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Examiners' Report January 2010

GCE English Literature 6ET01

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Explorations in Prose and Poetry

Timing did not seem to present a very significant problem for the majority of candidates, though there were those who clearly struggled with the demands of trying to complete all three tasks in the available period, often appearing to spend far too long on Q1a.

This said, it is acknowledged that the overall requirement is a challenging one and those candidates who managed to provide full and detailed responses to all three sections of the paper are once more congratulated.

No candidates reacted inappropriately to the exam.

All of the tasks set drew responses.

The quality of written expression and organisation remained generally good or better.

Section A: Unseen Poetry & Prose

This part of the exam offers candidates a choice of response. Two unseen texts are set - one poem and one prose extract, followed by three short answer tasks. Candidates choose one or the other passage to answer on.

Poetry

The poem set was *The Indian Serenade* by Percy Bysshe Shelley. The tasks were:

- (a) Language choice is often considered to be an important feature in poetry.
Discuss the use and effect of language choice in this poem.
- (b) Poets often make use of voice.
Using **two** examples from the poem, explore this poet's use of voice.
- (c) In poetry, themes are explored in different ways.
Using your knowledge of poetry, discuss what strikes you as being the important theme or themes in this poem and the ways in which they are developed.

The first task targets AO1 (5 marks), the second AO2 (5 marks) and the third AO1 and AO2 together (10 marks in total).

Question 1a

One examiner stated that “there were many very high quality answers, covering an enormous variety of examples and points. Several candidates commented thoughtfully on the use of archaic and/or exotic language, and there were some sensitive observations on the sounds of the words and poetic devices. The distinguishing factor tended to be the depth of analysis (ranging from basic identification to a searching approach), rather than the number of examples”.

Overall, there was not, perhaps, enough focus on specific words and centres are directed to the published Mark Scheme for an indication as to how candidates' work might be advanced in this respect.

Question 1b

A significant number of candidates appeared to find the concept of narrative voice confusing and almost every possibility was considered in their responses, many missing the obvious point, for example, of the first person narration.

Here is an example of a candidate who scored AO2: 5/5.

The narrator of the poem uses a first person narrative to convey how personal his feelings are. He addresses or addresses his lover directly as 'thee' giving an intimate atmosphere. His use of rhetoric 'Who knows how?' adds depth and pathos, and his employment of the present tense gives the poem a dramatic immediacy, especially poignant in his tricolon in the third stanza 'I die! I faint! I fail!' The ample use of exclamation marks exacerbate the passionate yet plaintive tone to the ~~the~~ narrator's voice.



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Examiner Comments

Here is a candidate writing concisely and in an informed way about voice in the poem to prove that it was possible to gain full marks for this question in the space available.

Question 1c

As with Q1b (and as in previous sittings), this proved to be a differentiator here. Many candidates were able to say that they felt the main theme to be love, though far fewer identified its unrequited aspect. Others plumped variously for nature, dreams, India and death, none of which were absolutely “wrong” of course, in the terms of the task. There was a degree of uncertainty about what “theme” actually meant, amongst a significant minority of responders and a real sense that many of those answering had no real idea as to how the theme or themes developed during the poem (i.e. through imagery, contrast and so on). For future reference, candidates are advised, once more, to avoid repeating material which they have already used in either Q1a or Q1b.

Prose

The prose extract was taken from Margaret Atwood’s novel *The Handmaid’s Tale*. The tasks were:

- (a) Novelists craft sentences to create interest.
Identify and comment on the effect of the writer’s choice of sentence structure in lines 1–13 of the extract.
- (b) Novelists choose particular words to create particular effects.
Identify **two** examples of language choice which add to the effect of the narrative, and comment on their use.
- (c) Novelists often use imagery in order to create interest for the reader.
Using your knowledge of imagery, discuss the ways in which Margaret Atwood uses it in this passage.

The first task targets AO1 (5 marks), the second AO2 (5 marks) and the third AO1 and AO2 together (10 marks in total).

Question 2a

There were plenty of difficulties with the concept here. Syntax is stipulated in the specification as something about which candidates ought to learn. It was therefore an idea with which they might have been expected to be more familiar, perhaps. Much of the commentary struggled to get beyond the simple distinction between short and long sentences and even then there was a great deal of uncertainty about the purpose of such variation. However, it was certainly possible to attain a high mark, and a good proportion of answers were successful.

