

Examiners' Report
November 2012

GCSE English 5EH2F 01

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Introduction

The take up for this November 2012 examination series was relatively small as entry was limited to those candidates retaking the qualification after certificating in summer 2012.

The level of difficulty was comparable to that in past series and the vast majority of candidates were able to cope with the specific demands of each question and the overall time constraints. Nevertheless, a very small number of candidates did not complete all the questions and others misread the rubric for question 7 (c).

Section A: Shakespeare

As in the past, *Romeo and Juliet* was the most popular choice of text but *Macbeth* came a very close second this time. Very few candidates chose to answer on *The Merchant of Venice*.

The (a) question, on character, continues to be the question which candidates seem to be most comfortable with. The picking out of three or four valid points about character, supported by appropriate reference to the extract and explained clearly, allows candidates to access the highest mark band. Even so, candidates should beware of presenting the same point more than once, albeit in a slightly different guise (e.g. 'Macbeth is nasty', 'Macbeth is rude', 'Macbeth is a bully').

A successful approach is to work through the extract underlining the quotations which reveal an aspect of character. After deciding on the trait which each quotation best illustrates, candidates are well placed to construct a number of PEE chains.

The (b) question focuses on performance and there is no doubt that the quality of response continues to improve as more candidates leave aside the temptation to write about peripheral features such as lighting and props. It is encouraging to see a greater number of candidates considering the mini extract in some detail and exploring what the language tells us about characters' thoughts and feelings. It is important that candidates not only make suggestions about performance but also explain why they are making them.

Candidates should also visualise the scene clearly. A significant number suggest that characters should 'wave their arms about' (to signify any one of a vast range of emotions from panic to anger) without realising how it would look in practice. The best responses often consider the impact that a performance technique would have on an audience.

The (c) question is worth the most marks in this section but the quality of candidates' responses was disappointing overall. A successful answer must focus on **one other part of the play**. This must be chosen carefully and identified clearly, although act and scene numbers are not expected. Unfortunately, many go on to discuss a second part, or even a third, fourth and fifth. When this occurs, examiners will only give credit for the single part that is treated with the greatest degree of success.

Answers are often brief and many do little other than describe what happens. It must be remembered that this is a question about a theme and its importance in the chosen part of the play. Candidates must not write an essay about the theme, however. **Importance** can be interpreted in a number of ways and I suggest that these are covered by the following:

Character

For example, what we learn about a character's attitude to, say, 'power' in the chosen part.

Relationships

For example, how differently Macbeth and his wife perceive 'power' in the chosen part.

Ideas

For example, what Shakespeare appears to be saying about 'power' in the chosen part.

Structure

For example, why that particular part occurs where it does and how the audience are affected by it.

Plot

For example, what the chosen part does to further the plot and how that impacts on our understanding of the theme.

I have adopted the acronym **CRISP** for the above and candidates, I hope, will benefit from discussing at least one from the list in their response. As it is, few go much further than suggest how their chosen part affects the plot.

Section B: Prose

As in the past, *Of Mice and Men* was the most popular text.

The (a) question on character can be approached in very much the same way as the Section A character question and, again, candidates seem comfortable and fairly confident in their approach.

The (b) question focuses on language and it is important that candidates do not turn this into another character response. Much depends on candidates' ability to analyse at word and sentence level and successful answers often use sentence structures that foreground a language feature, as in 'The word _____ shows that

The (c) question is on a theme's importance in **one other part of the novel** and the comments made on the Section A (c) question also apply here. Candidates who discuss several different parts are disadvantaging themselves. They must comment on importance and not just describe what happens. In addition to this, they must comment on **context** and the two bullet point prompts are designed to direct towards this. The contextual focus in the *Of Mice and Men* question was on the rarity of close friendships in a working environment that was seasonal and migratory.

Candidates must write enough that is relevant and rewardable if they are to access marks in the top band.

Section C: Writing

Candidates must remember to leave enough time to do justice to this section, which is worth 50% of the marks: a number of responses were simply too short to gain access to the higher bands.

