

Examiners' Report/
Principal Moderator Feedback

Summer 2013

GCSE English Literature 5ET03 01

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Publications Code UG035900

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Introduction:

Students 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.

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 students 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.

Both tasks will be set by Edexcel and accessed by the centres, via the website. They are to choose one of the following:

- characterisation
- stagecraft
- theme
- relationships.

In their response to the chosen task, students 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:

It was felt by all moderators that students were well prepared for unit 3 in general and often wrote with confidence in their chosen texts. Some wrote over long introductions and were too keen on establishing a context especially in the Shakespeare task where there could be a potted biography as an introductory paragraph. The same applied to modern drama also. Obviously with the change in AOs from 2014 this should benefit a number of students. The majority of scripts seemed to be band 3 and above. Marking across most centres was fairly consistent, however, when centres were out of tolerance or inconsistent they were usually marking too generously, especially in the Band 4 and 5 scripts. Students did equally as well on the two tasks but often engaged better with the Shakespeare whilst lacking focus and clarity with the Contemporary Drama task.

The most common texts/adaptations were Shakespeare Retold (Macbeth), Baz Luhrmann's Romeo + Juliet and Polanski's Macbeth. Other interesting ones included O (Othello), Ten Things I Hate about You (the Taming of the Shrew) and she's the Man (Twelfth Night). One centre compared their chosen play with a Manga text, which resulted in good and interesting engagement. In terms of

the Contemporary Drama text the most common were *An Inspector Calls* and *A View from the Bridge*. Others included *Educating Rita*, *a Cream Cracker under the Settee*, *History Boys* and *the Crucible*. One centre used the screenplay *Almost Famous*, resulting in responses which did not deal with dramatic devices as well as could be achieved with a more contemporary script, as they treated the screenplay as a film. This meant that students achieved less than they otherwise might have done.

Attempts to address AO2 (language/structure/form) by identifying and illustrating a prepared list of literary devices, often displayed the familiar weakness of knowledge unsuccessfully applied. Many students seem familiar with and able to find examples of alliteration, assonance (often confused) onomatopoeia (often unconvincingly claimed) and metaphor, but for marks in the upper range it is necessary to do more than identify and illustrate. Analysis and evaluation of authorial craft involve linkage with authorial purposes and effects upon readers.

AO3 is generally more effectively addressed by an integrated approach rather than a summative appendix. Some students make comparison a coherent organisational feature related to themes and devices whereas others are more confidently selective in making comparisons according to interest.

Some evidence existed where students for A03 misunderstood the method of linking the text and the adaptation and completed just a "spot the difference" exercise rather than looking at the effects of both in expressing meaning. Again this was mainly at the lower ability end. Responses within Band 4 and 5 began by discussing the textual features and the language used by the playwright and then linking to the adaptation and how the director has interpreted the lines. This method of analysis enables students to achieve marks for both AO2 and 3 simultaneously within their response. It was felt that many students were very secure in what they were writing about however, and that they had been guided carefully in respect of the Assessment Objectives. Many centre responses were a pleasure to read and seemed to understand the author's intentions even though it was not always easy for them to articulate these into a critical literary style.

Centres that studied 'Othello' with their band 5 students were excellent. Many of these folders fell into marks of 45 and above. The full mark folders that had studied these texts were far superior to the full marks that had been awarded to 'Romeo and Juliet' or 'Macbeth'. Top end students who had studied these texts seemed to go into much greater analytical detail and the writing to address AO2 was much more sophisticated.

In addition the better students were focused upon the task from the outset and used embedded quotations woven throughout their answer. There weren't so many responses which started with a quotation, which compared to last year, was a little disappointing, as this can be a good way of opening a character study.

Sometimes students still stuck to a formulaic answer which rather restricted any originality in their responses and it was obvious that a number of centres are still providing structured frameworks for their students, which is not permitted under the task taking rules. It was felt that some of these students could have avoided

the safe option of churning out a few standard points e.g. about dramatic devices, spending more time on their personal observations. It still seemed at times that students were working from a given frame and a given bank of quotes.

Additionally, at the start of essays, students frequently began with the phrase "I/We are going to write about....." and often this cliché was contradicted in what came next in the answer.

There were many students too who did write above and beyond the standard expected for the top of band 5 and these were a joy to read. On the other hand, some students relied on narrative answers and lacked focus on the key task they were asked to write. Mis-spelling (esp. of authors' names) continues.

It was also felt by the moderators that the tasks were better differentiated this time for lower ability students and centres had allowed their students and teaching staff the freedom to select texts and tasks according to the students' ability, rather than adapting a whole centre approach when it came to choosing tasks.

When it came to marking, it appeared that a few centres seemed reluctant to award the highest marks or even full marks, especially in the Shakespeare task, which could suggest confusion about this part of the mark scheme. Many centres were also too strict at the lowest end, awarding band 1 where students matched criteria of band 2. Centres need to be encouraged to award positively where they feel a student has produced work that justifies the next band or even full marks. I would also encourage centres to attend the standardisation meetings next year to familiarise themselves with the positive marking approach applied by Edexcel.

A number of centres are still allowing students to word process their responses, especially very able students in the top two bands. In the majority of cases, the responses were noticeably better in the quality of QWC than those that were handwritten, which causes concern over the fairness of allowing responses to be word processed unless under special circumstances.

Administration

Some centres had clearly completed no admin checks before the work was sent off; missing student numbers, no lowest or highest script included, missing lists or whole missing first pages of coursework. However, these are the odd cases and overall centres had taken note of the PM report from the January series. One or two centres had produced a staff checklist, listing all the items that needed to be correct before the sample was sent off, an example of excellent practice.

Plenty of scripts had annotated phrases from the AOs throughout with evidence underlined, and a summary of what had been awarded to each AO at the end of the controlled assessment, which means plenty of centres are doing all the right things. The purpose of the moderating team is to verify marks, therefore the more guidance given via the annotations and comments, the easier it is for the moderator to see where marks were awarded and agree them. It was also noted

that in the majority of cases where centres had internally standardised the marks awarded, the moderation team felt the accuracy was far better than those centres who had not taken the time to standardise internally.

Most of the centres arrived in good time for the team, but more centres than previous years had to be chased, which was very time consuming. Centres need to be aware of the deadline date for May 2014 and ensure all scripts are processed and sent out as soon as possible to ensure a smooth moderation series.

Administration summary:

- Some centres still failed to send mark lists, and some sent no Optem sheets.
- Several centres failed to indicate their highest and lowest students.
- On occasion, scores on the Optem sheets were at odds with the score on the centre mark list or cover sheet.
- There were some incorrect additions of pupil totals on cover sheets, some without tasks written on them and one with no details at all.
- Some cover sheets failed to specify the task or the appropriate one from the set list.
- Some teacher annotations were profuse but bore no relation to the A0's.
- Some essays had no breakdown of the marks on Shakespeare task, and some were added up wrongly when transferred to the cover sheet.
- There were fewer inconsistent samples in the centres assessed this time; those that were out of tolerance tended to be from smaller centres where there were fewer staff to moderate.
- There were many centres that got it all exactly right too. Great admin, folders submitted in rank order (a big plus) and really rigorous standardising procedures/annotations. Many were a pleasure to read and the centres should be congratulated on their efficiency and professionalism.

The moderators for 5ET03 would like to thank centres for their hard work throughout this exam series and wish you well for 2013/14.

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