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# Moderators' Report/ Principal Moderator Feedback

Summer 2019

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE  
In English Literature (4ET1)  
Paper 3: Modern Drama and Literary Heritage  
Texts

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## Introduction

Students responded to two coursework assignments, which were either self generated or devised by their teachers.

Assignment A was based on a modern drama text chosen from the list in the Specification. The assignment was assessed for AO1, for which students demonstrated a close knowledge of the text and presented an informed personal engagement. Students were also expected to analyse language, form and structure used by the writer to create effect as stipulated by AO2.

Assignment B was based on a Literary Heritage text chosen from the list in the Specification. In addition to being assessed on AO1 and AO2 students were expected to demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between text and its context in the form of AO4.

## General Comments

Modertators were impressed by the quality of the responses, as well as the range of tasks set by the centres. Many noted that at its best the coursework allowed the candidates a degree of autonomy, creativity and indepedence as well as a challenge.

## Setting a task

Where the responses were particularly focused was when the question and task in hand itself had a clear focus. Some good examples from this year's cohort of the type of task setting which elicited sound and well-focused results are:

*With close reference to the text explore how Miller present the character of Beatrice in relation to the unfolding tragedy. (Assignment A – Modern Drama)*

*Referring to language, structure and form explore the way Priestly presents the differences between the generations in 'An Inspector Calls'. (Assignment A – Modern Drama)*

*How does Dickens present the relationship between Pip and one other character in 'Great Expectations'? You must consider language, form and structure and refer to the context of the novel in your answer. (Assignment B – Heritage Texts)*

*With close reference to the play, explore Juliet's decisions in 'Romeo and Juliet' in relation to the life of women at the time. (Assignment B – Heritage texts)*

Less successful responses were often as a result of an unfocused question. One centre set the candidates' task with the title *Beatrice* as a base for discussion. This lead to a chronological retelling of the plot. Some titles were too vague: *The fears of Macbeth* or too wide. One task asking the candidates to *Explore the theme of crime and punishment in 'Great Expectations'* resulted in rather superficial responses on the Victorian penal system, with all but the most confident focussing on the relationship between text and context, as well as analysing language, form and structure of the chosen passages in the novel.

Conversely, there were questions which limted the scope of ideas and interpretations. *How does the character of Macbeth change throughout the play?* often resulted in a

chronological description of the character. Some titles did not lend themselves to good coverage of AO2, especially those based on character or theme alone. Questions which gave more focus to AO2 worked well at all ability levels. One centre set: *How successfully does Priestley create suspense in the play?* This task produced some pleasing results.

A number of centres opted for past exam questions: *How does Sheila change during the play?* or *How significant is Alfieri in A View from a Bridge?* These questions did not always lend themselves to an in-depth analysis of AO2 in particular.

## **Candidate Performance**

### **Assignment A**

By far the most popular texts for Assignment A were: *An Inspector Calls* and *A View from the Bridge*. There was a range of questions set looking at the presentation and the importance of themes and characters for both texts. Here is an example of a top level candidate who had incorporated both AOs in the response to the question *'With close reference to the play discuss how crucial is Alfieri's role in 'A View from the Bridge'*. Note how the candidate has referred to Miller's stagecraft to develop a point and has seamlessly incorporated all the AOs within this paragraph:

*Miller chose to structure his play as an ancient Greek play, therefore the implication is that Alfieri is like a Greek chorus. Miller uses him to start and finish the play: and as such Miller uses Alfieri to control and guide our opinions. For instance at the beginning of the play Miller uses Alfieri to warn us about 'the bloody course' to anticipate the tension and tragedy of the play. However, Miller ensures that our first impression of Eddie is positive by having Alfieri say that he 'was a good man'. At the end, as the main character dies Alfieri points out the tragedy of his 'useless' death, as he 'mourns' Eddie. Miller uses Alfieri as a greek chorus and controls how we feel about the protagonist throughout the play.*

This response scored full marks.

An example of a sound, level 3 response in which the candidate discusses Priestley's presentation of the theme of responsibility and offers some comment on language and form:

*A quotation to show (Sheila's) views on people are different from her father's is after she found out her father had fired Eva Smith because she asked for a higher pay. In Act 2 Sheila says: 'I know I'm to blame – and I'm desperately sorry' ...The use of the hyphen in a play is used for a dramatic pause, it is an authentic way for the audience to realise that Sheila is sorry for her actions. Finally, towards the end of the play Sheila comes across as more grown up...this is shown by the quotation: 'The point is, you don't seem to have learnt anything'. This implies that she feels responsible... for Eva's death.*

This response fulfilled the criteria of a level 3 response and was awarded 18 marks.

A small number of centres offered *Kindertransport* and *A Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*. The centres that had studied *Kindertransport* offered some thoughtful and interesting discussions on character presentation and the question of identity and the theme of fear. Thoughtful responses were offered by centres that had studied *The*

*Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* discussing Christopher's condition and how it would influence his relationship with his parents and the people around him.