The writing tasks are on subjects that candidates are familiar with and which do not rely on specialist knowledge. A range of approaches is welcomed and there is no need to apply rigidly the conventions of a specific genre. The tasks often require candidates to present their views on a subject and this can lead to an assumption that a piece of persuasive or argumentative writing is required. This is not necessarily a problem but it can become one if certain features of persuasive writing, for example, become too prominent. This can be illustrated with reference to the questions on this paper. Some candidates, writing about school uniform (question 12) felt that they should use some statistics or expert comment to support their views and used the time-honoured technique of inventing some of these. Unfortunately, less proficient candidates then made the mistake of assuming that these cold statistics *were* the argument (e.g. 98% of pupils in the survey did not want school uniform therefore uniform must go). This was to the detriment of any attempt to present a coherent and reasoned point of view.

Similarly, the fact that this task asked for the text of a speech often led candidates to write down a list of rhetorical devices in their planning. There followed a determination to include as many of these as possible but they were not always effective. Too many rhetorical questions can be counter-productive and contrived alliteration can be inappropriate.

However, these are pitfalls rather than widespread failings. It is good to see so many candidates engage in thoughtful planning of their responses. Structured, paragraphed prose, accurately presented is the keystone of a successful piece of writing.

Question 1

1 (a) Most candidates were able to point out the Nurse's concerns for Juliet and the shock of finding her dead but fewer commented on the early part of the extract which displays her bawdy humour. Others were misled by the phrase 'God forgive me!', claiming that the Nurse was feeling guilt for conspiring against Romeo.

Write your answer to Section A here:

A. From the Extract we learn that the Nurse is a kind, ~~loving~~ and loving woman towards Juliet. In the Extract we see that the nurse is very caring towards Juliet because when ~~she~~ the Nurse sees Juliet's body on the Bed she is worried about Juliet. The Nurse uses Repetition when speaking in the extract we see this when she says 'Why, lamb!', 'Why, lady' and 'Why, Love' because she repeats the word why.

We learn that she is also a fun and a lady who likes a joke ~~because~~ because when she enters the room she thinks Juliet is asleep and lets off a joke ~~and~~ saying 'Take your penny worth now. Sleep for a week - for the next night, I warrant, the country Paris hath set up his rest!'

(Section A continued) This is Meaning the County
Paris will have you up all tomorrow
Night So you better Sleep Now.
We see her emotional side when
she finds out about his death because
she says 'O Lamentable day'.



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Examiner Comments

The candidate makes a valid point in the first paragraph ('the nurse is a kind and loving woman') although the support offered is less than conclusive. She 'likes a joke' is a feature missed by many and this is clearly supported, if not fully explained. 'We see her emotional side' is also acceptable and this generally sound understanding is just enough to merit a mark in band 3.



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Examiner Tip

Always provide a brief quotation to support each point made.

1 (b) One examiner commented: 'The best answers explored ways to show the relationship between the nurse and Lady Capulet as well as just focusing on how to show sadness. I saw a couple of really good responses which explained that Lady Capulet should be cradling Juliet at the end, weeping over her daughter and drawing her to her as she says the 'revive' line as this provides a contrast with her attitude to Juliet earlier in the play where she wishes she were dead.'

(Section A continued)

8) 'Some aqua-vitae, ho! My lord! My Lady!' This line is said by the Nurse and could be performed with her shouting as the writer has used exclamation marks to show that she is shouting, her actions may be that she is running around shouting for her Lord and Lady trying to find them, this would also be used for her positioning and movement. Her facial expressions would be that she is shocked, scared, sad and also worried. The Nurse would also be moving her arms a lot when she is running around as if she is just flapping them around.

'What noise is here?' This is Lady Capulet who says that line and it could be performed by her running into the room where the Nurse is to find out what happened, she would sound confused as to what's happening and would have a confused/worried facial expression.

'O lamentable day!' This is performed by the Nurse and would be said in a sad ~~tone~~ tone of voice and would possibly have her head in her hands, her facial expression would be ~~that~~ sad and scared.