Question 2b

Candidates found themselves on safer ground here, generally, and there was plenty of sound or better work, with many able to identify two examples and comment on their effect. There was much good writing on “penetrated” and, in this case, the significance of the adjective “Westernized”:

The author uses language which reveals the abhorrent appearance of the Japanese tourists; red lipstick, for example, is a sign of sexuality, sometimes of beauty. However, Atwood's choice of “damp cavities” gives an almost repulsive twist to their appearance. A word that stands out in the latter half of the passage is “Westernized”, and not simply because it is italicised. Westernization is usually something favourable; akin to making all savage people more civilized. Here the word is ironic, almost sneering, like a concept gone so far it has lost all meaning.

Question 2c

Here too, there was far greater confidence and certainty. Many drew on specific examples to offer a good evaluation of the use and effect of imagery, deploying technical terms to good purpose (though there were a great number of “similies” to be seen). The bird motif which appears in the passage was well discussed, as were the obviously loaded references to the “delicate instruments of torture” and the “scrawls on the washroom wall”. In short, there was plenty to go on here, and a large number of candidates travelled a good distance.

General Comments

Candidates were largely more assured, as a rule, than this time last year. Whilst there were those who had little to say, or who offered no response at all to parts of the task on which they chose to answer, the majority made a good attempt at the poem or the passage and seemed to be coping well with, even relishing in some cases, the short answer format.

Centres are reminded of the dangers for their candidates in trying to cover every single avenue in Q1a, for instance – selection and conciseness are crucial here. Thus, even where it is not specified that they do so, candidates are advised to choose two examples for comment when they are answering the (a) or (b) parts of their chosen task. They should exemplify briefly and try to ensure that they offer some evidence of evaluation or engagement with the text.

Section B: Poetry

This part of the exam offers candidates a choice of response. A selection of poems from three anthologies (From *Here to Eternity*, Oxford University Press and *The Rattle Bag*) are set, grouped under the headings Home, Land and Work. The first option is a generic essay, allowing candidates to choose which poems they use to address the terms of the task. The second choice specifies one poem from each anthology and invites candidates to choose at least one other with which to respond. Section B targets AO1 (15 marks), AO2 (5 marks) and AO3 (20 marks).

The Poetry tasks were:

Home

Either:

(a) 'Home is only where we eat and sleep...'

Compare and contrast the ways in which home is presented in **at least two** poems in the light of this claim.

Or:

(b) 'Poets dealing with the concept of home are really writing only about themselves.'

Using one of the following poems as a starting point, compare and contrast how poets write about themselves in their presentation of home in **at least two** poems.

Either Samuel Taylor Coleridge *Frost at Midnight* (Here to Eternity)
or Robert Graves *Parent to Children* (Oxford Anthology of English Poetry)
or Louis MacNeice *Autobiography* (The Rattle Bag).

Land:

Either:

(a) 'Poems written about land describe the effect and significance of weather and the elements to add interest for the reader.'

Compare and contrast **at least two** poems in the light of this statement.

Or:

(b) 'Many poets writing about land make extensive use of contrast to create meaning.'

Using **one** of the following poems as a starting point, compare and contrast how poets use contrast in **at least two** poems.

Either Patrick Kavanagh *Epic* (Here to Eternity)
or Thom Gunn *On the Move* (Oxford Anthology of English Poetry)
or Robert Frost *Desert Places* (The Rattle Bag).

Work:

Either:

(a) 'Poets writing about work are concerned with social class.'
Compare and contrast **at least two** poems in the light of this statement.

Or:

(b) 'Many poets writing about work attempt to create a strong narrative voice in order to make their descriptions of it come alive.'

Using **one** of the following poems as a starting point, compare and contrast how poets use narrative voice in **at least two** poems.

Either U A Fanthorpe *You will be hearing from us shortly* (Here to Eternity)
or Philip Larkin *Toads* (Oxford Anthology of English Poetry)
or Charles Causley *Ballad of the Bread Man* (The Rattle Bag).

Question 3a

Many candidates took the "where you eat and sleep" element of the task fairly literally and offered answers which were far too narrative. There was often not enough quotation or sufficient technical focus. There was also a tendency to write prepared responses without really thinking about the question. Some, however, plainly took the time to consider an argument before they started to write:





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Examiner Comments

Where answers had this much thought put into them, they tended to do well and there was a good deal of very poised and considered analysis of the role of home beyond the purely utilitarian (which is, of course, a feature of many of the anthologised works).

