

London Examinations GCE Ordinary Level

Mark Scheme and Examiners' Report for English Literature 7171

May/June 2000

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Tel + 44 20 7758 5656

Fax + 44 20 7758 5959

International@edexcel.org.uk

www.edexcel.org.uk/international

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Mark Scheme and Chief Examiner's Report
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Mark Scheme

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ENGLISH LITERATURE 7171, MARK SCHEME

Observations on marking

Candidates will be expected to demonstrate:

- (a) a first-hand knowledge of texts and, where appropriate, close reading;
- (b) the ability to communicate sensitive, lively and informed personal response;
- (c) the ability to demonstrate some understanding and appreciation of authors' uses of characterisation, plot, narrative, setting and language.

When marking scripts, these objectives must be kept in mind. Questions are devised so that candidates who show an adequate knowledge and understanding of the books studied, and an ability to express that understanding in reasonably correct English, should obtain a mark equivalent to Grade C. Questions give scope for the display of critical awareness above the norm; evidence of this, and of personal response to the texts, must be generously rewarded.

Errors of fact, misquotation, repetition and gross irrelevance must be penalised negatively, i.e. by withholding marks that might otherwise have been given.

Points of value must be ✓ticked in the body of the answers. Material that shows above average perception or originality should be identified by a vertical wavy line in the left-hand margin.

The 3-band marking scheme

Each answer should be initially classified into one of 3 broad bands, and then placed precisely within it.

Do not attempt to subdivide the 20 marks for each question, either mentally or in writing. The listed qualities below are to be taken into account, but there is no 'weighting' for each and mixed profiles will be common – ie the answer does not have to qualify under all three headings to be classified in the 'Good', 'Average' or 'Weak' categories.

Assessment Profiles

<i>The GOOD answer</i>	14 –20
(a) Content	Accounts and commentaries will give evidence of close reading of texts and mature understanding of themes, events, structure, characters and techniques – as appropriate. Close references and/or apt quotations will support the points made throughout.
(b) Relevance	The selection of material will be full, appropriate and clearly set out with the question borne in mind throughout the answer.
(c) Organisation and Style	Accounts and arguments will be presented with clarity and conviction. Style will be fluent, expressing informed personal opinion, response and appreciation.

Overall, the good answer should reveal thorough knowledge and understanding of the chosen texts, an ability to respond to them in terms of the questions, and sufficient command of English to convey the candidate's own critical response and enthusiasm convincingly.

<i>The AVERAGE answer</i>	8 – 13
(a) Content	Evidence of study and understanding of the texts will be given, with some appropriate references and brief quotations. There will be some recognition and appreciation of basic aspects such as themes, characterisation and language.
(b) Relevance	An identifiable number of appropriate points will be made, some developed more fully and confidently than others. Attention to the terms of the question will be evident in the selection of material and in the comments made on it.
(c) Organisation and Style	The account and/or argument will be coherent, and presented in reasonably clear and accurate English. Response to the texts will be evident from the candidate's comments and from the liveliness of his/her expression.

Overall the competent answer should be able to show sound knowledge, moderate understanding and some pleasure derived by the candidate from his/her reading.

<i>The WEAK answer</i>	1 – 7
(a) Content	This may be slight, lacking in specific reference or with details inaccurate; understanding may be limited or seriously flawed; quotations will be scarce and may be grossly inaccurate.
(b) Relevance	Ill-judged choice of material (or the unsuitable 'prepared' answer) could bring the answer into this category, or the question may have been misunderstood. Argument may be stated simply, without development.
(c) Organisation and Style	Difficulties in written English may inhibit coherent expression of ideas, or the answer may consist of very simple and undeveloped statements of facts. Evidence of enjoyment and response will be minimal.

Overall the weak answer will display evidence that the text (or part of it) had been read, and something retained, but the level will be very superficial.

Rubric

If more than four questions are attempted, mark all answers and allow only the best four that lie within the prescription of 1 drama, 1 poetry and 2 prose.

Section A: Drama

Question 1

- (a) Simple summary or paraphrase cannot be rewarded. Candidates must identify the SIGNIFICANCE of the passage in the play as a whole. Apt reference should be made to material which comes before and after this extract.
- (b) Candidates must show an appreciation of the character of Lady Macbeth and they must be able to back up their ideas with sound evidence from the text. Weaker candidates will not be able to show that they have seen Lady Macbeth as something other than a one-dimensional character.
- (c) Candidates should be able to offer at least two themes.

