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Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2018

Pearson Edexcel IGCSE

In English Literature (4ETI) Paper 02: Modern
Drama and Literary Heritage Texts

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The paper proved successful in its first series with candidates engaging well with skills (AOs) in most cases. In this first series of the new specification, popular questions included those on *A View from the Bridge* and *An Inspector Calls* with some answers on *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* also attracting a significant number of answers. Understandably, legacy texts featured strongly in this first round of the new series. *Romeo and Juliet* and *Macbeth* were the most popular texts on the Section B Literary Heritage part of the paper, but *The Merchant of Venice* made a respectable showing with a good number of answers seen. All questions apart from Q7 and Q8 (*Kindertransport* attracted answers).

All questions that attracted answers performed well. AO1 was a strong feature of both Sections A and B with most responses demonstrating at least sound knowledge and understanding of the texts studied. AO2 discussion varied more across answers with some candidates limiting themselves to a peripheral approach such as identifying a technique without placing it in context or using it to respond to the question. A number of Level 4 responses were seen with thorough application of analytical detail and a convincing critical style. At Level 5, some very impressive responses were seen that used deep understanding of analytical approaches to perceptively respond to the question. Sophisticated exploration of AO2 led to some poised and lucid work with many achieving full marks.

In terms of AO4 on the Section B, Literary Heritage section of the paper, some candidates performed very well, integrating relevant and purposeful detail about the influence of context into their answers. Others effectively applied context details as an 'add on' or afterthought to their essay which was a much less successful approach. Some candidates did not include any reference to aspects of context at all, even though it is equal as an assessment objective to both AO1 and AO2 in the specification and mark scheme. It is worth noting that literary context is valid as an approach e.g. with reference to tragedy, genre and literary motifs alongside social, cultural and historical context.

A View from the Bridge

Q1 This question required candidates to write about the significance of different kinds of law in the play. There was a full range of responses to this question with effective application of detailed knowledge in many answers. Some were successful in applying the role of Alfieri as a construct of American law and understood the difference between moral and statutory law. Some focused on the difference between Italian and American law with the most able candidates explored the use of law to define personal situations.

Q2 This was a very popular question and in most cases candidates successfully explored the relationship between Marco and Eddie with a good range of supporting examples in place. The least successful answers fell into narrating events that included the two characters. In more successful answers, candidates focused on the family relationship and what happens because of their close proximity to one another. In some answers, achievement was compromised by a lack of AO2 points related to detail of language, structure and form. An example

would be use of the raising the chair over the head scene where a number of candidates did not go beyond explaining the conflict, missing the analysis of how this shifted the dynamic of the two men.

An Inspector Calls

Q3 This was another very popular question with candidates working at all levels of achievement responding to the play's themes and ideas. Candidates proved well able to explore how the Inspector is used by Priestley to explore the mystery behind Eva Smith's demise. Some fell into a trap of narrating without analysing language, structure or form. The question led to some perceptive and focused answers at the top end with imaginative interpretations applied in many cases. Examiners reported seeing a significant number of high level responses to this question. Some elements of context were applied unnecessarily but others highlighted aspects of the Inspector's role and use with some interesting reflections on his ghostly presence and connotations of the name, Goole. Some very lucid and successful answers remarked on the dramatic use of the telephone at the end of the play.

Q4 This was also a popular question with candidates confidently able to discuss the changes to Sheila's character as the play progresses. Stronger candidates were able to view Sheila as a construct used by Priestley to promote his themes and ideas. Most answers were well supported by relevant and judiciously selected reference. Less able candidates found the level of challenge of this question more accessible than Q3 as they were able to work sequentially through the play. Sheila's growth and maturity were well documented with good use of textual reference applied in support of arguments. Sheila's use of exclamatory language and her relationships with others were key features of many answers.

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time

Q5 Answers focused clearly on the character of Ed Boone and were able to chart his relationship with Christopher and his wider significance effectively. Candidates working at Levels 3 and below tended to select points in the play where Ed appears and define their importance. More successful answers considered Ed's significance to the play's themes and ideas as well as the characterisation of Christopher. Most saw the duality of his character, a man who can murder a dog and lie to a son that his mother is dead while also caring deeply for his son's welfare. The quality of support and level of dramatic awareness in these answers was, on the whole, very effective.

Q6 The theme of fear attracted some interesting and, in some cases, original responses. Candidates explored the tangible fears of Christopher in terms of the dog's death and his travel to London alone. Some also focused on his fears of the Maths exam and the world of fear experienced as part of his condition. Language, form and structure elements were very effectively covered by many responses to this question including the dramatic tension created by Christopher's fear and the dissemination of fear amongst the characters including Ed and Judy Boone. Some very sensitive comment explored Ed's fear of losing Christopher and his need to lie to his son.

Death and the King's Horseman

Q9 Jane and Simon Pilkings proved accessible to candidates working at all levels of ability and most were well able to explore Soyinka's dramatic presentation of their characters. Their significance to the frustrated suicide ritual of Elesin, their lack of understanding of the Yoruba and their disrespect of local traditions were aspects covered in some effective arguments. For the most part answers were well organised and supported by relevant reference to the play's detail.

Q10 This question led inevitably to discussion of the suicide ritual and the play's title. There was some coherent exploration of the significance of the theme of death in the culture of the Yoruba contrasted with the beliefs of the Pilkings and the expectations of western culture. Some very sensitive answers explored the play's spiritual elements and dealt effectively with the role of the Praise-Singer and the atmosphere created by Soyinka as he enters his trance prior to being stopped performing the ritual.