Question 3b

Widespread amongst the (smaller number of) candidates answering this task, there was a rush to agree with the assertion, which often led to simplistic comment and evaluation. Nonetheless, there were here too some pleasing answers, many dealing well with *Frost at Midnight* in particular.

Question 4a

This resulted in quite a lot of simple identification and description of the weather conditions which the writers had chosen as their focus, but not nearly as much work on the actual effects achieved. Understandably enough, there was a good deal of unadorned fallacy spotting. However, some candidates were able to write insightfully, seeing the importance of weather-related imagery in creating effects of tone and mood, for example. Others knew clearly that a weather motif might, for instance, be highly significant in developing theme.

Question 4b

One of the examining team comments that "A significant number of candidates wrote about the contrast between the natural and the manmade, some very perceptively and entirely pertinently. Others seemed to be trying to twist a previous essay on mankind's effect on nature to fit the title. On the whole candidates seemed more confident writing about the Gunn and the Frost than the Kavanagh. Popular points of comparison on these two proved, respectively, *Going, Going* and (less successfully) *The Trees are Down*, and *Nutting*."

Question 5a

The same examiner's commentary offers an excellent insight into the type of responses which this task drew: "There was a wide variety in the quality of responses to this title, where it seemed again, that some candidates did themselves the disservice of simply accepting that the assertion must be correct. Those who wrote about Larkin's *Toads* especially seemed to run into some difficulties. Some more able candidates explored the complexity of the persona's social status and his attitude towards it; one convincingly argued, "although the toad inside him forces him to work in order to maintain his social class, he himself cares not about social class at all, he simply wants to be free of the toad." However, those who argued that the poem simply conveys resentment towards those of a higher social class often had to work very hard to make their "evidence" fit. *Toads Revisited* proved a less popular, but far more successful, choice.

Blake's *Chimney Sweeper* was another popular choice and provided plenty of valid material across a range of abilities. This was often compared to Baillie's *Hay Making*. Most candidates offered confident and valid interpretations of this as a poem which shows no preoccupation with social class; however (some) top band answers explored the concept of the apparently happy haymakers in fact being exploited by the land owners, drawing pertinent links with the more obvious class concerns implied in the "your chimneys I sweep" of Blake's poem."

Question 5b

A candidate's response, scoring AO1: 13/15, AO2: 4/5, AO3: 17/20 is reproduced by way of commentary here

It is widely considered that work is an essential part of life. As such a fundamentally important and debated aspect of life writers and poets have for hundreds of years explored it as a theme. To say that "many poets all writing about work attempt to create a strong narrative voice in order to make their descriptions come alive" is most certainly true in the poems which I am going to examine.

"You will be hearing from us shortly" is a satirical swipe at the modern day procedure to securing work; the job interview. Although appearing at first to be written in dialogue this is questionable, as the interviewee never gets the opportunity for a lengthy response. "You do appreciate this work involves contact with the actual public? Might they, Perhaps, find your appearance Disturbing?" "Quite so" The rudeness of the interviewer begs the question as to the previous interview experience of the author. U. A. Fanthorpe is female, and as such one could conclude that she has suffered such an unpleasant interview in the past, at the hands of a sexist interviewer. However in a world where executive positions are being ever increasingly dominated by women this could also be viewed as a female interviewer and a male interviewee.

The numerous literary devices used in "You Will be hearing from us shortly" are key to establishing the strong narrative voice which is evident from stanza one. "Your qualifications, though impressive, are not, we must admit, precisely what we had in mind. Would you care to defend their relevance?" There is an extensive use of caesura throughout which creates a staccato, jumping and aggressive feel to the poem. Arguably the caesura makes it more confrontational and adversarial, as though the interviewer is literally spitting these things at the interviewee. Furthermore the numerous rhetorical questions have a strong sense of sarcasm with little, if any, sincerity or empathy. "You do appreciate this work involves work with the actual public?" The interviewee's response (as clearly visible from the unusual ^{five} ~~line~~ verse layout on the page) is restricted to a mere 15 syllables throughout the whole poem. The reader empathises with the interviewee more as there is a certain humility in the final (three) lines: "And you were born -? Yes pity" suggests that the interviewee has far greater intelligence than the interviewer and knows to just spit it out.

It becomes clear from comparing this poem to others in the collection that a strong narrative voice in poetry regarding work depends heavily on the context in which work is observed and reviewed. "The ~~burden~~ ^{burden} the interviewee from the interviewer

"Solitary Keeper" by William Wordsworth is juxtaposed strongly with "You will be hearing from us shortly" in that it is an observation of work from the romantic era of poetry (18th/19th century). It is a lyrical observation by Wordsworth of a young maiden working in the fields.

