

Examiners' Report

Summer 2016

Pearson Edexcel GCE English
Literature (6ET01) Paper 1

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Paper Introduction

This was the penultimate sitting of 6ET01. It was taken only by students re-sitting the unit. None of these appeared to react problematically to the tasks set, though there were, as always, some who didn't fully manage the timing of their work. In other respects, the paper performed as might have been expected, at least for those who marked it.

Question 1

The poem 'Birdfall', though brief, presented sufficient challenge for those who chose to answer the tasks set on it. The following examples of student work illustrate well what many of them were able to achieve.

1(a) The candidate writes specifically and accurately, addressing the terms of the question to very good purpose. The answer scored full marks.

The poem 'Birdfall' immediately establishes setting in the first stanza 'we were three hours at sea', this direct statement tells the reader where this poem takes place. The use of the pronoun 'we' implies a group of people, the narrator himself directly involved in the experience. Ognjenovic uses the past tense 'were' in order to create a sense of story telling, leading onto the connective 'when', which marks a ^{sudden} change in scenery and setting. A negative setting is presented through the use of pathetic fallacy 'fog and cold', 'mist and rain', the use of weather to establish setting in this way conveys an ominous sense of foreboding; the words belonging to the semantic field of storms and bad weather. The title itself 'Birdfall' reflects some sort of link to nature, further presenting the setting of the poem at sea.

1(b) The candidate does exactly what has been asked in an uncomplicated and sufficiently insightful manner, thereby scoring 5 out of 5.

One example of language choice is the line "to that blind rolling water". The effect of using "blind" creates personification of the sea. "Blind" may also suggest the way the sea does not follow its will but is "blindly" led by the wind. Another language choice in the poem is "When the birds began to fall". The use of "fall" suggests that the denots have tired these birds to the point that they "fall" rather than land out of the sky, giving the reader a sense of the overwhelming power of the sea.

1(c) There are one or two minor infelicities of expression here, but this is a thoroughly common-sense and competent answer. It was awarded 4 & 5, leading to a total of 9 out of 10.

The main theme of this poem seems to be about life and the fragility of it, this can be seen through the persona's concern for the birds as they "took off once more into the mist and rain", at the same time they're "fishing for food", which would be taking the life of one being while fearing for another's. This is developed by "Specks of beating life", as the poet emphasises

how small and delicate life is, the use of the word "beating" indicates a sense of rhythm or a cycle refusing to be ignored, the life cycle as an example.

Furthermore, "Birdfall" ~~see~~ also contains evidence of religious themes, seen through the persona "praying" for the birds and "prayed for ourselves once more". This is effective because it reinforces the sense of helplessness and numinosity with "In a world too big to picture", in addition to personifying the sea with "blind rolling water", this could be interpreted as a higher being or an additional deity is also with the persona and the birds; they are not alone.

Question 2

The opening of Raymond Chandler's 'The Big Sleep' was less frequently the subject of answers. Those who did attempt Q2 often demonstrated considerable understanding, however.

2(a) This is a sustained and detailed level of response for an unseen task of this type. It was given 5 out of 5.

The writer uses short sentences to create emphasis, "I was calling on four million dollars." The short sentence length puts the money in the focal point. However, the past tense verb "was" implies that the speaker is no longer, at present, in possession of that money or already received it. The asyndeton in "the solid, uneven, uncomfortable line of the foothills" creates a list-like effect, however, it is ambiguous. The asyndeton reflects either a child-like excitement and sense of being overwhelmed, or a monotonous statement, listing the negative features of the land. It appears that the speaker may not be as extreme as either polarity but somewhere in between. The four neatly structured paragraphs reflect a sense of order and a concert between the speaker and his surroundings.

2(b) The candidate identifies two examples and comments effectively on them, thereby scoring 5 out of 5.

One of the imagery that is used is shown in the line "decorative trees trimmed as carefully as poodle dogs". The employment of simile seems to suggest a rather sardonic tone of the narrative as the main character might have been ~~in~~ disliked the lifestyle of ostentatious ~~people~~ and affluent people. The phrase "another stained-glass romance" shows the use of ~~metaphor~~ ~~reference to the previous stained glass~~ ~~stained glass~~ ~~metaphor~~ ~~where he thought was rather use of metaphor as~~ ~~reference~~ ~~he refers it to~~ ~~same~~ pointless story where ~~the~~ a knight ~~rescues~~ ~~rescues~~ ^{tries to rescue} a lady without ~~much~~ ~~about~~ putting in much effort. He may ~~see~~ be using it as a metaphor to suggest the pointlessness of such display of ~~net~~ wealth.

