

Examiners' Report/  
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2015

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

Edexcel Certificate  
in English Literature (KET0)  
Paper 01

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Publications Code UG041491

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## **General points**

A large volume of entries this series offered a wide array of responses across the ability range and over all texts. It was pleasing to see texts that have previously not attracted answers being studied and written on in the exam. Overall, candidates appeared to be very familiar with the rubric of the exam and answered the right number of questions. The quality of analysis and personal engagement in answers working at Level 5 was impressive in many cases. Some of the critical approaches presented sensitive discussion of character and theme with apposite use of technical terminology to develop arguments in detail. Less successful answers offered an awareness of the text rather than engagement, which led to some superficial commentaries. Reading the question carefully and applying points to it consistently is required for an effective answer.

Use of textual reference and quotation showed improvement across the ability range, with the best responses selecting interesting and precise examples to integrate into the discussion. At Level 4, quotations and references were embedded into carefully structured answers, contributing to the thoughtful and thorough elements of achievement. At Level 3, sound knowledge and understanding of the texts were supported clearly by inclusion of reference, although at times these may not be consistently spread throughout answers. At Level 2 and below, attempts were made to relate arguments closely to the detail of texts with some success.

Although still a concern with some texts such as 'Romeo and Juliet', film versions of both plays and prose did not prove to be such a problem as they have in previous series, with more evidence of the texts themselves being used as the prime source for study. In some cases, candidates even referred to the film versions as part of clear personal engagement and consideration of alternative interpretations. Reference to context can be very beneficial to arguments presented, adding to a deep knowledge and understanding of the text. When used well, this feature was a real strength, but some indiscriminate inclusion of contextual detail actually hindered the success of a number of answers. When used, it is important that these points are relevant to the question rather than being tacked on with no real reason to do so.

## **Questions 1a and 1b: 'A View from the Bridge'**

In terms of Question 1a, most candidates showed knowledge and understanding of Rodolpho's role and presentation in the play, often with thoughtful and confident engagement. They discussed his physical appearance and the significance of his relationships, particularly with Catherine and Eddie. Some candidates lost sight of the question's focus by falling into a discussion of Eddie's downfall, but others were able to use this as a means of exploring Rodolpho's wider impact. The more subtle responses could identify the ambiguity in his reasons for marrying Catherine, discuss it and see him as a foil for Eddie. The fact that he is 'different' was analysed in terms of Sicilian culture and masculine expectations. Less successful answers relied on narration and tended to view characters as real people rather than constructs. Personal engagement was a strength in some answers that dealt in a sophisticated way with the ambiguous nature of Rodolpho's motives. One candidate argued very

convincingly that it is in fact Rodolfo who is the cause of all the trouble in the play; he is 'self-centred and ultimately responsible for Eddie's death.' The question appeared to attract strong personal engagement across all levels of ability.

Question 1b was less popular than 1a and required an exploration of truth and lies. A range of responses emerged from this question, including most commonly references to what constituted the truth in *Red Hook* and the role of Alfieri as arbiter of truth. Some candidates discussed Eddie's inability to be truthful to himself. The question opened up opportunities for candidates to create a personal argument and there was some impressive and relevant inclusion of contextual detail. Less successful answers worked through possible examples of lying used in the play in a largely narrative manner. What separated the quality of answers here tended to be how the question was approached. Those who planned and attempted a strategic approach fared better in the organisation of their work.

### **Questions 2a and 2b: 'An Inspector Calls'**

Question 2a was the most popular of the questions on this text, with many choosing to write about the character of Eric. Most candidates identified him correctly, with only a few mixing him up with Gerald and identifying him as the person who went for a walk and met the police constable. Views on Eric ranged widely, some candidates presenting him as the villain of the play and accusing him of raping Eva/Daisy, while others swung the other way and portrayed him as a good character who offered hope for the future of humanity. Candidates often identified very strongly with Eric's relationship with alcohol, commenting explicitly on his drinking. The best answers identified the fine balance between Eric's faults and his good points. Some answers considered him to be a victim and one or two likened him to Eva/Daisy in terms of his ill treatment by the Birling elders. The strongest responses explored Eric in a holistic way, discussing contextual issues and Priestley's purpose and message. The least successful responses presented quite limited, list-like points about Eric's character. Sometimes candidates got carried away with the idea of Eric and socialism, widening the focus of the essay beyond the question, as other characters were included and discussed in detail beyond that relating to Eric. This question appeared to be very successful in appealing to candidates of all abilities and it was encouraging to see achievement across the range.

