

Examiners' Report/ Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2010

O Level

O Level English Literature (7171)

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O Level English Language 7171 01

General Comments

Overall, the quality of candidates' work in the 2010 examination series showed improvement. Some very good essays demonstrated perceptive readings of the texts as communicated through detailed analysis of a writer's methods. Unfortunately, some candidates still continued to simply offer general and often narrative comment.

This being the final examination of this specification, I would like to thank the students and staff at the centres who have dedicated many hours to the teaching and study of GCE O Level English Literature and I wish you well for your future studies.

Detailed Comments

Section A: Drama

Question 1a

A reasonably popular question, and overall showed a good knowledge of the play. Many candidates were able to identify key moments of tension in the extract and were confident in discussing key moments from the play. Stronger essays offered more analysis of dramatic techniques and were able to engage with the language of the text in depth, whereas lower band responses tended to focus more on an explanation of events.

Question 1b

This was a very popular choice. Most candidates were able to articulate just how justifiable they found the assassination, but few were then able to develop this on to examine the deeper themes and issues surrounding the concepts of power and leadership. The best responses were able to develop these ideas to also consider the corrupting nature of power and authority and to then evaluate the long term 'success' of the assassination.

Question 1c

A much less popular question with candidates. In some cases the uncovering of the reasons behind Cassius' murder weren't provided, as well as solid expressions of feelings and thoughts while addressing this letter as Pindarus.

Question 2a

Unfortunately many candidates did not address the jocular nature of the dialogue. Those who did it well identified the roles played by the servants in the love plot.

Question 2b

Very popular but regardless of personal viewpoint on the proposition in the question, candidates would strengthen their responses by exploring both sides of the argument.

Question 2c

Few responses offered and these were largely narrative in scope.

Question 3

There were no essays on The Winslow Boy

Question 4a

Lower band candidates fell back on the safer option of commenting in general on Tom's character while other students were rewarded by also exploring the effect of Williams' stagecraft.

Question 4b

A number of engaging interpretive responses were provided especially those which explored how all the main characters were imprisoned in one way or another.

Question 4c

The few students that answered this question did demonstrate some empathy for Tom's character & his relationship with Laura, but very often they would mainly lapse in narrative.

Section B: Poetry

Question 5

As ever higher band marks will only be awarded to those candidates who indicate good understanding of the poem and provide detailed analysis of a range of poetic devices employed by the poet. Most responses offered a satisfactory analysis or at least some basic reference to methods; strong prompts in the question assisted with this.

Question 6

Overall this question received a very good response. Many candidates selected the poems *Island Man* and *Slave's Dream*. Candidates engaged with the poems well and were able to competently analyse the poets' choices of language and structure. It was also interesting to note how many students felt personally affected by the issues contained within the poems.

Question 7

Candidates engaged well with this question and demonstrated a good understanding and appreciation of the poems that they selected. Most candidates were able to discuss the effects of language quite confidently; however few were able to then develop this into a deeper analysis and understanding of the poem. Candidates who achieved the higher grades on this question were able to move their responses on to discuss the writers' craft in more depth and to then relate this to issues such as social context.

Section C: Prose Pre - 1950

Answers to the first question on *Far From the Madding Crowd* tended to provide mostly narrative responses with many candidates focusing on Gabriel Oak's enduring love and Troy's obsession. For the second question, many candidates were able to comment on aspects such as the storms, the flooding of Fanny's grave, the sense of the peace of nature and so on.

Nineteenth Century Stories continues to be a popular text. The first question enabled candidates to focus on the mood and atmosphere although in many cases this was undertaken in quite a basic manner. For the second question, there was a good balance in the treatment of both the stories and some candidates provided a close exploration of methods.

Questions on Brave New World and Northanger Abbey were attempted by a small minority of candidates. Responses to both questions tended to be reliant on general narrative and character study.

With The Great Gatsby candidates were confident in discussing the character of Myrtle. Most candidates understood the importance of her character in the story; however few were then able to develop this further. Good responses would also show consideration of how the character also linked to the wider themes of the text and to the social and contextual influences upon the text. Candidates responded well to the second question. The majority of candidates wrote pertinent essays to the question and engaged in depth with the theme of decay including close reference to imagery within the text and some skilful examination of the cultural influences upon the text.

Section D: Prose Post-1950

Responses to The Chrysalids, The Village by the Sea, Things Fall Apart and My Family and Other Animals were in the most part limited, narrative based and as with previous years lacked any attempt to be analytical.

To Sir With Love was a favourite choice and while some did offer simple character studies on Pamela and Denham (occasionally Searle), some essays demonstrated a deeper understanding of their characters based on a more detailed examination of Braithwaite's methods of characterisation. For the other question, many candidates offered a detailed examination of Sir's successes, but discussions of failures were rather vague.

Grade Boundaries

Paper No	Max Mark	A	B	C	D	E
01	160	87	74	62	54	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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