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Examiners' Report

June 2011

GCE English Literature 6ET01 01

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## Introduction

6ET01 continues to provide a good test of candidates' subject knowledge and skills. The questions are differentiating well across the board. There are relatively few problems with timing, though some students still write too much on Sections A & B in particular, leading to incomplete or rushed responses to Section C, for example.

In general, centres continue to prepare students effectively for this exam, which is to be expected. All parties are reminded that the primary focuses for 6ET01 are AO1, 2 & 3 and that even then, the first and second of these dominate – only 20 out of the 100 marks available are apportioned to the third.

Accordingly, structure, form and language, concepts and terminology remain the key contributing factors, along with coherent, accurate written expression. Although many of the tasks attempt to do some of the work for candidates by directing them explicitly towards techniques such as imagery, irony, tone and mood, language choices, dialogue, contrast, setting and characterization for example, there remains a tendency amongst a significant proportion to opt for narration and description, particularly in Sections B & C.

As time goes on, reactions to the more nuanced aspects of questions are beginning to be of more importance in differentiating outcomes. It is always a good idea for students to spend a few moments considering what the finer points of their arguments might actually be before launching into their answers.

## Question 1

1a. The instruction here was to write about "rhythm and metre". It was surprising to see so many responses which virtually ignored that, opting instead for commentary on rhyme, which led to 0 or 1 out of 5 in the main. Where the starting point was specific (i.e. a focus on the poem's iambic foundation), the general result tended to be 3, 4 or 5 out of 5. Centres may wish to revisit this teaching point. It remains true that, inspired by the template provided by the Sample Materials for 6ET01, some candidates default to evaluating the effect of the specified device as 'song-like' or 'lyrical'. This has been far less true of most of the poems so far set for the live exams than it was of the Yeats example in the starter pack.

1c. There was some good discussion of mood and tone with many responses identifying the nostalgic, wistful or melancholic aspect of *Maiden Name*. Less certain, however, was the ability to see how language choices, imagery and contrast, for example, established and developed these features. Some students identified more subtle nuances in the poem's later phase and even where their assertions were more questionable, they tended to be credited for ambition and sophistication of understanding.

(b) Poets often make use of sentence structure for effect.

Using **two** examples from the poem, explore the effect of sentence structure in the poem.

(AO2 = 5)

Larkin uses enjambement ~~over~~ across most of his poem, meaning it is only comprised of <sup>seven</sup> ~~six~~ sentences, ~~the~~ <sup>three</sup> ~~four~~ of which are very short. The first stanza is <sup>mainly</sup> comprised of a single sentence. It is split using ~~both~~ endstopping, with key ideas split by colons and semicolons. The first part describes its original meaning - "face" "voice" "grace". The next key idea is how marriage has separated who the woman once was from how she is now. The last idea is more separate through use of a ~~single~~ colon - the name belongs to who she once was. This sentence structure allows ideas to be built together into one sentence, and allows Larkin to highlight certain key themes. He also makes use of shorter sentences, which, through their shortness, are emphasised. For example "Try whispering it slowly." marks the first sentence to change direction - the name is still relevant through thoughts of others. It also gain attention through the use of the imperative "Try" which encourages the reader to notice its message.



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This response scored 5 out of 5 for its grasp of sentence structure and its effects.

## **Question 2**

2a. Comments on language choices were often concise. Largely, good use of quotation was in evidence and there was a pleasing focus on specific items such as nouns, verbs and adjectives. Amongst these examples, "smote" drew a lot of interesting responses. Sound devices were also frequently covered and often to good purpose.

2b. Imagery was also relatively safe ground for many, with the "toast and honey" simile drawing a lot of interesting response. Other much-discussed examples included the descriptions of the General's blood and the example of the "seared" fingers. Particularly in the first case, candidates were able to see the tonal effect of the technique, which usually led to higher marks. Indeed, there was often very much to be commended here in terms of insight and creative interpretation, especially given the context of time pressure.

