

Moderators' Report/
Principal Moderator Feedback

Summer 2014

Pearson Edexcel GCE
in English Language and Literature
Unit 2 (6EL02/01)

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Outline of Unit

Students are required to produce a folder containing two creative pieces. One intended for a Reading Audience and one for a Listening Audience. Both pieces must be linked by a theme taken from the specification. This work is accompanied by two reflective Commentaries. These need to be self-analytical; explaining how the work has been crafted; and how the selected stimulus texts have influenced the writing processes. The commentary must include, also, details of the linguistic and literary features which have enhanced the creative processes. As far as possible these should be treated equally.

Topic Areas

- Entrapment
- Dystopia
- Women's Lives
- Gothic and Supernatural
- Journeys and Pilgrimages

Overview

The Gothic genre has remained the dominant choice. This closely followed by Dystopias. However, this year there has been an increase in both Entrapment and Journeys and Pilgrimages. The choice of Women's Lives remains the minority one. As the Specification has matured the standard of the work has risen commensurately. This is particularly the case with creative work. Some of which is of an extremely high quality. These folders reflect a real ability to experiment with language and generic forms. In a minority of cases there have remained a few problems. In such circumstances students have needed more careful guidance in the choice of tasks. In particular to ensure that their work shows clear evidence of the required *One* fiction text and *One* text of either drama or poetry. These compulsory core texts can be supplemented by evidence of further wider reading. Also, in these minority cases, the Listening Commentaries do not satisfy the particular demands of identifying a specific audience with any clarity. This occurs, especially, when students are trying to write about media-related sources, such as film or television. It needs to be added that there are students of exceptional ability, who can understand any chosen medium; and can integrate an audience into the Commentary successfully.

Creative Work

What has been absorbed in the students' compulsory and wider reading is very apparent in the folders. The most successful work reflects a very close knowledge of the generic conventions in the chosen stimulus texts. This is supported by judiciously selected evidence of apposite wider reading. This work shows willingness to explore forms of narrativity; and to display an invigorating lexical experimentation as part of the creative process. The less accomplished work tends to have a rather weak grasp of the central themes drawn from the stimulus materials. The creative work tending to be driven more by rather basic re-phrasing of the originals. In such work there is often little evidence of any focused wider reading or referencing.

Reading Audience

For the purpose of this report students' work has been chosen as exemplars which show some of the possibilities that can be developed by a close adherence to the formal demands of the specification. It is hoped that this will be useful to centres as guidance.

Exemplar 1

This is taken from one creative piece. This is the opening and the central section on the theme of Dystopia. The stimulus text is *A Handmaid's Tale*.

Chapter One

Barren Land. The ice sheets melt and cascade down the endless tumbling hills; the earth depresses then opens and sheds a tear. The crystalline tear becomes part of the constantly migrating mass of water, the ever tugging gravity forcing it down. Swerving. Tumbling. Quickening in pace. So quick as if a flash of life came and went right before your eyes. It then comes to a halt as if time had stopped. But time can't be stopped.

"Hey, you. Here now," the mother said to her son. "Why should I?"

I keep thinking, although we have all mutated during the evolution of man, it does not mean that mankind has changed... The emptiness in my mind hid the ever occurring fears of doubt. This euphoric disaster reinforced the perilous fate we shall all face: Life. Born. Live. Die. Love. Live. Life. Slow down. Speed up and then come to a halt...

Key Features

- Arresting introduction
- Different narrative voices
- Enigma
- Link to Dystopian theme/ possibility of wider cohesive reading
- Establishing several potential thematic issues
- Lexis and syntax offer good chance for analysis and comment

Exemplar 2 (taken from later in same story)

All aspects of sense and intuition had been drained from me. It felt as if he was a magnet to which all my coping mechanisms had been attracted. I was a rock face subject to attack by his powerful waves of glares I knew why he wanted me. He want me cold the same as Lucy, Penny, Max and Ben. He wanted us all to be a part of his unearthly earth. "A warm twist on the old new" was the propaganda we were fed...Now I know the answers. He stole us. Captured our imagination with his captivating eyes. He wanted us. He knew we could offer something to his sick and twisted new fantasy that no one else could, pure intelligence. Einstein himself would have been outsmarted by our astounding IQ. We weren't born, we were made, we New Earth folk...

