



Examiners' Report
Principal Moderator Feedback

November 2020

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

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Introduction

Candidates produced two coursework assignments, the titles of which were self-generated or devised by their teachers.

Assignment A (Modern Drama): This was based on a modern drama text chosen from the set list in the specification. Two Assessment Objectives were equally targeted:
AO1: Candidates demonstrate a close knowledge of the text and maintain an informed, critical personal engagement (15 marks)
AO2: Candidates analyse language, form and structure used by the writer to create meanings and effects (15 marks).

Assignment B (Literary Heritage): This was based on a Literary Heritage text chosen from the set list in the specification.

Candidates were assessed on AO1 and AO2 (10+10 marks).

Candidates were also expected to show an understanding of the relationships between texts and their contexts for AO4 (10 marks).

The guidance for length of assignments was 600 to 1000 words for each one.

General Comments

There was a range in the quality of the responses as well as the tasks set by centres. The best responses were those where candidates showed a degree of independence and developed their own personal response to texts. It was gratifying to see evidence of this even during the difficult time of Covid restrictions.

Setting a Task

The choice of title set by the centre was often seen to affect the outcomes of the candidate: titles which led them to consider the writers' craft and set a challenge led to a more perceptive critical style and personal engagement. Where the task set had a clear focus which was not too broad the candidates found it easier to avoid descriptive and narrative responses. Some good examples from the November cohort of the type of task which elicited well focused responses were:

'How does the writer use language, form and structure to present fear in *Kindertransport?*' (Assignment A - Modern Drama)

'Referring to language, form and structure, how does Priestley present the character of Sheila Birling?' (Assignment A - Modern Drama)

'Taking into consideration the relationship of the play and its context, explore the ways in which Shakespeare presents Macbeth's relationship with his wife' (Assignment B – Literary Heritage Texts)

'Examine the ways in which Shakespeare develops the character of Romeo throughout the play. What might this show about growing up in those times?' (Assignment B – Literary Heritage Texts)

Less successful responses were often as a result of an unfocused question which did not lead to the candidate covering the set Assessment Objectives.

Titles such as: 'How capitalism failed the working class' (Assignment A Modern Drama –

Priestley) and 'What do you think of Mr Alfieri? Is he worthy of our respect?' (Assignment A Modern Drama – Miller) elicited good personal responses but did not lead to effective coverage of AO2 (language, form and structure) which is worth half of the marks.

Vague, descriptive titles like 'Young love in *Romeo and Juliet*' (Literary Heritage Texts) and 'Ambition in *Macbeth*' (Literary Heritage Texts) tended to produce a narrative response as the candidates struggled to maintain a critical approach.

It should be noted that the use of tasks taken from the alternative exam component, such as 'Explore the theme of loyalty in *Romeo and Juliet*' or 'To what extent are lessons learnt in *An Inspector Calls*?', whilst perfectly adequate for a 45 minute exam response, may not lend themselves to a sustained analysis of AO2 which is expected in the coursework unit where candidates have more time to develop their critical skills.

Candidate Performance

Assignment A

The most popular texts chosen for Modern Drama were 'A View from the Bridge' and 'An Inspector calls.' It was refreshing to see one centre choose 'Kindertransport' to good effect. Many responses appeared to be based on past examination questions, which though adequate did not always challenge the candidates sufficiently. Tasks which asked 'How' the writer achieved effects produced responses more focused on AO2, e.g. 'Explore the ways in which Miller builds up sympathy for the character of Marco throughout the play'. This is more focused than the question 'Is Marco a character for whom we have sympathy?'

Effectively analysing the playwright's methods and considering the audience reaction should form part of AO2 analysis for play scripts and stronger responses were those where the text was seen as a performance with dramatic techniques being considered.

This is an example of a Level 5 response to *A View from the Bridge* showing cohesive evaluation of language, form and structure, including consideration of dramatic effects:

'Beatrice feels as though she is being neglected by Eddie throughout the entirety of the play and senses a betrayal from him, as she still adheres to the role of a dutiful wife. She challenges: 'When am I going to be a wife again, Eddie?' with the direct address exemplifying her frustration and anger at Eddie's indifference. The interrogative 'What's the matter, Eddie, don't you like me, heh?' implies that she is demanding an answer, however she softens her inquiry with the colloquial 'heh'. This effective use of dialogue reflects her vulnerability and shows the audience that she is embarrassed about the situation but would prefer not to address the problem formally'.

Many candidates covered AO4 (context) for the Modern Drama response, although this is not required. This can lead to a greater understanding of the writer's intentions but it is important that any AO4 comment in Assignment A is made relevant to the task and not used as a historical introduction.

This is an example of a Level 5 response to *An Inspector Calls* where knowledge of historical context has been used effectively alongside analysis of AO2 to further exhibit assured knowledge and understanding of the text:

'Priestley's juxtaposition of the words 'hopes' and 'fears' and again 'suffering' and 'happiness' reflects the contrast in society between the positions of the lower and upper classes between the two World Wars. The use of these emotive words also encourages the audience to empathise with those in Eva Smith's situation. The imagery of lives being interconnected reflects Priestley's socialist view that everyone's actions impact on others, and those with the power to assist (the Birlings) those who are needy (Eva) should do so to improve everyone's quality of life. The Inspector also delivers the Birlings a powerful warning about divine judgement: 'We don't live alone. We are members of one body. We are responsible for each other'. Priestley's use of three short impactful sentences clearly sends the audience the simple message that we are all responsible for one another.'