Literary Heritage Texts Section B

Romeo and Juliet

Q11 This question attracted some very strong answers on the characters of Paris and Romeo. Some candidates focused more on Romeo while others dealt effectively with both and explored the differences between them in the light of their suitability as suitors or husbands to Juliet. Quotations were well used in the majority of answers. Some answers used context effectively to discuss the differing backgrounds of Paris and Romeo and the role of Juliet's father in their courtship of her. Some responses fell into narrative, recounting events involving the characters. Some candidates working at Levels 4 and 5 were able to comment on the use of sonnets and iambic pentameter with some insight. Some candidates explored the rivalry with a focus on the dramatic tension created by their conflict. There was a good deal of discussion of Romeo's fickle change of heart from Rosaline to Juliet which was compared to Paris's constancy in his intent.

Q12 The theme of loss attracted a wide range of answers with focus ranging from the loss of Romeo and Juliet's lives at the end of the play to the loss of hope by Juliet when she visits the Friar and the loss of peace as the families fight at the beginning of the play. Mercutio's loss and its dramatic significance was a feature of many answers. The best answers were well-supported and developed personal and strategic arguments. The concept of loss was related well to the play's context by many candidates, some of whom used the literary tradition of tragedy to explore the poignant nature of loss and its reverberation across the play's events.

Macbeth

Q13 This was a very popular question that covered a range of aspects of evil throughout the play. Focus on the witches' prophecies was seen at all levels of achievement with some good exploration of Lady Macbeth's character.

Speculation that Lady Macbeth is a witch herself was a feature seen in a number of answers. There was still a tendency by some to narrate the story with a small number of answers featuring repetition. Some answers moved effectively between characters showing evil as a general force growing and developing in the play. Context points were well handled with reference to the witches and the upsetting of the natural order featuring strongly. James 1 and his interest in witchcraft also featured in many answers. Some candidates made informed comments in their analysis of language, form and structure, including reference to iambic pentameter. Critical analysis was impressive in many answers.

Q14 Macbeth's conscience prompted good and varied discussion about whether Macbeth is really in control of his own actions and the extent to which the murder of Duncan is premeditated. Some considered the role of Banquo in challenging and pricking Macbeth's conscience with some well-chosen and integrated quotation applied. Soliloquies featured widely in many answers with candidates using these as a structure on which to hang their arguments. Candidates were able to explore the political conflict alongside the conflict enacted in Macbeth's own conscience. There were some very astute and poised arguments related to Lady Macbeth and the interchangeable nature of conscience in the couple.

The Merchant of Venice

Q15 Although rather less popular than the other Shakespeare plays on the paper, this play made respectable showing with answers largely offering narrative views of the theme of appearance and reality. The characterisation of Antonio proved a popular focus with arguments put forward that he is not what he seems. One or two considered Shylock in the light of the statement, using Shakespeare's presentation of him as a springboard to the common perception of Jews at the time Shakespeare was writing.

Q16 This question attracted more answers than Q15 and Bassanio proved an accessible character to most candidates who attempted the question. Context was less securely applied in this question than Q15, but candidates made some exploration through aspects that were bolted onto paragraphs without necessarily relating to the points being made. Language, form and structure was well-covered by candidates working at Level 3 and above.

Pride and Prejudice

Q17 The focus on Darcy offered most candidates the opportunity to present sound knowledge of the novel and character. Some relied on narration, using one or two key quotations to illustrate their answers. A wide variety of approaches was seen with good answers considering the unsympathetic presentation of Darcy at the beginning of the novel compared to his more favourable presentation later in the novel when he helps to secure the return of Lydia and save the reputation of the Bennets.

Q18 This was a much less popular question than Q17 and candidates considered the relationships between Elizabeth and Jane as well as Elizabeth and Charlotte Lucas. One or two very good answers integrated the novel's context, such as the

nature of society in Regency England, to develop effective and perceptive arguments. Some looked at the relationship between Darcy and Elizabeth as one largely of friendship with one or two focusing on Darcy's friendship with Mr Bingley.

Great Expectations

Q19 There were very few answers to this question but those seen tended to be confident with the theme of death. Less secure discussion worked through the different deaths in the novel and tended to work towards a narrative outcome. Responses at the higher end of the mark scheme considered the context of the novel and Victorian attitudes to death alongside Dickens's descriptions and characterisation.

Q20 This answer attracted more responses than Q19 with candidates writing effectively on the character of Estella and her relationships. Candidates confidently applied knowledge and understanding of form, structure and language to develop astute and thorough critical arguments. It was interesting to see the differing responses to Estella's presentation with some seeing her as aloof and cold and others considering her a victim from her introduction as Miss Havisham's ward.

The Scarlet Letter

Q21 Answers to this question reflected on the relationship between Hester and Arthur, with a strong sense of the novel's context and the Puritan society of Massachusetts Bay in view. The responses tended to be focused and well-referenced with critical discussion of Hawthorne's characterisation and use of language and structure.

Q22 There were fewer answers to this question than Q21. Answers explored the nature of evil with clear personal engagement and considered the hypocrisy of some aspects of Puritan society. Witchcraft and the role of Mistress Hibbins featured with effective and sharply relevant reference to the novel's context.