

Moderators' Report/
Principal Moderator Feedback

Summer 2012

International GCSE English Literature
(4ET0)
Paper 3

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Summer 2012
Publications Code UG032153

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General Overview

Again this year there was an interesting range of responses and it was good to see a sprinkling of poems in the wider reading that had not been used before.

Candidates tended to keep to the well-tried themes that fit the selection of poems in the Anthology, for example, love, death, childhood, parents and children, suffering etc. Interesting variations were work on the themes of regret, power – or the lack of it - and attitudes to life. Candidates of all abilities were able to engage with these themes. Occasionally the themes set were a little too interesting for some candidates, for example, reality versus unreality, universality etc. so that they spent a lot of time exploring the meanings of the terms and forgot to back this up with detailed exploration of the poems.

In most centres the same task had been set for all the candidates with the same teacher. Very few allowed individual choice by the candidate. While this was probably the safe option for the weaker candidates, the few examples of personal choice by very able candidates suggest that this can increase engagement with the task and raise the level of the response, provided the choice is carefully supervised.

Though most centres were extremely conscientious in carrying out internal moderation and the comments by the teachers on the folders were often accurate and helpful, a few centres showed inconsistency between teachers that affected the rank order, usually with no obvious signs of internal moderation, but, in some cases, despite it.

The great majority of assignments focused on one theme which allowed the candidate to keep control of the material and explore the Anthology poems with the thoroughness and depth expected. A few centres set tasks on multiple themes and most candidates struggled with this.

There were fewer examples of candidates failing to meet the coursework requirement for reference to six poems, but there were still some, and not all were penalised by the centre for this failure. It appeared to be helpful to the candidates if all six poems were listed in the assignment titles. It was in those folders where this had not happened that candidates tended to slip up. Though most of the wider reading poems used are well known, centres should include copies with the work so that the moderator has them to hand.

The use of the wider reading poems varied widely. At one extreme, some treated all six poems the same with, generally, a selection of material purely for comparative purposes at the expense of coverage of large parts of the set poems. While it was good to see candidates writing so enthusiastically about the poems they had chosen, the specification does require the Anthology poems to be treated in depth and a full picture of these poems to be given. At the other extreme, some, even in the higher bands, made only a cursory mention of the

wider reading poems in passing, sometimes no more than the title. In the higher bands the references to the wider reading poems are expected to have some development.

The highest-marked folders showed clear insight into meaning and the analysis of the link between structure and meaning was often well made. Technical terms were used in precise analysis of the writers' craft. However, there was a tendency to be generous to candidates who analysed the structure in detail, but failed to link it to the development of meaning, or who gave occasional evidence of detailed analysis, but were inconsistent. A consistent precise analysis of the language used in the Anthology poems is required for high marks to be awarded.

Examples of detailed analysis which, if consistent through the work, would deserve marks in the higher bands included:

The use of violent 'b' plosives in the alliteration 'behind blown empty bellies' creates a concrete, harsh and direct image.

Thomas presents life and death as if they were two people against one another. Death is negative and consistently trying to pull life into it and take it away whereas life generally gives in or, as Thomas suggests, can be motivated to fight to live on. As well as personification Thomas uses repetition 'Do not go gentle into that good night' and 'Rage, rage against the dying of the light' to arouse a fighting spirit.

'In Prayer before Birth' personification – particularly of natural things – is used to mould a feeling of opposition from all entities. Rather than just speaking of antagonistic people, the very feeling of nature itself scathing and scorning is intentionally utilised to make us feel exposed and unsafe. The idea of mountains frowning, white waves calling to folly, the desert calling to doom compares the most imposing of nature's entities to contemptuous beings.

One point of continual interest in the moderation is the opposing ways candidates interpret the phrase 'silent land' in the poem *Remember*. This year one extremely able candidate summed up it up precisely:

'Silent land' seems to be a very neutral description of death, as if Rossetti cannot define whether it is a good or bad place one will end up in. This can give us two different impressions, the first being in a very positive way, as it seems peaceful and gentle. On the other hand 'silent' could have been purposely used as a negative word as if she feels silenced for ever more.

As well as some excellent analysis there did, however, continue to be a confusion between the 'appreciation of the poets' use of language and style' (Band 15-18) with 'showing the ability to use some technical vocabulary in the analysis of texts' (Band 19 and above); furthermore, the 'some recognition of writers' techniques' (Band 11-14) with using 'some technical vocabulary in analysis of texts' (19 and above). Some examples of the types of statements which were over rewarded are:

- *Browning personifies and uses similes to give readers a clearer picture*
- *The metaphors and alliteration stimulate our sense of hearing*
- *He uses onomatopoeia and the sounds...almost bringing the poem to life as if we can hear the instruments ourselves*

Candidates should be reminded that phrases such as 'creates a flow', 'makes the poem more interesting', 'brings greater impact' may show clear appreciation of the poets' language, but their explanations require further development to gain higher marks.

Administration

With regard to administration, it would be helpful for checking purposes if the top/cover sheet with the candidate details. Assignment title and mark were fastened on top of the folder. Centres should ensure the folders are securely fastened with staples or treasury tags – paper-clips often come off in transit. Each folder should include a Coursework Authentication Sheet signed by the candidate (see page 14 of the specification), but attached under the top/cover sheet.

Once again the overwhelming picture was of candidates who had enjoyed, understood and appreciated the poems.

Grade Boundaries

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