



**General Certificate of Secondary Education**

**English Literature**

**Specification 4710**

**Unit 4710/1F (Exploring modern texts)**

**Report on the Examination**

*2011 Examination – June series*

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## GCSE English Literature 4710

### Exploring Modern Texts – 47101F – June 2011

June 2011 is the second sitting of English Literature Unit 1, for the new specification. This series saw responses to every text on the paper, demonstrating creativity from centres in their choice of texts; it is becoming clearly evident that centres are doing a very good job at picking appropriate texts for the ability range of their students and finding interesting teaching methods to help their students respond to all the assessment objectives. However, having said that, *An Inspector Calls* and *Of Mice and Men* are still by far the most popular choices but quite often lacked the detailed creative responses seen from other texts. Candidates are clearly demonstrating engagement with many of the texts studied and for foundation students this is wonderful to see – I do hope centres continue to encourage all students to share and enjoy texts and appreciate the value that Literature brings. Examiners reported seeing a lot more balance across the two sections of the paper suggesting that students had more preparation time and also several more months of maturity to offer in their responses.

As with the January 2011 report, many candidates demonstrated a clear understanding of the Assessment Objectives and the requirements of the mark scheme, both in modern prose or drama and exploring cultures; however one assessment objective was clearly weaker than the rest in both sections – AO2 writer's methods. As with the legacy specification, it still appears to be a challenge to ask students to comment on the writer and see the text as a 'construct'. The new assessment objective in Section B – AO4 personal response to context was embraced by many of the students and they appeared to enjoy being able to explain the historical, social context of the novel. The better candidates rose to the challenge of relating this to the text and the character in question, offering the contextual evidence as support for their points on the character. The weaker papers definitely suffered from lack of contextual knowledge and the ability to apply it to the question given. Also in Section B many candidates didn't respond to the passage given in part A of the question again suggesting that more focus on close textual analysis would help students reach the higher marks.

There were some frustratingly regular infringements of the rubric of the paper, resulting in some weaker candidates scoring fewer marks than if they had written just one response for each section, as clearly instructed! It might be prudent for teachers and invigilators to find ways to combat these errors as on many occasions it cost candidates dearly in the final marks for the paper. Examples were seen of candidates responding to several questions in Section A (up to seven in some cases) and then failing to respond to any of the questions in Section B as they had run out of time, one presumes. Also evident were many candidates responding to both questions on the same Section A text (eg. Q. 17 & 18 Priestley).

More candidates were entered than in January but the entry is still not large and it must be remembered that comments on responses to the texts in this report may be based on the work of a relatively small number of candidates.

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**Section A: Modern prose or drama*****Sunlight on the Grass***

Candidates demonstrated some wonderful engagement with these short stories dealing with Section A in a lot more detail than Section B – it seems that the hooks offered within the specified text guided the candidates but they couldn't then transfer this to a text of their choice. It would be worthwhile for candidates to know that both sections should be treated with equal merit. In addition, the anthology saw a lot of candidates thinking they had to respond to both questions, rather than one question but both parts of that question. It did appear that some centres saw the anthology as an appropriate set of texts for weaker candidates and whilst they dealt with their responses in some detail, they found it hard to move to the 'explained' section of the mark scheme evidenced with other texts.

**Question 1**

This was less popular than question two. The strongest part of the responses for this question was in relation to the specified text and more often than not, *The Darkness Out There* and Mrs Rutter was chosen as the secondary text. There were some good responses seen and some clear evidence of candidates attempting the writer's method strand.

**Question 2**

This was the most popular of the two anthology questions – again showing a favourite of candidates with the *The Darkness Out There* as a second text choice, although this was closely followed by *When the Wasps Drowned*. Candidates demonstrated clear engagement with the stories and enjoyment of these texts.

***Lord of the Flies*: William Golding**

Only a few responses were seen by senior examiners and often from very small centres of 1 – 4 candidates. There were some very pleasing responses with clear engagement and detailed understanding of the text.