It is perhaps one of the notable poet's most well known ballads and it romanticises heavily the life of hard work. The use of archaic language: "yon" and "chaunt" sets the poem in context and there is an extensive use of nature imagery throughout "A voice so thrilling ne'er was heard in spring-time from the Cuckoo-bird, Breaking the silence of the seas Among the farthest Hebrides". The narrative voice of this poem is much more lyrical and lonesome than "You will be hearing from us shortly". There is a gentler and calmer feel to the poem, heightened by the use of sibilance: "silence of the seas" and a clear structure and rhyme scheme: A B A B C C D D (excluding the first A scan the first line.)

The poet also uses rhetorical questions (as in Fentmore's) however in a yearning and innocent ignorance rather than a means of aggressive sarcasm "some natural sorrow, loss or pain, That has been, and may be again?" Although there is a clear melancholic aspect to the poem, it is also filled with an optimism and a sense of looking to a positive future. "The music in my heart I bore,

long after it was heard no more". The writer has taken a treasured memory away from the singing maiden exemplified by the romanticising narrative voice.

"Builders" by Ruth Padell is a poem which encompasses both a harsh view of modern work life (as in "You will be hearing from us shortly") and a (romanticised) romanticised view of the work life (as in "The Sallow Reaper").

The poem is built on stereotypes. The narrative voice builds a picture of a never ending, on going progression. This is heightened by the use of enjambement and caesura. "But I like the way they change how you see, so casually and for ever." This poem looks at work which has always, and will always be there. The final two lines suggest this: "Then they move on, I find them later in an unforeseeable place". It is ambiguous to the reader as to whether the author respects or pours scorn on the building progression. There is an ambivalence throughout from the narrative voice, suggesting merely an observer than a maker of judgements.

To conclude, the narrative voice is essential in establishment of both the intent and view point of the poem when examining work. "You will be hearing from us shortly" exemplifies the scornful view of the modern work life. "The Sallow Reaper" examines work from a romantic point of view and "Builders" has the narrative voice of observation rather than judgement. The narrative voice allows these conclusions to be drawn and without the use of the poetic devices which establishes these voices the poems would remain incomprehensibly ambiguous.

General Comments

The generic task remained, in the case of all three anthologies, far more popular than the text-specific one.

Candidates must make sure that if they are doing the (b) task in any of Q3, Q4 or Q5, they deal with the named poem for their anthology. In the case of Q5b, a number wrote about "Toads" when they had clearly studied "Here to Eternity". This was the named poem, however for OUP. A very small number of candidates also wrote about poems which do not appear on any of the lists – this remains a rubric infringement. Similarly, those responses which do not deal with two poems, for example, are unlikely to move beyond the middle attainment bands.

The lack of use of supporting evidence was commented on by some examiners – sound or better answers will always, in our opinion, be making direct reference to the poems which they have studied as part of the response.

A linear approach (i.e. comments on poem 1, then on poem 2, followed by conclusion) remains popular but centres are reminded of the significance of the AO3 objective here and the need for their candidates to adopt a more authentically comparative method if they are truly to prosper.

Section C : Prose

This part of the exam also offers candidates a choice of response. Five groups of three texts are presented: *Jane Eyre* and either *Wide Sargasso Sea* or *The Magic Toyshop*; *Brighton Rock* and either *Lies of Silence* or *A Clockwork Orange*; *Pride and Prejudice* and either *French Lieutenant's Woman* or *The Yellow Wallpaper*; *Wuthering Heights* and either *The Scarlet Letter* or *The Color Purple* and *Howards End* and either *The Remains of the Day* or *The Shooting Party*. The first option for each group is a generic essay. The second choice specifies an extract from the core text – the prompt suggests focus on that passage to start with, but candidates are intended to move outwards into a wider exploration of the core text and the one chosen to extend the argument.

Section C targets AO1 (15 marks) and AO2 (25 marks).

The Prose tasks were:

6 *Jane Eyre* (Penguin Classics) and either *Wide Sargasso Sea* (Penguin Modern Classics) or *The Magic Toyshop* (Virago)

Either:

(a) 'It is the minor characters who create much of the interest in *Jane Eyre*.'

Explore the methods which writers use to present minor characters and engage the reader.

In your response, you should focus on *Jane Eyre* to establish your argument and you should refer to the second text you have read to support and develop your line of argument.

