

Examiners' Report November 2007

IGCSE

IGCSE English Literature (4360)

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November 2007

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There was only a very small entry for the Winter session and consequently a small range of texts was addressed.

PAPER ONE: Drama and Prose

Section A: Drama

The vast majority of candidates answered questions on 'A View From The Bridge'. There did seem to be a significant number of candidates who had learnt certain phrases by rote and were determined to use them. Some candidates seemed to think that offering straightforward character studies would be sufficient. Candidates must answer the specific question that is asked. It was also noted that some candidates spent too much time in writing 'introductory' material such as, 'To answer this question I will refer back to the book and use my knowledge.' Biographical material was also often included and this is not required in this examination.

Section B: Prose

'Pride and Prejudice' and 'The English Teacher' were the two most popular novels. As has been noted above and many times in these reports it does not matter how much textual knowledge a candidate has, if s/he does not answer the question then s/he cannot achieve a high mark. As, is often the case, weaker candidates fell into the error of narrating far too much. This was evident, for example, in Q8(a) in which some candidates wrote about the relationship between Krishna and Susila without explaining what had been learnt as a result of a study of the relationship. Similarly, weaker responses were often very descriptive instead of being analytical. This was evident in Q6(a) when weaker responses described the characters of Wickham and Darcy without considering how successfully Austen developed the contrast between the two characters. Able candidates responded to questions in more thoughtful ways offering interesting insights which were well substantiated.

PAPER TWO: Poetry

As was noted in the Summer Report candidates do have the poems in front of them in this examination and so remembering the poems is not an issue. It is thus very disappointing to see that a minority of the candidates offering only summaries of the poems. Candidates must be very clear that the focus of their answer must be firmly grounded in the terms of the question. It should also be remembered that candidates do have 45 minutes in which to concentrate on the one required answer and so examiners do expect to see well argued responses to the question. Q1 asked candidates to explain how the poets had succeeded in eliciting certain responses to the two named poems. Some candidates simply summarised the poems and said how they felt about them instead of responding to the direction to explain how the poets had been successful in gaining the response from the reader. In Q2 candidates were given the opportunity to choose poems in which the ordinary is presented in an interesting way. Weaker candidates simply wrote about the subjects without addressing the part of the question which asked for thought about the poets' skills. All candidates are advised to concentrate closely on what the question is asking them to do and to be aware that this will always involve some close analysis of the poems.

PAPER THREE: Coursework

Topics of love, childhood, memory, death, and sympathy with characters were favourites as usual together with one specifically asking for how the structure and language contributed to the meaning of the poems. While this task was certainly successful in focusing the candidates on style as well as content, analysis was in many cases still not complete or detailed enough, at least for the marks given, e.g. *Both poems have relevant titles but they are different in their structure because Remember is a sonnet, while Plena Timoris is composed of four stanzas each composed of five lines.* Like this example, there were more attempts to draw comparisons between the poems than previously. The attempt was admirable but many comments were as superficial as the one given above or along the lines that one poem contained euphemism and another didn't.

The requirement of detailed analysis of language for the highest grades is a feature neither centres nor candidates have yet come to terms with. For the very highest grades to be earned the analysis must be specific, complete and thorough. There is still a tendency to jump from quotation to conclusion or opinion without analysing why the specific words were chosen e.g. *loot of Time* and *forged crown of luxury* (in *World! Why do you hound me?*) were quoted and the conclusion, correctly, drawn that these were considered worthless aspects of life but not once was the choice of *loot* or *forged* commented on precisely - let alone the reason why the word *hound* was used in the title. There were frequent examples of figures of speech being identified and fairly meaningless generalisations made e.g. *the onomatopoeic word engages our auditory sense* (used with reference to several different poems) and *He also used metaphor in "It seemed to freeze her" giving us a huge, enormous chill that I think was effective (Plena Timoris).* The implications of the word *freeze* need to be analysed much more closely.

In many folders lavish praise for the poets, not always appropriate, (*dexterous, adept poetess, stupendous choice of words, stupendous synthesis* etc.), and an emotional response to the situation in the poem (*wrings my heart, reduced to tears* etc.) replaced, or certainly tended to obscure, any analysis. At times the emotional response in general led to unjustifiable or over-stated conclusions about the parts e.g. *The title (For Me From You) itself glows with anger.*

It was disappointing to find so many discussions of the poems and even the personal response repeated word for word in several folders. In a few cases virtually whole folders were identical. While it is to be expected that ideas are shared in discussion and will be found across folders, they should be expressed in the student's own words.

There is a strong foundation of a clear appreciation of the general mood and tone of the poems together with sensitivity to the language and structure. However centres should insist that candidates aiming for the highest grades should build on this to reach an awareness of the subtleties of meaning through precise exploration of the language. Personal response should also be grounded in the detailed analysis rather than a generalised emotional response to the situation and ideas.

Statistics for IGCSE English Literature 4360

Grade	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Option 1	68	60	52	45	37	30	23	16
Option 2	73	63	53	44	36	29	22	15
Option 3	73	63	53	44	36	29	22	15

Note

Option 1: Candidates taking papers 1 and 2.

Option 2: Candidates taking paper 1 and submitting coursework.

Option 3: Candidates taking paper 1 and transferring a previous session's coursework mark.

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