2(c) This concise and thoughtful answer was awarded full marks.

The structural use of listing in "neat, clean, shined and sober," creates an idea of a reformed character. "Sober" suggests that the protagonist finds this unusual, perhaps suggesting that they have an alcohol problem to the reader. This adds to the description of their "black" and "dark blue" clothing to indirectly suggest a character with a troubled past or alternatively to a character who is in mourning and handling their emotions with alcohol. This would be in line with the codes and conventions of noir style detective drama.

The line "if I lived in the house" combines with the persistent narrative observation to create an impression of a protagonist in a foreign location. Overt description of seemingly irrelevant parts such as "a slim dark young Chasseur" connotes an observant mind, constantly observing the seemingly minor details. This conveys to the reader that the protagonist is skilled at their work and so we trust their narration even more.

Question 3

3(a) This essay scored 13, 4, 17 (35). Here, the candidate maintains a sound focus on the task and offers a precise and genuinely comparative passage of analysis.

In the poems 'House on a Cliff' and 'Frost at Midnight' both poets employ the use of contrast between the interior and exterior. Macneice in 'House on a Cliff' establishes the contrast through the use of ^{enjambement} ~~enjambement~~ juxtaposition 'Indoors the locked heart and lost key / Outdoors the chill, the void, the Siren'. The imagery of 'locked heart' may be symbolic of protection, creating the impression that inside is a place of safety. ~~which is~~ This image is juxtaposed with the use of the triple syntax 'chill, the void, the Siren'. This suggests that outdoors is dangerous, as ~~per~~ as there are many threats, each able to harm. Similarly, in 'Frost at Midnight', Coleridge presents a juxtaposition between the interior and exterior to present home. The interior is presented as restrictive and limiting. 'I gazed upon bars', the use of the first person narrative voice emphasises the isolation of inside and the use of 'bars' connects the bars of

a prison cell, suggesting that inside is confining. Coleridge juxtaposes the presentation of the interior with the use of the simile 'wander like a breeze / By lakes and sandy shores'. The simile is suggestive of outside being freeing, with no limitations. It may be interpreted that the use of simile 'sandy shores' furthers this impression as it creates a hushed tone, suggesting the speaker's peace and contentment ^{at outside}. ~~the contrast~~ ^{this contrast} is used to further the ~~poem's~~ ^{poem's} contrast, ~~an~~ ^a ~~emphas~~ ^{emphas} impression that indoors is ~~an~~ ^a limiting and that home should be in the country. Both poems use contrast of interior and exterior, and although they have contrasting presentations of home, the use of contrast may make each poem successful.

3(b) This is a competent stretch of commentary from an answer which sustains a focus on the technical aspects of 'Autobiography'. It eventually scored 12, 4, 17 (33).

The imagery in 'Autobiography' is part of what subtly show the ideas of love. He says "my mother wore a yellow dress" the use of yellow here is symbolic as yellow is a happy colour. ~~so~~ ^{so} this speaker associates his mother with happiness. He evidently loved his mother and this is what has led on to the huge amount of anguish now that she is not there. This is juxtaposed with his father who "made the wheels revolve". By fearing his father this heightens the love he had for his mother. This poem can potentially be read in an autobiographical way as MacNeice's mother had depression and lived in a nursing home and MacNeice never saw her, which is perhaps where "come

back early or never come" stems from MacNiece was also
appreciated of his father. ^{new paragraph} The use of colour is striking in ~~the~~
^{'Autobiography'} ~~poem~~. He says "the trees were green" which indicates happy
time however he says 'were' which implies that now,
without the love of his mother, his world is colourless and
joyless. He also talks about "black dreams" ~~black~~ to mean
nightmares. Black is the colour of death so this could be
interpreted as nightmares about his mother's death. The
darkness is personified when he says "The dark was talking
to the dead". ^{The speaker} ~~MacNiece~~ now associates black and darkness with
death which makes the fact that "the lamp was dark
beside [his] bed" even more chilling and upsetting for
the reader. The last stanza breaks the rhyme scheme

Question 4

4(a) As is always the case, candidates are reminded to use their time sensibly. This is the sort of thing which can result if they do not and it's terribly self-penalising - this student will have had to have done *exceptionally* in other parts of the exam to achieve a mark above 61 out of 100 as this answer was only awarded 0,0,1.