Question 2b required candidates to write about the theme of social class in the play. This invited a range of points relating to social, cultural and historical significance that varied widely in security and relevance. Some candidates were very skilled at using this knowledge to answer the question while others suggested a more polarised view of social class. The most discriminating identified the Inspector as 'classless', often supporting this with the quotation about his lack of golfing experience. Dramatic links to the question included stage directions relating to the port and to Edna's role. Some less able candidates appeared to struggle with the concept of social class, with a number confusing it with socialism. Stronger responses were able to discuss social class and its presentation in the play, using political class as an additional point to make. Excellent answers drew out the differences between the classes from

what they gleaned from the text itself in terms of stage directions (belongings, furniture etc) and dialogue (attitudes).

### **Questions 3a and 3b: 'Henry V'**

Question 3a required discussion of the Dauphin and other French characters. Most were familiar with who the Dauphin is and presented arguments relating to his rash attitude to Henry, with better answers contrasting this with the caution of his father. Most wrote about the gift of tennis balls, the Battle of Agincourt and the importance of Catherine to the play's events. Candidates produced some very perceptive answers with evidence of thoughtful expositions of French behaviour and how Shakespeare used the characters as foils to the English in order to glorify the latter. On the whole, understanding was effective and candidates wrote confidently at all levels of achievement. Some interesting answers considered the Siege of Harfleur in their arguments, offering alternative views of French characters as either pragmatic and sensible or rash and bold.

Question 3b was focused on the theme of death. The best answers looked strategically at this question, considering the impact of death on Henry. Falstaff's sad demise was considered alongside the deaths of the traitors and wider loss of life in battle. Several well-crafted answers dealt with the fact that Henry died in his thirties and commented on the poignant nature of this fact when considering the play's events. In some answers awareness was shown that death was at times necessary as punishment, and for honour, and that some retaliation had to be carried out in response to death of the luggage boys etc. Weaker answers listed out the deaths in the play with some commentary on how/why they died.

### **Questions 4a and 4b: 'Much Ado about Nothing'**

Question 4a proved much more popular this series than in previous years. Some extremely lucid and sophisticated answers were seen that offered well-referenced and critical analyses of Beatrice and Hero. The question specifies two female characters, leaving candidates open to discuss Margaret for example, but only Hero and Beatrice were seen in answers. The very best saw the contrast in Shakespeare's presentation of Hero and Beatrice, including impressive use of contextual detail alongside acutely focused supporting detail.

Question 4b was seen less frequently but, like 4a, offered a range of clear and effective answers. Justice was largely considered in light of the treatment of Hero, but there were some good responses that used the comedic role of Dogberry to develop a freshly personal answer on this theme.

### **Questions 5a and 5b: 'Romeo and Juliet'**

Question 5a was a very popular question, as in previous series, with answers ranging from simple one or two line descriptions to thematic and perceptive discussions of character motivation and presentation. In some answers the use of the word 'change' in the answer led less able candidates into a storytelling spree that kept them in Level 2. The best answers dealt in detail with Juliet's development throughout the play, considering her key relationships and scenes.

As in previous years, some candidates had only watched the film, which is a self-limiting situation. The best candidates were selective in their choice of scenes, with some convincing arguments on ways in which Juliet comes to take more control of her own life and choices. Most answers referred to her young age and the effect on her character of meeting Romeo at the Capulet ball. Some noted that she becomes less reactive and impulsive as the play progresses. Answers were divided on whether her suicide constituted bravery or weakness. Some answers at Level 3 and above made reference to thematic concerns such as adolescence and rashness, discussing the importance in the change of Juliet's character from having a passive to an active role in the play, or made contextual comments that attempted to address the role of women in society.

