

# Examiners' Report January 2009

GCE2008

GCE2008 English Literature (6ET01 & 6ET02)

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## 6ET01

Timing did not seem to present a very significant problem for the majority, though there were clearly those who found the demand of managing to complete all three tasks in the available period difficult. It is acknowledged that the overall requirement is a challenging one and those students who managed to provide full and detailed responses to all three sections of the paper are to be particularly congratulated. No candidates reacted problematically to the exam.

All of the tasks set drew responses with the exception of Q10a and Q10b - apparently no centres studying the texts set for those questions entered candidates in this series. The quality of written expression and organisation was generally good or better, though many of the characteristic errors of this level of study remained - to wit, the tendency to regard "of" as a verb and so on.

### 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. The question is worth 20 marks and assesses AO1 (10 marks overall) and AO2 (10 marks overall).

#### Poetry

The poem set was *Sister Louise de la Misericorde* by Christina Rossetti. The tasks were:

**Q1a** Sound devices are often considered to be an important feature in poetry. Discuss the use and effect of sound devices in this poem.

**Q1b** Poets often make use of imagery.

Using **two** examples from the poem explore the effect of imagery in the poem.  
**Q1c** Poetry, themes are explored in different ways.

Using your knowledge of poetry, discuss what strike you as being the important 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).

**Q1a:** Candidates were generally able to identify features of alliteration, rhyme, assonance, consonance and sibilance in responding to 1a. In such cases, they usually exemplified well and offered some evaluation. Other students struggled, however, to get much beyond the imprecise notion of "repetition" and were thereby limited to Band 1.

Prior to the exam, many centres had expressed concern about the amount of space available on the answer paper for the short task responses. Whilst there were some candidates who over-ran (almost never to significant gain), the undoubted majority managed to confine themselves to the demarcated areas, often writing in exactly the way that it had been envisaged they would.

### Exemplar Response:

*“Rosetti uses onomatopoeiac words (“Oh”) and words that are mimetic of their meaning (“trickles” “drop”) to add vivacity and emotion to her poem. Aliteration is also used to emphasize the words “perished pleasure” and give harmony. Her mostly falling cadences express her yearning.”*

This answer gained 5 out of 5 marks. Although it is not wholly accurate, it offers precision, clarity and insight.

**Q1b:** The question on imagery was more successfully managed, on the whole. Candidates were able to comment on Rossetti’s use of simile, metaphor and personification, for example, in an informed and intelligent manner, many choosing to discuss the images of the fire, the rose and the mire as central to the poem’s meaning and effect.

**Q1c:** This task proved to be a differentiator here and it is where the element of stretch and challenge truly resides in this section of the exam. Many candidates were able to pick out key themes such as desire, love and vanity, but it often proved a struggle to comment on the ways in which they were developed. A proportion ended up repeating what they had said in either 1a or 1b and consequently achieved marks in the lower band. It is suggested that if students wish to return to a discussion of techniques which they have already covered in previous tasks when answering the third part of this section, they ensure that they pick on different examples.

### Prose

The prose extract was taken from Jay McInerney’s novel *Bright Lights, Big City*. The tasks were:

- Q2a** Novelists use setting to create interest.  
Identify and comment on the effect of the writer’s use of setting in this extract.
- Q2b** Novelists choose particular words to create particular effects.  
Identify **two** examples of diction which add to the effect of the narrative, and comment on their use.
- Q2c** Novelists often use narrative voice in order to create a specific mood in their work.

Using your knowledge of narrative voice, discuss the ways in which Jay McInerney 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).

**Q2a:** Candidates answering this question offered a wide variety of response, ranging from the very general (often getting no further than the information conveyed in the textual headnote) to the purposeful and particular. Many of the better answers saw that McInerney creates a setting familiar to the broader audience and uses it to establish a claustrophobic and tense mood (which is undercut with humour).

