

Examiners' Report
November 2013

GCSE English 5EH2F 01

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Introduction

This was the seventh series of this Unit 2 exam, including the November 2012 resit. The unit is divided into three sections: Section A (reading) which examines responses to a Shakespeare play. Section B (reading) which examines responses to a prose text from a different culture; and Section C (writing) which examines students' ability to construct and develop an accurate piece of written prose.

Of the three Shakespeare plays offered for selection, 'Romeo and Juliet' was again the most popular choice, followed by 'Macbeth'. A smaller number of students chose 'The Merchant of Venice.' By far the most popular prose text was John Steinbeck's, 'Of Mice and Men' with a smaller number of students opting for Cormier's 'Heroes.' Fewer students selected one of the five other options.

This unit is offered at both Foundation and Higher tiers and it clearly is in the best interests of the students that they are entered for the appropriate tier.

There was far more evidence of planning and effective time management in this series. All questions were answered in the majority of cases and there were very few answers where students had not made a reasonable attempt at the question. However, there was still some evidence of students spending too long on question a) and b) answers under Section A and B and not allowing themselves enough time to complete question c) under A and B in sufficient detail. It is therefore worth repeating the guidance on the timings we have offered:

Sections A and B

Question (a) 7 marks, 8 minutes

Question (b) 7 marks, 8 minutes

Question (c) 10 marks, 12 minutes

Section C

48 marks, 45 minutes.

For the purposes of this report, I have concentrated my comments on the most popular reading questions: 'Romeo and Juliet' (question 1) and 'Of Mice and Men' (question 7). Comments on these questions can be applied to other Shakespeare and Prose questions as appropriate.

I have also commented on both writing questions (11 and 12). I have selected students' work to illustrate my points, focusing positively on those who were successful.

The many students who performed well were those who went about developing their work in a focused and structured way, offering full responses. These students usually managed their time correctly and had been very well prepared for the exam.

Question 1

Section A Question (a)

This trait, of which students have studied about a nominated character in the extract is usually answered successfully. To access band 3 the response must show 'sound understanding,' or be 'generally sound.'

In the 'Romeo and Juliet' extract Lord Capulet shows a wide range of characteristics e.g. he is sympathetic to Romeo and cares about standards of behaviour, but seriously stamps his authority when challenged by Tybalt. The vast majority of Foundation students were able to identify some of Capulet's characteristics. Many students were able to identify at least three characteristics and offer some explanation about his character in the extract. Obviously many focused on Capulet's behaviour towards Tybalt.

An example of good practice is to use PEE (Point, Evidence, Explain) chains and to write three separate paragraphs, each paragraph dealing with one main characteristic. This allows the students to structure their answer.

Section A Question (b)

This question focuses on performance. A number of lines, usually about 6, are isolated from the main extract and students are required to explain how the lines should be performed. The more successful answers avoid writing comments on peripheral aspects (such as costume, props and lighting) and concentrate on suggestions that highlight character, situation and language.

It is often far more effective to make points about the tone of voice or facial expression rather than suggest exaggerated dramatic gestures. Students should avoid suggesting a sequence of movements designed to illustrate every other word in the extract. It is extremely helpful if the student can visualise the scene clearly. In preparation they may benefit from enacting whole scenes, delivering individual lines and playing the part of director. They may then consider the use of pauses, or the reactions of more peripheral characters such as the Lords in the 'Macbeth' extract. Students would certainly benefit if they consider what impression is being made on the audience.

Many of the better answers in Band 3 not only suggest **how** the actors should be performing the lines, but also **why**. When Lord Capulet realises that Tybalt is refusing to comply with his initial instruction, his assertion of authority should inform suggestions about his voice, facial expression and body language.

A number of students also successfully commented on the interplay between Macbeth, the Ghost and the Lords.

Another example of good practice is to include a sentence starter such as:

'I can imagine that...'

'I want the audience to see ...'

This can help the students to 'signpost' that they are visualising the scene.

Section A Question (c)

This asks students to consider a theme (here it was 'hatred' in 'Romeo and Juliet', 'fear' in 'Macbeth' and 'friendship' in 'The Merchant of Venice') and comment on its importance in 'one other' part of the play. Students should not range widely over different parts of the play. The best answers chose a relevant scene, or part of a scene. Simple recounts get very little reward and the key word here is **'importance.'** Once the part has been identified (and the student need not quote any Act and Scene numbers, but simply say something like, 'the part where Romeo kills Tybalt') the notion of 'importance' can then be interpreted in different ways. One is to see it as a driver of the **plot**. Another is to consider what it teaches us about a **character** or a **relationship**. One might consider its impact on the audience, or what it tells us about the way Shakespeare is using it to communicate **ideas** or even to **structure** the play.