(Section A continued) When Lady Capulet asks 'what is the matter?' This would be said in a worried tone of voice and she could be possibly putting her hands on the Nurse's shoulders and shaking her to find out what has happened. Her ^{facial expression} ~~movement~~ would be questioning and confused.

'Look, look! O heavy day!' The Nurse would be pointing to Juliet to show Lady Capulet what happened, she would be shouting and would look sad. She would probably be stood next to Lady Capulet and shake her to get her attention then point at Juliet.

The last line; 'O me, O me! My child, my only life! Revive, look up, or I will die with thee! Help, help! Call help!' is said by Lady Capulet and she would be shouting and running over to Juliet and shaking her to try and wake her up ~~she~~ she would be very scared and panicking and would possibly be crying. When she says 'Help, help! Call help!' she could be pointing at the Nurse telling her to go get help and would be shouting.



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Examiner Comments

The first paragraph describes a rather bizarre image but this is a detailed answer which shows occasional understanding of the effectiveness of performance techniques and was awarded a mark in band 2.



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Examiner Tip

Visualise the scene and remember that subtlety can be effective at times.

The (c) question carries the most marks in Section A but is often the least well done. Candidates must select an appropriate **other part of the play** and consider its importance to the theme in question.

c) In another part of the play when Juliet and Romeo are together in the crypt, Romeo finds Juliet and thinks she is dead, I believe that he killed himself to be with Juliet for ever, because Romeo truly loved Juliet to the bottom of his heart, the problem with this was that she wasn't really dead but when Juliet finds Romeo dead she takes the knife which Romeo killed himself with and Juliet kills herself to be with Romeo. I believe that they both loved each other so much that they died for one another.

From Romeo and Juliet dead both families, the Capulets and Montagues stopped fighting because they had lost what was most precious to them, it took the importance of death for these ~~two~~ families to realise that they didn't want to fight or lose anyone again.



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Examiner Comments

The candidate identifies a relevant part of the play and says something about its importance in effecting the reconciliation of the feuding families.



ResultsPlus
Examiner Tip

Remember CRISP when considering importance.

Question 2

2 (a) Many candidates wrote of Macbeth's confidence in this scene but his change of mood once the servant leaves confused some. Unfortunately, a number claimed that Macbeth was showing fear throughout, thus limiting the success of their response.

2 (b) An examiner wrote about responses to this question thus: 'This question was affected by how well the candidate had answered the first one. Those who felt Macbeth was becoming fearful focused very much on showing that through him trembling or having a look of horror on his face. However, where they had understood his attitude in the scene the (b) question was answered well with a good focus on how and why the lines should be performed and a sound understanding shown through the interaction between Macbeth and the servant. I saw some good answers which showed Macbeth on a higher level than the servant in a strong arrogant pose (hands on hip etc) while the servant knelt with his eyes lowered, glancing up occasionally in fear and confusion. Candidates explained that Macbeth's perceived invincibility puts him in this position of ultimate power which is then later proved to be false.'

Question 7

7 (a) Most candidates were able to comment on George's dominance over Lennie and better answers stressed that he was concerned for Lennie's welfare. Some very successful answers took account of George's frustration at constantly having to be responsible for Lennie.

7 (b) One examiner noticed that, although candidates would point out that Lennie is compared to an animal, they often did not comment on the significance of this or the impact it had on the reader. Another examiner observed that many identified the childish nature of Lennie's language and 'the strongest candidates were able to explain that it was the use of short, simple sentences that made him sound childish as well as just what he said.'

7 (c) The question specified that the focus should be on George and Lennie's relationship but a significant minority misread the rubric and answered instead on a different relationship such as that between Curley and his wife or Candy and his dog. Such answers could not be rewarded.

Write your answer to Section B here:

Ⓐ In this extract you learn that the character George is very strict with the character Lennie. For example "You gonna give me that mouse or do I have to sock you?" This shows that George has to be cruel to be kind and clamps down on Lennie.

George can be quite intimidating towards Lennie. For example "Blubberin' like a baby! Jesus chrise!". I think that George is like this towards Lennie to toughen him up a bit for when they go from ranch to ranch for work.