'Our experience of the land makes us who we
are'.

The poems Beeny Cliff by Thomas Hardy, The Trees
are Down by Charlotte Mew and To Autumn by
~~John~~ John Keats depict the poet's experiences
of land which either suggest the land has had
a self-defining impact on them, or not.

Beeny Cliff

4(b) This answer scored 12, 4, 16 (32). Here, the candidate concludes neatly and specifically, all the while keeping their eye on the AO3 component.

In conclusion, the use of striking imagery and symbolism is significant in the exploration of themes in both 'Mutting' and 'Birches'. Wordsworth's vivid imagery effectively ~~show~~ highlight the contrast between men and nature's gentleness, whilst the use of symbolism in 'Birches' strikingly contrast harsh reality with imagination and escape.

Question 5

5(a) This essay has an extremely good opening. It is nicely discursive, presenting the idea from the outset that it will seek to engage fully with the terms of the task. Such an approach is to be commended. The eventual mark attained here was 12, 4, 16 (32).

The statement that 'The best poems about work are only the ones which are deeply critical of it' while largely accurate in regards to William Blake's 'The Chimney Sweeper', is at odds with Paterson's 'Shearing at Laxdaleceagh'. While Blake's poem is successful in its critical presentation of Victorian child chimney sweepers, Paterson's writing explores a more idealistic view of sheep-shearing which is no less successful in its more light-hearted approach; it is simply less political.

5(b) This answer is very well-written. It has an impressive focus on language and supports its ideas well with quotation. The final mark awarded was 13, 5, 16 (34).

Wordsworth primarily asserts his emphasis on the individual through his focus on 'The Solitary Reaper's' "melancholy strain", which is magnified to a grandiose scale:

"O listen! for the Vale profound
Is overflowing with the sound."

The ~~single~~ apostrophe "O" and jointly imperative and exclamatory sentence moods draw explicit attention to the sound of the individual, which suggests that the poet's voice believes it to be profound in nature. The transferred epithet therefore used, ~~describing the "Vale" as~~ ^{applying the adjective} "profound" to the "Vale", allows Wordsworth to demonstrate the powerful capability of the individual by enlarging the scale of her "sound" in applying its profound nature to the larger objective. Compare this to Baillie's similarly large scale and we see the differing foci of the poems when it comes to the worker/work balance:

"In every field, in every lawn and meadow,
The rousing voice of industry is heard."

Question 6

6(a) This well-ordered comparison of the use of symbolism in the two texts under discussion is typical of the kinds of genuinely analytical writing which have come to characterise many answers to questions of this nature in 6ET01. The mark here was 14, 23 (37).

As previously stated, Jane is often associated with 'fire', as this is symbolic of her passionate nature. This imagery is also used to emphasise her love for Rochester, as she even describes her love as 'fire in her insides' and her emotions 'ignite' her. This portrays Rochester in a positive manner, as he is also closely linked to Jane's strength and passion, not only her misfortune. Fire can also be used to represent Antoinette and her passion within *Wide Sargass Sea*. In this, her passion mutates into hatred and here we can see a narrative driven by a hatred for men, or one man in particular. Critic Adrienne Rich states that Antoinette could be seen as an external manifestation of Jane's own contained anger, so while Jane does not outwardly express any strong feelings of loathing toward Rochester, they still may be present. Antoinette

6(b) Taken from an essay which was awarded 13, 22 (35), this relatively dense and detailed passage is a very good example of a candidate engaging with the texts and the task in a thoughtful and sustained way.

The splitting of the chestnut tree at Thornfield conveyed the significance of Jane's growth, which argues against how the places are far more interesting than the people in the novel: 'The great horse-chestnut tree at the bottom of the orchard had been struck by lightning in the night, and half of it split ~~away~~ away. Not only is this symbolic of Jane's love for Rochester, but she was the half of the tree that split away due to ~~Bertha~~ the reveal of Rochester's mad wife, Bertha. Brontë cleverly uses pathetic fallacy to emphasise how the lightning holds connotations of Bertha trying to split the two lovers apart. One half of the tree died down over the winter, which represents Rochester becoming crippled; their relationship becoming a ruin while Jane is away from him for a whole year. Though, it is a ruin, it is a whole one as the chestnut tree is still held together by a firm base, connoting the strength of their love. Furthermore, the chestnuts are shaped like hearts and have a hard exterior, but can easily be broken; similar to their hearts.

