

Examiners' Report/ Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2014

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE
in English Literature (4ET0) Paper 01
and
Pearson Edexcel Certificate
in English Literature (KET0) Paper 01

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Report on the examination - 4ETO 01/KETO 01 English Literature - 1401

General Points

- The exam enjoyed a considerable increase in entries this series, however texts and questions varied in terms of popularity. Some texts were rarely seen while others were answered on by a great many candidates. 'Of Mice and Men', 'Romeo and Juliet' and 'An Inspector Calls' invited the largest number of responses.
- Fewer candidates than in previous series are committing rubric infringements but these are still seen with a few candidates attempting to answer all the questions on the paper. Some candidates left sections of the paper unanswered.
- Achievement was seen across the whole ability range but examiners reported seeing a significant number of Level 2 responses this series. It was clear that a large number of candidates did not know the set texts very well at all. In a closed book exam such as this, familiarity with the texts is of great importance. Some candidates relied heavily on film versions of the texts, especially in the cases of 'Romeo and Juliet' and 'Of Mice and Men.' While film versions can be extremely helpful in supporting study, they cannot replace the texts on which they are based.
- A number of candidates who showed some Level 3 promise remained within Level 2 because they failed to develop points and, in many cases, drifted into narrative retellings of the texts. This was especially noticeable in responses on Romeo (5a) and Candy (11a) but there were also numerous instances of this in answers on 'An Inspector Calls'.
- The best answers, in Levels 4 and 5, demonstrated thorough and perceptive knowledge of the texts; developed, relevant arguments and evidence of personal engagement. These candidates supported their points with carefully selected quotation or textual reference.
- Examiners commented on variation in the application of quotation with some excellent use of integrated support from the texts. In a large number of responses, however, quotation use was insecure or inaccurate.

Question 1a

A fairly popular question, candidates who wrote on the characters of Marco and Eddie tended to present Eddie in an unfavourable light compared to Marco. Marco's qualities of loyalty and determination were frequently noted while Eddie's aggressive and jealous nature tended to be the focus when writing about his character. The best answers looked at both characters equally with some less successful responses writing more generally or leaning towards Eddie with little consideration of Marco. Some candidates relied heavily on narrative; retelling the story is not a successful approach and is to be avoided.

Question 1b

Several answers were seen on this question on the theme of family. The most successful responses reflected on several aspects of family life, including Marco's commitment to his family and the complex relationships in Eddie's family.

Question 2a

This question was very popular and the full range of achievement was seen. There was some very perceptive discussion of Gerald as an upper class young man, while less secure answers offered more general character studies. Many candidates picked up on the quotation about the port with some useful analysis and consideration of port as an upper class drink. A few candidates identified aspects of Gerald's kindness towards Daisy with rather more noting his connections that enabled him to get information from the policeman later in the play. Secure knowledge was seen in the majority of answers with varying levels of support and development. Many answers reflected on the play's context with variable success. There was a tendency by some candidates to present a blunt idea of upper class as bad and lower class as good. This led to some answers effectively 'demonising' the character of Gerald.

Question 2b

This question was less popular than 2a. Examiners saw a range of answers across the achievement range. The most successful reflected on the meaning of the play's title and its wider significance. Some offered clear and secure discussion of the play's context and Priestley's use of the Inspector as his mouthpiece. Less successful answers tended towards narration or attempted an explanation of each word in the title - a simplistic deconstruction of the words themselves was evident in the most extreme of these approaches.

Question 3a

Very few candidates answered this question, with those writing on *Henry V* favouring the b) question in most instances.

Question 3b

A small number of candidates answered on *Henry V* this series. Those who responded to this question on setting tended to be secure in their knowledge and able to build purposeful and effectively supported arguments. Some excellent points were made by some candidates about the contrast between the court scenes and the battlefields.

Question 4a

A very small number of candidates answered on *Much Ado About Nothing*. Of those who did, this was the most popular question, focusing on Shakespeare's presentation of Beatrice's character. Responses demonstrated knowledge of the play and character with some using the quotation accompanying the question to good effect. There was little reliance on narration in the answers seen which supported candidates in achieving within their ability.

Question 4b

Very few answers were seen to this question. These argued that the play did have a happy ending, commenting on the victory of justice and unions of the central characters in matrimony.

Question 5a

This question enjoyed great popularity with answers seen at every level of achievement. Candidates working at Levels 1 and 2 tended to rely heavily on narrative retelling of the plot with the best of these focusing on the parts of the play featuring Romeo most prominently. These included the Capulet ball; balcony scene, death of Tybalt and the last scene in the tomb where Romeo takes the poison. It was in these answers that the modern film version of the play appeared most prevalently. Variations on scenes from this film compromised the effectiveness and accuracy of some answers. Examples of this are evident in Romeo's killing of Paris; which is not shown in this particular film version; and the use of guns and cars rather than swords and horses. Answers at Levels 3 and 4 demonstrated secure and thorough knowledge of the play with the ability to structure an answer. Some excellent answers were seen that focused clearly on Romeo's development throughout the course of the play's events. These tended to be very well supported and some demonstrated scholarly and sophisticated awareness. Examiners noted that most candidates were able to engage with the character of Romeo and his actions, offering a sincere level of personal interest.

