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## FOREWORD

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This booklet contains reports written by Examiners on the work of candidates in certain papers. **Its contents are primarily for the information of the subject teachers concerned.**

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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## GCE Ordinary Level

Paper 2010/01

Paper 1

### General comments

Because of the reduced size of the entry for this subject this year, it is not possible to make such comprehensive comments as one would wish, since some of the texts were offered by very few, if any candidates. The range of ability of candidates was, however, as wide as ever. There were examples of extremely high performance, as well as a few very low marks from candidates who seemed to have less than a passing acquaintance with the texts. A disproportionately large number of weaker answers seemed to be tackling passage-based questions 'unseen', to little effect. Even if they gleaned a little from the passage, the second part of the question generally revealed their lack of knowledge. In these circumstances, it is strange how many candidates were able to write a page or two without saying anything. Most candidates appeared to have enjoyed and to have benefited from their study of the subject, however, and did themselves justice in the examination.

### Comments on specific questions

#### **Section A**

*Romeo and Juliet*

#### **Question 1**

Candidates had no difficulty in recognising the passage and contextualising it, though many did not remember that Romeo is in fact in a state of euphoria at this moment, having had a good dream which he thinks signals his reunion with Juliet. Some candidates did not recognise that (c) was asking for a comment on the words that Balthasar uses, but most did, and even if they were not able to describe precisely how he is using Romeo's words, any indication that they were aware of word-play or irony gained them the mark. Most candidates recognised that (f) required a comment on the importance of Fate/the Stars in the play though often omitted to explore what Romeo means by defying them. Generally they were able to provide another relevant quotation. Some candidates confused 'mood' with 'characteristic' in (h). The other part-questions caused few difficulties.

#### **Question 2**

- (a) There were some very sound explorations of the passage and strong responses to what is revealed of the Nurse here, though weaker answers tended to find little to say about the humour of the situation. Better answers showed a clear response to the humour created by the Nurse's prevarication and Juliet's increasing anxiety and supported their ideas by detailed reference to the passage. Perceptive candidates made the point that the audience only finds the situation funny because they know that the Nurse is bringing good news.
- (b) Weaker candidates did not focus sufficiently on how one's response to the Nurse changes and develops, but merely trotted out everything they knew about her. Such answers frequently glossed over what Juliet considers to be her betrayal when she advises Juliet to marry after all and says Romeo is a 'dishclout' compared to him. More thoughtful answers considered the extent to which this advice was completely in character in its pragmatism and lack of romanticism and that the Nurse in fact does believe that this is the best course for Juliet.

### Question 3

This question produced the least stereotypical answers and there was evidence of some careful thought from a lot of candidates. Even weaker answers were able to see that Romeo's love for Rosaline is infatuation in comparison with his love for Juliet; better answers supported this with careful comparison of the imagery that he uses in describing them. Most candidates saw that Paris's love for Juliet bore a resemblance to Romeo's for Rosaline in being unrequited; better answers showed that it was genuine in its way, however and that he was prepared to die for Juliet in the same way as Romeo. There were all sorts of ideas, and any that could be supported from the text were credited.

#### *Lord of the Flies*

This text was almost as popular as *Romeo and Juliet* and candidates had obviously enjoyed it and found it thought provoking.

### Question 4

Candidates seemed to know the incident well and to find the questions straightforward on the whole. In (c) they generally recognised that the place referred to was where Simon had been killed, but surprisingly few mentioned their discomfort and guilt at the memory. They had no difficulty in explaining why the boys were in a dangerous situation and in supporting their ideas from the passage. The only part-question to baffle a lot of candidates was (e) – many knew that the red, weedy square is associated with a death, but many thought it was Simon's rather than Piggy's (despite their answers to (c)) and came up with some fanciful ideas as to how Simon's body got there. Many of them saw the symbolism of the colour, however, even if they identified the wrong character. As **Question 1 (h)**, there was sometimes a confusion between an emotion and a characteristic, many candidates saying such things as 'Ralph is feeling courage'. Many offered a wide range of appropriate suggestions, however.

### Question 5

- (a) There were some good answers to this question. Candidates found it easy to sympathise with Ralph's guilt and uncertainty following Simon's death and they generally explored the passage quite thoroughly. They tended to be harder on Piggy because of his apparent desire to deny responsibility for and forget Simon's death though they saw that he is trying to keep Ralph focused and confident in his leadership.
- (b) There was no problem in recounting what happens during the storm following Simon's discovery of the dead pilot, or in identifying this as a key moment in the degeneration of the boys into savagery. The quality of the answer was determined by the depth in which this idea was explored and in the judicious selection of supporting detail.

### Question 6

This was a popular question and had obviously been prepared for. Candidates generally knew the material well, though they tended to focus on the very beginning of the novel. Better answers were able to refer to details all the way through the text and to show not only how the conch is established as a symbol of democracy and discipline, but also the ways in which this is eroded through Jack's disregard for it ('It does not count at this end of the island') to its final destruction along with Piggy, the voice of reason.

#### *The Woodlanders*

It is not possible to comment on candidates' performance on this text as no examples were seen.

## Section B

#### *The Calling of Kindred (Section D)*

A few candidates offered this text and most of them showed evidence of knowledge of the subject matter of the poems and of some ability to relate this to the question. There was a disappointing lack of exploration of language and form, or of close reference and quotation, however. Inevitably a few candidates attempted, in desperation, to answer **Question 10** as an Unseen. Some of them were able to see what *Tomorrow and* is about, but often revealed themselves by asserting that the dying friend was Cowper, and, of course, they had no knowledge of *Easter Monday*.