Assignment B

For Literary Heritage Texts, *Macbeth* was by far the most popular text choice followed by *Romeo and Juliet*. A few centres chose *Pride and Prejudice* and one centre offered *The Merchant of Venice*. Where two plays were chosen for study, the lack of AO2 coverage, particularly dramatic techniques, became more noticeable. Most candidates wrote more successfully about narrative techniques in prose texts.

A few candidates produced thoughtful responses and attempts were made to link text with context to cover the requirement for AO4. There were, however, some responses which included substantial biographical detail on Shakespeare which was irrelevant to the task in hand and not integrated into the main body of the response. Often the comment on context (AO4) was not integrated well and served as a biographical or historical introduction rather than being detailed and sustained.

Here is an example of a Level 5 response to *Macbeth* where the relationship between text and context has been integrated convincingly alongside analysis of AO2:

'Lady Macbeth's dominant and forceful nature is further demonstrated in Act 1 scene 5 where she instructs Macbeth to 'look like the innocent flower/ But be the serpent under it'. The flower symbolises beauty and innocence, while the serpent has connotations of Satan as he is symbolised as a snake in the Garden of Eden, recalling well-known biblical images to a highly religious Shakespearean audience. The image reflects her own character by suggesting she is a vicious fiend hiding within a beautiful female body. The contrast between these two objects further emphasises how much she has changed since calling out to the spirits to 'unsex' her, and would shock Shakespeare's audience, including King James 1, who were superstitious about witchcraft and demonology.'

As in Assignment A, titles which were focused on the writer's craft and were not too wide proved most successful. Titles such as 'How does the author make a memorable character?', 'Are the three witches really horrific?' and 'Fate in *Romeo and Juliet*' are too wide ranging for the candidate to focus specifically on the relevant AOs and led to descriptive answers lacking in a discriminating and perceptive critical style.

Less successful responses used over long quotations to support points and lacked close analysis of AO2 (language, form and structure). However, the knowledge and understanding of the texts studied (AO1) was often a strong point even with less able candidates and centres should be congratulated on this.

Administration

Most centres included the necessary paperwork with their sample of scripts: EDI print out, front cover sheet (signed and annotated with marks awarded and summative comments) and authentication sheet (signed), which made the job of moderation run more smoothly. Moderators do need to check details against the information on Gateway so it is important that the folder cover sheet is fastened to the front of the work and completed with candidate and centre numbers. The work of the highest and lowest candidate must also be included even if these do not appear on Gateway as part of the sample.

All work should show evidence of teacher marking. Although the majority of centres provided detailed comments on the assignments, there were some centres who submitted clean scripts. The comments, both marginal and summative, should link to the wording of the Assessment Objectives in the mark scheme. Some centres did not appear to accurately apply the marking criteria to explain how marks were attained. Comments such as 'assured', 'perceptive' and 'sophisticated' were used on Level 3 assignments and subjective comments like 'Beautiful summing up', 'Excellent understanding', 'Perfect point! Well done!' appeared on some scripts addressed to the student.

Some centres showed evidence of very good practice in carrying out internal moderation with two sets of comments appearing on the scripts. Where this was the case, the marking was usually a lot more accurate. A few centres have adopted the practice of highlighting the scripts in different colours to show where they feel the AOs have been covered. This is very helpful to show how marks have been awarded, but the highlighting must relate accurately to the wording of the mark scheme.

It was rewarding to see some very strong personal engagement across the ability range of the candidates and to read thoughtful responses often produced under difficult conditions.

Summary

It is important that centres take into account the following:

- The importance of setting a task which is sufficiently challenging and related to all the relevant Assessment Objectives for the assignment
- All questions set should be tightly focused and allow the candidate to develop themes and analyse language, form and structure
- It is important that candidates are presented with a range of topics and ideas, and are encouraged to choose ones that appeal, thus encouraging personal engagement and independence
- The analysis of drama texts should focus closely on dramatic techniques, audience reaction and stagecraft
- It is important that AO4 (the relationship between text and context) is well integrated into the response and relates fully to the question set. Substantial biographical detail on any of the writers is irrelevant and detracts from the task in hand
- The guidance for each assignment is 600-1000 words. Quantity does not always mean quality, and unnecessary narrative or historical detail can detract from the core of the response. However, in order to cover all the Assessment Objectives sufficiently responses need to be developed and sustained
- The best practice is to internally standardise all marking even if there is only one teacher teaching the specification. Small centres in the same geographical region should share good practice
- Scripts should show evidence of teacher marking with comments that relate to the wording of the marking criteria and refer to relevant Assessment Objectives. Looking at the Board's exemplar scripts for this unit should provide greater guidance for small or new centres
- All folders should be submitted with the centre's EDI printout and signed authentication form.