This trait is worth 10 marks and it is often the one on which students write the least. This may be because they have spent too long on earlier questions and have run out of time. However, it may be because they are not sure what to write. The best advice to help with the latter is:

Don't write a long account of what happens in the scene or part

Do focus on one or more of the emboldened words above.

Some students have found the acronym CRISP helpful in memorising the key emboldened words.

Romeo's killing of Tybalt might show us that Romeo acts impulsively, one of his central characteristics. It also shows us that this one key event determines and drives the future plot of the play. Furthermore, it reveals Romeo's sense of fate, and foreshadows his encounter with Paris in the graveyard.

Answers to this trait still suffer from being too brief and it is suggested that centres should focus their attention on how to answer this question in preparation for future series. The issue of time management should also be considered and students should be reminded not to spend too long on a) and b) answers.

In this band 3 answer the student makes a number of points about Capulet with relevant text references.

A) From the extract we learn that the character of Capulet is a ^{gentle} ~~gentle~~ man who's wishes seems to be not to make a big fuss over Romeo being at the Capulets ball.

Tybalt "Tis he, that villain Romeo" then Capulet says 'Content thee, gentle coz, let him alone' which suggests he doesn't want any trouble at his ball ^{or} ~~and~~ anything that could bring shame on his family and warns Tybalt not ~~to~~ do anything.

Also Tybalt says 'I'll not endure him!' and Capulet says 'He shall be endured' which means Capulet knows Romeo is a ^{Montague} ~~Montague~~ and still insists on him staying because Capulet is a kind and caring person even though he hates the Montagues he still doesn't care that Romeo has showed up.



ResultsPlus
Examiner Comments

The student has offered a range of characteristics and some balance to Capulet's character.

Try and identify at least three different characteristics and support with relevant evidence.

In the b answer the candidate has made a consistent reference to the lines with valid comments. The answer is Band 3.

(Section A continued) B) ~~to~~ Tybalt 'it fits when such a villain is a guest' his facial expression will show rage by having his face all screwed up and having direct eye contact with Capulet.

He could also be moving up and down the room shaking his wrist to show he's angry.

"I'll not endure him" this point he could snap and he could shout it and hit his hand into his other hand to show that he is furious with Capulet's choice.

Capulet "He shall be endured" Capulet will shout this back to Tybalt and turn to face him when he says "what, goodman boy? this is when Capulet will put his hand on Tybalt's shoulder to try and calm him down.

Capulet 'Am I the master here, or you? Go to! Capulet will put Tybalt back into his place and push him on the words 'Go to'



ResultsPlus
Examiner Comments

The answer is well structured and with comments on both 'how' the lines should be performed and 'why' the lines should be performed in that way.

Deal with both the 'how' and 'why' and try to consider the impact on the audience.

This is a band 3 response that has some detailed comments about the theme of hatred.

D) Another part of the play where there is a importance of hatred is the fight scene. In this scene Tybalt comes looking for Romeo as he feels he has been wronged by Romeo. ~~As Romeo arrives, secretly a married man to Juliet. Tybalt challenges him blissfully unaware of their new connection.~~ We learn Tybalt is very antagonistic and feels much hatred for Romeo as he challenges him to a duel, of which Romeo refuses as he's secretly married to Juliet, and does not want to dishonour either family name. Tybalt shows even more of his hatred as he goes on to call Romeo a 'villain'. The fight goes on and Mercutio is stabbed under Romeo's

(Section A continued) arm by Tybalt. ~~And~~ Mercutio ~~shows~~ goes on to die and curses both the Capulet and the Montague houses as he is outraged and showing his hatred for ~~that~~ Romeo and Tybalt making 'worms-meat' of him. I think Shakespeare is trying to say love is blinding, but hatred will always cause us to stray from what we want the most. In this scene, we see a different side to Romeo, instead

of ~~the~~ showing us his usual pining self.
We see the hatred he holds inside himself.
This scene directly leads to the ~~Star-crossed~~
~~lovers~~ 'star-crossed lovers' death as
Romeo takes revenge on Tybalt, resulting
in him being banished, not receiving
Juliet's letter and them both committing
suicide.



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Examiner Comments

The answer says something about how the theme sheds light on characters, Shakespeare's ideas and how it drives the plot.



