



General Certificate of Secondary Education

English Literature

Specification 4710

**47104F (Approaching Shakespeare and the
Literary Heritage)**

Report on the Examination

2011 Examination – June series

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The first series of this component had an extremely small entry, so it is difficult with a sample which may well be unrepresentative to draw conclusions about performance which might be helpful to a wider candidature. Responses were only seen on four texts out of the ten on offer, for instance. Some issues are unlikely to change, though.

Section A: Shakespeare

The main weakness here was the failure of the majority of candidates to address successfully Assessment Objective 2, which centres on writers' uses of form, language or structure. Given the writer set in this section, this seems surprising, but very few managed to identify or explain the effects of the writer's choices on the reader. This strand is worth one fifth of the marks in this section, so the equivalent of a whole mark band could easily be lost. 'Shakespeare uses words to present the character' as the only relevant comment is not likely to attract many marks.

Macbeth

A number of responses to both of these questions showed good knowledge of the text, and understanding of the Macbeths' feelings. There was a tendency to 'give an account' of the passage, though, in the form of an explanation of the meaning of the sentences, perhaps with a comment on each, rather than answering the question in an ordered way. Both questions began 'How does Shakespeare present', of course – see above.

Romeo and Juliet

Very few responses were seen on Question 5, perhaps unsurprisingly, candidates preferring to write about Juliet in an extremely well known passage. Question 6 was also the better answered, many candidates grasping the significance of names well, and a few showing the effect on the audience of the unseen (by Juliet) Romeo.

Section B: Prose from the English Literary Heritage

The examination testing of Assessment Objective 4, which refers to contexts, is a new challenge for teachers and candidates in this specification. It was not particularly well tackled on either of the texts seen, though *Animal Farm* fared slightly the better of the two. When candidates did not address Assessment Objective 2 either, the effect was severe, as half of the marks in every band are covered by these two AOs. It must be stressed that this component is assessed on skills, like all the components in this specification, so even if a candidate details everything that Napoleon does in *Animal Farm*, for instance, and explains what they think about it, their marks will be drastically affected without reference to these Assessment Objectives.

Great Expectations

Question 15 was not tackled well, as most candidates struggled to remember much about Magwitch beyond his appearance in the first chapter, and confined AO4 comment to the assertion that prisons were not very nice then. Question 16 was more popular, and a little better done, in the sense that more detail was provided about two episodes, though 'learning about life' was usually not at the centre of the response. One or two candidates wrote quite well about society in the novel, though they were rare.

Animal Farm

Question 19, centring on Napoleon, was rather better tackled than 20. Candidates responding to the former did generally manage to focus in Napoleon, though AO2 was often sadly lacking. Question 20 asked candidates to show how the animals' rebellion changed from good to bad, but unfortunately many responses simply retold the story of the book, leaving the reader to draw their own conclusions, which is not really the approach to adopt for a successful outcome. AO4 was sometimes quite well done on this text. The majority of candidates got onto the scorecard by mentioning the Russian Revolution, some explaining links with the text quite nicely, while others managed to draw wider conclusions about people's behaviour in society, which promises well for the future.