Question 2

- (a) Simple summary or paraphrase cannot be rewarded. Candidates must identify the SIGNIFICANCE of the passage in the play as a whole. Apt reference should be made to material which comes before and after this extract.
- (b) Reward candidates who are able to go beyond mere descriptions of the various friendships and who attempt to explore the importance of the friendships.
- (c) Some independent thought is required here which must be seen to grow out of a close consideration of the personalities of those involved.

Question 3

- (a) Simple summary or paraphrase cannot be rewarded. Candidates must identify the SIGNIFICANCE of the passage in the play as a whole. Apt reference should be made to material which comes before and after this extract.
- (b) Candidates are expected to identify the functions of these characters and not just re-tell the parts of the play in which the characters are involved. Carefully considered personal impressions well sustained by reference to the text are also required.
- (c) Look for a thorough understanding of all of the implications of the title and an explanation of how the various elements/issues in the play fit into this.

Section B: Poetry

Question 4

The poem must be approached in an analytical way; valid comments and observations must be made. It is not enough just to recognise various devices.

Question 5

Candidates must be very clear in explaining what they believe to have been the poet's/poets' stimuli. The discussion about the poems must be appropriately directed and not just straightforward critical analyses.

Question 6

Weaker candidates will simply describe poems which are concerned with adventure. Reward candidates who are able to answer the 'How successfully...' part of the question.

Question 7

Candidates must refer to particular poems written by the poet as well as offer some general comments about the poet.

Section C: Prose

Question 8

- (a) A close knowledge of particular letters is required here.
- (b) Both parts of the question must be answered for each character.

Question 9

- (a) Expect close reference to the text.

- (b) Candidates are not being asked for a character study here but rather for a personal response. Candidates are free to express their own opinions but they must be well substantiated.

Question 10

- (a) Expect close reference to the text.
- (b) Candidates must display a clear understanding of the three people who had an influence on Pip's life and be able to evaluate the most important one.

Question 11

- (a) Candidates must show an awareness of the appropriate issues in the novel and be able to substantiate their answer.
- (b) Candidates are free to express their own opinions but beware of prepared character studies.

Question 12

- (a) Look for an appreciation of the author's skills rather than just a re-telling of the incidents.
- (b) Reward candidates who are able to comment on a variety of aspects within the community.

Question 13

- (a) Candidates must be able to identify the main issues which give rise to the comedy.
- (b) Individual character studies cannot gain high marks; similarities and differences must be clearly stated.

Question 14

- (a) Quite a challenging question as candidates will have to think about the reversals in the novel. Expect candidates to answer around the issues of power and status reversals.
- (b) A careful tracing of significant changes is required here.

Question 15

- (a) Answers must focus on what the candidate finds interesting about the central theme and Wyndham's way of presenting it. Marks in the 'good' category cannot be awarded for simply re-telling the story.
- (b) Candidates must make clear what elements have given them their deeper understanding.

Question 16

- (a) A careful choice of events and characters is required.
 - (b) Character studies will not attract marks here as the focus must be on the importance of these characters in Salim's life.
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ENGLISH LITERATURE 7171, CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT

General Comments

Overall, it is true to say that candidates have a good knowledge of the texts that they have prepared for the examination. However, what is still lacking is the really close reference to the texts and quotation which would lift so many answers. Candidates would also do well to remember that questions never ask for simple summaries: there is always a requirement for some analysis and explanation. In addition, candidates are often invited to include an element of personal response in their answers. Centres must prepare their candidates to do more than re-tell the stories of texts or give potted character descriptions. Commentary, analysis and personal response are essential if candidates are to attain the higher grades.

Comments on individual questions

Section A: Drama

Responses to Questions 1(a), 2(a) and 3(a) continue to be of a disappointing standard. Candidates are not using the prompts that are given to them. Very few are responding to the invitation to discuss the passages as pieces of drama and even fewer candidates seem to be able to discuss the use of language in the passages. Candidates far too frequently simply summarise the given passage and make passing references to the characters.

