

Examiners' Report Summer 2008

O Level

O Level English Literature (7171)

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7171/01

General Comments

There were a range of extremely good essays which demonstrated detailed engagement with and analysis of a writer's craft and considered personal response. However, there is a concern with the continuation of candidates to rely on narrative and rote responses which disregard the specific terms of the question. Centres must continue to enable candidates to become more confident in their ability to engage with the texts and articulate individual viewpoints.

Detailed comments

Section A: Drama

No questions on 'The Winslow Boy' were attempted. The most popular texts were, the two Shakespeare plays.

When responding to two-part questions, candidates must take care to spend an appropriate time on each part. They should also be aware that the part ii) of all (a) questions in the Drama section requires consideration of the text as a whole therefore candidates must venture beyond the extract provided.

Q1(a)

This was the most popular question in this section and handled well by the majority of the candidates. Most candidates were able to comment on Anthony's use of rhetoric although it would be beneficial if candidates were able to use literary terminology more effectively. Candidates presented interesting points about Brutus showing good understanding of his character. Candidates should remember that both parts of this question must be addressed.

Q1(b)

Those responses which offered more than a general character study were engaging and contained a range of interesting and justified points of view, demonstrating fine understanding of the characters chosen.

Q1(c)

The least popular question of this section, but some solid essays were produced, particularly those referring to Caesar and Brutus and on occasions Cassius.

Q2(a)

Examiners noted a pleasing awareness of why Katherina was so angry at life but unfortunately many candidates did expand into an exploration of Katherina in the play as a whole.

Q2(b)

A popular question and provided a number of pleasing essays which fully explored the issue of disguise e.g. not only the physical disguises employed but commented on Bianca hiding her true nature and so on. Many did consider the issue of success as stipulated in the terms of the question.

Q2(c)

Most responses did believe that serious issues were certainly apparent and offered a number of points to support their views. Those candidates attaining higher marks were able to sustain their views.

Q3

No questions were attempted on 'The Winslow Boy'

Q4(a)

Some very good responses were to be had showing understanding of the purpose and effect of the stage directions at this point in the play. However, all too often, candidates did not consider the second part of the question in much depth. Those who did were quite successful in analysing the troubled relationship between Tom and Amanda.

Q4(b)

There very few responses to this question.

Q4(c)

A number of candidates presented good, detailed responses with close consideration of methods employed by Williams. Others simply narrated parts of the plot such as Laura's memories of Jim at school.

Section B: Poetry

Q5

A very popular question but centres should advise their candidates that this is a demanding question on the paper and candidates will not attain high marks by offering simple paraphrase or stating how many similes are present. However, some responses were very good, indicating understanding of the ideas within the poem and provided detailed analysis of a range of poetic devices employed by the poet.

Q6

Again this was a well-liked response but probably the most disappointing of the paper as a whole. Appropriate poems were chosen by candidates, the most popular being 'The Lady of Shalott' and 'La Belle Dame sans Merci'. However, most responses merely offered a retelling of the narratives of the poems rather than exploring the poetic methods used to present the theme of love as stipulated by the terms of the question. Candidates should also avoid lengthy comment on the lives of the poets as often much more was made of Byron's love affairs than his skill as a poet.

Q7

On the whole, most candidates provided interesting responses to the poem and addressed the question focus throughout. Those awarded higher marks provided evidence of detailed insight into the effects of a range of poetic methods used to present danger and corruption.

Section C: Prose Pre-1914

Overall, responses reflected good knowledge and understanding of the texts studied. However, candidates must avoid retelling the narrative as those who do so, cannot hope to achieve the higher band marks.

The questions on 'The Great Gatsby' were very popular. The best responses in relation to the issues of Daisy's impact offered consideration of a range of characters in the novel and not solely Gatsby himself. With regard to the second question set on this text, candidates were required to relate what they knew about 1920s society in America to specific examples in the text. Examiners did encounter a number of

candidates who digressed into a history lesson and indeed those which offered highly moralistic responses.

Questions on 'Brave New World' were only attempted by a small minority of candidates. The question on Linda was most popular but unfortunately many of those who attempted it often lapsed into character study / narrative.

On the other hand, other questions which required candidates to consider statements in relation to a specific character namely Bathsheba Everdene and General Tilney were on the whole answered very well. Indeed, examiners commented the many insightful and well-constructed arguments produced.

Questions on 'Nineteenth Century Short Stories' continue to be popular yet still candidates persist in offering narratives rather than addressing the question focus which invariably requires a consideration of the purpose and effects of methods employed by a writer. Most candidates were able to select examples of tension or suspense in their chosen stories but higher band marks were reserved for those who went beyond identification and moved into the realms of analysis of techniques which created suspense. In terms of the second question on this text, many candidates tried to make the stories appear funny when they are not meant to be so. However, some candidates realised that 'entertaining' does not always mean 'funny' and produced some engaging responses.

Section D: Prose Post 1914

It is essential that the key terms of any question should be carefully addressed by candidates. As with questions across all sections of this paper, many candidates addressing the prose texts in Section D disregarded what was being asked and offered a retelling of events.

Narration of events was in abundance for Q13a however, some candidates did comment upon Sir's own prejudices and address the fact that prejudice was evident in terms of gender and class and not solely on the basis of race.

On the whole the empathy type Q13b was well answered with there being clear evidence of a move beyond narrative, (as was prevalent with Q8b), and some detailed expression of thoughts and feelings based upon a very good understanding of Denham's character.

Desai's 'The Village by the Sea' continues to be relatively popular although again narrative was in abundance for the second question. When considering the depiction of the village, better responses were provided by candidates who compared the village with life in Bombay and talked about nature, traditions etc as well as poverty.

Essays on 'Things Fall Apart' were generally well answered although most candidates chose to consider the impact of the missionaries. Better responses were those which offered considered, detailed and justified arguments / viewpoints.

Questions on 'My Family and Other Animals' often digressed into narratives and character studies. Yet a number of carefully considered and interesting points were provided when discussing the issue of realism in the book. More needed to be made of Durrell's use of methods.

'The Chrysalids' is not a popular option in general but some good responses were offered in response to both questions indicating clear understanding of the novel's themes and characters.

English Literature, 7171 Grade Boundaries

Grade	A	B	C	D	E
Lowest mark for award of grade	92	76	60	52	34

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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