Key Features

- Attwood influence evident
- Internalised narrative voice
- Some arresting metaphorical language
- The fear invoked by the nameless He, a constant source of anaphoric reference
- Scientific lexis, subtly flagging up possible generic issues
- Still the sense of possible enigma evoked in opening extract
- Very clear links to stimulus source

Accompanying Commentary

My story begins with a prologue (not included in exemplar) comprising of an extract from Tennyson's *Ulysses*. This prepares the reader for descriptive projection of the internal and external struggle of my main character...A semantic field has been created in order to portray a restricted and dictatorial society. I used oxymorons, like Attwood, to hint at the forthcoming 'euphoric disaster'...I adapted a third person narrative for some of the work, shifting to the first person to allow my main character to create empathy with her world...My story's opening is deliberately focused on metaphor, exploitation verbs of movement and compound adjectivals; this to contrast with the following abrupt direct speech...

Key Features

- Clear links to two primary textual sources
- A critical vocabulary to address literary/linguistic features
- Good understanding of the position of the narrator(s)
- Clear address to a 'reader' foregrounding textual influences
- The dystopian theme integrated into commentary with economy

Listening audience

There was clear evidence that a number of centres had given more detailed consideration to the subject this year. There were several examples of highly original and experimental broadcast-style talks, which demonstrated a real understanding of the potential of the spoken word. Another interesting development were several folders where characters from stimulus texts were recast talking about their own 'real' personalities. This proved a plausible way to invoke characters from texts and give them a real voice. In past reports comment has been made about problems with some monologues. It would seem that this is an issue to which centres have given some consideration. The most satisfying outcome would appear to be that there has been a greater distinction made between the Reading piece and the Spoken monologue.

The following Listening Audience extract is taken from one creative response. It shows the possibility of the soliloquy as a medium for exploring the theme of Entrapment.

Exemplar 1

Adam's monologue

SFX Music quietly playing in the background then fading (20 seconds)

Adam: It was the twenty third. I woke up on the boat and the first thing I noticed was the embracing quietness (*Sound of sea in background*)

It hung in the air; it was suffocating. Synonymous with grief it cast a devastating shadow over all the vibrancy I once knew. Birds overhead seemed shy of their usual optimism and the ocean that isolated me asserted the mortality of my very being. For my whole life I had begged for a moment of peace and quiet: a rest from the loud traffic; the never ending cycle of working, running, surviving, working, running, surviving...Aching and heavy, my bones and my brain forced my body to rise and I painfully slogged to the side of the vessel. Leaning over I stared down into the deep blue, all consuming, abyss. The water that stretched for miles and miles rose and fell with a rhythm so regular that it looked to be a dance. Its choreography in synchronisation with nature...(*Music accompanied by sounds of the sea*)

Key Features

- The theme made clear immediately
- The internalised speech establishes the soliloquy form, introspective and isolated
- The lexis reflects the reality of the present
- There are some powerful metaphorical features
- The syntax with its clausal structure enhances the loneliness

Exemplar 2

SFX Sounds of stormy sea

It was the twenty fourth...the sky was the colour of a savage war and it matched the depth of the water. The sea had started to rise and fall with an aggressive attitude. Her way or no way, she danced a waltz of totalitarianism, painting her power with frightening grace. She, the ocean, was provoked by nothing and no one yet she reacted with such volatility...Amidst the organised chaos that surrounded me, I could not help but think of the solitary confinement I had unofficially been sentenced to. On a vessel intended for travel I had never been so isolated.

'No man is an island', they had said...

