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Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2017

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

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January 2017

Publications Code: 4ET0_01_1701_ER

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General comments

In a relatively small entry, the paper attracted responses to most texts across the range of marks and levels. On the whole, answers were well focused with few straying into narrative recount. Strategic organisation through careful planning was a feature of the most successful responses at all levels of achievement. Strong answers selected support judiciously, including quotations and apt textual references. This support was achieved in a number of ways, including consideration of specific episodes in texts studied and accurate, integrated quotation. The most successful candidates developed their answers effectively as they expressed sensitive and interesting arguments with clear and sustained evidence of convincing personal arguments. Answers that demonstrated awareness of the form in which specific texts were written were more effective than those that did not. In particular, some very effective responses considered the differences between the reactions of modern and contemporary readers or audiences. References to structure and how this contributes to effectiveness of characterisation and narrative cohesion were features of some very good answers. Similarly, aspects of writer's craft led to some deft and impressive analysis. It is pleasing to see much less reliance on film versions of texts this series with references to these used to evaluate different interpretations rather than to convey basic aspects of knowledge and understanding.

Specific Questions

A View from the Bridge (Questions 1a and 1b)

Question 1a on women in the play was a very popular question. Many candidates focused, as would be expected, on the characters of Catherine and Beatrice. Some considered the wider place of women in Red Hook society and beyond with references made to the changing roles of women as they moved into the workplace and began to assert their independence. Catherine's new job as stenographer was often contrasted with Beatrice's role as homemaker and wife with effective levels of personal engagement and commentary. Choice of support tended to be purposeful and relevant with contextual detail applied appropriately. Interestingly, both Catherine and Beatrice were perceived as weak by a significant number of candidates who criticised Beatrice's loyalty to Eddie.

Question 1b on hopes and dreams tended to focus on the dreams of Marco and Rodolpho as immigrants coming to America. The most discerning answers saw the contrast between Rodolpho's motivation and Marco's wanting to send money back to his family in Sicily. Rodolpho's motives in marrying Catherine were questioned by several candidates. Other hopes and dreams included those of Catherine, Beatrice and Eddie with one or two candidates also considering Alfieri's hopes for a united community. Weaker answers strayed into narration and character study. The best answers evaluated Miller's success as a playwright presenting hopes and dreams in the play.

An Inspector Calls (Questions 2a and 2b)

Question 2a required candidates to explore Priestley's presentation of the changing relationship between Sheila Birling and Gerald Croft. Many responses were well developed and strategically planned with some very effective analysis of the key changes in the characters' interactions as the play's events unfold. These answers were particularly well supported and developed. Many referred to the engagement ring and the idea that Sheila and Gerald's marriage is more one of convenience than true love. The possible uniting of the Birling and Croft businesses featured in a significant number of responses. Candidates often referred to Sheila's growing strength as she is emboldened and swayed by the Inspector's revelations. Weaker answers lacked development or tended to offer separate character studies without considering the relationship.

Question 2b focused on the theme of responsibility. Mr Birling's early speeches featured in most answers, but better engagement with this detail came from those who selected valid examples to support their informed arguments. Priestley's voice coming through the Inspector was mentioned by many. It was refreshing to see original ideas and genuine personal engagement from some candidates working at levels 3 and above, especially considering the classic nature of the theme. Conclusions to these answers were often thoughtful and evaluative, referring to the importance of the context, both at the time Priestley was writing, and when the play is set.

Henry V (Questions 3a and 3b)

Question 3a required candidates to consider Henry's character as a leader and as a man. Candidates rose to the challenge in most cases and some excellent and impressive analysis was evident. It was pleasing and impressive to see a significant number of answers that demonstrated very comprehensive and accurate knowledge and understanding of the play. Some scholarly responses were evident, offering sophisticated analysis and evaluation. A number of responses considered Henry as a King and contrasted this with his past and with his relationships with the soldiers before Agincourt. Reference to Cambridge, Scroop and Gray provided a clear example of Henry's decisive leadership for many candidates. Most admired Henry as a leader, however one or two criticised what they perceived as his inflexibility. One disagreed completely that Henry is a good leader, citing his treatment of Falstaff and claim on the French throne as well as his threats of violence against the town of Harfleur.

Question 3b invited candidates to explore whether or not the play is simply about battles. It was pleasing to see some robust and even impassioned arguments from candidates with clear supporting detail and a number of perceptive and lucid arguments. References to the battle of Agincourt and Siege of Harfleur were common and for the most part, well handled. Most candidates who answered on this question did not think the play was simply about wars and battles, focusing on political matters, characterisation and love as examples of dimensions in the play that are not related to fighting.

***Much Ado About Nothing* (Questions 4a and 4b)**

There were very few answers to **Question 4a** and no answers to **Question 4b**. The responses to 4a agreed that Benedick and Beatrice were the perfect couple and offered detailed discussion to answer. Quotation was well-used and arguments were secure or better with some consideration of how the relationship changes and develops as the play unfolds.

***Romeo and Juliet* (Questions 5a and 5b)**

Question 5a required discussion of Romeo and Juliet's parents. As anticipated, most responses focused more on the Capulets as there is more in the play relating to their characters. Some of the very specific and strategically applied detail offered by a number of candidates was impressive and led to convincing analysis. In many cases, knowledge and understanding of the play and the dynamics of the Capulet and Montague families were well-sustained and compelling. Lady Montague's collapse and the effects of the feud were brought into discussion with some adept analysis from the best answers. The quality and range of textual support was very thorough and judiciously chosen in many cases.

Question 5b asked candidates to write about whether the play was more about love or hate. Some explored both sides with love usually prevailing. Others chose a direction and stuck with it, selecting evidence to back up their views. On the whole, personal engagement was successful in these answers with clear evidence of organisation and evaluation in the best responses.

