



Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2023

Pearson Edexcel International Advanced
Level in English Literature (WET02)

Paper 2: Drama

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Introduction

The January 2023 series featured a relatively small cohort of candidates, although most of the texts were answered on. The paper was very similar in performance to previous series. There were no errors in the paper, no erratum notices and there were no enquiries from centres following the examination.

Examiners saw a range of responses, with the majority of candidates achieving Level 3. Very few responses achieved Level 5. A number of responses were restricted to Level 2 or below because of a narrative, generalised approach which did not engage directly with the text.

There was a good knowledge of contexts demonstrated and there was some effective use of other viewpoints, most often in the form of literary criticism. Where candidates engaged specifically with the point being made by the critic, and then linked it to their argument and a specific part of the text, candidates accessed the top of Band 3 and into Band 4

In terms of analysis, a number of responses did not get beyond fairly general comment and tended to write about the plot of the drama rather than quote from the text and analyse. To access the higher levels candidates need to demonstrate evidence of clear and detailed understanding as to *how* writers use language to make meaning in texts.

Overall, candidates who were most successful engaged with aspects of stagecraft and showed understanding that these are literary constructions. They also explored a range of interpretations, debating a thesis rather than setting out a definitive reading/using pre-learned arguments.

SECTION A: Pre-1900 Drama

Questions 1 and 2: *The Rover*

Only one response to Question 1.

Questions 3 and 4: *She Stoops to Conquer*

A small number of candidates answered on Goldsmith's play and of those who did the majority chose Question 4 on first impressions. Candidates were most successful when they linked the way first impressions created humour and satire rather than just listing the first impressions experienced by each character.

Questions 5 and 6: *Twelfth Night*

Q5 and Q6 proved to be equally popular with students, with the former focusing on social order and the latter on trickery.

The majority of the responses for both questions were able to integrate a range of relevant contexts in a pertinent way. Contexts such as the spirit of the carnival, conventions of Shakespeare's theatre and conventions of Shakespearean comedy were generally handled competently. Most candidates who chose to answer on question 6 dealt with the character of Malvolio effectively, exploring both a contemporary and

modern audience's response to his presentation of suffering at the hands of others' trickery.

Questions 7 and 8: *Doctor Faustus*

Almost every candidate who answered on Marlowe's text answered on Q7 which focused on Faustus's weakness. Candidates explored a range of weaknesses: ambition, blasphemy, lascivious behaviour and triviality were all discussed. The most successful candidates balanced the demands of analysing the text with integrating the sometimes difficult and complex context which underpins the drama's ideas. However, there were some candidates who unfortunately sacrificed analysis for a too detailed exploration of a range of theological/religious ideas.

Questions 9 and 10: *Othello*

As in previous series *Othello* proved to be a popular text with centres. Question 10 saw the most responses, with candidates finding loyalty a fertile topic for discussion. Rather than track through the text detailing the different kinds of loyalty (or disloyalty) evident in each character, the stronger responses developed a line of argument focusing on loyalty. For example, a number of responses explored the idea that loyalty serves as a high price to pay for some.

Section B: Post-1900 Drama

Questions 11 and 12: *Top Girls*

Only 3 responses to this text.

Questions 13 and 14: *A Raisin in the Sun*

Most of the candidates who answered on this text chose to focus on Q14 which asked about conflicting values, with responses focusing on the contrast between Walter's values and his mother's.

Questions 15 and 16: *Death of a Salesman*

Q15 and Q16 proved to be almost equally popular with candidates. Q15, where the focus was on the conflict between love and money, elicited some useful discussion of Linda's devotion to her husband in contrast to Willy's blind faith in the values of materialism and capitalism. Q16, on selling, produced some thoughtful interpretations, with a number of candidates exploring how Willy attempted to 'sell' the American Dream to his children. For the most part, context was integrated effectively here, although there were still some examples of candidates 'chunking' descriptions of the American Dream at the beginning or end of paragraphs with no real link to the argument/text.

Questions 17 and 18: *A Streetcar Named Desire*

Williams' play remains the most popular choice of text in Section B, with candidates exploring different types of conflict in response to Q17. The most successful answers moved past listing different examples of conflict and debated the different reasons for the antagonism between Stanley and Blanche. Q18, which asked candidates to consider

how Williams' shaped an audience's response to Blanche, produced a number of thoughtful responses which took into consideration more than just her demise in the last scene. Contexts were integrated effectively for the most part, and there was some useful discussion of Williams' use of Plastic Theatre.

Questions 19 and 20: *Waiting for Godot*

Beckett's play attracted a small cohort of students this year, with almost equal numbers attempting Question 19 (with its focus on physical theatre) and Question 20, which asked students to explore the idea that *Waiting for Godot* is a play about universal experience. Answers tended to focus on retelling the narrative of this play, which was surprising when considering that Q19 focused on actions rather than speech.

Grade Boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

<http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>