Or:

(b) 'Essentially, *Jane Eyre* is a story of romantic love.'

Using *Jane Eyre* page 171 as your starting point, from 'I, indeed, talked comparatively little' to "Suppose he should be absent spring, summer, and autumn: how joyless sunshine and fine days will seem!" on page 172, explore the methods which writers use to present romantic love.

In your response, you should focus on *Jane Eyre* to establish your argument and you should refer to the second text you have read to support and develop your line of argument.

7 *Brighton Rock* (Vintage) and either *Lies of Silence* (Vintage) or *A Clockwork Orange* (Penguin)

Either:

(a) '*Brighton Rock* is a story of how the individual struggles to fit into society.' Explore the methods which writers use to present the struggles of individuals trying to fit into society.

In your response, you should focus on *Brighton Rock* to establish your argument and you should refer to the second text you have read to support and develop your line of argument.

Or:

(b) 'In *Brighton Rock*, it eventually seems that the whole of society is corrupt.'

Using *Brighton Rock* page 82 as your starting point, from "'I'm sorry, Mrs. Arnold.'" to "'I've got my friends.'" on page 83, explore the methods which writers use to present the idea that their societies are corrupt.

In your response, you should focus on *Brighton Rock* to establish your argument and you should refer to the second text you have read to support and develop your line of argument.

8 *Pride and Prejudice* (Penguin Classics) and either *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (Vintage) or *The Yellow Wallpaper* (Virago)

Either:

(a) 'If we don't care about the marriages of the characters, there isn't much else to interest us in *Pride and Prejudice*.'

Explore the methods which writers use to create interest in their characters and their marriages.

In your response, you should focus on *Pride and Prejudice* to establish your argument and you should refer to the second text you have read to support and develop your line of argument.

Or:

(b) 'The effective depiction of realistic settings is essential to the success of *Pride and Prejudice*.'

Using *Pride and Prejudice* page 153 as your starting point, from 'Every object in the next day's journey' to 'It was rather small, but well built and convenient;' on pages 154–155, explore the methods which writers use to present setting.

In your response, you should focus on *Pride and Prejudice* to establish your argument and you should refer to the second text you have read to support and develop your line of argument.

9 *Wuthering Heights* (Penguin Classics) and either *The Scarlet Letter* (Oxford World's Classics) or *The Color Purple* (Phoenix)

Either:

(a) 'Personal freedom is perhaps the most important theme in *Wuthering Heights*.'

Explore the methods which writers use to present the theme of personal freedom.

In your response, you should focus on *Wuthering Heights* to establish your argument and you should refer to the second text you have read to support and develop your line of argument.

Or:

(b) 'Imagery and symbolism are an essential part of the interest of *Wuthering Heights*.'

Using *Wuthering Heights* page 85 as your starting point, from 'However, Catherine would not be persuaded into tranquillity.' to "'I've been wet," she answered reluctantly, "and I'm cold, that's all.'" on page 86, explore the ways in which imagery and symbolism are used to create interest for the reader.

In your response, you should focus on *Wuthering Heights* to establish your argument and you should refer to the second text you have read to support and develop your line of argument.

10 *Howards End* (Penguin) and either *Remains of the Day* (Faber and Faber) or *The Shooting Party* (Penguin)

Either:

(a) 'Howards End is more the story of Helen than of Margaret.'

Explore the methods which writers use to present their characters and create interest in their stories.

In your response, you should focus on *Howards End* to establish your argument and you should refer to the second text you have read to support and develop your line of argument.

Or:

(b) 'The theme of change is crucial in *Howards End*.'

Using *Howards End* page 9 as your starting point, from 'It was rather difficult.' to the end of the chapter on page 11, explore the methods which writers use to present the theme of change.

In your response, you should focus on *Howards End* to establish your argument and you should refer to the second text you have read to support and develop your line of argument.

Question 6a

This proved a fairly popular choice for candidates, many of whom wrote knowledgeably enough about the minor characters in *Jane Eyre* and, much more frequently than not, *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Thusly, the Reeds, Reverend Brocklehurst, Helen Burns, Miss Temple & Blanche Ingram were afforded plentiful coverage, as were Tia and Richard Mason from the latter text. There was also some good discussion of *The Magic Toyshop*, it should be noted, with sensible consideration of, for instance, the use of the minor characters to present contrast, develop theme or "help" Melanie on her troubling journey. Predictably enough, there was also a good deal of character-by-character walk-through - this led both to some indifferent commentary and to some well-worked analysis, thereby proving that the task provided sufficient opportunity for differentiation and was therefore successful. Again, the importance of characterisation as a method is stressed for future reference, as well as the (by now repeated) injunction to consider the methods used by writers to present character.