Question 5b was a less popular question than 5a but answers were seen from the full ability range. Where answers were successful, candidates explored selected scenes with interest and knowledge of the play. This question really exposed when candidates had only watched the film as there was reference to the fish tanks, toilets and swimming pool from the Baz Luhrmann edition. Examples of successfully used scenes included: the streets of Verona (which was related to the developing violence); Capulet's house; the Friar's cell; the tomb and even the grove where Romeo was described to be pensively musing about Rosaline.

### **Questions 6a and 6b: 'The Importance of Being Earnest'**

Question 6a required candidates to write about the characters who work for a living. Those who attempted this question wrote about Lane, Merriman and Miss Prism, with very few even thinking of Chasuble as someone who works. Some even discussed Lady Bracknell's early career, using this to make a commentary about social mobility.

Very few examples of responses to 6b were seen. The best answers considered the secret lives of both Jack and Algernon, moving to a more abstract consideration of secrecy as a plot device and motif in the play. Some used the angle of social/historical context to consider why secrets may have been kept by different people. Increasingly, it is impressive to see candidates stretching themselves in terms of their analytical ambitions.

### **Questions 7a and 7b: 'Our Town'**

7a responses showed knowledge of the mothers in the play at varying levels of achievement. The best answers ranged through the play, while less confident attempts tended to cluster around set scenes early in the play such as the wedding scene.

Responses to 7b were very rarely seen. Candidates who attempted this answer were able to discuss the play's central theme of *carpe diem* and related this to the transience of human existence with some impressive maturity.

### **Questions 8a and 8b: 'Pride and Prejudice'**

Question 8a proved popular with no reports of candidates being unable to identify the character of Charlotte Lucas. Candidates for the most part really seem to enjoy writing on this novel and this series was no exception, with examiners reporting positive and lively discussions on this character. Some used it as an opportunity to write about Elizabeth as a contrast with varying success. Most candidates displayed at least sound knowledge of the text with very good candidates subtly and skilfully integrating nuances of social and historical context into their answers. Support from the text was nearly always impressive in its accuracy and breadth.

The 8b question attracted largely relevant answers, with the theme of ambition attracting comment on Elizabeth and the Bennets in general with some amusing references to the ambitions of Mrs Bennet to have her daughters married off. Opinions were divided as to whether Elizabeth is ambitious or not, with some referring to her ultimate decision to marry Mr Darcy being based on ambition rather than love. Mr Collins was mentioned in a number of answers as an example of someone who is corrupted by ambition. As in 4b, the best answers considered the abstract of ambition as well as in terms of characters. This was often carefully linked to historical context.

### **Questions 9a and 9b: 'To Kill a Mockingbird'**

Question 9a proved extremely popular with many candidates choosing to write about these two characters as fathers. Although comparison is not required, many candidates did this as a result of their analytical approach, often with excellent results. The fine tuning of the question did have the desired response in focusing candidates' analysis. On the whole, responses reflected real engagement with the novel that demonstrated the strength of candidates' views on the issues raised by these characters. Bob Ewell's poor parenting produced comments on his treatment of Mayella and his violence towards Jem and Scout. Less successful answers presented 'shopping list' style accounts of Atticus and Bob. Some candidates focused a little too much on their contextual knowledge and their focus on this was, at times, a distraction to the rest of their response. Most answers wrote equally on both characters. Points made about Atticus referred to his thoughtful and considered treatment of his children and how he is a role model.

Question 9b proved rather less popular with candidates than 9a but did attract some very strong responses. Examiners reported strong application of personal opinion when writing about the violence in the novel, with even the least able candidates able to express coherent views. Aspects discussed tended to include the shooting of the dog (necessary violence mentioned in some answers); Bob Ewell's actions at various points in the novel; the death of Tom Robinson and the threat of the lynch mobs.

### **Questions 10a and 10b: 'The English Teacher'**

Answers to the 10a question on characters who teach lessons to others tended to select the Headmaster, Susila and Leela as characters who teach lessons. Most seemed to know the text well and used valid textual support to back up

their points. Unfortunately, a small number of responses struggled through candidates' lack of confidence in the use of English, which made the work difficult to access.