Question 5b

Although not as popular as 5a, a fairly large number of candidates answered this question. Most were able to identify Shakespeare's use of humour at some level. Less able candidates tended to focus on Juliet's nurse and Mercutio, often applying ideas by way of narration of the scenes featuring these characters. Better answers analysed the humour generated by the Nurse and Mercutio with some reflecting on Shakespeare's use of contrast to highlight his tragic themes. A few discussed Shakespeare's bawdy humour, such as in the Nurse's words to Juliet about her wedding night and in the play's opening exchanges between the servants.

Question 6a

A very small number of answers were seen on this text. 6b was more popular than 6a amongst those who wrote on 'The Importance of Being Earnest'. Characters considered when answering this question included: Algernon, Cecily and Miss Prism.

Question 6b

A small number of answers were seen. Most of those who attempted this question demonstrated a sound knowledge and understanding of the theme of truth and were able to back up points made with relevant reference.

Questions 7a and 7b

A very small number of answers were seen on this text. Responses to 7a considered the significance of George and Emily's relationship by working through the Acts one by one, analysing the relationship in each one. Candidates' knowledge of the play and characters was largely secure. 7b was very rarely answered with responses focusing on the idea of 'carpe diem'.

Question 8a

This year, answers on 'Pride and Prejudice' presented a wider range of achievement than seen in previous series. There were few answers on either 8a or 8b with some candidates showing very little knowledge of the character of Lady Catherine. Better answers presented coherent and well-supported arguments to good effect.

Question 8b

Few answers were seen in response to this question. Most were well done with effective reference to matters of social, cultural and historical context. These included: exploration of the concept of entailment and the situation of women in terms of finance at the time the novel was written. Comments on the wealth of Mr Bingley and Mr Darcy were largely well made.

Question 9a

This question on the importance of Boo Radley was popular amongst candidates answering on this text. Most answers were of good quality, many achieving Levels 3, 4 or 5. Some superb answers were seen, demonstrating excellent knowledge of the character and his significance to the novel's events. Candidates engaged well and there were some clear and thoughtful personal responses with most demonstrating some level of empathy with Boo and his situation.

Question 9b

There were fewer responses to this question on the theme of injustice. Answers seen by examiners showed clear understanding across the range of ability. In answers achieving Levels 1 or 2, most candidates focused solely on the idea of racism as injustice. Higher level answers considered the aspect of racism but also stereotyping and prejudice more comprehensively across the novel. In most cases, even in the case of lower ability candidates, less narrative retelling was seen in answers on *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

Question 10a and 10b

A very small number of candidates attempted answers on this text. 10a answers tended to focus on Krishna and Susila as the parents with only passing mention of the grandparents of Leela. 10b responses considered the idea of hope and despair as they relate to Krishna and his journey to spiritual enlightenment in the novel.

Question 11a

This was by far the most popular question of the series. Some candidates focused heavily on the film version starring Gary Sinise and John Malkovich. The use of the film version was effective when supplementing study of the novel rather than replacing it. Some candidates confused Candy with other characters whose names begin with 'C', usually Curley but there were instances of candidates writing at length about Carlson and Crooks also. This was a real shame as some of the essays showed good knowledge of the wrong character. Basic knowledge of who each character in the novel is should not be underestimated. Many answers focused on: Candy's dog and its fate at the hands of Carlson; Candy's involvement in George and Lennie's dream and his disappointment at the end of the novel when all hope of fulfilling their plans evaporates with the deaths of Curley's wife and then Lennie. Context points were usually well used by candidates working at all levels of achievement. Some strayed away from character into the theme of loneliness with some achieving partial relevance to the question. Examiners reported seeing many solid, worthy answers which considered Candy's characteristics and role within the novel. Some very good answers

were seen at Levels 4 and 5 with these candidates demonstrating deep knowledge and understanding.

Question 11b

This question was less popular than 11a. Some candidates struggled with the idea of setting in the novel but others engaged with aspects such as the opening and closing chapters down by the river; the bunkhouse and the barn. Some considered the setting in terms of cultural and historical context with varying levels of success. The least successful answers used the settings as scaffolding on which to write largely narrative answers. Some wrote about themes in general without mentioning any settings. A number of excellent answers discussed this question with sophisticated insight and engagement. These considered how the settings related to themes and considered less obvious ones such as the imagined dream setting of George and Lennie's homestead and that of Curley's wife dreaming of Hollywood.

Questions 12a and 12b

Very few candidates answered on *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*. 12a attracted one or two answers on the characters that represent the white community in the novel. These demonstrated some knowledge and understanding of the novel. The ending of the novel was considered to be effective as a conclusion by the few candidates who answered 12b.

Questions 13a and 13b

Very few candidates answered on the *Nineteenth Century Short Stories*. Answers showed basic knowledge of the events of the stories with little further development.