(c) Novelists use characterisation in order to create interest for the reader. Using your knowledge of characterisation, discuss the ways in which J G Farrell develops it in this passage.

(AO1 = 5, AO2 = 5)

Clear and well described characters add a lot of interest to the reader and allows us to really feel how the character is portrayed to be feeling.

The Magistrate's character engages the reader by the use of 'grumbled' after what he said, conveying that the Magistrate is not a jolly or lively man, but rather grumpy instead. The Collector on the other hand seems to have a slightly witty and ironic side to him, as instead of being grumpy, he says "Damn the fellow!" sighed the Collector. The word sighed conveys that it does bother him but that he doesn't take life too seriously. He continues to say, "I expect he's come to sneer at my ramparts again." This is viewed by the reader as having been said in a slightly ironic and playful tone, rather than being fully serious. Another example where the collector's character is conveyed as ~~not~~ not taking life too seriously is when he does not over-react at all after the General is killed but just "could not be sure that he had actually seen what he had just seen". This also conveys him as ~~being~~ being a calm character that doesn't over react and has self control. This level of detail that the characters are described in allows the reader to really feel in touch with the

excerpt and adds largely to the reader's interest.



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This response to 2c received full marks (5+5).

### **Question 3 (a)**

This question gave candidates clear opportunities to either challenge or agree with the statement. As with most other tasks, the more obviously contentious nature of the statement led to the focus of many essays being the argument, perhaps to the detriment of the technical and literary aspects of the discussion. Many answers used a third poem, although quite a lot of these only added it as a final paragraph that made little impact to the essay as a whole. Some poems in each selection were more obvious favourites; those candidates tempted by the word 'safe' in Dickinson's 'Sweet-safe-houses' often struggled to see beyond the title.

### **Question 3 (b)**

In the spirit of Assessment for Learning, centres are reminded that the Mark Scheme *could* be said to be a useful teaching tool. Here is what the indicative content for 3b said in relation to *The Lake Isle of Innisfree* (the most popular of the poems chosen for this task – comments on the other two named texts are in the Scheme also):

Responses may include reference to:

- the language choices used to create a sense of place e.g. *cabin, hive, sings*
- the use of imagery to create a sense of place e.g. *bee-loud glade, noon a purple glow*
- the use of tense
- the use of first person narration
- the appeal to the senses of sight and hearing particularly
- the effects of metre, rhythm, rhyme and versification.

Comparisons are likely to involve finding similar poems and making effective links in terms of mood, structure, language and form. There may be a discussion of the terms of the proposition and whether a poet writing about home has to create a vivid sense of place. In order to meet the AO3 requirement, effective comparison and contrast will need to be demonstrated.

### **Question 4 (a)**

Responses conveyed interest and enjoyment. Most candidates kept the focus on two chosen poems, but a good number were able to range across several poems by different writers in pursuit of their argument. Some explored the "personal" in relation to reader/audience as well as writer.

### **Question 4 (b)**

The notion of poems being “unhealthily obsessed” with nature seemed to be a stumbling block for some candidates, diverting attention from the main body of the question which asked them to: “...compare and contrast how...” Overall, though, responses were varied and thoughtful, paying due attention to exploration of poetic method.

### **Question 5 (a)**

The assertion regarding “character building” provoked some interesting responses, with relatively few answers challenging the proposition directly. Less well developed essays often ignored the statement and simply compared descriptions of work from various texts. ‘Toads’ was an obvious popular choice, both from *Here to Eternity* and from the *Oxford Anthology*, often paired with ‘The Chimney Sweeper’ for example.

### **Question 5 (b)**

Candidates seem to be a little more confident each session in writing about “imagery”. The most popular (and generally the most successful) of the named poems seemed to be *The Great Palaces of Versailles*, often compared with *Thoughts After Ruskin*. Most candidates accepted the title assertion without challenging it. A key distinguishing factor tended to be the understanding of the sensory appeal of the images. There were some very sophisticated responses which offered evaluative comparisons of the images in their chosen poems.