Responses to 10b on 'journeys' tended to chart the journey to 'enlightenment' of the main character with the help of others on the way. The spiritual journey of Krishna was the focus of one quite interesting answer, while others mentioned the physical journey to the river and the trip taken by Krishna and Susila to the new house where she fatally contracted typhoid.

### **Questions 11a and 11b: 'Of Mice and Men'**

Question 11a was by the far the most popular prose question, with candidates of all levels of ability answering on Curley. Engagement was evident across the full ability range, but less successful candidates lapsed into storytelling. More successful candidates offered an emerging sense of debate and analysis into the complexity of this character and his relationships with others. Higher level responses were also able to use more interesting quotations and consider Curley's character as a lonely figure who was frustrated with his life as well as exploring the theme of being an outsider. Examiners reported a genuine sense of engagement and enjoyment in these answers, which clearly adds to the credibility of personal engagement. A few answers confused Curley with Candy or Crooks. As is usually the case, the film featured in some answers with the giveaway details of 'broken records' and 'wife beating' mentioned. The nuance in some answers was impressive and it was clear that all levels of achievement were possible on this text and question. One answer discussed Curley as 'a representation of the paucity of hope for humanity as the Great Depression continued to bite hard', backed up by his cynical visit to town with the other men, and by implication, the cat house. The perception held by some that *Of Mice and Men* is the easy option was certainly disproved by some of the sensitive answers seen by examiners.

Question 11b was also very popular with candidates of all ability levels writing about death with some clear development. The selection of deaths was crucial to more lucid and discerning responses while weaker attempts produced chronological lists of deaths starting with the mouse (or sometimes, Aunt Clara) and ending with Lennie. There was some evidence of enthusiastic re-plotting in some answers with both rabbits and rats expiring as a consequence of Lennie's over enthusiastic handling, alongside a few snakes meeting their end in the opening scene as well as the closing one. One particularly good point that was seen several times commented that: 'Slim drowns some of the puppies in order for better survival of the rest of the litter.' There were also some interesting interpretations along the lines of: 'when Candy lost his hand it was the 'death' of his working life.' Also: 'the death of Aunt Clara forces George and Lennie together.'

### **Questions 12a and 12b: 'Roll of Thunder, Hear my Cry'**

Question 12a required candidates to consider the importance of children and there were some very well-crafted responses relating to Cassie in most cases but nearly always bringing in others, such as Little Man and Jeremy. Responses varied in focus from the straightforward exposition of who the children are in

the book and what they do, to the stronger responses where the roles of the children were analysed in detail and well supported. The role of the childhood narrator learning with the reader was brought up and investigated, usually with success. Occasionally the essays tipped into studies of racism which led to some irrelevance.

Question 12b attracted comments on the nature and likelihood of hope, with many tending to err on the side of hopelessness in the light of prejudice and inequality. Some answers dealt with the seeds of hope evident in the novel's ending as the community fight to save the crops from fire. Hope for the future through the idea that children would be able to change things was evident in some answers. A number of candidates cited the interest in others shown by the Logan children, and some of the white characters who are not totally racist e.g. Jeremy. These ideas were fully investigated at times and the changing attitudes of the younger generations were pointed out. (Cassie and family would not just accept racism as a 'fait accompli'.) Stronger answers also looked at the ambiguity of the ending as far as hope went. Some pointed out that with prior knowledge of the future it was much more possible to see hope and positivity at the novel's end.

### **Questions 13a and 13b: 'Nineteenth Century Short Stories'**

Responses to question 13a were more evident than in previous series. '*Tony Kytes the Arch-Deceiver*' was dealt with in a narrative fashion by less able candidates who told the story and commented on attitudes to women as they went along. Better answers used the story's detail to develop strategic discussions related to male attitudes and often included sensitive comments on context. Although not asked to do so, some better candidates compared the story to their other choice. Examples of stories used included: '*The Unexpected*' and '*26 Men and a Girl*'.

Question 13b enjoyed equal popularity to 13a with candidates demonstrating knowledge of the setting of '*The Adventure of the Speckled Band*' at all levels of ability. Some ran out of steam after the first setting and produced brief answers while others developed lengthy and effective responses that ranged through the whole story. '*The Yellow Wallpaper*' was a popular choice to write about alongside the named story.

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