Question 7

7(a) This answer scored 36 (13, 23). Here, the candidate explains some of the subtleties of Greene's depiction and use of the 'vitriol bottle'. As elsewhere, the task-focused nature of the excerpt is a strength.

Pinkie as a man of violence. This concept is first explored ~~in Pinkie~~ by the "vitriol" bottle that Pinkie carries, allowing it to hiss "like steam" on the "wooden plank ~~top~~ of the pier" whilst with Rose. Greene uses the simile of "like steam" to further the detail in the description of the vitriol, like steam is a warning that something is dangerously hot, like how the vitriol is inherently dangerous. Greene goes on to say how "one hand caressed the vitriol bottle in his pocket," whilst "the other touched Rose's wrist." The connotations of the lexis "caressed" implies how Pinkie has a sensual feeling for the bottle and subsequently, for violence itself. The power that the bottle embodies ~~means that~~ equates to him holding both it and the bottle at the same time, implying that for Rose, there is a fine line between her safety and Pinkie being a threat to her very existence.

7(b) Here, the candidate makes a very strong, discursive start to their response, which is to be commended. Although the rest of the essay did not quite live up to the promise of this opening, it still scored well - 13, 16 (29).

In Brighton Rock, Graham Greene explores society through the eyes of characters many of whom are unapologetically violent. Yet, this is often balanced by characters who act as a moral compass. Even in ~~the~~ extremely violent characters, there are occasional glimpses of innate moral awareness. This is true of Anthony Burgess' A Clockwork Orange which will be used alongside Brighton Rock to explore the extent to which characters in the narrative can be described as wholly unpleasant.

Question 8

8(a) Here too, the response commences impressively - the candidate takes the injunction in the rubric to task in a manner which suggests that something thoroughly worthwhile might follow. In this case, it did and the essay attained 13, 23 (36).

The statement claiming that 'This is a novel which is, above all, about freedom' is certainly intriguing. ~~The idea that~~ Elizabeth and Mr Darcy's journeys of self-discovery and self-improvements could ~~not~~ reinforce this argument of freedom being the central focus in Austen's novel as these characters aim to ^{achieve} 'freedom' ^{from} of pride and prejudice. However, it will be argued that marriage is instead the ultimate focus of 'Pride and Prejudice' as it acts as either a catalyst or obstacle for ~~the~~ the novel's main plots. Conversely, 'The Yellow Wallpaper' ^{arguably} ~~also~~ centres around the protagonist gaining freedom from her captivity by her husband.

8(b) This passage demonstrates a candidate working neatly through a counter-argument. The habit of underlining key terminology is neither dis-encouraged nor endorsed, though it does at least indicate that the answer has a clear AO1 focus. The eventual overall mark was 31 (11, 21).

In addition Lady Catherine is a point of comical interest as her proud nature is ~~presented~~ mocked by Austen's satirical tone. Lady Catherine's breeding does not ~~out~~ shine her poor manners, ~~and~~ which are ~~made~~ poked fun at by Austen's authorial voice which states 'though this great lady was not in commission... She was a most active magistrate in her own parish'. This highlights to the reader how bossy and outspoken Lady Catherine is and encourages the reader to ~~accept~~ Austen's opinion of her. Lady ~~Catherine~~ ^{Catherine} may also be an example of Austen's ~~to~~ ^{attempt} ~~attempting~~ to question the hierarchy of ~~the~~ society and present to the reader that wealth does not always ~~create~~ produce admirable or respectable characters. This ~~to~~ shows that female characters can too be of interest to the reader.

Question 9

9(a) This conclusion is well-formed and neatly summative. It gives a strong end-note to a generally proficient response which scored 27 overall (11, 16).

Overall power in the novels is represented by the characters ~~as~~ upbringing. Those who have faced turmoil like Heathcliff and Chillingworth have used their vengeance and power to gain control of characters. However in the end the power is drained as they no longer have anyone to control. Their education and upbringing play an important role when gaining power as it allows them to manipulate and coerce other characters using their power. However overall it is the power they hold as men in a masculine man society that gives them the power they need to control others and manipulate situations to suit themselves.

9(b) This 'pivot' in the centre of an essay is effective in demonstrating that the candidate is quite determined to demonstrate and ability to extend their argument with reference to the other text which they have read. It works to sound purpose. The essay was graded 11, 20 (31).

Whilst *Wuthering Heights* has other strengths such as the characterisation of Cathy and Heathcliff, as this ultimately ties back to ~~the~~ imagery and symbolism to show their characterisation, it is the use of imagery and symbolism which is the novel's greatest strength.