### **Question 6 (a)**

There proved to be valuable material in most of the novel’s characters which could be explored as part of a response to this question. Many candidates restricted themselves to the title character within the primary text and there were some thoroughly developed arguments which explored the nature of her pride and the growth of her self love which thus earned high marks. A number of thoughtful essays considered Rochester, often comparing his pride to that of St John (Brocklehurst proved another fruitful source of discussion here). Other useful characters were Blanche Ingram and the Reeds, with Miss Temple and Helen Burns sometimes introduced to challenge the title assertion. The obvious link with *Wide Sargasso Sea* was Rochester, though few candidates compared the level of pride apparent within the “same” character in two novels. One candidate wrote convincingly about Antoinette that her problem was a lack of self love, comparing her to Annette and arguing that, had she not loved Rochester “too much”, she would not have gone mad. A few candidates misread “self love” as “love”, thus limiting the relevant development of their arguments to some extent. *The Magic Toyshop* was a rich vein of material for many candidates with Melanie, Uncle Philip, Finn and Margaret all providing interesting sources of discussion, both agreeing with and contesting the proposition.

### **Question 6 (b)**

This was one of the (b) questions where candidates seemed to limit themselves to the specified extract, writing only about John Reed's violence. Others allowed themselves a very loose interpretation of "abuse" and therefore moved from the opening chapter into relatively unfruitful sections of the novel. Whilst it is clear that Helen Burns suffers violent treatment at Lowood, it is more difficult to describe the humiliation suffered there by Jane as "violence". Much more useful material, particularly given the phrase "the core part of the attraction" was to be found by looking at Bertha and Rochester. Analysis of the gothic elements of the novel was much more valid here than in 6a responses, and some candidates addressed AO2 successfully by writing in detail about the effects of this aspect on a Victorian readership. One response compared Rochester's "hints of violence" towards Jane with the almost uncontrolled violence of Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights*. Although such a point might seem more suited to an essay where AO4 is assessed, this candidate used it to offer sophisticated evaluation of the effects of language and form. Although *The Magic Toyshop* was by far the less popular secondary novel, both this and *Wide Sargasso Sea* were used effectively to develop the argument.

### **Question 7 (a)**

The prompt led some candidates to productive discussions of the relationships between good and evil, guilt and innocence and right and wrong. As with some other questions, generalised discussions prompted by the proposition led some candidates to lose focus on the AO2 'explore the ways ...' part of the question. Most answers looked at Rose and Pinkie, with some weaker essays focusing on Pinkie alone, becoming rather narrative as a consequence. Both second texts provided good material to develop a response, with most choosing to look entirely at Alex or Michael rather than the fates of other characters.

### **Question 7 (b)**

Here, many well-directed answers suggested that the importance of setting had been taught explicitly, with the techniques of the selected passage clearly familiar to many. Candidates were able to make further connections to heaven and hell through Rose and Pinkie's childhood homes, Frank's place and the Cosmopolitan Hotel as significant settings. Others commented on the cliff and the significance of the vertical dimension. Both second texts' settings are well foregrounded - Alex's parents' flat and the Korova milk bar were picked up on, as was the use of the hotel in *Lies of Silence*.

### **Question 8 (a)**

It was pleasing to encounter freshness of approach in candidates' responses to a long-established examination set text. There was confident exploration of the methods used by the writers, with appropriate textual reference. A few candidates struggled to agree with the quotation and demonstrate that people's problems and the texts were in fact "the dullest things about which to read".

