

London Examinations GCE Ordinary Level

Mark Scheme and Examiners' Report for English Literature 7171

January 2001

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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 you must bear these objectives 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. Please show in the left-hand margin where such penalties have been incurred.

Points of value must be ✓ **ticked** in the body of the answers (**not** in the margin). Material that shows above average perception or originality should be identified by a vertical wavy line in the left-hand margin.

Please document all your marking wherever possible by means of written comments in the margin and at the end of the answer – explanations of how assessments have been made are often immensely valuable to the Chief Examiner.

THE 3-BAND MARKING SCHEME

Try to secure a satisfactory spread of marks over the full range available. It is unwise to speculate where grade boundaries will be established; the Assistant Examiner's job is to be as consistent as possible throughout the marking period so that the merit order for that allocation of scripts is reliable.

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, unless directed to do so. 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 3 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 4 questions are attempted, mark all answers and allow the best 4 that lie within the prescription of 1 drama, 1 poetry and 2 prose.

All answers should have their marks recorded; those disallowed should be struck through with the letter '**R**' alongside. Indicate on the front cover of the script where such action has been taken.

N.B. Every page of the script on which the candidate has written must be marked in red ink in some way to show that it has been seen by the examiner.

Section A: Drama

Question 1

Macbeth

- (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 both before and after this extract.
- (b) Expect there to be references to pivotal episodes eg: early discussion re. murder of Duncan, banquet scene etc. There must be a careful tracing through the whole play.
- (c) Weaker candidates will simply offer scene summaries which cannot attract good marks. The good answer will explain the reasons for the candidate's response.

Question 2

The Merchant of Venice

- (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 both before and after this extract.
- (b) An in-depth study is required here and the candidate is expected to explain clearly why s/he found the character interesting.
- (c) Reward answers which show an awareness of the appropriate aspects of the play and an ability to explain how they are important.

Question 3

The Crucible

- (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 both before and after this extract.
- (b) A personal response is required here but there must be evidence presented to uphold the view. (Do not reward candidates who refer to the printed material in 3a).
- (c) The choice of character will be of great importance. Evidence must be given of the internal conflict.

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 are at liberty to discuss either long or short poems to back up their viewpoint. A 'range' refers to a minimum of three poems.

Question 6

The focus must be on the aspects of the poems which are amusing.

Question 7

The two poems may be by the same poet or by different poets. The focus of the answer must be on answering the question HOW the poems have communicated the sense of joy/sadness.

Section C: Prose

Question 8

Pride and Prejudice

- (a) Expect highly detailed answers here as candidates will almost certainly have studied this issue in some detail.
- (b) Expect reference to a variety of incidents. Beware of straightforward descriptions of place. A sound knowledge is required here.

Question 9

Silas Marner

- (a) Both parts of this question must be answered.
- (b) Candidates must show an appreciation of those aspects of the novel which they feel are of value. Mention could be made of themes, style of writing, interesting characters etc.

Question 10

Great Expectations

- (a) Do look for the personal response aspect in the answer.
- (b) There are three parts to this question and all three areas must be addressed.

Question 11

Animal Farm

- (a) Candidates are free to choose their characters but those qualities which they find admirable must be made clear. **One** or **two** characters could be enough but candidates may range more widely.
- (b) A close knowledge of the text is required here along with some evidence that the candidates have thought about the issues involved.

Question 12

Ake

- (a) Beware of summaries which do not bring out Wole's childish perception of the illogical world of adults.
- (b) The changes must be carefully explained, as must the consequent effects.

Question 13

A Man of the People

- (a) Candidates must be able to evaluate the importance of their characters in the novel as a whole.
- (b) Candidates will probably focus on corruption and related issues but the question does require more than one problem to be discussed.

Question 14

July's People

- (a) Candidates must not be rewarded for straightforward descriptions of the lives of the whites and the blacks; the focus must be on how the relationship is shown.
- (b) Candidates must be able to offer a variety of 'lessons' learnt.

Question 15

Into the Wind

- (a) A careful choice of stories is necessary here. Candidates cannot be awarded high marks for simple descriptions of female characters.
- (b) The focus must be on illustrating the author's skill and not on presenting character studies.

Question 16

A Bend in the River

- (a) Candidates will need to have experienced a sense of empathy here in order to be able to offer a detailed answer.
- (b) Candidates are free to offer their own opinion but it must be well substantiated.

ENGLISH LITERATURE 7171, CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT

General Comments

Candidates who are entered for this examination range from the very able, who produce thought provoking and carefully argued answers, to those who are barely able to write three or four lines in answer to the questions.

It is the responsibility of teachers to prepare their candidates in an appropriate way. Teachers must be very clear about the demands of the syllabus. They must be aware of the rubric demands and of the need for close textual reference and quotation. It is quite distressing to find centres which have, for example, encouraged candidates to begin every answer with a potted biography of the writer before going on to answer the set question. Conversely, it is extremely pleasing when one comes across centres that have prepared their candidates well and enabled individuals to excel in their writing.