**Question 3**

By the far the most popular of the two questions with a variety of approaches to the question. Some candidates opted from the outset to say who they thought the best leader was and then justified it through close textual analysis, whilst others chose to offer up to three leaders offering consideration of the qualities of each, with a final conclusion showing their own personal opinion. Both approaches were wonderful to read and candidates moved very quickly from 'supported' responses to 'explained' and 'sustained'. The favoured leader was Ralph followed by Jack. Piggy was often referred to but dismissed quite early on in the analysis.

***Martyn Pig*: Kevin Brooks**

As with the January exam, examiners were overwhelmed by the quality of responses seen to this text. The consensus was that the responses to this text were fresh, free from the classic / stereotypical 'lit. crit.' answers enabling students to show their own viewpoints and clear engagement and enjoyment of the text. Candidates seem to find this an interesting text to write about and seem to genuinely enjoy crafting their responses, exploring characters, places and scenarios, and with appropriate 'support' / 'explanation'. The 'method' bullet was often successfully targeted, with some centres teaching specific terms such as 'leitmotif'. Where such

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terms had been taught, they were often appropriately used, rather than being referred to meaninglessly, as features, with no further comment.

***The Woman in Black* : Susan Hill**

Senior examiners saw no responses to this text.

***Touching the Void*: Joe Simpson**

Of the few candidates who attempted this text, some pleasing responses were seen, although the senior examiner did feel that candidates had been taught specific language terms that they couldn't link to the text or exemplify e.g. syntax. Better responses linked language to the ideas of tension and danger – a far better approach to responding to the text.

***Under Milk Wood*: Dylan Thomas**

Senior examiners saw no responses to this text.

***The Crucible*: Arthur Miller**

Some good answers were seen in response to this text but far too many dealt with it at a superficial level. Many candidates saw it as a 'story' and actually wrote about it as such.

Question 13

Candidates saw the play as 'spooky' rather than recognising the frightening consequences for individuals and the community. There was definitely a working knowledge of the play evidenced but political implications were overlooked. However having said that, candidates did try hard with the 'how does Miller' part of the question but instead of developing ideas about his methods they tended to list ideas. The better candidates knew about McCarthy but only a very small number could attach such ideas to the play and very few thought about fear, execution, panic in the community.

Question 14

The majority of candidates who responded to this question wrote their answer as a study seeing Danforth as a "real" person rather than a character who influences the play. Danforth's overall importance in the play's message was rarely dealt with and candidates struggled with the 'how does Millar' – AO2 part of the question.

***Kindertransport*: Diane Samuels**

Senior examiners saw no responses to this text.

***An Inspector Calls*: J.B.Priestley**

There were mixed responses to this text. Both questions were answered with an equal balance of responses. The majority of candidates managed to make a comment at least on how Priestley presented his characters with the better ones responding in detail; therefore showing some awareness of the play which through 'the story' and structure presents people at a particular time coming to terms with social responsibility. Question 17 on Gerald was less well done in comparison to Question 18 dealing with a main theme of the play. Many of the answers demonstrated candidates using textual detail in their responses but too many offered textual

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detail to support a point but did nothing with it, thus not moving out of band 3 for AO1. Many candidates understood general themes and ideas and some offered a much deeper appreciation pushing towards thoughtful contributions.

### **Question 17**

All candidates could say something about Gerald but more often than not it was superficial treatment of his words and actions that were offered, with no real explanation of him or his role in the play. The better candidates were able to see him as part of the whole play and structure but for the majority they found it very hard to apply Priestley's methods to Gerald and therefore this question. Some candidates confused Gerald with Eric which led to some interesting statements and others saw him as a Socialist, Capitalist and a Communist.

### **Question 18**

This was done reasonably well by many able candidates. Weaker candidates managed to write about responsibility and in fact gained marks from the thread that identifies themes and ideas. The better candidates were able to demonstrate sustained understanding of the theme by linking it to the characters, Priestley's methods, as well as contextual detail.

### **DNA: Denis Kelly**

Responses seen to this text were on the whole well done. Candidates demonstrated a clear engagement with the text and a real enjoyment of it. They were able to discuss in quite considerable detail (the more able candidates) the writer's methods and moved quickly through the mark scheme. Examiners felt these responses were quite fresh in their approach although some complicated language descriptor words were used far too often to describe Kelly's methods, with little understanding of the application.

