

# Examiners' Report

## GCE O Level English Literature (7171)

June 2006

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Examiners' Report

## ENGLISH LITERATURE 7171, MARK SCHEME

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### General Comments

Examiners continue to be impressed by the quality of work offered by the high achieving candidates. These candidates show real analytical skills along with carefully thought out personal responses. It is a cause of concern however, to see in contrast, the number of candidates who appear to have learned by rote stock responses and identical phrases. This is very obvious when an examiner is reading a Centre's work and the lack of personal understanding and engagement is alarming.

### Detailed Comments

#### Section A

##### Drama

The most popular texts were, once again, the two Shakespeare plays.

##### Question 1 (a)

This was the most popular option here. (i) was answered quite well but many candidates were unable to respond adequately to (ii). Far too many candidates simply listed examples of imagery without any evaluation about its effectiveness at all.

##### Question 1 (b)

Those candidates who agreed with the statement often did not have very much to say. Candidates who disagreed were able to write quite convincingly about characters and themes.

##### Question 1 (c)

Very few candidates answered this question, however, there were some good responses made.

##### Question 2 (a)

This was the most popular question here. There was a wide spectrum of response here with the best showing real insight into why the Nurse responds as she does as well as offering close analysis of Juliet. Weaker candidates simply summarised the passage.

##### Question 2(b)

Candidates who attempted this question seemed to respond best to Benvolio. There was evidence of some lack of historical/cultural understanding when candidates were writing about Lady Capulet.

##### Question 2(c)

Very few candidates responded to this question.

##### Questions 3 and 4

An extremely small number of candidates responded to these questions.

#### Section B

## Poetry

### Question 5

This was a very popular question. Once again far too many responses were essentially paraphrases of parts the poem which showed a lack of understanding of the poem's overall meaning. Some candidates did attempt to identify poetic techniques but they were then unable to discuss the effects of these techniques. Those candidates who were able to understand the poem wrote some very interesting responses which were of real quality.

### Question 6

Those candidates who attempted this question had clearly studied the poem closely.

### Question 7

This question required candidates to focus on the techniques the poets had used to involve the reader. However, too many candidates ignored this aspect and instead presented summaries of the poems. Some candidates took this as an opportunity to write about their own experiences in love!

## Section C

### Prose Pre-1950

There were responses on most of the texts in this section but 'The Great Gatsby' and 'Northanger Abbey' were by far the most popular. 'Far From The Madding Crowd' also attracted many candidates. For the most part candidates have a secure knowledge of the content of the texts.

Candidates must always focus on the texts and remember that they are answering literary questions. There were some examples of candidates stepping out too far from the text and talking about 'real' life too much. For example in Question 8a many candidates wrote statements such as 'people don't behave like that in our society now' instead of examining how credible Hardy's characters are. Similarly in Question 12a some candidates offered too much about honesty and morality in 'real' life instead of concentrating on the novel.

As noted in previous reports, weaker candidates continue to disregard the exact terms of the question and present summaries of the stories or incidents with little, if any, focus on the question. Candidates must also be ready to offer their own personal responses which should be backed up with reference to the texts.

The empathetic questions in this section were quite popular this year and many were very well done indeed. Some responses to Question 11b were excellent and candidates had really written in the style that one might have expected from Catherine. Sadly, some candidates had not read the question closely enough and wrote about the night before Catherine left to go to the Abbey.

It has been pointed out before in the Chief Examiner's Report that teachers must ensure that candidates are familiar with the generic marking grid for this paper as candidates are then able to appreciate the importance of close reference and quotation. However, some candidates had obviously been encouraged to count up the number of quotations they had used and then write the number out at the bottom of the essay for the benefit of the examiner. That is most definitely not required.

## Section D

### Prose Post -1950

There were responses on all of the novels in this section with 'Things fall Apart', 'Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry' and 'My Family And Other Animals' being the most popular.

Many of the comments made about Section C obviously also relate to this section as well. Of particular concern this year was the tendency referred to in the General Comments to offer answers which were almost identical across a Centre. It would seem that candidates have been given the opportunity of answering past papers which is a perfectly acceptable exercise in class. However, less acceptable is the practice of learning phrases and essays verbatim. This was particularly obvious in questions such as 13b and 15a which involved writing about characters. Candidates must be encouraged to write their own thoughts and not simply to re-present their teachers' ideas.

Candidates would be well advised to be very clear in their choice of incidents if invited to make such a choice as in Question 16a. Too many candidates ranged widely across the whole book instead of limiting themselves to two particular incidents, this often led to narration and a lack of detail.

When candidates are asked to 'illustrate' or 'show' how an author does something then the focus of the response must be on the author's techniques and craft and not on a simple retelling of the story or, as in Question 15b, a retelling of the deaths.

As is usually the case in this examination, examiners are often impressed by how well the candidates know their material but examiners are sorry to see that this knowledge is not always used to the very best effect. A critical eye, a personal response and a focus on the question are all elements which must be present if the candidate is to attain high grades.

## **ENGLISH LITERATURE, 7171 GRADE BOUNDARIES**

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<b>Grade</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>
<b>Lowest mark for award of grade</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>27</b>

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