~~In~~ ^{In} the novel *The Colour People*, whilst imagery and symbolism is one of the ~~greatest~~ ^{novel's} strengths due to it conveying themes and ~~the~~ characterisations, it is not the greatest strength.

Question 10

10(a) This candidate has already written extensively about irony and its importance to the success of the narratives under discussion. It is perfectly permissible therefore to extend the argument by moving into another relevant area. If students wish to operate this model, however, it is essential that they spend sufficient time addressing the terms of the task in their overall response. The mark for this essay was 15, 25 (40).

Whilst 'vivid' irony might indeed make a narrative humorous, symbolism and place are far more important in making a narrative compelling. Both *Howards End* and *Darlington Hall* serve as a microcosm, and they are ^asynecdoche of England as a whole. *Howards End* is imbued with an inherent mysticism by Forster. "The air here is delicious". This conflation of senses - taste with smell - evokes its ethereal nature of the place. The building is indeed almost ~~perfect~~ ^{deified} and when Mrs. Wilton dies, there is the joke of "Howards Ended" uttered. Indeed, Mrs. Wilton is characterised as a spiritual entity, and makes the 'narrative compelling'. She is portrayed by Forster "noselessly" over the lawn. The narrative voice is indeed almost surprised when stating, "there was actually a wisp of hay" in her "hands." The hay symbolises her affinity with the very land itself. Whilst it is 'ironic' that these paganistic properties are perhaps ~~being~~ dying out,

the "figs teeth" in the bark of the wych elm tree are grown over - time and time again pastoral symbolism emerges, the wych elm tree itself. The narrative voice at times shifts perspective to allow delineation and ~~to~~ intrigue to be built in the novel. When Margaret is seen looking out the window, she views the "wych-elm tree". The narrative voice emphatically states, "it was an English tree." Its spirituality throughout the narrative is highly compelling. At the climax of the novel the "man" and the "tree" "disentangled" and no longer overshadow the house. This is to signify that the "spiritual hair" of Howards End has resolved. Nature and its paganistic associations are at the forefront of the novel. The "city seemed satanic" is in direct contrast to the "precious soil" of London.

10(b) This excerpt from a high-scoring response (13, 24 - 37) keeps a strong focus on the extract named but also offers a clear indication that the writer has a keen awareness of how to develop ideas from the rest of the narrative.

Firstly, Forster clearly condemns Helen in this ~~excerpt~~ passage, showing how Helen's self-absorption has led her to lack self-awareness and to be hypocritical in her scolding of Mr Wilcox. In the passage, she scolds, "I consider it a deplorable misfortune". In this she refers to the fact that Leonard has been made poorer by Mr Wilcox's oversight, clearly believing that he is as 'deplorable' as Leonard's misfortune. This is shown to be remarkably hypocritical, as shown in the aftermath of Leonard and Jack's visit to Eric's wedding. Helen is described as; "burgling her money" and then, instead of facing the consequences of her mistakes, the word ~~word~~ unfairly ~~graces~~ ~~her~~ with becoming 'rather richer than she had been before'. Forster creates a contrast here, with Leonard's aftermath being that ~~to~~ "the expedition... crippled the Basts permanently".

This is a cruel irony on Forster's part, ~~making~~ the showing that Helen's charity has been ruined by her self-absorption. In her hurry to leave, she ~~loses~~ 'forgets' to pay the hotel bill - and has actually made the situation worse rather than better.

This ~~fits~~ fits the idea that Forster has written a dual narrative, presenting a tragedy for the poor, and a comedy for the rich. When Leonard falls, he tragically does not get back up, and when Helen falls, she returns stronger and better than before in true comedic form. Forster creates ~~an~~ an exposition of unfairness in society, using Helen's hypocrisy as a result of her self-absorption to show how condemnable the rich are.

Section B

The poetry section operated much as before, with more students tending to opt for the (a) task on each choice. There was no clear preference for one anthology over the others.

Section C

As ever, the (a) task proved largely more popular. Once again, though it yielded some excellent responses, the 'Howards End' cluster lagged far behind the others in terms of the numbers of answers it attracted.

Summary

Candidates appeared to be largely very well prepared for this iteration of the exam and it was interesting to see, once again, how the messages of and exemplification provided from previous series appear to have been assimilated. The students and those who taught them are thanked for their levels of engagement, enthusiasm and general response.

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