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Examiner Tip

Don't spend too long describing the events in your chosen part of the play. Do keep your answer focused on the importance of the theme.

Section B Question (a)

This trait, is very similar to question b) in Section A, as students are asked what they have learned about a nominated character in a given extract. This is a skills-based exam and the skill here is to draw inferences from the extract and not be side-tracked into making comments about the character from other parts of the novel. The vast majority of students were able to draw out points about the character of Candy and the PEE (Point, Evidence, Explain) approach can again be used successfully. Candy shows many facets of his character in the extract and many students were able to offer supported interpretations, many with sound and developed comments.

Section B Question (b)

This question can prove problematic for students who fail to realise that it is first and foremost, a question about how language is used by the writer and not about a character, or about any other feature mentioned in the question. The 'Of Mice and Men' question was not so much about Crooks, or how he is treated, but how Steinbeck uses language to present the treatment of Crooks. Unfortunately a significant number of Foundation Tier students were still essentially writing about the treatment of Crooks in the extract, rather than considering the writer at work.

Successful students were able to pick out words and phrases that highlighted the racist and brutal treatment of Crooks.

A significant number of students benefitted from being equipped with some sentence starters such as:

- 'The word.....shows that..... .'
- ' The use of the phrase/description/simile/metaphor suggests.....'.

Please remember that it is not necessary to use technical terms to gain high marks but an understanding of them can be helpful to students. Practice in word and phrase analysis is probably the key to success on the b) question.

Section B Question (c)

This trait examines students' ability to fulfil two assessment objectives: A02ii and A02iv.

As with the Section A question c, there is a requirement to consider the importance of a theme in the student's chosen part of the text, but also some additional reference must be made to the social, cultural and historical context of the text.

If a student chooses several parts of the text on which to base their answer, examiners will only mark the section of an answer which gives the best response to the question. It is certainly the case that far fewer students are now selecting multiple parts, ranging across the novella.

The contextual element to the question is being approached with more success now that students are realising that general comments about the Dust Bowl and what happened in 1930's America are not what is required. It is much more apposite to make comments about how the theme impacts on the characters in the ranch and its hierarchy.

The 'Of Mice and Men' question was about explaining the importance of conflict in one other part of the novel. Many answers dealt with the conflict between Lennie and Curley, or Lennie and Curley's wife. Some students drifted into a narrative of the plot, rather than emphasising the importance of the theme in the selected part. Again, the CRISP acronym is very useful, providing a focus for answers to the c question.

In this band 3 answer the candidate offers three well structured paragraphs.

A) From the extract we learn that Candy is a quiet, wise old man who keeps himself to himself. We also learn that the men on the ranch look down upon Crooks because of the colour of his skin. We see this in the extract "Sure. Ya see the stable buck's a nigger" this shows us that Candy doesn't respect Crooks a lot causing him to be segregated from the white men.

In the extract we also learn that Candy the swamper instantly makes a friendship with George. ~~this is very important~~ we see this in the lines "An' he give the stable buck hell, too" George: "Give the stable

(Section B continued) buck hell?" Candy: "Sure, ya see the stable buck's a nigger." George: "nigger, huh?" This part of the extract shows that George and Candy are in general conversation with each other and this is how their friendship forms. Friendship is a major theme in Of

Mice and Men as a lot of the people on the ranch feel segregated and lonely.

The extract also shows us that Candy knows he isn't ranked the highest on the ranch because he's only an old swamper, we see this in the extract when Slim enters the bunkhouse and Candy is quick to get out of his way "The old swamper looked quickly at him, and then shuffled to the door rubbing his whiskers with his knuckles as he went." "Them guys just come, he said, and shuffled past the boss and out the door." This shows us that Candy keeps his head down on the ranch because of the fear of being canned.



ResultsPlus
Examiner Comments

Although the first paragraph has some validity, paragraphs 2 and 3 are stronger.



ResultsPlus
Examiner Tip

Point Evidence Explain with three separate paragraphs is a good structure for you to follow.

In this band 3 answer the candidate focuses on the writer at work.

⑤ The writer uses language to show that Crooks is getting treated badly because he is black. Candy says the boss gives ~~him~~ Crooks hell when he is mad. The word hell suggests that the boss directs all of his hate and anger towards Crooks. And the only reason he's getting the grief for is because he is black.

The noun "nigger" is used all the way through the extract even though it is racist. It shows in those days people didn't care as much about people then. Especially if they were different to them.

