



**General Certificate of Secondary Education
January 2011**

English Literature 47101F

(Specification 4710)

Unit 1: Exploring modern texts (Foundation)

Report on the Examination

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Foundation Tier

January 2011 saw the first entries for English Literature Unit 1, for the new specification, and candidates seemed to be able to write in some detail on the texts. There were some candidates who clearly struggled with the exam and in some cases there was not a balance in their knowledge of the texts; this was probably due to early entry and only a few months preparation time. Evidence from the candidates suggested glimmers of higher order thinking rather than a superficial gloss of the texts and again this supports the idea that longer preparation time for the texts would have benefitted these students. Having said this, many of the scripts were balanced and candidates demonstrated a clear engagement with the texts they had studied.

Some trends in responses did seem clear. 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.

Another trend that caused concern amongst the examiners was the surprising number of candidates who did not follow the rubric instruction on the question paper itself, answering both questions in Section A of their chosen text. This of course hindered them as they wrote very brief responses to both questions rather than a longer detailed response to one of the questions. In some cases, candidates tried to respond to every question on Section A clearly knowing they had not studied the text.

The comments below on individual questions reflect the balance of responses on the Tier: Section A had more of a spread than expected which was pleasing to see, although *An Inspector Calls* did dominate! On Section B 'Of Mice and Men' dominated with just a few papers covering 'To Kill a Mockingbird'.

Section A: Post-1914 Prose

AQA Anthology: Prose

Only a few responses were seen.

Lord of the Flies: William Golding

Only a few responses were seen.

Martyn Pig: Kevin Brooks

One examiner commented that it was pleasing to see candidates who had been 'taught *how* to respond, rather than being told *what* to say.'

Question 5

This question gave candidates really strong 'hooks', in terms of 'home' and 'before and after'. These resulted in some strong comparative responses (e.g. candidates would focus on something within the 'home' - Billy Pig's chair, and say how Martyn felt sitting in it after his father's death). Many candidates managed to write about 'method', although this was generally the weakest feature. Candidates picked up on Martyn's point of view, and were able to write about the 'domestic chaos versus the change',

often citing appropriate references to support comments (smells, description of cigarette end, Martyn clearing up etc.) The scenarios relating to Christmas were often quoted in detail (there was also strong focus on the use of noise / sound throughout the text, with examples.)

Question 6

Again, the responses 'to Alex' were often fairly accomplished. Some candidates wrote about descriptions of Alex / her appearance, from Martyn's point of view (e.g. how her eyes shone / were like marbles etc., contrasting that with Billy Pig's red-eyed , 'alcoholic' appearance, but then later, also Alex as 'cold-eyed' - quite an effective link.) Most candidates were able to write about how she had been presented as nice, helpful, friendly etc., but deceiving Martyn. A fair number wrote about how Kevin Brooks had chosen to show her feelings through the letter.

The Woman in Black: Susan Hill

Question 7

There were no responses to this question.

Questions 8

There were no responses to this question.

Touching the Void: Joe Simpson

Of the few candidates who attempted this text, some pleasing responses were seen.

Question 9

Candidates who responded to this question produced rather vague answers. They clearly did not use the details of the text as well as they could have and also struggled with methods used to present the surroundings/conditions.

Question 10

This was the more popular of the two questions and also the most successful. Candidates demonstrated a clear engagement with the text and with the difficult situation faced by the two men. They also managed to explain their ideas as well as attempting writer's methods.

Under Milk Wood: Dylan Thomas

Question 11

There were no responses to this question.

Question 12

There were no responses to this question.

The Crucible: Arthur Miller

Responses were mixed in terms of quality – there were some strong responses to 'Reverend Parris' and also the 'crying out' scene but just as many weak ones where candidates offered a straightforward narrative account to both questions with little comment or exploration beyond the obvious storyline/

plot. One examiner commented that the candidates 'seemed to lack the maturity to deal with such a demanding text'.