**Q2b:** Answers here were also varied, but to a lesser extent. Those candidates attaining marks in the higher band tended to choose examples such as “heebie-jeebies” and “shudders”, which they labelled accurately and commented on to good purpose. There were, in fact, relatively few students who found this task completely beyond them.

#### **Exemplar Response:**

*“The use of diction can greatly influence a text to alter a reader’s conceptions. In the first paragraph, McInerney uses the Lexis ‘shudders’ to describe the trains movement which would imply something unpleasant was happening around the train, as we would associate that word with something uncomfortable. A second interesting word to have used is ‘Breathers’, also in the first paragraph. It could simply suggest that the train is resting, but it could also imply that commuters are like air being respirated out and in from the train.”*

This answer does exactly what is asked and provides comment, particularly in the final sentence, which indicates insight and imagination in analysis. It was awarded 5 out of 5 marks.

**Q2c:** Many candidates immediately recognised that the excerpt was in second person (though all other possibilities were represented). There was a good deal of interesting and engaged commentary on the relative unusualness of the form, its purpose and the creation of narrative persona. Some candidates also added thoughtful and relevant discussion of the other voice or voices in the passage, particularly that of the old woman. Those who fared best tended to acknowledge the incipient humour which derived from the world-weary address of the narrator and the ways in which McInerney exploited form and structure to achieve effect.

#### **General Comments**

Candidates seemed, on the whole, to be at least reasonably well-equipped to handle the demands of this section of the exam, which is creditable, given the very early point in their post-16 careers at which the vast majority will have taken it. Even where it is not specified that they do so, students 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. Even given the apparent limitations of space, many answers were well on their way to having met these basic requirements.

#### **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 students 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:**

- Q3a** 'For many poets, home is defined by the people who live there.'  
Compare and contrast the ways in which home is presented in **at least two** poems in the light of this claim.
- Q3b** 'Poets interestingly explore the themes of possession and ownership in poems about home.'  
Using **one** of the following poems as a starting point, compare and contrast how poets present these themes in **at least one other** poem.  
Either W. B. Yeats *Meditations in Time of Civil War* (From Here to Eternity)  
or Samuel Rogers *A Wish* (Oxford University Press)  
or Gwendolyn Brooks *The Ballad of Rudolph Reed* (The Rattle Bag).

**Land:**

- Q4a** 'Poets writing about land frequently explore the theme of loss.'  
Compare and contrast **at least two** poems in the light of this statement.
- Q4b** 'Many poets write about land intending to convey their attitudes towards a specific region or nation.'  
Using **one** of the following poems as a starting point, compare and contrast how poets their attitudes towards a region or nation in **at least one other** poem.  
Either Miriam Waddington *Popular Geography* (From Here to Eternity)  
or Elizabeth Barrett Browning *The Sweetness of England* (Oxford University Press)  
or Hugh MacDiarmid *Scotland Small?* (The Rattle Bag).

**Work:**

- Q5a** 'The work we do makes us who we are.'  
Compare and contrast **at least two** poems in the light of this statement.
- Q5b** 'Some poets writing about people at work idealise or romanticise them.'  
Using **one** of the following poems as a starting point, compare and contrast how poets present people at work in **at least one other** poem.  
Either Gillian Clarke *Hay-making* (From Here to Eternity)  
or Seamus Heaney *The Forge* (Oxford University Press)  
or Walt Whitman *The Ox-Tamer* (The Rattle Bag).

To the relative surprise of the marking team, the generic task was, in the case of all three anthologies, far more popular than the text-specific one.

**Q3a:** Candidates responding to this task tended to pick from a relatively small range of poems (*Aunt Julia* was a favourite, as was *The Old Familiar Faces*). They also had a proclivity to agree with the terms of the proposition, rarely moving much beyond it, though some saw that "home" could also easily be defined by associations with a particular location (often rural). As was true of all the other responses to section B, students who adopted a more genuinely comparative approach to the task did much

better than those who chose a linear method (dealing with one poem, then another). Similarly, candidates who took as their starting point the methods which the writers

employed to convey the significance (or otherwise) of the “people who live there” more usually prospered than those who took a descriptive, verse by verse line. There were, therefore, some interesting discussions of imagery and diction, for example, and the roles of those techniques in establishing the “definitions” of home for those poets choosing it as a topic.

