

Examiners' Report Summer 2008

IGCSE

IGCSE English Literature (4360)

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4360 01

Introduction

The summer 2008 examination successfully enables a wide range of candidates to show their knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the Drama and Prose texts they have studied.

The candidate is expected to make two responses, one on a Drama text and one on a Prose text in one and a half hours. The candidate should spend forty five minutes on each response.

Few candidates missed out on marks because they did not read the questions carefully; centres are familiar with the expectations from this examination and time management did not appear to cause any problems.

Candidate choices - Texts

Of the five choices available on the two sections of the examination paper, familiar Drama texts '*Julius Caesar*' and '*A View from a Bridge*' and the Prose text '*Pride and Prejudice*' proved unsurprisingly to be the most popular choices.

Despite this, a reasonable number of candidates opted for alternatives such as '*A Doll's House*', '*My Children! My Africa!*' and '*Balzac and the Little Chinese Seamstress*'.

As in all examinations, candidates should take care when reading each question. Candidates might benefit by highlighting the key words in each question to avoid any misunderstanding.

Candidates need to respond to the question asked

The best answers support perceptive commentary with brief and appropriate evidence. These candidates offer insightful and detailed material, often a personal response, which is focused with detailed analysis and are therefore credited with higher marks.

Weaker candidates tended to re tell the story, summarise the plot or write character narratives, often appearing to recycle material.

4360 02

Introduction

The summer 2008 examination successfully enables a wide range of candidates to show their knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the poems in the Poetry Anthology they have studied.

The candidate is expected to make one response, in forty five minutes, on two poems from the anthology booklet. Candidates should spend a short period of time selecting appropriate poems for the question and highlight the key words to avoid any misunderstanding.

Centres are familiar with the expectations from this examination and time management did not prove problematic.

Candidate choices

Candidates chose between two questions. The first question proved to be the most popular; often demonstrating a developed understanding of theme and purpose.

The second question allowed candidates to freely choose two poems and presented an opportunity to make a personal and authentic response. Some responses appeared to be 'prepared' with lengthy introductions that at times were irrelevant to the question set.

Candidates need to respond to the question asked

The best answers supported evaluative commentary with brief and appropriate evidence. These candidates offered a personal and original response, and were therefore credited with higher marks.

A number of candidates, inevitably scoring in Ranges 1 and 2, made references to technical terms without having any real understanding of their purpose and effectiveness, sometimes listing these in one paragraph for the sake of inclusion.

It is important that centres discourage candidates from focusing on one poem at a time and then adding an ineffective short conclusion.

Candidates are likely to score higher marks if they compare and contrast two poems alongside one another, demonstrating a sound awareness of the links between these poems whilst remembering to clearly reference throughout.

4360 03

As usual, most candidates treated the poems by the thematic grouping of the anthology: death, love, childhood, place etc. Some, more adventurous, linked the themes of love and death, though the poems needed to be carefully selected for this and candidates who chose *Crabbit Old Woman* struggled to justify the love aspect. Another theme that was tackled successfully was the portrayal of victims, using a variety of poems mainly from the sections on childhood, love and death's approach. Those whose questions focused on structure and language had varied success as, at times, the strength of the analysis was undermined by the points not being clearly linked to the context of the poems or to each other. Often there would be a brief summary of the poems overall followed by separate points out of context so that the analysis was not fully made e.g. 'in *Piano* the word *winter* shows how cosy it is'.

There was evidence that more centres and candidates had taken on board the subtleties of meaning in the poems, particularly the fact that the *Half Past Two* experience was also pleasurable as demonstrated by the word *escaped* - used twice - though nobody managed to explain *the silent noise his hangnail made* and there was some doubt about what a *hangnail* is. Candidates were more balanced in their blame of the parents in *My Parents kept me from Children who were Rough*.

Nevertheless it was still concerning that major errors in some of the work was not noted. These, sometimes made by otherwise strong candidates, affected the meaning of the poem, e.g. confusion between the two singers and pianos (*glamour, clamour, appassionato*) in *Piano*, the two places in *In Your Mind* and the two women in *Plena Timoris*; also the idea that *Geography Lesson* featured cities that really were *haphazard, unplanned and without style*. A surprising number of candidates wrote about *For Me From You* without mentioning the visit to the market.

While there were excellent examples of close and consistent analysis, there was also still the fairly widespread misapprehension that quotation, identification of figure of speech and a description of the general effect on tone, emotion etc. is enough analysis e.g. many candidates, with reference to *Crabbit Old Woman*, gave a *stone where I once had a heart, old carcass and battered heart* as figures of speech giving a pitiful image of the old woman but did not analyse closely any of the phrases. Using the same words in the attempted analysis was not helpful either e.g. 'the writer {in *An Unknown Girl*} uses a simile to compare clinging to the henna lines to *people who cling to the sides of a train* because they are clinging like people to a train'.

The strongest feature of the work was the obvious engagement with and personal response to the poems. All candidates without exception seemed to have developed their understanding and the great majority showed sensitivity both to the ideas and the way the writers had expressed them. Some, without lapsing into generalised emotional gush, found links to their personal circumstances and showed appreciation of this.

Centres should note that the highest and lowest scoring folders need to be sent as well as the asterisked ones, if not already included. Also there should be an Authentication form for each candidate, signed by both the candidate and the assessor, as well as the folder cover sheet. However these should not be fastened to the front of the folder on top of the cover sheet as the folder mark needs to be clearly visible.

Statistics for IGCSE English Literature 4360

Grade	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Option 1	72	65	58	51	43	35	27	19
Option 2	77	67	57	48	40	32	24	16
Option 3	77	67	57	48	40	32	24	16

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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