris', who is based on the character from 'Cream Cracker under the Settee' (CCUTS). It has a dual purpose, first for the reader; to entertain and inform, the other for 'Becky' herself, as a diary is therapeutic to express and reflect upon; "I don't know how Leo is going to cope..." She is addressing an imaginary adult, questioning herself, as does 'Doris'. This has the appearance of diary entries, so relates to the base text of 'Color Purple', which is similarly a series of letters.

Exemplar 4:

(A Commentary for 'A Soulless Encounter')

My coursework features the genre of Gothic and the supernatural. The purpose of writing my short story was to entertain an audience of young females, between the ages of 15-25, interested in traditional gothic aspects with a twist of some subverted and romantic features-American gothic. Angela Carters' 'The Lady of the House of Love' in 'The bloody Chamber' inspired me to write about traditional gothic vampires whilst incorporating a modern love tale within the story. As my story features both romance and horror I drew on the semantic field of both romance and horror using lexis such as 'I love you' and 'tormented'.

Examiner Comment:

The candidates in Exemplar 3 and Exemplar 4 make clear their intended purpose and audience. This is always an important aspect for candidates to understand. The technique of stating this, unambiguously, at the outset is good practice. Both candidates go on to mention a stimulus text, linking this with a particular example within their own work and exemplifying their point with relevant quotation. Often, candidates used their introduction to outline the aspects they would discuss in more detail within the main body of their commentary. Doing this helped to clarify the variety of skills they had put into practice within their own texts. This invariably worked well.

The most successful candidates seamlessly and naturally discussed the literary and linguistic devices within their work. Their analysis was succinct and supported by carefully chosen, brief examples taken from their own texts.

Exemplar 5:

Comma splice, as used in Gret's speech, tells the actress playing Carol to increase the tempo of her delivery in 'I haven't seen you in ages, [...] do me and Phil smell eh?' to convey desperation and insecurity. The second person pronoun is addressed directly to Izzy with the emotive concrete noun 'home' connoting place, however as an abstract noun 'home' is also viewed as happiness, security. Izzy's reluctant response is marked by an awkward pause before Carol continues; 'Izzy, [...] silly Mummy, asking for your only child to be happy for you!' Carol's use of 'silly mummy' distances herself from the uncomfortable present by attempting to recreate the mother-child relationship. The patronising tone alienates the audience. The power of silence was inspired by Angie's silence in the office in Top Girls 2.3. The dramatic irony here, and in Carol's asyndetic defence of Phil who 'bought [her] up since [she] was eleven, [...] comforted [her], put [her] to bed' prepares the audience for the final revelation; her mother was 'silly' to not figure it out.

Examiner Comment:

This candidate clearly understands why they have used particular techniques in their creative piece and is able to explain the intended influence of these on their audience. It is clearly important to explore this relationship carefully with candidates. The whole area of whether an author can completely maintain control of their text, after its completion, is a complex one. However, once explored, candidates are better able to explain their intentions for the techniques they have employed. Some, take on an appropriately cautious lexis themselves, 'hoping' for a particular response from their reader or listener.

It was particularly pleasing to see that most centres had taken on board last year's key advice to clearly differentiate creative work according to the intended audience. Consequently, there was much greater diversity in terms of the form of the listening audience piece. The greatest issue now is ensuring candidates have read across the genres in their wider reading. This lack of breadth in some centres is resulting in too loose a reference being made to the stimulus text, or reference being made to films or little known texts. It is clearly important that candidates are reading texts with sufficient literary merit to positively influence their own writing.

Candidates need to make explicit reference to their chosen stimulus text.

Moderation

There was lots of evidence of good practice by centres. Assessment was sound with centres accurately linking marks to assessment objectives. There was greater teacher annotation accompanying completed folders, reflecting advice given in the previous report. Creative work was generally awarded appropriately. Centres generally linked marks given to the creative pieces to a candidate's ability to analyse their work within the commentary. There was ample evidence of centres using the whole range of marks available.

Conclusion

Unit 2 once again demonstrated excellent practice being followed by teachers in preparing candidates for their coursework. The main messages from previous entries appear to have been taken on board by most centres. The quality of work across the ability range was very impressive and the moderation process was a pleasure.

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