(Section B continued) It also shows that they have no respect on the ranch and is treated like an animal.

The extract says that someone "took after the nigger". The words took after shows that the men were fighting Crooks for fun when they were drunk.

This shows that they do not care about Crooks and only bring him out of the stable when they are drunk, to make them laugh and bully him because Crooks can't do anything about it. And this is because they think nothing of him because of his race.



ResultsPlus
Examiner Comments

Although the first paragraph has some validity, paragraphs 2 and 3 are stronger.



ResultsPlus
Examiner Tip

'Zoom in' on specific words and phrases and then 'zoom out' and comment on what you think the writer's intentions may have been.

In this band 3 (c) answer the student makes an appropriate identification of conflict in 'one other part of the play.'

(Section B continued) Conflict is important when writing novels because it causes tension making the reader who want to read more to see what occurs further in the book.

Another part of the novel that is a clear example of conflict is when Candy, Slim and George were in the bunk house and Candy's old dog was the subject of the argument. George and Slim trying to convince Candy to allow them to shoot his dog and put it out of its misery. This part of the novel is quite upsetting but shows great conflict when decided deciding what is best for the dog.

This chapter shows the different thoughts and feelings of the characters and what the dog actually need to Candy. George and Slim did not show any emotion toward decide the shooting of the dog because they had no emotional attachment where as Candy was the dogs owner so was therefore upset when he had to kill his dog because it was old.



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Examiner Comments

The student provides relevant details from the scene and the impact on the characters.



ResultsPlus
Examiner Tip

Make sure you deal with the wider context when explaining the importance of the theme.

Question 11

Section C

Here students have a choice of questions. In each case guidance was offered in the form of bullet points. Take up of the questions was divided fairly equally between the two and in this series it was pleasing to see that most students had little difficulty in developing their ideas.

It must be remembered that this is partly a test of appropriate writing skills. Good content can be easily undermined if no due consideration is given to sentences and paragraphing. Students must remember that they have an obligation to communicate clearly to the reader.

However, it was very pleasing to see that there were fewer limited answers and most Foundation Tier students responded very positively to the writing task.

This question invited students to write a magazine article for teenagers suggesting ways the lives of teenagers could be improved. This allowed students to adopt a wide range of approaches, which varied in tone and content. For example, some adopted a more light hearted approach, dealing with issues such as: dating and part-time work commitments. Other students dealt with more serious issues such as: exam pressures, cyber bullying and alcohol and drug problems. The wide question made for some engaging and original responses. There were still a number of students who failed to develop their ideas and produced a brief response. These answers generally limit themselves to the lower bands.

The better students developed their ideas using a coherent plan.

This script in band 5 expresses and develops ideas appropriately. It has sound organisation and makes a successful use of cohesive devices.

Teenagers lives can be improved in many different ways.

Firstly, the difficulties teenagers face are varied. Some may be faced with problems at school, for example they may be going downhill with failing grades or they could be getting into different amounts of trouble.

These could be from bullying others, being disrespectful to others and not doing as they are told.

Secondly, many teenagers face problems with home life. These situations could be parents divorcing, arguments at home between anyone, for example: between mum and daughter, dad and daughter, mum and son, dad and son or even, mum and dad. Also teenagers could be facing deaths of close ones in their family.

Thirdly, illness. Teenagers also face illnesses

(Section C continued) including life threatening illnesses, disabilities or illnesses which can be cured. This can make your teenager stressed or worried.

Also you have exams. Teenagers hate their exams. This is a difficulty which every teenager faces, especially if it's not a strong topic for them or they don't get the grade they were hoping for.

Lastly, friendships and boy troubles, there's also a teenagers who goes through both of these situations. No matter how young or old they are.

Well if a teenager is suffering from any of these or maybe all of them then the best way to overcome them ~~is~~ varies.

If it's problems at home and the struggling at home then if they should go and see a ~~conciller~~ conciller or even speak to someone they know about it to see if they can help.

Problems with illnesses? They should try and stay calm. Even if the illness is life-threatening

(Section C continued) being in trouble a lot then all you need to do is behave, don't chat back, do as you're told and don't be disrespectful to others.

If your grades are failing it's probably due to stress or anxiety about any other problems.

The best thing to do for this is to just try ~~to~~ and not think about it. Try and do well, just concentrate in school and you'll do fine. Don't let anything hold you back.

These suggestions may benefit teenagers as they may not know what to do if they've never been in this situation before. They may be confused or worried so speaking to someone may help them overcome their worries or anxiety.