**Q3b:** Of the small number of candidates answering this task, the majority dealt with *The Ballad of Rudolph Reed*. *Piano* was a popular option for comparison, but a number of other poems featured. Once again, a narrative approach was followed, especially in respect of the former piece. This frequently led candidates into difficulties, as, having spent a goodly proportion of their time re-telling the story of *Rudolph Reed*, they struggled to do much in the way of commentary on how the poets presented the themes of possession and ownership - a key component of the rubric of this question.

**Q4a:** This proved to be a popular option, with many candidates seizing on what apparently presents itself as a straightforward enough proposition. Again, however, having successfully selected the poems which they thought best to answer on (often *Beeny Cliff* or *Going, Going*) students were not so effective in commenting on language, or on structuring a response to facilitate genuine comparison. Interestingly, some responses elected to deal with *To Autumn*. This was a less obvious choice, and in one or two cases, yielded some good commentary, though elsewhere it was apparent that this was probably one of a smallish handful of poems that had been studied and that it was going to be shoe-horned into the answer, come what may.

**Q4b:** By way of report on this question, an extract from a student response follows:

*“To enforce the celebratory and laudatory tone, Browning largely uses imagery such as personifications, as in “the day was born”, or pathetic fallacy, as in “happy violets.”*

*The diction is often deliberately archaic, to add romance and poetry to the idealised land of England.*

*Browning refers in a laudatory way to England’s typical flora and fauna, emphasizing the beauty and harmony around her in every line of the poem, that seem to spill in one another as “waters”. She uses ~~adjectives such as~~ terms such as “gentle dimplement (as if God...in making England)”, to attribute an idyll of sights and sounds. The rhythm is lethargic as cadences rise and fall, only few lines are end-stopped, this enforces the movement of the poem, that appears to never stop, such as the affection of the poet for the land she is contemplating....(goes on to Keats for some little time)*

*Nevertheless, not all poets picture certain regions or landscapes in an idealised way, celebrating their view of nature. Other poets infact link some scapes to memories, less pleasant and charming, such as Thomas Hardy in “Beeny Cliff”....  
So we can now argue that some poets have an attitude of affection and tendence to idealise their country or land, when others view the land, or some specific regions as triggers for memories, wheather pleasant or not.”*

Despite its minor flaws, this is indicative of what the examining team considered to be successful here. The overall mark for this answer (centres are reminded that the passages reproduced above are extracts and not the whole response) was **AO1: 14**,

A02: 4, A03: 18. Though the task is moulded slightly to the candidate's own ends, there is authentic comparison and a pleasing focus on the specifics of language.

Q5a: Here too, a part of a student's answer is presented:

*"Feinstein and Thomas use imagery to make us "see" the working individuals they are writing about. We see Feinstein's father as a cheerful man, a little larger than life, with "belly laughter" giving the image of someone without any worries who can afford to buy things out of season. In Iago Prytherch the titular character is made to sound somewhat mysterious ("your dark figure"), isolated from the rest of the world. Thomas suggests his affinity for nature is perhaps more powerful than traditional learning - science and art is merely "furniture" whilst nature "sweeps the skull"... In conclusion, "Father" and "Iago Prytherch" admire the working individual, asserting work as something which makes up a person's character and reflects them. Yet "Toads" shows that this isn't always the case, and that work can be a burden, especially in modern society."*

In this case, the use of textual reference is very successful and the conclusion to the task is nicely judged. As can be deduced from it, the candidate offered a genuinely discursive response, choosing to take issue with the terms of the proposition. Whilst it is not always the case that those answers which can provide a balanced argument will do better than those which are more one dimensional, the examining team felt that many candidates who used one of the poems which they chose to counteract another, marked themselves out as likely to score in the higher bands.

