

Moderators' Report/
Principal Moderator Feedback

Summer 2012

GCE English Language and Literature
(6EL02)
Creating Texts

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General Overview

In Unit 2, students are encouraged to read widely across a range of literary texts, including poetry, drama and prose. These texts will be linked through a particular thematic choice selected from the syllabus. Following this preparation, they must use a significant stimulus text as a central focus for their own creative writing.

Students produce two creative pieces, one intended for a reading audience and one for a listening audience. Students should use their stimulus text and wider reading as inspiration to deliberately craft their own work. They should be encouraged to deliberately experiment with literary and language devices and mimic features they have come across during their wider reading.

Accompanying each piece is a student commentary. Here, students have the opportunity to discuss their own creative process and need to include examples and explanation of some of the literary and language features they have included. They need, also, to link these features and devices to their stimulus text and continue to acknowledge the influence of this text on their own work.

There was a reasonable spread of folders across the possible topic areas available, with the most popular choices being *Gothic and Supernatural* and *Dystopia*. *Entrapment* was again the third most popular, with only a handful of centres choosing *Journeys and Pilgrimages* and *Women's Lives*.

Centres continue to allow students an encouraging degree of freedom when it comes to their creative responses. This autonomy is integral to the spirit of the specification and is intended to provide the best opportunity for students to really engage in the process of creative writing. It is, however, important to ensure that students have read from across the literary genres (of poetry, prose and drama) as part of their preparation and, also, that they choose a core text which conforms to the description of being of 'sufficient literary worth' to act as the stimulus text here.

It is invariably apparent when students have embraced this range of background/wider reading, prior to their own creative work and are then able to reference a suitable stimulus text closely in their accompanying commentaries. These students have an in-depth understanding of relevant genre conventions and are best equipped to draw upon a genuine range of story-telling and narrative devices within their own work. Consequently, their efforts feel authentic and measured reflecting a real attempt to replicate the author(s) who has inspired them during their preparation.

The importance of choosing a suitable stimulus text cannot be emphasised enough.

In the following example, taken from a single commentary, we can sense this student's ability to link their ideas coherently to their research.

Exemplar 1

Stylistically and thematically, 'India' was heavily influenced by Conrad's Heart of Darkness. Marlow, the central first person narrator in conversation with the framing narrator and his arrogant friend, describes how his journey to somewhere more wild and primitive had changed his opinion of the British Empire and how even its powerful colonialism cannot prevent inner tribal darkness.

...The comical aspect of my writing such as in the description of the narrator's 'Delhi-Belly' was largely influenced by travel writer Mark Moxon, as he comments for example on his visit to the Red Fort in Delhi, where tourists wearing 'Lungis gave the impression of sexually excited men wandering around in bath towels.'

... As in Heart of Darkness, my decision not to name the framing narrator is because, in my view, this person's journey from ignorance, (considering a detention an excuse to claim 'the hardest life on earth') to consideration of the harder conditions faced by beggars in Delhi and Agra, for example, is the reader's personal journey – the framing narrator must therefore be accessible to the wider British reader.

... Incorporating Moxon's travel humour at a deeper level, with Heart of Darkness, I wanted to use this light comedy about India's uncertain, ambiguous future, threatened by the western elite, who ironically provide the 'private school' setting for the narration to take place.

Again, in the following examples, these students frequently and explicitly reference their stimulus text(s) explaining cogently, how they have been used. Notice how an additional text has also been referenced, complementing the main, and stimulus text. This works well in this case and adds to the impression that this students has read widely before embarking on their own work.

Exemplar 2 (taken from one commentary)

The play 'The accidental death of an Anarchist' by Dario Fo was the main stimulus for my dystopia monologue, meaning my piece's medium would also be the stage. The main themes in my monologue, similarly to Fo, were power, authority and the subversion of these themes. David seems like he has the most power and status due to his appearance (similar to Maniac, who impersonates people of authority using different disguises to indicate power)

... Similarly to Fo's writing, David's voice has many aspects of speech

... Using the influence of Atwood's 'The Handmaid's Tale', I disguised status through the use of colours

I wanted to keep my monologue ambiguous, and allow the audience to put their own interpretation onto where/who the power source is, for example, a secret government or possibly robots controlling the future world. This is similar to Fo's play as it is the protagonist that allows the audience to decide which ending they'd prefer.

