

Moderators' Report/ Principal Moderator Feedback

June 2011

GCSE English Literature
(5ET03) Shakespeare and Contemporary
Drama

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The first external moderation for the Unit 3 Controlled Assessment went very smoothly and centres generally found the process straightforward.

The majority of centres offered detailed feedback to candidates with targets and grades. This is not necessary as once the controlled assessment has been administered there should be no feedback to candidates. The only comments that are required on scripts are those to indicate to the moderator where a student has achieved a mark or band, in line with the AO criteria.

There was some adjustment to centre marks by moderators, primarily in the Shakespeare task, as candidates had focused closely on the adaptation at the expense of the play text.

Overall the text choices allowed candidates to fulfil the various assessment objectives and in most cases it was clear that sufficient amount of time had been spent on a close study of the texts and in the case of the Shakespeare task, on the adaptation. Planning and note-taking time had clearly been of benefit to the candidates. However, there was some candidates' work where the structure of essays was formulaic and centres need to avoid providing a framework or scaffolding for candidates to use when making notes.

Task

The focus of this unit is the study on page and screen of one Shakespeare drama text and one contemporary drama text.

This unit gives candidates the opportunity to:

- understand how dramatists use their drama texts to entertain and engage audiences
- make comparisons and explain links between texts and adaptations, evaluating writers' different ways of expressing meaning and achieving effects
- explain how language, structure and form contribute to the presentation of ideas.

Candidates complete two tasks – one Shakespeare task and one contemporary drama task. Task-taking time will be up to four hours to complete both tasks. The unit represents 25% of the overall GCSE.

Both tasks are set by Edexcel and accessed via the website. The centres have to choose one of the following:

- Characterisation
- Stagecraft
- Theme
- Relationships.

In their response to the chosen task, candidates will:

- respond to the chosen drama text critically and imaginatively
- with the Shakespeare task, make comparisons and explain links between their own reading and an adaptation, evaluating different ways of expressing Shakespeare's meaning and achieving effects
- support ideas by choosing evidence from the drama text.

General Comments

Most candidates performed well and coped with the new demands of this unit. The majority of candidates had been well prepared by centres for both components, although it was felt that some candidates found the comparative nature of the Shakespeare task challenging. There were a couple of centres who had adapted the title of the task given by Edexcel and subsequently the nature of the candidate's work did not fully address the requirements set. Centres must use the wording given for both tasks by Edexcel online for the appropriate year. Most candidates completed both tasks; there were very few incomplete folders submitted.

Contemporary Drama

The most popular choices for the Contemporary Drama were 'An Inspector Calls' and 'A View from the Bridge', with candidates primarily opting to complete the character or relationship task. 'A View from the Bridge' proved a popular choice for a range of abilities, with the relationship between Eddie and Catherine being the most popular. One drama that proved to be very successful with the lower ability students was 'Our Day Out' by Willy Russell, as it provided an easily accessible storyline and identifiable characters for a theme or character option. Weaker candidates did revert to retelling the storyline and there were a number who identified features within the text, provided textual evidence to support their point but did not always evaluate the point they were making before moving on.

An area that centres could target for future series is the use of P.E.E paragraphing. Lower to middle candidates tended often to rely heavily on biographical details or too much historical context at the expense of analyzing and commenting on the text. Equally there were many who spent almost half their first page introducing what they were going to write about. This wasted valuable time and was poor examination technique. The best candidates analysed the texts convincingly and in a number of cases perceptively, integrating their textual evidence within the answer and fully evaluating the writers ideas/themes. One centre that was extremely impressive had chosen 'The Crucible' by Arthur Miller. It was obvious from the responses received that although it was a challenging text, the candidates had been taught exceptionally well and had achieved high band marks. It was felt that as only AO1 was assessed for this task, the Contemporary Drama was marked fairly accurately by most centres, only occasionally were candidates rewarded too highly at the top of Band 3/bottom of Band 4.

Shakespeare

The new format for the Shakespeare task proved more challenging for a number of candidates and centres, with more discrepancies occurring in the marking, particularly for AO3. A number of candidates spent too much time discussing the historical or biographical context behind the play or adaptation and describing what they intended to do within their writing. The lower band candidates generally focused on the adaptation at the expense of the text, many opened their writing by describing the adaptation – in the majority of cases a film version. Centres need to ensure that the initial points made by candidates should focus on the text, supported by evidence and analysis, followed by the link to the adaptation. The balance should be in favour of the play on a 60:40/70:30 ratio.

For candidates choosing the dramatic devices option there was sometimes a tendency to feature spot, without showing the impact of the feature as a dramatic device (AO2). Pathetic fallacy was common. Some candidates gave a list of dramatic devices and didn't illustrate or expand on any of these. A number of candidates ended their essays with comments on whether they preferred the film or the play: this is an area of irrelevance. The Band 5 essays were at times breathtaking and sophisticated. The candidates had confidently stayed clearly to the task, using the key words from the question and used short embedded quotations to support their analysis. Many centres decided to stay with texts they had previously taught as coursework – the majority favouring 'Romeo and Juliet' and 'Macbeth'; however it was refreshing to see some excellent work on 'Othello', 'The Merchant of Venice' and 'Much Ado about Nothing'. The breakdown of marks for both AO's was not always clearly shown by some centres and this needs to be taken into account when preparing for the next series.

AO2 and AO3

Assessment criteria for AO2 was generally applied accurately, although students in Band 1 and low Band 2 were at times awarded too generously, when they identified features but little or basic explanations were given as to how the writer uses language, structure and form to create effect.

Similarly, AO3 was awarded too generously for Bands 1 and 2, when candidates had focused primarily on the adaptation and very little mention was made to the text. To move to a Band 3 comparisons need to be sound and clear throughout the answer.

Administration

The candidate folders were generally well presented, however there were some administrative issues which affected the moderation process. These included:

- front sheets for each candidate missing the correct candidate or centre details.
- samples did not always include the highest and lowest scoring candidates

- some candidate work did not include annotations or teacher comments
- many coversheets did not include full details of the task, to indicate which of the four choices the candidate had chosen.
- Some centres had not indicated when internal moderation of candidates' work had taken place by more than one teacher.
- samples missing the print out of marks from Edexcel Online
- a few centres had not submitted candidate marks on Edexcel online

A few centres had added the marks on candidates' coversheets incorrectly

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