

Examiners' Report Summer 2009

iGCSE

iGCSE English Literature (4360)

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Summer 2009

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iGCSE English Literature: 4360 01

Introduction

This summer 2009 English Literature examination successfully enabled a wide range of candidates to show their knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the Drama and Prose texts they had studied.

The candidate was expected to make two responses, one on a Drama text and one on a Prose text in one and a half hours. The candidate should have spent forty five minutes, an equal amount of time, on each response.

Centres are familiar with the expectations from this examination, therefore few candidates missed out on marks because they did not read the questions carefully and time management did not appear to cause any problems. Candidate answers showed focus and there was evidence of a successful learning style, few responses fell in Range 1.

As in all examinations, candidates should take care when reading each question. Candidates might benefit by highlighting the key words in each question to avoid any misunderstanding.

Candidate choices - Texts

Of the five choices available on the two sections of the examination paper, candidates mostly opted for the classics of 'Julius Caesar', 'The Importance of Being Earnest', 'A View from the Bridge' and 'Pride and Prejudice'.

Despite this, a considerable number of candidates opted for texts such as 'A Doll's House', 'My Children! My Africa!' and 'Balzac and the Little Chinese Seamstress'.

General Observations

The best answers supported perceptive commentary with brief and appropriate evidence. These candidates offered insightful and detailed material, often a personal response, which was focused with detailed analysis and was therefore credited with higher marks.

There were still too many mechanical responses with irrelevant introductions, often on the standard classic responses. Some of these appeared prepared and 'tweaked' to fit the question; it was rare that a candidate gave a sense of having enjoyed studying these set works. Many of these 'type' responses lacked flair and originality and appeared to contain a memorised set of quotations 'fitted' to the response.

In contrast, a candidate responding to the less established works, 'My Children! My Africa!', 'A Man of the People', 'The English Teacher' and in particular, 'Balzac and the Little Chinese Seamstress' wrote with more relish and enjoyment. These responses often demonstrated a more personal response.

Questions 'rooted' in characters were more popular than those 'rooted' in themes but in general answered less well. Character questions often confined themselves more or less to mechanical character studies and rarely attracted the most able or

in some cases the response contained an answer on the wrong character, 6a, for instance.

Theme questions were either answered fairly badly or very well, although 2b, Julius Caesar produced some laboured efforts. Some of the best answers came from questions 4b and 7b. Some of the weakest answers came from responses to 6b.

Drama responses on the whole, seemed stronger than the Prose responses, although responses to the Short Stories in the Prose section rarely scored high marks.

iGCSE English Literature: 4360 02

Introduction

This summer 2009 English Literature examination successfully enabled a wide range of candidates to show their knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the Poetry Anthology they have studied.

The candidate was expected to make one response, in forty five minutes, on two poems from the anthology booklet.

Centres are familiar with the expectations from this examination, therefore few candidates missed out on marks because they did not read the questions carefully and time management did not appear to cause any problems.

As in all examinations, candidates should take care when reading each question. Candidates might benefit by highlighting the key words in each question to avoid any misunderstanding.

Candidate choices

Candidates chose between two questions. The first question proved to be the most popular; often demonstrating a developed understanding of theme and purpose.

The second question allowed candidates to freely choose two poems and presented an opportunity to make a personal and authentic response.

Candidates responding to Question 2 should spend a short period of time selecting appropriate poems and highlight the key words to avoid any misunderstanding.

General Observations

Fewer candidates for this Poetry examination paper focused on one poem at a time; more compared two poems alongside one another, although conclusions were still brief and often ineffective.

Question 1 appeared to restrict candidates' choice of poems and was less popular; presumably because of this restriction. However, the candidates that tackled it tended to do so successfully; many responses were lively and interesting.

Many candidates were able to cross reference effectively. Candidates were also able to identify more sophisticated points of comparison between the two poems, such as the use of metaphor and/or rhetorical questions,

In Question 2, a number of responses tended to rely too heavily on a narrative approach and some attempts at comparison were fairly basic and simply listed techniques, used by each poet in turn, then the candidate would make a statement such as, 'both poets used literary techniques to great effect' to conclude their response.

Candidates are likely to score higher marks if they compare and contrast two poems alongside one another, demonstrating a sound awareness of the links between these poems whilst remembering to clearly reference throughout.

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Apart from the tasks that followed the thematic sections of the anthology, the examination of the relationships between parents (or adults) and children was popular topic, which allowed a choice from a wider range of poems.

There were several candidates who were awarded, and deserved, full marks, showing a mature and sophisticated understanding of the subtleties of the poems and giving detailed and thorough analyses of the poets' craft. There were also, however, examples of centres over marking candidates who showed a sensitive response to the general effect of the language but only occasionally made the detailed analysis to justify this response. In contrast some centres' work focused almost entirely on detailed analysis which was rewarded highly even when the candidate had only picked out a few relevant features of each poem and a full picture of it was not clear. For the very high grades the candidates would be expected to analyse both meaning and style with some thoroughness.

Many candidates spent time describing the shape and rhyme of the poems but, too frequently, almost as an end in itself. Some failed to analyse at all the effect on the meaning of the overall poem or, more commonly, failed to justify their conclusions, particularly those trying to argue that the same basic structure had the opposite effects in *Piano* and *My Parents kept Me* from *Children who were Rough*.

On the whole the poems appeared to be well understood and appreciated. Even the ambivalence of the children's response to the experiences in *Half-past Two* and *My Parents kept Me* from *Children who were Rough* was appreciated by an increasing number of candidates. *Geography Lesson* seemed to cause most problems. Though the message of the final stanza was clear to all, the earlier stanzas were frequently either ignored, apart from a brief reference to 'it was clear why' in contrast to the final 'it was not clear why', or misunderstood, as many thought that the cities still appeared unplanned when viewed from the plane, so contradicting the statement 'it was clear why' and missing the point of the switch at the end.

Administratively there were a few problems: a number of cases where the mark on the cover sheet of the folder was different from the mark on the mark sheet; some centres still not sending their top and bottom folders; a number of centres not providing authentication forms signed by the candidates.

iGCSE English Literature: 4360 01 Grade Boundaries

Option 1

01 WRITTEN (DRAMA AND PROSE)

02 WRIT.ALTERNATIVE (POETRY)

Paper No	*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Lwr	80	71	62	53	43	34	25	16

Option 2

01 WRITTEN (DRAMA AND PROSE)

03 COURSEWORK (POETRY)

Paper No	*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Lwr	83	72	61	50	40	31	22	13

Option 3

01 WRITTEN (DRAMA AND PROSE)

03T TRANSF.COURSEWORK(POETRY)

Paper No	*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Lwr	83	72	61	50	40	31	22	13

Note: Grade boundaries may vary from year to year and from subject to subject, depending on the demands of the question paper.

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