However, if they stop eating, feel ill or don't seem to be themselves then the best thing to do is to take them to the doctors as it may be due to symptoms of depression.

The quicker they are seen to the quicker they will be able to get help.

(Section C continued) Even if it's the slightest slightest, small ~~issues~~ issues, still get seen to.

Help is always on hand for anyone suffering any illness or difficulties.



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Examiner Comments

The student offers solutions to the identified problems and does not forget the purpose and intended audience of the writing.



ResultsPlus
Examiner Tip

Organise your writing into paragraphs and develop your ideas. It is also a good idea to try and write a concluding sentence in each paragraph.

Question 12

There were some heartfelt responses to question 12, a speech about the importance of friendship. A significant number of scripts adopted the speech form and some scripts presented appropriate features e.g. rhetorical devices and punctuation used for deliberate effect. Less successful answers tended to drift into repetitive generalisations about friendship and its merits. Some students could only offer rather superficial and generalised comments about friendship.

The better students adopted a suitable voice and were able to produce convincing speeches.

Good afternoon boys and girls.

Today I am going to talk to you about the great importance and support of friendship. My opinion is that to have good friendship fulfils the needs of every feeling you have. My friends are extremely important to me, without my friends my life wouldn't be worth living for. Having friends creates happiness and encouragement and without friends you are nowhere. However there may be people who like being alone, but you never know the great feeling of friendship.

Having friends to lie back on when your helpless or you are in need of someone. The greatest benefit is whether your happy, sad, angry or nervous if you have friends you can share your feelings with them. If friends criticize you it's for your benefit, they are telling you the truth and don't want you to make a fool out of yourself. Also the pros of having friends that they encourage and motivate you, they tell you to try out new things they are showing you the way to live your life. My motto is that life is too short, go out and enjoy your life. When your ill you always have that one friend who'll

look after you, get you work you have missed out on. This is love of friendship, when you are friends with people you automatically create a connection of love and understanding of each other. This slowly, slowly grows into something more fruitful which makes your friendship last longer. Another point is having friends that are a great laugh, they cheer you up when you're sad or upset. These are friends that are worth living for.

However not every friendship is as fruitful as you think, one day or another your friendship will go down a lane of misunderstandings, misconception and betrayal. This period of time is extremely difficult for you and your friends. Sometimes the reason of this difficulty may be small, sometimes big, but you have to get through this rough period and patch up. Especially if your friendship has been going on for years and years. Difficulties in friendship could be that your friend ~~isn't~~ isn't sharing her problems with you and you may want to help. Also you may have seen your friend cheat on your boyfriend or your friend betrayed you. There are countless of possibilities and difficulties and the ones I've mentioned are mostly teenage difficulties. You have all got to remember that friendship shouldn't be broken off because of a petty reason because having a close friend will be extremely difficult to find.

I, myself have been through rough patch with my friend, my friend had family problems and she was coping

with them by herself. I used to ask my friend countless of times what is up. At school she used to be quiet, she hardly socialised with anyone and would have breakdowns. I was extremely upset and felt betrayed that my friend wouldn't talk to me. Slowly, slowly we were drifting off and our friendship became weaker and weaker. However after a week, I was going past her and saw she had cuts on her arms, I was shocked. I knew I had to talk to her, we talked and finally she opened up to me and told me that self-harming relieved her pain. I helped her get back up and we both went to counselling. In a matter of months our friendship was back on track.

I hope you all took into mind the importance of friendship the benefits and the hardships along with it. Concluding all my points having friends is great with them come an excellent package deal. However you have all ~~got~~ got to understand that ~~enjoying~~ along with friends you will have to undergo the hardships. If you pass, it only just makes your friendship stronger and last longer.

Thank you for listening. Any questions?



ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

There is sound control of expression and meaning with a variety of sentence structures used. There is also sound control of punctuation and accurate spelling.



ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

Always write in the correct form and use ambitious vocabulary to explain your ideas.

Paper Summary

A much smaller number of students took the paper in this series and the standard of entry showed some improvement. This may have been in part due to the nature of the cohort for this November 2013 exam. Good planning and time management are an increasingly impressive feature of many students' work. Students are generally well prepared and have clearly practised the type of questions they will encounter. As a result, answers are more developed.

Answers to the Section A and B (c) questions are still sometimes the exception and can be underdeveloped. Some answers are still mainly focused on plot. Centres may need to consider different approaches to these questions and also may need consider further the balance of marks across the Section A and B questions.

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