

Examiners' Report Summer 2007

GCE O Level

GCE O Level English Literature (7171/01)

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General Comments

Overall, there was a pleasing standard of work in this examination series, reflecting much sound preparation. Some very good essays demonstrated very close and often mature personal engagement with the texts and knowledge is communicated through the detailed analysis of a writer's craft rather than a summary of the plot or a character study. However, a few candidates are still reliant on narrative and tend to avoid the specific terms of the question. Centres need to address this issue and continue to help candidates become more confident in their examination technique.

Detailed Comments

Section A Drama

'The Taming of the Shrew' and 'The Winslow Boy' were introduced as new texts for examination this year. No questions on 'The Winslow Boy' were attempted however, 'The Taming of the Shrew' proved reasonably popular alongside 'Julius Caesar'.

When responding to two-part questions, candidates must take care to spend an appropriate time on each part. Examiners frequently saw lengthy detail on Part(i) and very little on Part(ii).

Q1(a)

Many candidates chose this question. Part(i) was generally answered well but many candidates did not attend to the aspect of 'effectiveness' of Portia referred to in the terms of the question. Part(ii) saw many responses still focusing on the extract rather than addressing the play as a whole as stipulated by the question. Often there was very little detail for Part(ii).

Q1(b)

This was the most popular option and candidates in the main produced detailed responses which engaged with the statement and showed understanding of Caesar's character and his flaws. Arguments were offered and points justified with appropriate references to the text although candidates do need to be wary of lapsing into narrative when attempting textual evidence.

Q1(c)

Very few candidates responded to this question.

Q2(a)

Some good responses provided for Part(i) which engaged with the extract and showed understanding of the way Petruchio was presented. Again, Part(ii) suffered due to lack of detail. Candidates must pay closer attention to the terms of the question for instance, Part(ii) required an exploration of how humour was created rather than just identifying examples of humour.

Q2(b)

A popular choice for this particular text. Solid responses clearly focused on the specific terms of the question, showed a good understanding of the relationships concerned and justified their views.

Q2(c)

An extremely small number of candidates answered this question.

Q3

No questions were attempted on 'The Winslow Boy'.

Q4(a)

A handful of candidates addressed this question. Some good understanding of Amanda's behaviour and theatrical devices used was evident.

Q4(b)

This was the most popular option for 'The Glass Menagerie'. Good responses engaged with the statement posed and clearly supported points with a wide range of examples from the text.

Q4(c)

This question was only attempted by a small number of candidates however, there were some good responses made.

Section B Poetry

Q5

A large number of candidates attempted the unseen poem. Some responses paraphrased the poem and some clearly misunderstood aspects of it. Good responses did attend to the terms of the question in some detail and attempted to examine a few methods (namely imagery), employed by Scannell.

Q6

Responses to 'Telephone Conversation' often produced much moralising about racial discrimination which candidates must take care to avoid. Better responses clearly engaged with the poem and offered some detailed exploration of the poetic devices employed such as structure and imagery and related this to the subject matter. However, some responses relied heavily on paraphrasing the poem and sadly, a few confused the poem with 'Telephone Call'.

Q7

This was the most popular option in the poetry section. A number of very effective answers were offered displaying some highly detailed knowledge of both poems and demonstrated an understanding of how poetic devices were employed to suggest aspects of society. On the other hand, many candidates tended to provide summaries of the poem

and did not even address the issue of representing 'society' as posed in the question. Candidates must take care to address the poems in roughly equal measure. Although the majority of candidates selected suitable poems to discuss in relation to the poem ('Prelude', 'Poem', 'Prayer before Birth'), others chose inappropriate ones such as 'Tyger' and 'The Lady of Shalott' and responses showed evidence of candidates unsuccessfully trying to make the poem 'fit' into the framework of the question.

Section C Prose Pre-1950

All of the texts in this section were addressed. 'The Great Gatsby' was the most popular text although 'Far From the Madding Crowd' and 'Nineteenth Century Short Stories' produced a large number of responses.

Those questions which required candidates to discuss their view of a particular statement were generally well answered and allowed candidates to display a good knowledge of the text studied. Better responses developed solid arguments with clearly justified points. Some candidates needed to remember to focus on the specific terms of the question, for example, answers to Q12(a) tended to provide character studies of Nick rather than explore his function as a narrator.

The empathetic questions in this section were fairly popular however, candidates must pay close attention to the terms of the question and avoid offering lengthy narratives.

For Q8(a) and Q11(b), a minority of the candidates had provided narratives rather than focusing on the terms of the question.

Q9(a) was a popular choice on 'Nineteenth Century Short Stories'. The majority of responses were sound with good responses clearly addressing methods used to make the stories 'distressing' and 'uncomfortable' for readers. 'The Yellow Wallpaper' and 'Hopfrog' were particularly popular choices but as with Q7, candidates must take care to select appropriate stories in relation to the terms of the question.

Responses to Q9(b) were small in number but they did highlight the tendency for candidates to provide narratives rather than explore the terms of the question, particularly when a specific examination or analysis of methods (in this case methods to create suspense), is required. Although particularly highlighted by this question, it is clear across the paper that some candidates clearly need to acquire more confidence in writing about the effect of literary techniques.

While few candidates attempted the questions on 'Brave New World', responses were generally good with solid knowledge of themes and characters being demonstrated.

Section D Prose Post 1950

'To Sir With Love' replaced 'Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry' this year and was the second most popular choice following 'Things Fall Apart'.

Many of the comments made about Section C also relate to this section. In the vast majority of cases, candidates knew the texts well but there is a need for candidates to not only know the story but be able to comment on how the text has been crafted. Many of the responses in this section lapsed into varying degrees of narrative rather than paying close attention to the terms of the question. This was particularly apparent in responses to Q13(a), Q13(b), Q14(a), Q15(a), Q16(a) and Q16(b). For instance Q13(a), required candidates to consider the 'effectiveness' of Braithwaite's portrayal of school life yet,

most candidates offered a narrative account of events which had occurred in the school. Again, the questions which required candidates to refer to particular incidents commonly produced narrative.

However, better responses were created for Q14(b) and Q17(a) with most candidates showing engagement with the question and clearly justifying points made with detailed reference to the text.

English Literature, 7171 Grade Boundaries

Grade	A	B	C	D	E
Lowest mark for award of grade	86	67	49	41	26

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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