Section A: Drama

Questions 1, 2, 3

- (a) As is made clear in every report, candidates must not treat part (a) in this section as if it were an exercise in paraphrase and precis. Question (a) follows a standard format and candidates should be given plenty of training and practice in how to answer it. Candidates would also be well advised to note the bullet points which are printed as a guide to them.

Question 1

- (b) This was a popular question and there were some excellent answers produced in response to it. Weaker candidates wrote about changes in Macbeth and changes in Lady Macbeth without focusing on the changes in the relationship between the two characters.
- (c) Not very many candidates responded this question. However, almost all those who did wrote about the banquet scene and the sleep walking scene. Some candidates found it difficult to explain why they had found these scenes to be so effective and so were unable to access higher marks.

Question 2

- (b) This was a very popular question and, as expected, most candidates wrote about Shylock. There were some really excellent answers here in which candidates were able to give full reasons for their choice. These candidates were able to illustrate fully their fascination with the character. More pedestrian answers were presented as character studies which did not move on to explore personal responses to the character.
- (c) There were surprisingly few responses to this question.

Question 3

As has now come to be expected, very few candidates answered questions on "The Crucible". Of those who did attempt to answer questions on this play most chose question 3 (c). Proctor was the character on whom most candidates concentrated although there were some answers based on Abigail.

Section B: Poetry

This syllabus does permit the study of a very wide range of poetry and yet on reading candidates' scripts one could be forgiven for thinking that only about five poems are prescribed for study. Candidates appear to be very limited in the number of poems they have studied and therefore find themselves having to twist and turn to try to make the few poems they know fit the question. Such tortured efforts can rarely be rewarded with good marks.

Question 4

Most candidates who attempted question 4 were able to understand the essential theme of the poem and did write quite competently about the poet's attitude to his subject and about the poem's effect on them personally. Candidates were not so competent in writing about the poet's descriptive skills or about the poet's use of language. A small but significant number of candidates failed to treat the poem as a piece of literature and simply used it as a springboard to write about personal losses that they have experienced.

Question 5

Question 5 required candidates to refer to a range of poems and to present a viewpoint about the statement put forward in the question. Far too many candidates were unable to refer to more than two poems and very few responded to the assertion in the question.

Question 6

Question 6 vividly illustrated the point that many candidates appear to know only two or three poems. The choices made here caused great concern to the examiners. It is extremely difficult to believe that candidates really find "Dolce et Decorum Est" amusing and yet this poem appeared time and time again in answer to the question. If candidates are limited in their knowledge of poetry they must at least try to make sensible choices of questions. Many candidates who answered this question would have been able to answer question 7 with the poems that they had clearly prepared.

Question 7

Question 7 was quite a popular choice. Weaker candidates failed to show how the poems communicated the sense of sadness or joy. Such candidates simply wrote summaries of two sad or two joyful poems and were thus unable to attain good marks.

Section C: Prose

There is no advantage in choosing a traditional classic of earlier centuries and yet the vast majority of candidates answered questions on Austen, Eliot and Dickens. The brevity of "Animal Farm" also appears to attract many centres.

Last year's report noted that candidates must be encouraged to read the questions more carefully and to make sure they address all parts if they hope to receive high marks. This advice is still not being heeded and candidates often appear to ignore parts of the question. They must focus clearly on the wording of the question if they are to gain good marks. For example, in question 9(a) many candidates wrote well about the importance of the characters but failed to address the part of the question which asked how believable Eliot had made the characters for them. Similarly, in question 10(b) candidates wrote about Estella's part in the novel and most wrote about Pip's attitude towards her, but very few managed to explain their own response to Estella. Such answers are not complete and cannot attract good marks.

The temptation to write summaries for the examiner is still evident in many answers. Candidates are required to answer specific questions by making three or four sound points and supporting each with close references or quotations. Long summaries of plots are not required. Candidates who have studied the short stories in "Into The Wind" seem to be particularly prone to offering summaries. In question 15(a) far too many candidates wrote summaries of two stories which centred on women without focusing on the question at all. In question 15(b) there were many detailed summaries of the stories but very little which clearly illustrated the author's skill in the creation of memorable characters.

Another problem which has been noted before is the tendency to reproduce pre-prepared answers. It seems that some candidates, having been practising (quite properly) with past papers, have then learnt their essays verbatim and are intent on using them again no matter what the question. This was particularly obvious in question 11(a). It is difficult to believe that candidates really admire characters whom they call "back stabbing liars" such as Squealer. It is more likely that candidates wanted to write about the character no matter what the question. This must be discouraged.

Personal responses which are well substantiated with close reference to the text and which are clearly related to the focus of the question are always welcomed. It is worth remarking on the high quality of some answers to question 9(b). There were some very thoughtful answers offered here which were a pleasure to read.

Although it can sometimes be rather disappointing to read answers which clearly show that candidates do not have an understanding of the demands of the paper it does continue to be a great pleasure to read other answers from well prepared candidates.

ENGLISH LITERATURE 7171, GRADE BOUNDARIES

Grade	A	B	C	D	E
Lowest mark for award of grade	46	36	26	22	17

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

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