## **Assignment B**

*Macbeth* and *Romeo and Juliet* were by far the most popular texts for Assignment B. There were some thoughtful and interesting contextual points made across the levels and these were often woven into the responses. The following extract shows how a top level candidate has integrated the context into the response and has demonstrated the relationship between text and context. The response discusses the motives behind Shakespeare's presentation of Lady Macbeth:

*In 'Macbeth' Shakespeare presents ... Lady Macbeth, as a villain. He does this by showing crucial changes from the beginning of the play and contrasting stereotypes of gender. Shakespeare presents Lady Macbeth as willing power upon herself and rejecting her gender. She's rebelling against stereotypes and the manners of a Jacobean lady. As she is powerful and independent Shakespeare's motives would be to make Lady Macbeth a villain and a witch in order to present Macbeth in a better light. By killing a dangerous rebel he would please King James 1<sup>st</sup> which is the main point of the play. As a powerful female character...she would receive negative feedback from both audience and king which can only be resolved by her death.*

A level 3 response, which had been awarded a mark of 18, in which the theme of control is discussed, AO4 is less confidently and subtly presented:

*The titles of Thane of Glamis and Cowdor emphasise an immediate sense of the power Macbeth holds. Macbeth's reaction is confused and he questions the witches about his possible future. An audience at the time would understand the belief of the Divine Right of a King to rule...his position is decided by God and the people must believe in it...Macbeth needs a stronger person to direct him towards the 'golden round'. The introduction of Lady Macbeth supports the belief that a woman has to be loyal to her husband, but Shakespeare gives her more influence which contrasts with the views surrounding gender at the time of the play. An Elizabethan audience would not approve of her.*

With reference to both Assignments A and B, and particularly where candidates offered both texts on Drama, Modern and Heritage, many moderators felt that there did not appear to be a close enough focus on dramaturgy and stagecraft. It was felt that these texts had possibly been taught as if they were prose and this sometimes hindered the responses. A number of moderators also noted that where centres chose a novel for the Literary Heritage Text, the candidates often did better on AO2 analysis, particularly the language, than those which chose a second play.

Other texts offered included *The Merchant of Venice* which discussed gender roles, power, the relationship between Portia and Bassanio. Of the prose texts *Pride and Prejudice* proved popular with questions about wealth and marriage. *Great Expectations* was also offered, but many of these responses tended to be chronological and narrative

descriptions of Pip's development.

## **Administration**

With regard to administration, it is important to remember that moderators do have to check the candidates' names, numbers and marks against the mark sheets, so it is helpful that the folder cover sheet is fastened on the very top of the folder. Many moderators expressed their frustration at having to chase up centres about submitting folders with the highest and lowest marks, even if these are not specified in the sample required by the exam board. This is an examination board requirement.

Attaching the exam board's mark scheme, relevantly highlighted to indicate where marks were awarded was also appreciated and considered good practice.

Many centres displayed clear evidence of robust internal moderation and most marked accurately according to the criteria and highlighted where the AOs had been covered. Some centres, however, tended to over-reward and sometimes quite substantially at the 24/25 borderlines, or indiscriminately award full marks, often resulting in the folders having to be re-marked in full by the moderator.

Some of the more confident centres displayed a reluctance to award the highest grade when the candidate's work merited it. It seems that some centres are still assuming that a highest grade script must represent a perfect response, whereas the mark scheme does not require that. Some responses achieved the highest grade and some would have scored much higher than the maximum theoretically.

## **A brief summary**

It is important that the tasks set are sufficiently challenging and related to all the assessment objectives. Assignment A is assessed for AO1 and AO2. Assignment B is assessed for AO1, AO2 and AO4.

It is important that candidates are presented with a range of topics and ideas and are encouraged to choose one that appeals, thus encouraging a sound personal engagement.

It is important that all drama texts, for both assignments focus closely on dramaturgy and stagecraft.

It is also important that AO4, the relationship of text to context relates fully to the question set. Substantial biographical detail on any of the writers is irrelevant and detracts from the task in hand.

Some candidates have started using materials from various critical works and citing these using footnotes or a bibliography at the end as in A level coursework. This detracted from the personal engagement and original response asked for in the specification.

The guidance for each assignment is 600 – 1000 words. Some responses were over 2500

words long. Quantity does not always mean quality and often narrative or historical detail detracted from the core of the response. On the other hand to cover ALL the Assessment Objectives in sufficient depth and detail responses need to be developed and sustained. A well-planned, concise and carefully structured response, within the word limit, can achieve full marks.

All moderators without exception commented on how rewarding it was to see the strong personal engagement of the candidates with the texts and how they enjoyed reading some of the interesting, thoughtful and sometimes unusual interpretations.