### **Question 19**

This was by the far the most popular choice and was done very well in the majority of cases. Candidates worked their way through Kelly's methods beginning with the opening of the play and considering the impact words and 'beats' had on the audience. They also considered different characters and the roles they played within the theme of violence. The more able candidates were able to compare and contrast characters and/or consider a change in character to show their understanding of violence.

### **Question 20**

Some candidates responded to this question well but the majority only offered superficial responses to Cathy. Candidates confused her with Leah at times which also didn't help them reach the 'explain' sections of the mark scheme. Nevertheless, as with question 19, there were some interesting and engaging responses with clear appreciation of the text.

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**Section B: Exploring Cultures*****Of Mice and Men: John Steinbeck*****Question 21**

The majority of candidates responded to this question. On the whole they engaged with the text but sometimes this was the weaker text for the students on the paper. The most alarming trend identified with this question was the lack of awareness of how to respond to the question. So many candidates did not use the passage offered in section A, instead they chose to tell the examiners about George and Lennie's relationship in generalised form, from elsewhere in the novel. Although this didn't hinder them from some aspects of the mark scheme, many times they missed a whole assessment objective of writer's methods that was clearly being tested in this passage. Of course the most able student drew on the passage and writer's methods and dealt with it particularly well; many then used it to springboard to other aspects of the relationship within the novel which was fine as they moved to the 'explained' and 'sustained' components of the mark scheme.

Candidates did manage to attempt both parts of the question in nearly all cases. Part b where AO4 was addressed caused some issues for candidates – the majority could comment on the generalised context e.g. dust bowls, 1930s depression and men being forced to work on ranches but if the mark scheme is applied to this, centres will see that this fits 2.4 and 2.5 'some clear response to context'. To achieved 3.4 and even 4.4 candidates had to offer support from the text either through quotes or references to other characters and then explain how the context and characters work as one to give an understanding of the text. Better candidates did just that, often using Crooks, Candy or Curley's wife in their support of the context and again they quickly moved through the mark scheme for AO4. Sadly some candidates missed out 'context' altogether, compromising their final mark.

**Question 22**

Senior examiners saw no responses to this text.

**Question 23**

Senior examiners saw no responses to this text.

**Question 24*****To Kill a Mockingbird: Harper Lee***

There were some very good responses to this question where candidates were able to show their understanding of the text and the issues it raises. However, some candidates ignored the passage in part a which limited their ability to respond to all assessment objectives, instead they responded to Atticus in general. As with the comment on 'Of Mice and Men' it is important that candidates are taught how to respond to a passage and do close analysis. The better candidates made specific deductions from the details in the passage and were able to link this to other areas of the text as they explained and explored the character of Atticus. In part b some candidates ignored the second bullet and continued to write about Atticus – again hindering their achievement. The better candidates used the other characters to show their knowledge of the novel recognising it is "about" something exploring the context assessment objective.

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As a final note for this report:

Considerable improvement has been seen from responses in January to responses now and this can be attributed to many factors:

- Longer preparation time for students enabling equal study time on both texts
- The maturity of the candidates and their understanding a year into the course, rather than 4 months into the course
- A greater understanding by some centres of the demands and requirements of the assessment objectives

Clear enjoyment and accessibility of 'foundation' tier candidates with the texts offered and coverage of every text and every question on the paper shows that foundation candidates can cope with and enjoy literature! For this centres must be applauded – the value is clear to see.

The main problem areas:

- Writer's methods – actually considering the author's craft and explaining the effect a particular approach or method has on the reader / audience / themes within the text etc
  - More fresh approaches to texts that allow candidates to demonstrate their enjoyment and understanding rather than rote learning which appears to be hindering candidates – this is particularly evident in the texts that have been taught for a long time e.g. Priestley
  - AO4 in section B – linking of general context – American Dream, loneliness etc to characters and the text to move to 'supported context' with a clear and detailed explanation of the link between the two to move to 'explained' responses to context.
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