(Section B continued)

Another reason being he is strict on Lennie and makes these comments so it gets Lennie out of habit ~~of~~ of acting like a child.

George can also be quite fair towards Lennie as well. For example 'You get another mouse that's fresh and I'll let you keep it a little while'. George realises that ~~George~~ Lennie is just a big friendly person ~~that~~ who doesn't mean know harm towards any one.



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Examiner Comments

The candidate makes some interesting points about George, showing a sound understanding of the character and earning full marks.



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Examiner Tip

Study the whole of the extract to find evidence of character traits.

⑥ The way Steinbeck uses the language to present Lennie's behaviour is that it's clear Lennie isn't all there. For example - 'Lennie sat down on the ground and hung his head dejectedly.' This makes Lennie seem like a child

(Section B continued) when they have their tantrums when something gets taken off them or they have done something wrong.

Another way of how Steinbeck uses language to present Lennie's behaviour is Lennie seems like a big kid at heart. For example 'Lennie hesitated, backed away, looked wildly at the brush line as though he contemplated running for his freedom.' This was all because George caught him with a dead mouse and wanted to take it away from Lennie. So like a child Lennie wasn't going

to back down.

Lastly, a different way of how Steinbeck uses language to present Lennie's behaviour

(Section B continued)

is "I don't know why I can't keep it. It ain't nobody's mouse. I didn't steal it. I found it lyin' right beside the road". Lennie instantly says this because this is what parents ask when they find their children with things that aren't theirs, so this indicates that Lennie acts like a little kid and George is his father figure.



ResultsPlus

Examiner Comments

This answer makes a number of points about Lennie but is not commenting explicitly on language even though the quotations chosen could be used to do so. There is just enough to merit a mark in band 2.



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Examiner Tip

Start each sentence of your answer with a reference to a language feature in the extract.

Write your answer to Section B here:

(A) You learn ~~George~~ ~~that~~ ~~George~~ that George seems like a bully to Lennie "do I have to sock you?" which may show his a violent person. But as you read on you discover George cares for Lennie "I ain't takin' it away just for meanness. That mouse ain't fresh." So it shows Lennie could of got ill from the mouse which George didn't ~~want~~ want.

(B) The writer uses a language to make you feel Lennie is a child "Give you what?" ~~that~~ this gives you the thought of a fowler trying to be funny and clever, which helps show the reader what it may be like for George to look after Lennie. Also when the writer uses alliteration

(C) At one point in the novel George has to help Lennie when Curley begins to start on him in the bunk house. George can see how hard Lennie is trying ~~to~~ but Curley decided to hit him repeatedly at this point George had to allow Lennie to do something. It shows how much he cares and can't watch him get hurt. Lennie and George's relationship is very much

like a father son relationship
as George's has to look out
for Lennie, and stop him doing
bad things. Where Lennie looks up to
George and wishes he was like
him. Their relationship is unusual
because people at that time ~~was~~
were on their own because of
the wall street crash.



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Examiner Comments

This candidate chooses a relevant part of the novel and uses it to make a point about George's attitude towards Lennie. The contextual comment is perfunctory and unexplained. There is enough relevance to gain a mark in band 2.



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Examiner Tip

Remember CRISP when discussing importance. Make sure your comments on context are directly relevant to the part of the text you have chosen.

Question 11

Candidates were required to write a letter to a local newspaper explaining what people in the local community could do to improve their environment. Some very successful responses focused on the candidates' local environment and made specific suggestions on how to reduce litter and graffiti, for example. Others looked beyond to global warming and the plight of polar bears. Either approach was acceptable but, as one examiner put it, 'less successful answers tended to mix the two, flitting between the problems of graffiti then onto endangered species. This resulted in a lack of focus, particularly when discussing solutions.'

Write your answer to Section C here:

Dear Council,

I am writing a letter to you to inform you of the ways we can improve our ~~communit~~ environment in the local community.

One way of improving the environment, is introducing recycling bins onto our public pathways, car parks etc. In doing this, it will prevent the wastage of perfectly good resources and altogether reduce the amount of rubbish our community produces. In a survey I carried out with the locals, 80% of the people I asked claimed they would use the recycling bins if introduced.