Q5b: A handful of answers dealt well with *Hay-making* and were generally good at identifying the ways in which that poem seems to agree with the proposition of the task, focusing on the relatively idyllic representation of agricultural work and exploring the diction and imagery, for example, to sound purpose. They largely chose to contrast it with *The Chimney Sweeper* or *Toads* which was eminently sensible as those poems provide a fairly straightforward contrastive position. *The Forge* was also a popular option - it too was often paired with *The Chimney Sweeper*, but *Toads* was also commonly picked here too. At least one student wrote interestingly about *The Solitary Reaper*.

### General Comments

In one or two cases, candidates answered on poems which are not named. This represents a rubric infringement, unfortunately, and centres are asked to ensure that the specification is followed with due care.

Similarly, those responses which do not deal with two poems, for example, are unlikely to move beyond the middle attainment bands.

On the whole, however, as with section A, candidates seemed to have acquired the basics of literary analysis and were able to organise and express their ideas with clarity and common sense. Their use of supporting evidence was at least competent and they tried, mainly, to compare or contrast the poems which they had chosen in responding to the proposition.

### 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

**Q6a** ‘The main source of *Jane Eyre*’s interest is its story of immense human endurance.’

Explore the methods which writers use to present the idea of human endurance.

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.

**Q6b** ‘The use of imagery is a key part of the success of *Jane Eyre*.’

Using *Jane Eyre* page 295 as your starting point from ‘But what had befallen the night?’ to the end of the chapter on page 296, explore the ways in which writers use imagery and symbolism.

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.

**Q7a** ‘Trust is ultimately the most important theme in the novel.’

Explore the methods which writers use to present the theme of trust.

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.

**Q7b** ‘The strength of the novel is its use of irony and ironic situations.’

Using *Brighton Rock* page 203 as your starting point from ‘He said cautiously into the dark, “It’s all right. Go to sleep.”’ to the end of the chapter on page 204, explore how writers use irony and ironic situations to create interest for the reader.

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.

**Q8a** ‘*Pride and Prejudice* is pre-occupied with surfaces and never gets beneath them.’

Explore the ways in which writers present the worlds of their novels.

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.

**Q8b** ‘In *Pride and Prejudice* Jane Austen is essentially writing about self-knowledge.’

Using *Pride and Prejudice* page 200 as your starting point from ‘She perfectly remembered everything that had passed in conversation between Wickham and herself,’ to ‘“Till this moment I never knew myself!”’ at the bottom of page 202, explore the methods writers use to develop the theme of self-knowledge.

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.

- Q9a** 'Childhood is shown to be a bitter experience in *Wuthering Heights*.'  
Explore the methods writers use to present childhood.  
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.
- Q9b** 'Dialogue is an essential part of the interest of *Wuthering Heights*.'  
Using *Wuthering Heights* page 14 as your starting point from "'I don't think it possible for me to get home now, without a guide," I could not help exclaiming.' to "'No, no! A stranger is a stranger, be he rich or poor - it will not suit me to permit any one the range of the place while I am off guard!' said the unmannerly wretch." on page 16, explore the ways in which dialogue is 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.
- Q10a** 'It is the duty of writers to report faithfully the facts of the times about which they write.'  
Explore the methods writers use to present the times in which their novels are set.  
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.
- Q10b** 'Contrast creates most of the narrative interest of *Howards End*.'  
Using *Howards End* page 127 as your starting point, from 'To her annoyance, Mrs Bast was still in the garden;' to the end of the chapter on page 199, explore how writers make use of contrast.  
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.