### *Animal Farm*

This was a very popular choice of text and candidates knew it well.

#### **Question 13**

There were some good detailed responses to **(a)**, better answers ranging from amusement at the visual idea of the pigs on two legs, to horror at the way in which the other animals are being duped, and sympathy for them in their new enslavement. There was also anger towards Napoleon and towards Benjamin for keeping quiet. And there were many other emotions. Even weaker answers formulated the more obvious responses. **(b)** was also competently handled for the most part.

#### **Question 14**

Sympathy, admiration, irritation and annoyance were a few of the emotions generated by the portrayal of Boxer. There was a real sense of engagement and sympathy in most answers, though some candidates argued that in his blind devotion to Napoleon he is responsible for a lot of what goes wrong on the farm. The text was known thoroughly and used sensibly to support ideas.

#### **Question 15**

Similarly, Napoleon drew strong reactions from most candidates. They knew how he systematically abuses the system which he has helped to set up and alters the commandments to suit himself. It was not such a popular question as the other two, but generally produced sound and sometimes perceptive responses.

### *Fielas Child*

Very few candidates offered this text, so comments are very limited.

#### **Question 16**

- (a)** This was quite well done and candidates generally showed a good appreciation of all three characters. They were not expected to give equal attention to all three.
- (b)** There was generally a sound understanding of the part played by Petrus and of the relationship he has with Fielas and Selling.

### *To Kill a Mockingbird*

This was one of the most popular texts on the Paper and produced some very good work. Candidates clearly derive a great deal of pleasure and interest from this novel and it stimulates them to debate.

#### **Question 19**

- (a)** Though candidates were expected to focus on the passage, they were implicitly invited to refer outside it by the words 'using your knowledge of the three characters'. Disappointingly, weaker candidates seemed to miss this prompt and merely went through the passage re-telling it in their own words. Better answers discussed the different perspectives of Scout and Miss Maudie and showed, for example, an awareness of how Scout's view is conditioned by what has been happening to her at school as a result of Atticus taking Tom's case and his instruction to her to fight with her head not with her fists.
- (b)** Candidates found this part of the question much more comfortable and knew the material well. Better answers showed the part that Maudie plays in reinforcing the lessons of courage, of seeing things from other people's point of view and of not shooting mockingbirds as well as identifying the qualities of character which make her a good rôle model for Scout. More supporting detail would have enhanced a good number of answers, however.

## Question 20

This question was less popular and perhaps required greater organisational skill. Some candidates focused on the word 'prejudice' and referred to the trial only in passing, which was not the most productive approach. The most successful answers showed a detailed knowledge of the trial, of the ways in which the cross-examinations of Tom, Bob Ewell and Mayella reveal the evidence against Tom to be deeply flawed, and the way in which Tom's treatment by Mr Gilmer exposes the contempt held by most of the community for any black person. They also considered Atticus's rôle in moving forward the cause of equality.

## Question 21

Even the weakest answers referred to Boo's initial reputation as a 'malevolent phantom' and could trace the stages in the novel by which he comes to be seen as a harmless recluse. The key to the question was, however, 'your impressions' and candidates who merely recounted how Scout and Jem came to change their mind about him were only going some way towards meeting the requirements. There was a tendency for weak candidates to repeat theories that they had learnt, but not fully thought through, like that of Boo being a father-figure to Scout and Jem. Better answers were able to distinguish between the child's eye view presented through Scout and the way in which the reader comes to his or her own judgements about Boo. Such answers also related the character to the theme of the novel and discussed the ways in which he is a 'Mockingbird'. There were some excellent answers to this question which showed thorough engagement with the characters and the novel as a whole.

### *The Royal Hunt of the Sun*

This text was offered by very few candidates. Nevertheless, there were some sound answers, showing good knowledge and understanding of the text and thoughtful responses to the characters and to the Spanish invasion.

### *Twentieth Century Short Stories*

Not many Centres offered this text, but those which did produced extremely pleasing work.

## Question 25

- (a) Most candidates explored this passage in a great deal of detail and produced some very thorough and lively responses. It produced some of the best analyses of a passage, combining careful tracing of ideas and emotions with detailed textual support.
- (ii) The story was known very well and most candidates were able to illustrate a variety of emotions ranging from pity, through irritation and contempt and amusement and back to pity. Even those who misread the question and described the sisters' changing emotions were able to convey some implied response to their situation. The story was known very well and most candidates were able to illustrate a variety of emotions ranging from pity, through irritation and contempt and amusement and back to pity.

## Question 26

A good opening gambit was to define the term 'outsider' and most candidates did this and showed that there were distinct differences in the ways in which their chosen characters found themselves set apart from the societies in which they were operating. It was rare to see unpointed character sketches; most candidates wrote relevantly and fully and arrived at a judgement at the end.

## Question 27

The story chosen by most candidates in answering this question was *Odour of Chrysanthemums*. It was clearly a story which had captured their imaginations. They were able to discuss not only the central husband/wife relationship but also the relationships of parents and children, old and young and the wife and her mother-in-law.

### *Master Harold ...and the Boys* and *Touched with Fire* (Section D)

Neither of these texts was offered by more than a handful of candidates and so it is not possible to comment on performance.