Another method of improving the

(Section C continued)

environment would be cleansing of the walls surrounding the public footpaths, due to the high amount of youths that gather in these places, over the years, these walls have been abused through criminal activity such as graffiti. *Also in my survey, I asked the public: do you feel safe travelling through these specific footpaths, 70% of the feedback showed they didn't feel safe. So, in my opinion, and for the benefit of the public, the removal of the graffiti will create a cleaner environment and the sense of safety in our community.

* because of this

Finally, ~~another way~~ linking to the last method, and used by many other councils: Introducing new facilities for the younger generation will hugely aid and reduce the amount of kids/teenagers that lurk about the streets and paths, blind that they give off a sense of danger to the serious

(Section C continued)

of our community. This method of new facilities, yes it will be expensive. However in the long run it will prevent criminal activity and the cost to repair the damage, due to the younger generation having hobbies ^{and} things to do in their spare time.

I hope this has come of help to you.

Yours sincerely



ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

This candidate focuses on the local environment and has a clear sense of audience and purpose. The organisation is sound and the vocabulary is well-chosen. It was awarded a mark that just took it into band 5 for AO3 (i) and (ii). Accuracy is generally sound enough to merit mark in band 4 for AO3 (iii).



ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

Try to leave enough time to check the accuracy of your spelling and punctuation.

Question 12

The task was to write the text of a speech giving the candidate's views on school uniform. Always a topic tending towards vigorous debate, there was a temptation to present a rant but the majority of candidates offered a reasoned discussion. Some weaker responses, however, included an exposition of views which had none of the features of a speech.

Write your answer to Section C here:

Good afternoon, do we need it? Most schools in the area are told to wear a given school uniform and that it's compulsory. However, like most school kids, including myself, would rather wear their own clothes. Our own clothes are comfortable, unique and stylish. I believe that people in a different country to us are allowed to wear their own clothes if they wish. So I ask is this really fair? A school uniform is decided by a school headteacher and their really bad taste. Students don't get a say in whether they want to wear more comfortable clothes.

(Section C continued)

In my opinion students would be much happier and more willing to learn if they get to wear what they want and what suits them not the headteacher. It is said that around 55% of school kids don't produce work to their full ability due to being tortured into wearing a school uniform. If students are not allowed to wear school uniform then I think they should at least get a say in what their school uniform should look like. This type of punishment is not needed and school kids don't deserve to be treated this way. It's like school kids are get hamsters wanted to be tested on for the new ridiculous, outrageous and disgusting uniforms. Why not let us have a say for once?

(Section C continued)

Like myself I'm sure many students agree with my thoughts and ideas. Stuart, from the local school says "It's not needed, I don't see why we can't wear our own clothes." One school recently took a survey asking about uniform for schools; it's no surprise but they were shocked by the results and the amount of students protesting to not wear a specific school uniform. Most would prefer to wear their own clothes or design the school uniform for themselves.

Some adults disagree with all of this however some agree. Adults always say how it shows you belong to a school and that you look smart. However, students could look smart, unique and

(Section C continued) comfortable in their own clothes. Most parents want what's best for their child so if sending them in their own clothes means getting them better grades than us we most adults will do this.

So finally I hope that all of this will be assessed and that sometime in the near future students will no longer be tortured and have to wear a silly uniform. They will in fact be comfortable, unique and smart. Thank you for listening.



ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

This response has some features of a speech, including emotive language, and is fairly clear about the purpose and audience. It relies a little too heavily on a fake interview and invented statistics but does take some account of opposing views. It is organised and developed, gaining a mark in band 4 for AO3 (i) and (ii). The level of accuracy is generally sound - enough to merit a mark in band 4 for AO3 (iii).



ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

If you are going to use fake evidence, don't regard it as conclusive proof. Your own reasoned views are the most important factor.

Paper Summary

Candidates seem to have a clear idea about how to answer the (a) and (b) questions on the Shakespeare and prose texts but are much less confident about the (c) questions on both. More time should be spent on practising the writing of full, relevant answers which cover all the requirements of the questions.

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