Exemplar 3

My short story extract is the beginning of a fantasy fairy story inspired by Angela Carter's 'The Company of Wolves'. I have explored the theme of entrapment through the idea of being trapped by poverty and circumstance and my piece is aimed at readers who enjoy dark fiction. The long, detailed description at the beginning of 'The Company of Wolves' inspired my first paragraph in which I set the scene using figurative language such as metaphors 'the diamonds hid its infectious virus' in order to create the idea of something beautiful hiding a danger beneath.

... Carter uses contrasts within 'The Company of Wolves' as 'her hair looked white as snow' unlike wolf's dirty, unkempt hair which I mirrored as the pale, bleak Braun household in contrary to the 'bright, emerald cottage' in the forest.

... Carter depicts her story through an omniscient narrator which I imitated in my piece with authoritative statements and a commanding voice, this way we learn everything about what the characters are thinking and doing throughout the piece as opposed to a first person account.

Creative work

There continue to be fantastically creative and carefully crafted folders and the standard of work continues to improve. Certainly, the most successful pieces reflect supported wider reading and it is always apparent when a candidate has really engaged with this research process and is able to draw on a comprehensive understanding of their chosen genre and literary theme.

The highest attaining creative pieces are able to establish quickly, the linked theme they are based on and tend to reflect a willingness to experiment with both a distinct narrative voice, and some deliberate language features.

What became clear this year was the increase apparent in the number of descriptive short stories. Students seemed more willing to delay their narrative, and linger for longer on the task of scene setting or in establishing their characters. This led to some highly successful and quite beautiful opening paragraphs and allowed students to demonstrate their willingness to experiment with language features and devices.

Exemplar 4

Crystal white fungi gripped the oak; the beautiful shimmer of the diamonds hid its infectious virus rotting the tree's brittle bark. The gleam of the gems would blind any poor passer-by; however, the locals were wise to this and knew not to be tricked by its extremely beautiful, seemingly harmless exterior, for if they succumbed to the glitter it would be their last sight on this ungodly planet as the glare stole their vision instantly.

Exemplar 5

The empty streets, overwhelmed with crepuscule, remained inert as the clock struck a monotonous drum. A man of twenty-four charged through the abyss, desperate for an abdication; his heart pounding, furious and irrepressible, a repetitive rhythm sound-tracking his doom. He reached a dead-end and knew it was over.

Similarly, with Listening audience pieces, successful candidates often attempted to add depth to their work by experimenting with language features. This was evident with candidates, for example, carefully creating their settings and characters, before starting their dialogue.

Exemplar 6

Kasai, a black woman is rocking, and curled up on the floor staring at the audience. Her eyes are dead, glazed over, not blinking. Surrounding her is old, dirty furniture. The stage is dark except from a single beam of light from the left illuminating half of her. Her voice is shaky as she speaks.

Exemplar 7

It is very late morning, almost midday on a cold, damp and miserable weekday. Pat, the family's grandmother is busy tidying and putting anything 'out of place' in the bin. She retains a West Country accent, but has however, particularly with her old age and mannerisms, adopted the tendency to talk to herself.

Commentaries

Students must focus on the literary and language features they have deliberately used within their own creative work. It is important that both aspects are discussed fully and that students do not merely 'feature spot' with their own texts. They must discuss both what techniques they have included, and also the likely effect of these techniques on their chosen audience. Another important consideration here is the balance of the commentaries. Successful students were able to equally analyse the differing aspects required of them rather than be taken in one particular direction. The opening of the commentary is important. Best practice involved the students using their introduction to mention each of the aspects they would go on to discuss in more detail. In doing so, they were

able to demonstrate and acknowledge the different skills they had put into practice within their own texts.

Moderation

There was plenty of evidence of really good practice by teachers, with internal moderation made apparent (where possible) and annotated comments, linked to the Assessment Objectives, helping to explain where key decisions had been made. There was little evidence of over-rewarding top folders and marking was very accurate across the range.

Bibliography

It is a requirement of the specification to include a bibliography detailing the students' wider reading which quite a number of centres are still not consistently doing. The best examples here are not necessary long (perhaps detailing 10 to 12 texts) but reflect a breadth of reading, to include poetry, prose and drama, as well as both fiction and non-fiction.

Conclusion

It is most pleasing to witness a continuing improvement in Unit 2 responses, with students producing some wonderfully imaginative and truly engaging work supported by considered and comprehensive commentaries. This has made the moderation process, once again, a really enjoyable process. Thank you.

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