Question 6b

This was an even more widely chosen option. Love is an obvious question focus for this cluster of texts, so there were plenty of candidates who launched into a version of the essay which they had almost certainly done during their preparation for the exam. Consequently, the distinction of romantic love was not often enough discussed, nor whether this is the primary source of interest not only in *Jane Eyre* but the second text under consideration. Plainly, for instance, *The Magic Toyshop* is not especially notable for romance, it could be argued. This is also easily asserted of *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Returning to the source, lots of responses attempted to cover the whole unfolding of the Eyre/Rochester affair in an indiscriminating fashion, with generally indifferent results. Where candidates branched out, for example into analysis of what the St. John Rivers episodes offer to the narrative, there was much to commend.

Question 7a

Responses here were often very keen to agree with the proposition – that these are the stories of individuals struggling to fit into society. There was, accordingly, plentiful focus on Pinkie, covering his status, his attitude towards sex and the constraints of his religion, for instance. There was also some good writing about violence and the implications of this “anti-social” behaviour. This said, many candidates quite often threw everything ‘relearned’ at the task without taking even a moment, it often seemed, to plan a response and make it more focused on the specifics of the question (and therefore the methods used by the authors to interest us in individuals and their struggles). In respect of the second text, there was a good deal to say about Alex in *A Clockwork Orange*, for example, but many candidates dealing with *Lies of Silence* struggled to see how Dillon, Moira or the members of the IRA were having difficulty with society, which is not to say that it couldn’t be seen, of course. Occasionally, candidates wrote about Rose (or even Ida) as a part of their response, often leading to interesting argumentation.

Question 7b

Though drawing many fewer responses, this question represented an interesting challenge and differentiated well amongst those who chose it. Most used the extract to commence and develop an argument, but as with the 2009 versions of 6ET01, there were also a number who chose to bypass the set passage almost wholly (this applying to all of the (b) type prose questions in the exam). Both approaches can work, but as a rule the candidates who stuck to the former method tended to fare better, offering good insight into the ways in which the writers presented the idea of corruption in society. The focus tended to be on character, specifically that of Pinkie, of course, but the police and Colleoni were also frequently considered in expositions on *Brighton Rock* as, less often, was Rose. Once again, Alex seemed easy prey here for those students who had been reading *A Clockwork Orange* but there was much of interest written about the Ludovico technique, for instance. In the small handful of responses looking at *Lies of Silence* Pottinger was occasionally mentioned, as was the Priest, however the majority dealt primarily with Dillon, arguing, for example, that his moral corruption in conducting an extra-marital affair was reflective of the wider malaise prevalent in the society in which he lived.

Question 8a

This was the most popular of the prose tasks and there were many good attempts to interweave the narratives (almost always using *The Yellow Wallpaper* as the second text) in establishing and sustaining an argument. There was widespread coverage of the role and importance of marriage in Georgian society, but not as much understanding of the techniques used to develop it as a theme, beyond the use of characterisation – there was relatively little mention of the way in which it, and attitudes to it, are ironised, for example. Once again, the idea of there being little else to interest the reader beyond the marriages of the characters was perhaps neglected, as candidates stormed through an essay on marriage in general and its representation in the book. There were some interesting discussions of the role of John in *The Yellow Wallpaper* and his “mis-diagnosis” of post-natal depression and subsequent control over the narrator.

Austen's novel is a didactic one as she ~~challenges~~ ^{challenges} ~~questions~~ the conventions of a patriarchal society, and attempts to ~~refine~~ ^{open} views of women society to women. In the patriarchal society women were seen as inferior to men and men's treatment of them was in accordance with this idea. John's treatment of his wife in 'The Yellow Wallpaper' is reflective of this belief as he infantilises her as a 'blessed little goose'.


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Examiner Comments

Here is a maybe slightly prepared, but nonetheless interesting introduction to a response.