Question 1

Question 1(b) was an extremely popular question and there was a wide range of response. Better candidates were able to trace Lady Macbeth throughout the play and thus present a well balanced argument in response to the question. Weaker candidates concentrated only on the earlier part of the play and thus their discussions were less thorough. Sadly, there were some candidates who did not recognise the quotation and mis-read the word 'fiend' as 'friend'.

Question 1(c) elicited some good answers but equally there was some rather disturbing evidence that candidates did not understand the word 'theme'. Candidates wrote about imagery and symbolism but failed to respond to the word theme. Centres must ensure that candidates have a firm grasp of the terminology that is routinely used in Literature papers.

Question 2

Answers to Question 2(b) were rather limited. Candidates described friendships instead of highlighting the importance of friendship in the play. Few candidates managed to progress beyond Bassanio and Antonio's friendship.

Answers to Question 2 (c) were wide ranging in their quality. The best answers were lively and full of informed personal response whilst the weaker answers tended to describe Bassanio and Portia's courtship and little else.

Question 3

As in previous years, very few candidates attempted questions on 'The Crucible'. Of those candidates who did respond to this play most chose to answer Question 3 (c). Clearly, the candidates who attempted this question were well prepared and had thought about the title in some detail.

Section B: Poetry

Examiners remain concerned that centres are not encouraging their candidates to study a sufficiently wide range of poems. Without this wide ranging knowledge candidates are not always able to respond appropriately to the specific questions asked on the paper. Candidates are frequently struggling to make inappropriate poems somehow fit the question; this is rarely successful.

Question 4

Most candidates who attempted Question 4 were able to grasp the essential irony in the poem. It is a shame that candidates do not use the guidelines that are given to them in the bullet points as these are designed to aid the candidate in the structuring of their answers.

Question 5

Answers to Question 5 often illustrated the point made above about using inappropriate poems. There were some very ill judged choices of poems here. Some candidates chose to write about poems which had made a strong impression on themselves, thus completely ignoring the question and making what amounted to a rubric error.

Question 6

Question 6 was not a very popular question and when chosen candidates gave little more than summaries of two poems.

Question 7

In order to answer Question 7 really well candidates needed to be able to refer to a number of poems by their chosen poet. Unfortunately, candidates did not appear to have this range available to them and answers were therefore rather limited and thin. Some candidates did not read the question properly and thought that they were required to recommend a poem rather than a poet; obviously credit could not be given to such answers.

Section C: Prose

Questions 8 - 16

The pattern of choice of texts continues to be much the same as in previous years with most candidates choosing the traditional texts along with 'Animal Farm'. It is disappointing that so few centres choose other twentieth century texts.

Candidates must be encouraged to read the questions more carefully than they appear to be doing at present. Unless all parts of a question are attempted candidates cannot expect to receive high marks. Question 8 (a) required candidates to 'explain why (the letters) are so important in terms of plot and character.' Far too many candidates simply presented the contents of the letters, often in some detail, but they did not respond to the terms of the question. In Question 8 (b) candidates were asked to 'describe the part' characters played. There was a distinct lack of analysis here and character descriptions were thought to be enough. Similarly, in Question 9 (b) the candidates were asked to explain their 'response' to Silas Marner and to refer to 'several episodes spread throughout the novel'. These directions were ignored by too many candidates and so they were unable to access the higher marks.

In Section A : Drama reference was made to the observation that candidates did not always appear to understand the word 'theme' in Question 1 (c). This observation was made again in Question 15 (a). Candidates are severely hampered in their work if they do not understand the terminology which is used in the study of Literature.

It is also very important to note that the examiners saw some outstanding answers in which candidates had addressed the terms of the question and presented informed essays which were lively and well substantiated.

ENGLISH LITERATURE 7171, GRADE BOUNDARIES

Grade	A	B	C	D	E
Lowest mark for award of grade	46	35	24	20	14

Note: Grade boundaries may vary from year to year and from subject to subject, depending on the demands of the question paper.

Edexcel Publications, Adamsway, Mansfield, Notts, NG18 4LN, UK

Tel + 44 1623 450 781

Fax + 44 1623 450 481

Order Code: UO010830

For more information on Edexcel qualifications please contact us:

International Customer Relations Unit,

Stewart House, 32 Russell Square, London, WC1B 5D

Tel + 44 20 7758 5656

Fax + 44 20 7758 5959

International@edexcel.org.uk

www.edexcel.org.uk/international

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