**Q6a:** Roughly a fifth of the candidature answered on this task. Many wrote intelligently about the theme of human endurance and how it is developed in *Jane Eyre*, although there was a significant tendency to narrate rather than analyse here. Indeed, some students tried to offer a blow-by-blow account of the story - a decision which was bound to backfire. Those who examined specific scenes (The Red Room and Lowood featured large), focusing on imagery, dialogue, contrast and other narrative techniques were more successful. Both *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *The Magic Toyshop* were used to extend the argument effectively - the characters of Antoinette and Melanie, for example, provided plenty of opportunity in this respect.

**Q6b:** This was also a popular option. Imagery and symbolism were seized upon with some enthusiasm by many students. The important scene with the chestnut tree provided a good springboard for discussion. Candidates used the secondary text well here - both *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *The Magic Toyshop* provided ample opportunity for extension of the argument. The extract also had the effect of making students focus on technique, thus addressing the Assessment Objective criteria more precisely and

avoiding the tendency to narrate. On the whole, this task was well handled by the majority of those who answered it.

Q7a: By way of report on this question, an extract from a student response follows:

*"Irony comes when Rose is unable to trust Ida, yet trusts Pinkie implicitly. This could be because Pinkie gets to her first and inflicts his ideas on her before Ida questions her, but it has been suggested that it is also due to Rose's lack of faith in maternal figures. We learn later that Rose's family mistreated her - "the woman...vindictive", "they get terrible moods" - so it would be entirely natural for her to hold back from trusting any mother figure, particularly one so overt..."*

*Pinkie and Alex in Anthony Burgess' "A Clockwork Orange" are similar in many ways, but not in the people they trust. Alex trusts that his "dear pee and em" will be apathetic and turn a blind eye to his activities. He trusts the old women from the Korova milk bar to provide an alibi for him and his "droogs". He trusts the police not to bother chasing them and the people he attacks not to report him..."*

*As a reader, we do not trust many characters in the novels. We at first trust Ida, but when her crusade for justice becomes 'an exciting adventure', we lose faith in her morals. Oddly, we trust Alex in "A Clockwork Orange". Burgess uses Alex to make us understand his mentality and because we are made to feel like his "droogs" - this is done by the use of inclusive language like "Oh, my Brothers" - we become his allies and share his laughter ("haw, haw, haw my droogs"). We, like Rose trusts Pinkie, trust the most unlikely character to come good."*

Besides the other strengths of this answer, the last paragraph is an excellent example of how to use the secondary text to extend the response, whether we agree with its argument or not.

Q7b: Not very many students answered this task. Those who did were by and large able to comment on the importance of irony and ironic situations. Some took issue with the proposition. The answers generally followed an overview approach, which was not unsuccessful, but the highest attainers were usually those who dealt with core episodes and explored the irony of these in the context of the book as a whole. The secondary text was more often *A Clockwork Orange* than *Lies of Silence*. It was certainly a challenge to extend the argument with reference to either novel, it seemed, but some responses met it head on and made some mileage out of the various situational ironies surrounding Alex and his droogs or Michael and Andrea, for instance.

Q8a: *Pride and Prejudice* was a popular core text. Many students, therefore, attempted this question. As with responses on *Jane Eyre*, a narrating tendency was apparent and this was not especially helpful, as the task itself had its complications. Primary amongst these was the difficulty candidates had with defining "surfaces". The best answers focused on the social scene of the book and the ways in which first impressions seem to count for so much, at least in the early parts of the story. There was often, therefore, a character-based analysis at the forefront of much writing and this worked best where focus remained firmly on the terms of the task, as opposed to becoming a broadstroke commentary on the relationship between Elizabeth and Darcy. *The Yellow Wallpaper* was the only text used to extend the argument. Candidates were able to see that "surfaces" was open to interpretation here and that this concept could therefore be linked to the core novel. Most students were able to get beyond the literal and explore the idea of social and other issues connected to appearance and reality, for example. Had there been answers using *The French Lieutenant's*

*Woman*, they would have had the opportunity to explore the surfaces presented by Charles & Sarah, for instance. The proposition, it should be added, was intended to allow for contradiction - happily, many students saw this and offered genuinely discursive commentary, albeit briefly in a large number of cases.