Question 8b

A member of the examining team comments that “although the less popular of the titles on *Pride and Prejudice*, this was tackled with more consistent success, seeming to evoke a more interested and engaged response to the novels. The extent to which candidates highlighted the term “realistic” proved a key distinguishing factor; it was fruitful in leading to searching analysis and evaluation.” Setting is, of course, a key component of both *Pride & Prejudice* and *The Yellow Wallpaper* and the extract presented provoked some interesting discussion of the role of this narrative element in enhancing our understanding of the characters, their relationships and the themes, for instance. There was some good work on the claustrophobia of the narrator's situation in the latter text and the use of the setting for symbolic and thematic purposes. There was very little coverage of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* indeed, but here the question provided plenty of scope for argumentation based on, say, Lyme Regis, Ware Commons or Exeter.

Question 9a

Personal freedom was a rich source of comment for those writing about this group of texts and this was the third most frequently answered of the prose questions. The focus tended to fall, sensibly enough, on characterisation. The stock approach was to discuss the major figures in *Wuthering Heights* one by one in terms of their relation to the theme, then move on to the second text and do the same, though to a lesser extent, given the constraints of time. This often led to reasonably sound discussion, though those who spent more time on fewer people, as it were, usually produced more detailed and interesting work. Heathcliff & the elder Catherine, as well as Hareton and the younger Catherine drew plenty of attention, understandably, but there was also some engaging discussion of Isabella Linton, for instance. From *The Color Purple* Celie's condition as a virtual slave at the outset, and her movement to personal freedom was a fruitful branch, except where candidates tried simply to re-narrate her story. The few who chose to use *The Scarlet Letter* often wrote thoughtfully about Hester Prynne and her obvious problems in terms of the theme.

Question 9b

There was much good material on imagery and symbolism deployed in these responses, especially relating to the "barrier motifs" of windows and doors, for example. An examiner states that most choosing this task were "well-versed in the use of symbolism and imagery within the novels, and the best were very articulate in developing their arguments with apt close reference and analytical comment". *The Scarlet Letter* has at least one very obvious symbol to draw upon, and candidates dealing with that text were prone to leap on it with vigour. There were also some pleasing mentions of the other symbolic strands of the novel such as Pearl and the forest. Where *The Color Purple* was the second text, the possibilities were also plentiful and candidates were able to deal happily with the significance of cars, clothes and colour itself, amongst other things.

Question 10a

In January 2009, no-one answered on this group of texts. Happily, this year, there were at least some responses to look at, and they were routinely of a good or better quality. Here is an example of a candidate who scored A01: 14/15 & A02: 24/25.

intro is letter from Helen - it would seem so - but no
 HE - M main protagonist - seen/unseen connection
 TSP - commentary by (legate) without condemning
 H - Bast
 M - everyone.

If one was to read the opening chapter of *Howards End* (HE) alone, without reading further, it would be understandable for ^{a reader} ~~the~~ to interpret that Helen is the main character. However, I do not believe this to be the case.

Whilst the novel does indeed open with various letters from Helen Schlegel to her sister, Margaret, and therefore communicates her inner thoughts to us before everyone else, the letters also embody aspects of most other crucial characters from the Wilcox family and the Schlegel household. Mrs. Wilcox is introduced to us ~~in~~ in harmony with ~~the~~ *Howards End* and with nature - a vital aspect of her character: "Trail, trail went her long dress over the sopping grass ... her hands full of the hay" instantly communicating a

great unity with the garden by the connection of her garments to the lawn, and therefore to the natural world of the "unseen" itself. ~~Mr~~^{Henry} Wilcox too is introduced by explanation of a conversation in which ~~he~~^{he} dismissed "women's suffrage" and "folded his arms" over the mention of equality. Although Forster has used incredible subtlety, vital characteristics are brought out such as the Wilcox's values of business and materialism - the "outer life", often characterised with the leitmotifs of "panic and emptiness" and "telegrams and anger" - and the Schlegel's values of intellect and knowledge of the self - "The prose and the passion" - "I had probably picked up the notion ... from some book".

The short syntax and quick leaps from subject to subject show Helen's great love of communication and the fast paced thoughts and opinions of "a six-hundred-pounder" but, after this chapter, the focus changes to Margaret for most of the book. Although Forster writes in the third person, his interjections (using the device of free indirect style most for Margaret) allow us a far greater exploration into her character than Helen's, making her the main protagonist.

Whilst both sisters share the same life of luxury and the same values - a desire for connection with other people beyond the superficiality ~~of~~ of the everyday

Margaret is the character who succeeds in accomplishing the novel's epigraph of "Only Connect". It is she who connects with Mrs Wilcox and, subsequently with Howards End and it is her she who makes a successful bond between the Schlegels and Wilcoxs, whilst also connecting with the Basts. Helen is unable to connect with Henry right until the end of the novel and merely connects with Leonard Bast through her desire to help him stay out of the "abyss", which both interpret wrongly, resulting in her illegitimate child under circumstances where both sought sex for connection, rather than a connection of values in their "inner" selves.