Question 13

Many candidates commented on Reverend Parris's strict attitude and his love for his daughter. Many focused on Miller's use of 'stage directions', where 'method' was discussed, though often 'method' was lacking. Weaker candidates took the 'how do you respond' quite directly, and personally, commenting on the rights and wrongs of Reverend Parris and the girls (e.g. Candidates would say they 'liked' or 'did not like' someone, or 'it was wrong of them to behave like that', but did not offer the explanation behind their thoughts – this kept the marks down!) or they had difficulty writing much about Parris beyond the opening of the play.

Question 14

Stronger candidates did identify the varied motivations of the girls; the themes of 'fear' and 'mass hysteria' were commonly referred to. Like Question 13 some candidates focused on Miller's methods but for many this was lacking and therefore a complete assessment objective was ignored.

Kindertransport: Diane Samuels

Question 15

Candidates responded confidently to this question generally describing what kind of mother Helga was and explaining why she had to send her daughter away for her own safety. Very few contextualised this and those that did tended to throw in information about the impending war without relating it to the text.

Where many candidates excelled was on the writer's use of form and structure. Candidates identified the split scenes and many commented on the effect and proposed ideas about why Samuels may have used this technique.

Question 16

Again, candidates did well recognising the methods used by Samuels and there were some highly perceptive comments about the different mothering styles. Candidates clearly engaged with the play and its issues and wrote convincingly about character / theme quoting confidently from the text to support their comments.

An Inspector Calls: J.B.Priestley

There were mixed responses to this text. Both questions were answered and there was not a clear favourite. 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. Many of the answers demonstrated candidates using textual detail in their responses but too many offered textual 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 Eric – normally he was drunk and childish. The better candidates were able to recognise the change Eric experiences through the play, identifying how

Priestley presents him at the beginning and then how he changes his views and attitudes later in the play; many offering a sympathetic view of him. Several candidates recognised him as Miller's 'mouthpiece' for Socialist views and therefore demonstrated understanding of Priestley's message. The better responses explored, through detailed explanations, his true character including his relationships with others.

Question 18

This was done reasonably well by many able candidates. Weaker candidates managed to write a paragraph on both characters and identify basic differences between the characters, however the better responses compared and contrasted throughout the response. In addition, many candidates did consider how Priestley had presented both characters and used this to draw out the differences between the characters' behaviour and attitudes and their different 'journeys' within the play - such as the speed in which they had learnt lessons and changed through realisations.

DNA: Denis Kelly

Very few candidates responded to this question. Candidates often found Assessment Objective AO2 a stumbling block in their responses and therefore struggled to raise their grades by missing this out altogether. Evidence of some knowledge of the play was seen but candidates tended to shy away from showing understanding of 'issues'.

Section B: Exploring Cultures

Of Mice and Men: John Steinbeck

Question 21

The majority of candidates responded to this question. On the whole they had engaged with the text but sometimes this was the weaker response of the two parts, however having said this students did manage to attempt both parts of the question in nearly all cases. One problem encountered by the examiners was the student's confusion about Candy – many citing Curley and giving details about him instead of Candy. Themes and ideas were often evident within the response but many lacked development or even explanation. Candidates did comment on the details in the passage but often failed to go further and tackle 'how' the writer uses 'details'. The comparison between Candy and his 'ancient dog' was a favoured focus within the details of the stronger students. Where AO4 was addressed, it was generally well considered, with stronger candidates making the link between context and the understanding of the character, though sadly some candidates missed out 'context' altogether, compromising their final mark.

Purple Hibiscus: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Question 22

There were no responses to this question.

Mister Pip: Lloyd Jones

Question 23

There were no responses to this question.

To Kill a Mockingbird: Harper Lee

Question 24

There were very few responses to this question and sadly candidates seemed a little under-prepared (probably not surprising given the length and complexity of the text.) Stronger candidates had a fair amount to say on specific incidents involving Boo but even they struggled to get to grips with the attitudes of Maycomb and Lee's methods.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.