



# Examiners' ReportPrincipal Examiner Feedback

January 2024

Pearson Edexcel International  
Advanced Level in English Literature (WET02)  
Paper 01: Drama

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January 2024

Publications Code WET02\_01\_2401\_ER

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## **Introduction**

The January 2024 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 a number of responses restricted to Level 2 or below because of a narrative, generalised approach with overviews/introductions which made little or no reference to the specifics of the question. Candidates should not use pre prepared introductions as these are often too generic to engage fully and with an appropriate focus.

As mentioned in previous reports, candidates would be best advised to take the time to plan their responses, developing lines of argument which directly answer the question and engage with the critical viewpoint given. In terms of analysis candidates would be best advised to pay closer attention to the text and embed more quotations/examples. The closer attention a candidate pays to the text the more likely they are to access the higher levels. Candidates who saw the characters as constructs, consciously constructed by the playwrights, also tended to access the higher levels as their responses were more focused on writers' choices rather than talking about the characters as real people.

With reference to the embedding of context most candidates were able to embed relevant references. To access the higher levels candidates need to consider the idea of 'illumination'; what ideas of the text does the consideration of context illuminate? How does context *add* to meaning? When engaging with different critics there was some evidence of some useful discussion and integration. Candidates would be best advised to 'dig deep' on the criticism used and link the idea to a specific part of the play if possible.

## **SECTION A: Pre-1900 Drama**

QUESTIONS 1 and 2: THE ROVER

There were very few responses on this text

QUESTIONS 3 and 4: SHE STOOPS TO CONQUER

Knowledge of Goldsmith's play was thorough and engagement with characters often thoughtful and responsive. Attention to the writer's choice of language, structure and stagecraft was not as detailed as it could have been and characters were sometimes discussed as though they were real people.

QUESTIONS 5 and 6: TWELFTH NIGHT

Q5 was the more popular option, with candidates engaging with ideas about desire and its disregard for society's rules and boundaries. It was pleasing to see a range of different desires considered; there was of course discussion of romantic desire but candidates also explored Malvolio's desire for social advancement or Sir Toby's for cakes and ale. Antonio drew a lot of sympathetic attention - he was claimed by some to be the only character in the play whose desire is not superficial or fickle, yet he remains unrewarded. Discussion of the play as a comedy and analysis of its comedic conventions proved useful in developing candidates' lines of arguments.

QUESTIONS 7 and 8: DOCTOR FAUSTUS

In contrast to previous years there was evidence of a much more effective approach to integrating context, with far fewer free-standing sections dedicated to theological details. When responding to both questions it was evident that a number of candidates had endeavoured to develop a sense of debate within their response, a characteristic which often led to answers accessing the 'controlled' Level 4 and above. There was some effective use of the text, however to access the higher levels candidates should be advised to remember that this is a play and therefore should be analysed as such.

#### QUESTIONS 9 and 10: OTHELLO

As in previous series Othello remains the most popular Section A text. When exploring ideas about virtue Desdemona was predictably the main focus, but few saw her as a paragon, citing her defiance of father and society in having a secret marriage which would end in disaster. This question was a useful example of the benefits of planning, with much more nuanced discussing emerging out of a thoughtful consideration of virtue rather than an immediate discussion of who may be virtuous and why.

In Q10, Cassio's importance to the plot was recognised, giving good AO2 credit in terms of dramatic structure. Some answers did slip into narrative when they attempted to engage with the 'key ideas' referenced in the question. Again, more judicious use of time and a more specific plan may have mitigated this.

### **Section B: Post-1900 Drama**

#### QUESTIONS 11 and 12: TOP GIRLS

There was a small number of responses to the Churchill play

#### QUESTIONS 13 and 14: A RAISIN IN THE SUN

Question 13, with its focus on dreams, proved to be marginally more popular than 14 which looked at the conflict between expectation and reality. Answers tended towards the narrative and candidates again are reminded to foreground the writer, e.g. 'Hansberry uses' rather than talk about the characters as real people.

#### QUESTIONS 15 and 16: DEATH OF A SALESMAN

Q15 proved to be the more popular choice here, with candidates seemingly relishing the choice to discuss Willy's fantasy life. Whilst the question proved to offer fruitful material for exploration, candidates sometimes became lost in their own argument. Perhaps a little more time spent planning could have mitigated this tendency to let lines of argument divert on a tangent.

#### QUESTIONS 17 and 18: A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE

The play continues to engage and stimulate a great number of candidates. The discussion of the play as an example of a drama was particularly strong in many of the responses we looked at, with due attention paid to costume, lighting and sound. In terms of context, there was some useful consideration of social and cultural influences on the work. Candidates should be wary of relying too heavily on biographical context to support wider points about the characters as these can sometimes be assertive.

#### QUESTIONS 19 and 20: WAITING FOR GODOT

Beckett's play attracted a small cohort of students this year, with more students opting to consider the question on isolation. Candidates clearly had good knowledge of the key ideas of Beckett's play and there was some useful discussion of dialogue. candidates could be advised to think more carefully about the text as a play and include analysis of its dramatic techniques.