## Question 8 (b)

A main factor in determining the success of the answer here was how well the concept of irony was understood plainly; in a significant number of cases this was a bit disappointing given how this might well have been covered explicitly by teachers. (It also proved a pitfall in the unseen poem question two years ago). Accordingly, many answers worked through a series of scenes, saying 'it is ironic when ...' without deeper analysis. Better answers built on the extract given, discussing character development, narrative voice and epistolary elements in the novel to build an argument and address the AO2 element fully. The majority of responses again used *The Yellow Wallpaper*, with the contrast between the narrator's real character and the one constructed for her by a patriarchal society examined to some extent. Discussions of the ways that narrative voices are created in each text were usually productive, although a number were quite limited and used non-standard terminology.

## Question 9 (a)

"the idea that what society thinks matters is hugely significant in this story"

Explore the methods writers use to present the idea that what society thinks matters

1st Gen

- Lockwood
  - wants to be misanthropic / enjoy Nell's gossip
  - having to leave Brighton after disgracing himself

- Catherine Earnshaw / Hareton

- is used by the world of 19
- becomes lady like

- Heathcliff attempts to conform for fear of losing Cathy

- at first unsuccessfully

- after hearing - degrade to marry it, disappears 3 years

- returns - Nell's description

- holds himself

contrast between respectable Earnshaw and gypsy brat Heathcliff

2nd Gen - Catherine + Hareton

appear inappropriate to Lockwood  
encouraging of the impression they leave

CP

- Inge Aveny does not conform to social stereotype of a submissive woman and is welcomed by society

9a. "The idea that what society thinks matters is hugely significant in this story."

Explore the methods writers use to present the idea that what society thinks matters.

Within the story of *Wuthering Heights* Emily Brontë explored the relevance of society's opinion on the individual. By using a variety of characters in the first person narrative the reader is able to decipher the opinion of each character and how they feel society affects them and those around them.

Lockwood is the initial narrator and a self-professed misanthrope. By describing his new home as "a <sup>perfect</sup> misanthrope's heaven" the reader becomes acutely aware of the primitive quality of the countryside, separated from any real society in the way of towns, the closest being "Cimmeron" which is a fair walk from both *Wuthering Heights* and *Thrushcross Grange*. \* Liverpool, which is a recognizable city is a "sixty miles each way" walk and therefore the reader realizes the remote quality of the location. Similarly, the entire book is set within either *Wuthering Heights* and *Thrushcross Grange* and with the exception of reference from the characters, never leaves this

location. In this sense therefore, what society thinks does not matter as Wuthering Heights is almost completely separated from society.

In contrast to this, Catherine Earnshaw ~~makes~~ undergoes a dramatic alteration after staying a-while in Thrushcross Grange as a result of an injury suffered at the jaws of Skulker, the Thrushcross Grange dog. Whilst spending five weeks under the watchful eye of the Lintons she is won over by their world of acceptable dress and impeccable manners. Although the readers are of the impression that change is superficial, as later on she describes both Edgar and Isabella Linton as "spoiled", a change has ensued nonetheless and it is this conformity that allows the reader to truly witness the importance of society. Equally, Catherine's choice of life partner mimics her dependence on society's view of her. She exclaims that "It would degrade me to marry Heathcliff" therefore recognizing the tension that exists between the two social classes.

Heathcliff recognises the importance of society's view, not for himself but for Cathy as upon her return after <sup>a</sup> considerable degree of "sulking" he asks Nelly to "Make (him) decent Nelly, I'm going to be good". His efforts however are rebuked

by both Hindley and Edgar Linton who condescend his attempts to fit in with Catherine and her new companions. His second attempt at change however comes as a result of hearing Catherine remark that it would "degrade" her to marry Heathcliff as they "should be beggars". Without waiting to hear ~~that~~ Catherine's declaration of unwavering love to "the gypsy brat" he leaves ~~Thrushcross~~ Grange Wuthering Heights and does not return for three years. However, his absence appears to have provoked a dramatic transformation. Although emotionally he is the same passionate man with a savage temper, his physical appearance is quite altered. Nelly describes him as a "grown tall, athletic, well-formed man" and notes that "his upright carriage suggested the idea of having been in the army". Also it becomes increasingly evident that he has come into some fortune, thereby defining the importance of status in a superficial society.