It is not to say that Margaret found her job of connecting easy, even her marriage to Henry at first seemed doomed. She could not help him to the "rainbow bridge that should connect the prose with the passion", despite their love for each other. She was left with the feeling that whilst the two of them were in "fragments", they were still stuck in the daily "grey" of the outer life, failing to connect in a way that allowed "human love to be seen at its highest". Forster states that she fails to do this because of Henry's "obtuse-ness". As he has not connected fully with himself, he is unable to notice the "inner" life of others and therefore doesn't notice things

His inability to accept "responsibility" is exemplified several times in the novel. At first, he cannot connect his bad advice about The Porphyrio to the fact Leonard has lost his job and is struggling to survive, driving a rift between him and Helen. Then, when his affair is exposed he cannot see the connection between him and Jacky and Helen and Leonard, resulting in a blind condemnation of Helen's illegitimate child. It is this which drives Margaret to chide him: "You have had a mistress - I forgave you. ~~the~~ My sister has a lover - you drove her from the house... only say to yourself what Helen has done, I've done"

Conversations like this, as well as the ensuing aftermath for Margaret are shown to the reader, whereas Helen is far from omnipresent in the novel. Her affair with Leonard is barely hinted at (although this could be due to Forster's inability to express sexual affairs between men and women) and when she disappears, we hear nothing of her for several chapters during her pregnancy. Examples such as this show why she could never truly be seen as the main character, whilst Margaret definitely can be seen in this way.

In *The Shooting Party*, there is no main character. Instead, Colegate introduces us to many

guests who stay at Nettleby Park, who stand for the typical Edwardian ideal of "Society" and privileged England and describes them alongside the servants. Likenesses can be drawn from Olivia Lillam, who is cultured and intelligent, just as the Schlegel sisters are, with her love of Ruskin and disdain for society and her husband, Bob, who has many of the values of Henry Wilcox. Leonard Bast can also be likened to Tom Harker: both are killed by the upper classes and both occupy the lowest end of middle class. Bast's death is particularly ironic as he is killed by a shelf of books, sadly echoing his attempts to acquire culture via "Ruskin."

Conversely, whereas Forster's voice is heard strongly throughout HE, ~~the~~ when he expresses his dislike for the changing face of England and his reluctance to talk of the lowest classes who are "only to be approached by the statistician or the poet" Colgate refrains from making personal comments, instead allowing the reader to make judgements for themselves. She doesn't condemn Aline Hartups

affairs or her husband's ways of "not shooting like a gentleman". She merely presents us with the evidence and lets us make of it what we desire.

Her writing style is different to Forster's in that she doesn't communicate her 'favourites'. However, I would say that, despite Forster saying in later life that ~~that~~ he no longer feels proud of HE because "there is not "a single character" for whom he cares, I feel at the time he wrote it, Margaret embodies many of his views and is therefore a fair ~~is~~ character to take on the role of main protagonist - not Helen.



ResultsPlus

Examiner Comments

Notable here, amongst other things, is the way that the candidate uses both texts to deal very proficiently with a fairly broad injunction.

Question 10b

This question was the more popular of the *Howards End* options. It too produced some very fluent, coherent writing, often of a lively and quite ambitious character. Change is a major concern of the core text, naturally, and there was a quantity of informed and astute discussion of its purpose and the methods used to develop it. Imagery and symbolism were considered to useful effect, as was the importance of specific characters in establishing and continuing the theme. Not only physical, but social, emotional and personal changes were approached. There was some support for *The Shooting Party*, including the interesting comment in some responses that change is presented there as more coming than extant, but the majority of answers dealt with *The Remains of the Day* as the second novel and were able to delineate an argument clearly enough, based largely on the protagonist, his unwillingness to change, and what this portends.

General Comment

This was a further successful series for this unit. The paper offered both opportunity and challenge in reasonably happy measure. Candidates almost always had something to say in response to at least part of the examination and very many seem to have written fully and purposefully in response to all three sections. Although virtually all of our teaching colleagues are to be saluted on their endeavours on behalf of their candidates, the team would once again offer particular congratulations to those professionals who have managed to prepare Year 12 entrants for a January module of this relative complexity.

Grade Boundaries

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E	N
6ET01/01	100	73	64	55	46	37	28

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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