**Q8b:** Once again, this option proved less popular than the previous choice. This said, the candidates who answered on it were able to deliver some sound discussion of the principle of self-knowledge and its centrality to *Pride and Prejudice*. They examined the extract in reasonable detail and were able to use it to move outward into a wider discussion of the core and supporting texts. Slightly surprisingly, though not wholly without success, some students paid only slight attention to the passage selected, choosing to get straight into a wider analysis. As a rule, however, it might be wiser for those sitting the exam in future to devote a reasonable amount of their answer to the excerpt. *The Yellow Wallpaper* provided plenty of opportunity for discussion of the proposition - clearly "self-knowledge" is a central tenet of that slight tale. The way in which Perkins Gilman develops it via symbolism, for instance, potentially provided a rich vein of commentary which some responses explored to good purpose. Again, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* was unused here, but it too offered plenty of material by which to expand an argument, for example by reference to both Charles and Sarah and the former's journey towards increased self-awareness.

**Q9a:** There were roughly 50 answers to this question. Quite a lot of description and story-telling was evident in respect of the idea of childhood in *Wuthering Heights*. Heathcliff, the younger Catherine and Hareton all drew plenty of attention, but there was not, often, enough focus on how Bronte creates the sense that childhood is a bitter experience in the book through her use of imagery, dialogue, contrast and diction, for example. Instead, students tried to wade their way through sequences of events, becoming quickly bogged down in the weight of the narrative. Those who moved beyond this plainly prospered. Their use of reference was often well-chosen - a function of their decision to concentrate on specific details rather than cover too many bases. The popular choice by which to extend the argument was *The Color Purple* - most of those who went down that path commenced with Celie's abuse at the hands of Albert and occasionally offered some discussion of Nettie's role. A small number of responses answered on *The Scarlet Letter*. These often had interesting things to say about Pearl, whose childhood is not "bitter" in the same way as the characters in *Wuthering Heights* for instance.

**Q9b:** This task was under-represented by comparison. Those who wrote about the importance of dialogue were clearly able to use the specified extract as a jumping-off point, dealing with the idea that it is essential in developing both voice and character. There was some discussion of dialogue as it is used to present Joseph in *Wuthering Heights* but, interestingly, relatively little work on Heathcliff or Catherine, both of whom say a lot in this novel. *The Color Purple's* epistolary style seems to mitigate against discussion of dialogue, but a great deal of what is written in that text is actually reporting what is said, either directly or otherwise. Here too, dialogue plays an important role in developing character and theme. Hawthorne has a number of set-piece face-to-face discussions in *The Scarlet Letter*, many of which add to the interest of the novel through extending its ironies, for instance. However, this text was hardly used at all in responding to Q9b.

**Q10a & Q10b:** As stated, no candidates answered on this group of texts. The thrust of the task in Q10a was to encourage candidates to think about the use of imagery and symbolism, setting, dialogue and character, for instance, to present the worlds of the novels. This was explicitly not a question about context, of course, as AO4 is not being

assessed in this exam, but one which intended to allow students to comment on whether they saw the writers' uses of the core techniques as presenting immersive and vivid environments for the imaginations of readers to inhabit.

Q10b was straightforward enough. Contrasts between characters and settings were obvious points for discussion and indeed contrast is a theme in itself in all three novels, arguably. The ways in which contrasts are presented include dialogue, imagery and symbolism and diction, for instance.

### **General Comment**

The demands of teaching two novels in four or so months (in all likelihood) alongside the requirements of delivering the other parts of the course should not be underestimated. It is to the credit of both teachers and candidates that so many of the latter arrived to sit 6ET01 in any position to answer, so soon after starting their course (in relative terms). That a significant proportion scored as well as they did is highly commendable.