Key Features

- Re-statement of theme with greater verbal force
- Writing has poetic quality, using alliterative and assonantal sounds
- Some forceful adjectivals
- Narrative developing like a diary

Accompanying Commentary

Exemplar 1

The extract is from a radio monologue, appropriate for Radio 4 and is punctuated with some of the conventions such as sounds...As in Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper* the first person style of the soliloquy allows the speaker's thoughts and feelings to be simultaneously anecdotal and complex...The boat on which the monologue is set, inspired by Hemingway's *Old Man and the Sea*, provides an allegory for entrapment...The character Adam reflects upon his solitary confinement and through his voice there is an allusion to the stream of consciousness crafted by Fowles in *The collector*...

Key Features

- Establishes listening conventions
- Identifies a range of stimulus texts
- These texts are succinctly linked to theme of Entrapment

Exemplar 2

With the exception of the deictic sentence 'it was the twenty fourth', there is a significant lack of discourse markers limiting time and relativity. The crucial line 'No man is an island' is isolated from the main body of the text. This creates additional emphasis and contributes to the dysfunctional structure...The literal isolation, displayed in the setting, mirrors the symbolic isolation that revolves around solitude. Prosodic features identify the sound directions and separate

them from the main body of the text. 'No man is an island' is meant, also to provide extra accentuation and impact. The plosive sounds of 'aggressive attitude'. mimic the actual sounds made by the sea...

Key Features

- The use of a technical vocabulary
- An analytical approach to describe some of the language features
- Clear attempt to evaluate specific use of sounds
- Produces more than a features' list

Commentary work in general

This is a much improved aspect of the specification. Centres appear to be giving more guidance in ensuring students are addressing the necessary elements. This appears, sometimes, as a kind of check list, followed by all students in the centre. This can have the effect of making the actual analytical referencing too mechanical; where students simply list the features of language used in their own creative work. It is important that some element of autonomy should appear in folders. This is particularly so when evaluating the structural formalities explored in one's own writing.

Bibliographies

It is a requirement of the specification to include a bibliography, detailing the students' wider reading. There are still some centres where this rule is not being applied consistently. With the advent of web-based research becoming ever more predominant, it is crucial that centres do ensure that there is clear evidence of the sources of all primary fictional and non fictional data in the students' folders. This need not amount to more than 10-12 references.

Moderation

Much of this is of a very high academic quality. The annotations and referencing of Assessment Objectives are of enormous value to the external moderators. Internal moderation in some larger centres is very variable. If it is possible, where there has been marking covering more than one teacher/lecturer, there would be some benefit from internal double-checking.

Concluding Comments

Many centres have shown significant improvement in their assessment practices as the specification has matured. This year the session can be judged as relatively unproblematic.

It is clear that many centres are reading the Principal Moderator's Feedback. This has resulted in a decrease in the use of stimulus texts drawn from too diffuse cultural areas. Whilst these can be of interest to the individual student, they can be very difficult to assimilate into a specification focused on literary and linguistic production. There remain grey areas, which have appeared this year. The use of speeches by Winston Churchill, Barack Obama and other political figures do not easily accord with Prose/Drama/Poetry texts in terms of structural analyses. Whilst such works do appear in English text-books, their application in this specification places an unnecessary burden upon the students. There are still pockets of work, depending upon television or other popular cultural sources, being used as primary source materials. This is an issue which has been raised previously. The students should not waste too much creative or critical time upon such. The Literary/Linguistic balance seemed to be quite reasonable in this session. The analytical application of linguistic terminology remains a difficulty to some students.

Their knowledge of the terminology and how to apply it is variable. At its most elementary it is used in making a basic list of very simple features employed in the creative production. In the Listening work there is still some quite significant divergence between students who have some knowledge of speech conventions and those who appear to have none. With the advent of more formal language instruction being given at an earlier school age there is the possibility that students' work will become more technically enhanced. Centres should try to give every encouragement to the students in this area. The suggestions made in last year's Report seem to offer some sound practical opportunities for class-room practice.

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Grade Boundaries

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