***The Importance of Being Earnest* (Questions 6a and 6b)**

Questions 6a and **6b** attracted few answers. Question 6a required candidates to write on the characters of Gwendolen and Lady Bracknell. The best answers attempted to contrast the two with some excellent analytical outcomes. In particular, subtle reference to the place of women in society was a feature of several arguments, with effective use of textual support and aspects of context.

Question 6b focused on the theme of morality. Candidates who attempted the question used the stimulus of the quotation to build coherent arguments and demonstrated secure knowledge and understanding of the play's concerns.

***Our Town* (Questions 7a and 7b)**

There were no answers on **Question 7a** or **7b**.

***Pride and Prejudice* (Questions 8a and 8b)**

Questions 8a required candidates to write about the relationship between Mr Wickham and Elizabeth Bennet. Most responses demonstrated lively and effective engagement in charting the relationship between these characters, demonstrating accurate knowledge of the novel in most cases. The quality

of textual support was excellent in Level 4 and 5 responses with impressive inclusion of mature and insightful personal engagement. A couple of candidates strayed too far into a discussion of Darcy but each of these returned to the question before the end. Most considered Mr Wickham's congenial appearance and manners at the start but then brought in his behaviour towards Georgiana, Miss King and Lydia as convincing reasons for his villainy. The best answers reflected on Elizabeth's view as a filter for the novel's moral journey and offered lucid discussion of her changing perception of Wickham's character.

Question 8b focused on the theme of friendship. Candidates explored a variety of relevant friendships including Elizabeth's relationships with Charlotte and Jane. Darcy featured in most answers as did exploration of the Gardiners and their unfailing and reliable friendship. This was compared to the lack of good friendship offered by Caroline Bingley and Mr Wickham. Some saw family as a disappointment with the Bennets letting down their daughters and relying on friends to resolve situations such as Lydia's elopement. Some answers remained low in level 4, as, although arguments were sustained, there were few, or inconsistently applied references to specific episodes. Some excellent use of quotation and contextual detail featured in the best responses with some referring to the effect of entailment on friendship.

***To Kill a Mockingbird* (Questions 9a and 9b)**

Question 9a required candidates to write about two children who face problems in the novel. Several candidates wrote about Jem and Scout, but some chose to write about Mayella as one of the children with interesting and valid arguments presented. One particularly interesting answer focused on Boo Radley and his innocence making him effectively a child facing problems. This was combined with analysis of Mayella to produce a subtle and imaginative response. Most answers were well-referenced and demonstrated sincere engagement with the text and its detail.

Question 9b required candidates to write about Harper Lee's presentation of the theme of friendship and whether this could be considered a force for good. One interesting answer argued that it was not a force for good in some ways as Tom's befriending of Mayella ends in tragedy for him.

The English Teacher (Questions 10a and 10b)

Question 10a required a focus on the ways in which Krishna changes as the novel's events unfold. Supporting detail was well integrated in most answers with approaches referring to his relationships with his daughter, Leela and wife, Susila. One engaging response made subtle and discerning reference to Krishna's relationship with the work of Milton as a teacher of English. These answers benefited significantly from the genuine engagement of candidates with the text.

Question 10b focused on the theme of love. Candidates used Leela and Susila as examples of Krishna's love and considered how Narayan's development of Krishna's character as a spiritual man led to a deeper understanding of love.

Of Mice and Men (Questions 11a and 11b)

Questions 11a and **11b** were very popular as is usual on this paper. **Question 11a** was the most popular, requiring candidates to consider Curley's wife and one other character as characters who do not fit in on the ranch. Curley's wife was teamed typically with Lennie, Crooks or Candy. Curley's wife's lack of a name, status as the only woman and unfulfilled dreams featured regularly. Answers ranged from Level 1 to 5 with most answers falling into levels 3 and 4. Some candidates attempted comparison of the characters with some effective analysis as a result. Less successful answers stuck to straightforward character outlines with only brief or implicit consideration of the actual question about not fitting in. Some used quotation well to illustrate their points while those working towards the bottom of Level 3 and Level 2 struggled to support their views.

Question 11b required candidates to write about friendship and a good deal of perceptive and knowledgeable engagement was noted in the best answers. Some not entirely secure references featured in a few responses e.g. the idea that Lennie is friends with the mice he pets or that the men find friendship in their relationships with Suzy's girls. Consideration of the Great Depression and its impact on friendship featured alongside other contextual matters. Itinerant working was identified as making friendship very difficult. There was some very sensitive engagement with Lennie and George's relationship. A number of candidates focused on the lack of friendship for some characters e.g. Crooks and his tacit enjoyment of Lennie's visit to his room.

Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry (Questions 12a and 12b)

Question 12a required candidates to write about the character that they believe changes the most in the novel. Cassie was usually cited as the character that changes most with candidates considering her move from innocence to maturity through some sustained and sophisticated engagement with the text.

Question 12b offered some genuinely excellent responses which combined good exploration of the theme of racism as portrayed in the novel with contextual detail. References to the 'nightmen' and Cassie's experience with Lilian Jean featured consistently. A couple of answers were less effective, taking a more general in approach that lacked episodic knowledge and textual support.

Nineteenth Century Short Stories (Questions 13a and 13b)

There were very few answers to the short stories. **Question 13a** combined 'The Yellow Wallpaper' with 'The Half-brothers', contrasting outcomes effectively. Analysis was well linked to the question and effective knowledge of both stories was evident.

Question 13b attracted strong responses. One exquisite response offered very sophisticated and lucid analysis. Support was integrated seamlessly and accurately into sophisticated and elegant arguments closely related to the question. 'An Arrest' and 'Napoleon and the Spectre' were used with concise analysis and focused evaluation of effect.