## GCE2008 English Literature 6ET01 Grade Boundaries

Paper No	Max Mark	A	B	C	D	E
01	100	74	66	58	50	43

**Note:** Grade boundaries may vary from year to year and from subject to subject, depending on the demands of the question paper.

## 6ET02

### EXPLORATIONS IN DRAMA

#### General Comments

Most centres seemed to have engaged fully with the new specification and had approached both task-setting and assessment with thoughtful planning and organisation. There is evidence that most candidates are able to tackle both coursework pieces with confidence and, on the Creative Critical Response in particular, they were able to develop their own critical views and to experiment with form.

There were a few cases where candidates had chosen tasks which did not allow them fully to access all the relevant assessment objectives. These will be explored further in the comments below.

#### Administration

- Centres must include the top and bottom candidates if these are not already included in the sample. They must also substitute another candidate's folder if one of the folders selected is from an absent candidate.
- Candidate's work should, ideally, be fastened by treasury tags or, alternatively, by staples. Paper clips should not be used, nor should plastic or cardboard folders.
- Centres must check to ensure that candidate numbers and marks in the AO boxes are correct and complete.
- It is important that the coursework record cards / authentication statements are attached to the candidate's work and are signed (and dated) by both the teacher and the student. Some centres failed to do this and the moderation process was delayed accordingly.
- Centres should download the coursework record cards from the Edexcel website:  
<http://www.edexcel.com/migrationdocuments/GCE%20New%20GCE/EnglishLit-GCE-cwrcV2.doc>
- It is a requirement of the specification that references to texts, sources and quotations must be provided and all candidates should therefore attach a bibliography to their work.

#### Word Counts

- The maximum number of words allowed for the folder as a whole is 2500 (including quotation). There is no set word limit for each individual coursework task: what is important is that the candidate meets all the relevant assessment criteria for each piece.
- The specification makes clear that there is to be no tolerance on the prescribed word limit and that teachers and moderators are to discontinue marking once the prescribed limit has been reached. What this means in practice, with a two-task folder, is that the excess words should be excluded from the piece that does least harm to the candidate's overall mark. Thus, a candidate who writes well over the total limit on the Explorative Study should be penalised on it rather than having his/her second coursework piece ignored.
- Candidates should be encouraged to edit their work to meet word count requirements. It is the experience of moderators that this invariably enhances the quality of coursework.

- It is a requirement of the specification that candidates include a cumulative word count at the bottom of each page. It is also helpful for separate totals to be provided for each task.

## Assessment Objectives Explorative Study

### AO3

- Some centres had not taken account of the importance of AO3 on this piece. It is worth 36 of the 62 marks available and some candidates who had otherwise written sound essays lost a good deal of ground because they failed fully to access this assessment objective.
- Candidates should be reminded that there are two parts to Assessment Objective 3: the first requires them to explore connections and comparisons between texts; the second asks them to explore different interpretations of texts by other readers.
- The choice of task is crucial here. The title, 'The representation of the tragic hero in *Hamlet* and *Othello*' does not focus tightly enough on AO3: a better approach would be, 'In his essay, Phillip Edwards discusses the breakdown in sympathy for Hamlet during the twentieth century. Do you agree that this is the case and does it also apply to *Othello*?' The latter gives the student both a clear invitation to compare texts and a critical interpretation to explore.

### AO1

- In general, candidates were comfortable writing about drama texts and there were lots of examples of sophisticated structure and argument. However, some candidates tended to adopt a rather naïve style, involving rhetoric - 'how is it possible that Shakespeare understood the human heart so well...?' - rather than argument or analysis.
- The weakest candidates here tended to produce list-like essays - '...another example of power in *King Lear* is...' at the expense of developing an evolving argument.