In comparison, the world in which "The Colour Purple" Celie lives is <sup>similarly</sup> ~~apparently~~ oppressive however, evidently those who are strong minded and refuse to conform are rewarded as is shown by the initial success of Mrs. Avery and later on the success of Celie once she has broken the

bond with her oppressive husband. These women push the boundaries further still as they become lovers. Ultimately, in both stories the opinion of society is meaningless as each set of people sets their own boundaries. However, ~~whether~~ the residents of Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange appear to attempt to conform but their passionate emotions prevent them from transforming completely. It has been said that "passion is the most prominent part of the book" and this is reflected in the characters inability to conform to be acceptable within society. Be it Catherine Linton and Hareton's evident <sup>look of</sup> hospitality toward Lockwood or Catherine's and Heathcliff's final embrace before her demise, the characters of Wuthering Heights continuously push the social boundaries proving that in fact the idea that what society thinks doesn't matter.



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This answer received 35 marks (13+22).

### **Question 9 (b)**

Most candidates were able to see the significance of contrast in *Wuthering Heights* and leapt straight on to the obvious examples in setting and characterization, for example. As ever, there was a divergence in practice between those who made extensive use of the set passage and those who took the “starting point” injunction literally. Both approaches can work, though it is usually more politic to devote some time at least to closer textual analysis of the specified excerpt. Both *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *The Magic Toyshop* presented useful opportunities here with setting and character-focused discussion fore-grounded in most cases.

### **Question 10 (a)**

This led to answers that generally followed the statement in not taking one particular side – most responses demonstrated sufficient sophistication in considering the characters’ representative functions while also recognising the narrative interjections that seem to suggest authorial attitudes. Some responses using *The Remains of the Day* as the second text seemed to react to the first person narrative voice of Stevens with a sense that the reader is being asked to identify with an unappealing figure. Others argued that because we do not want to love or hate him, he is perhaps more easily seen as a construct. Once again, there were few candidates looking at *The Shooting Party*. Those who did had a good sense of the perspective through which society was viewed and Colegate’s representation of character.

### **Question 10 (b)**

“(W)hat people say and how they say it” has been a prompt for other prose tasks in previous incarnations of 6ET01. It was recycled here because it had worked well before. Once again, though the overall number of answers was comparatively small, there was some strong writing about voice, dialogue and characterization with many seeing the significance of the contrasts in speech presented and their impact on the development of themes, for example. This was counterbalanced by some ‘blocky’ or linear response though this is perhaps less typically noticeable as a phenomenon in questions on the *Howard’s End* grouping, as a rule.

# Paper Summary

## Section A

This part of the exam offers candidates a choice of response. Two unseen texts are set – one poem and one prose extract, followed by three short answer tasks. Candidates choose one or the other passage to answer on. The question is worth 20 marks and assesses AO1 (10 marks overall) and AO2 (10 marks overall). As previously stated, some candidates still write too much for Section A, despite the warnings of Reports and Training Packs since January 2009.

## Section B

The vast majority of students understand the rubric for this section of the exam. However there are those who occasionally infringe by, for example, answering a b.) task without referring to the named poem or by responding to a “Home” question using “Work” texts. In the latter case particularly this leads to an award of 0 marks. Centres will already remind their students of the requirements of the specification and the instructions on the paper itself are clear enough – it is difficult, therefore, to give specific recommendations as to how such serious errors can be avoided other than to point it up here once again.

## Section C

The prose section of the paper continues to attract a generally sound or better level of response. Candidates appear to understand what is required of them and there is often evidence in their answers to the various tasks of insight and understanding. Though some continue to narrate or describe rather than analysing and extending their arguments, on the whole this tendency is diminishing.

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