### AO2

- Most candidates approached the texts as literary constructs - although there are still some who give narrative accounts of the plays or who treat characters as if they were real, opining, for example, that Lear who 'had it all' lost it through 'pitiable decision making.'
- The best candidates confidently discussed the writer's use of structure, form and language to shape meaning - e.g. 'Throughout *The Merchant of Venice*, the concept of risk is displayed through the dialogue... Salanio's language highlights the risks: "and see the holy edifice of stone and not think me straight of dangerous rocks"'

### AO4

- It is pleasing to see that candidates on the whole now incorporate contextual material in a much more sophisticated manner. There are very few examples of essays that focus on historical and cultural information at the expense of the texts.
- The best candidates made reference to contextual material as a means of progressing their argument - almost in passing - rather than 'bolting on' lots of, often irrelevant, material. For example: 'The apparently "motiveless malignity" throughout *Othello*, in contrast to the manner of betrayal and revenge within *Hamlet*, introduces the key generic differences between the

two plays. They are - despite both complying with the traditions of character and plot laid out by Aristotle in *The Poetics* - split into two separate genres: *Othello* is a pure tragedy, whilst *Hamlet* tends to be seen as a revenge tragedy...'

## Creative Critical Response

### A04

- A number of candidates failed to access this assessment objective. There is a requirement for evidence of understanding of the contexts in which texts are written and received. Again task setting was the issue. Straight reviews of videos gave candidates no opportunity to demonstrate contextual understanding. Rather than, for instance, having candidates write a review of a video production of a play, it would be better to have them write a response to another viewer's review, thereby creating a critical context for the candidate to explore.
- Many candidates, however, responded thoughtfully and creatively to this task, writing for example a review of *Much Ado* for a radical feminist magazine, or scripting a presentation to the class that proposes a modernisation of *Dr Faustus* for a school production.
- Centres are reminded that the criteria for A04 on this piece are different from those that apply to the Explorative Study. The notion of 'context' that applies to the Creative Critical Response is one of the 'critical context' that looks at reception by different audiences; it does not refer to historical / social context which is addressed in the longer study.
- In some cases candidates submitted work for this piece which read simply like another literary essay - a shorter version of the Explorative Study, in effect. This approach does not allow candidates fully to access either A04 or A01 on this task.

### A01

- This assessment objective looks at a candidate's ability to write persuasively in a critical style. The key here is to foster the candidate's sense of appropriateness of register and audience. Some candidates had established 'creative' situations - e.g. writing as a drama critic for *The Times* - but failed to establish a register and style that were appropriate for this situation.
- It is important that the candidate's work on this piece is accompanied by a clear indication of the task that has been set - including details of the intended readership. Many centres omitted these details and that made it difficult for moderators to assess the candidate's awareness of register and audience.
- One centre included commentaries with the Creative Critical Responses. These are not required by the specification.

## Assessment and Annotation

- Centres are reminded that they should base all their marks on bands and not grades. It is not helpful to put grades on candidates' work.
- In order to fulfil the specification requirements for internal moderation, there must be separate totals for each coursework piece so that the moderator can see clearly how the overall mark was awarded.
- Centres clearly felt that they needed to indicate particular AOs in the body of the essays: this doubtless was helpful to centres in this first series of a new specification. However, it is important that centres in their summative comments do not simply reproduce the words of the assessment grids but rather comment on the candidate's individual work. This gives the moderator a far clearer understanding of why particular marks have been awarded.

- Comments that are addressed solely to the candidate are not helpful to moderators - 'This is much better than your usual effort' -and so on.
- Almost all centres had engaged fully with the process of internal moderation and it was good to see evidence of an ongoing dialogue between teachers and the centre-assessor. Centre moderation comments are really helpful - e.g. 'I think you're being too cautious on AO2' etc. demonstrates clearly to the moderator what processes of internal moderation have taken place. Just crossing out and changing marks is not helpful.

## GCE2008 English Literature 6ET02 Grade Boundaries

Paper No	Max Mark	A	B	C	D	E
01	80	70	61	52	44	36

**Note:** Centres are reminded that this is the first examination for this new specification and that coursework boundaries may change in the following series.



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