

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2013

International GCSE English Literature
(4ET0) Paper 1

Level 1/Level 2 Edexcel Certificate in
English Literature (KET0) Paper 1

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Introduction

The examination saw an increase of entries this series and examiners reported seeing the full ability range in answers submitted. Rubric infringements were less evident than in previous series but there were still examples where students had attempted to answer both questions from a text or several texts from the same section of the paper. As in previous years, instances where students wrote on the wrong section of the paper prevailed but were perhaps less common than in the past. *Of Mice and Men* and *Romeo and Juliet* proved extremely popular again with *An Inspector Calls* and *Pride and Prejudice* attracting a large number of answers also. Overall, use of quotation and textual reference was more focused this series with students less likely to make quotations fit points with spurious relevance.

Section A: Drama

Q1(a) *A View from the Bridge*

This was a popular question with students, some of whom approached the relationship of Catherine and Rodolpho in its own right, discussing the development of their love, with the most successful answers supported by close reference to the text. Other responses commented more on the impact of their relationship on other factors and themes such as Eddie's downfall and ultimate demise. In many cases, the use of reference and quotation was effective in showing engagement with the play as a whole and focusing argument. The question invited responses from the whole ability range and there were some very strong analytical answers given.

Q1(b) *A View from the Bridge*

This was a popular question that invited answers on different aspects of love – brotherly love, parental love and romantic love. Some answers also chose to write about the impact of love in a negative sense with many focusing on Eddie's unhealthy love for his niece, Catherine. Some answers used a narrative approach to achieve their ends with varying success while others offered a secure and confident analysis. At times, students missed opportunities to use textual reference to support and develop points of argument, thereby restricting their achievement within a particular band. Where students performed most effectively, responses demonstrated insight and an ability to synthesise information from the whole text.

Q2(a) *An Inspector Calls*

Most students were confident in writing about Inspector Goole. Students working at Level 3 and below focused largely on his interactions with the Birling family and Gerald Croft as well as physical descriptions. Some very good answers considered Goole as a social construct or Priestley's voice in the play. Others worked through his impact on the different characters in the play. Some of the best answers dealt with details of the inspector's dramatic presentation by Priestley, commenting on his description of the character in stage directions with insight and perception. This was a very popular question.

Q2(b) *An Inspector Calls*

Q2(b) was very popular and presented a classic focus on the theme of responsibility for which students were well prepared and able to show their knowledge and understanding in most cases. Responses meeting criteria for the lower levels tended to focus on narrative while those reaching higher levels were

able to use their knowledge and understanding of the play to make valid and coherent arguments in relation to Priestley's message and intent, applying quotation and textual reference with a very good level of skill.

Q3(a) *Henry V*

The text attracted more answers than in previous series but this question on Henry's captains and other soldiers was considerably less popular than the 3(b) question. The question proved to be particularly challenging for less able students who sometimes ran out of steam after discussing the roles of Gower and Fluellen and Henry's exchanges with soldiers when disguised. Some answers were effectively developed and detailed in their analysis and exploration.

Q3(b) *Henry V*

This question prompted a number of very strong and impressive answers, some confidently discussing how Harry changes to become Henry through acquisition of status and personal influence. The power of the French court and struggle for victory were evident in some answers through thoughtful and well supported analysis. Students confidently referred to textual details with the most effective answers dealing with the 'how important' element of the question, some bringing in arguments about other important themes worthy of consideration.

Q4(a) *Much Ado about Nothing*

This text attracted a small number of answers overall. Students responding to this question explored key aspects of Benedick's character and his importance to the play's events and themes. Some sophisticated readings of Benedick's motivations were presented including how he changes to become what he claimed to despise: a married man.

Q4(b) *Much Ado about Nothing*

Q4(b) responses were largely focused on the dishonour of Hero and the role of Don John in the play with secure knowledge and understanding demonstrated in answers for the most part. One or two weaker answers relied on narrative retelling to convey their ideas.

Q5(a) *Romeo and Juliet*

This text was extremely popular with students in terms of both the (a) and (b) questions. Students working at Levels 1 and 2 often worked through a

straightforward reading of Juliet's relationship with her parents, focusing on her mother's distant coolness and her father's frustration at her refusal to marry Paris. Some were predominantly narrative in approach. References to the Baz Luhrman film version still appeared but were less in evidence than in earlier series. More able students showed a good knowledge of the 'deal' made by Lord Capulet with Paris and some explored the subtleties in their exchange with interest and sensitivity. Some students also included the nurse as a 'parent figure' to Juliet with varying success. Some very good Level 5 answers were seen but also a large number of Level 3 and 4 responses.

Q5(b) *Romeo and Juliet*

Q5(b) answers focused largely and inevitably on the love between Romeo and Juliet with some astute comparisons to Romeo's infatuation with Rosaline towards the beginning of the play. The Level 4 and 5 answers used thoughtful and secure analysis of language effects to illustrate purposeful arguments. The use of direct textual reference and wider support was particularly pleasing with evidence of students really knowing the play. Again, all levels of ability were evident in these answers. There was some excellent and relevant use of contextual detail in responses to this question including some reference to courtly love.

Q6(a) *The Importance of Being Earnest*

Q6(a) and Q6(b) on the whole attracted answers from more able students and most responses fulfilled Levels 3, 4 or 5 on this text. This was quite a popular play. A number of students considered Algernon's contradictory and subversive role in the play and some offered detailed analysis of his wider importance to the play's structure and themes. Answers were nearly always well-referenced and confident in their arguments.

Q6(b) *The Importance of Being Earnest*

Q6(b) on humour presented some students with difficulty in terms of writing about why the play is funny. Most were better able to explore how it is funny, considering different types of humour – situational, punning etc. In some cases, students would have benefited from considering the context further in relation to this question which would have led them more fluently in the direction of Wilde's intentions.

Q7(a) *Our Town*

Q7(a) and Q7(b) were more popular than usual but there were still relatively few answers on *Our Town*. Answers to 7(a) featured The Stage Manager as a popular choice of most important character. Many answers showed clear and effective knowledge of the play with apt use of support from the text and convincing personal arguments.

Q7(b) *Our Town*

The (b) question on life and death attracted responses focused around the theme of 'carpe diem' around which students were able to build convincing arguments. Some very good students referred to theatrical and dramatic effects in answer to this question with some using the portrayal of the god-like Stage Manager to highlight arguments about these aspects.

Section B: Prose

Q8(a) *Pride and Prejudice*

Q8(a) was very popular and some excellent answers were seen that showed extremely good knowledge and understanding of Wickham and Collins and their eligibility as husbands in the novel. Most answers were well-referenced and some employed scholarly arguments to develop their analysis. This question worked well for students of all abilities and many answers offered a good range points relating to relevant contextual details. Less successful responses tended to describe Wickham and Collins rather than considering the 'how' element of the question.

Q8(b) *Pride and Prejudice*

Q8(b) was also quite popular and again, many very good answers were seen with students showing clear and effective understanding of the theme of reputation. Contextual details, including insights into social mores of the time, were well incorporated and contributed to some sophisticated and perceptive arguments achieving Level 5 in the mark scheme criteria. Appearance and reality featured as part of a number of cogent arguments.

Q9(a) *To Kill a Mockingbird*

This was a popular text and question inviting responses from the whole ability range. More sophisticated and perceptive answers used references to aspects such as Burris Ewell's behaviour at school when he reduced Miss Caroline to tears, as well as the more obvious importance of Bob and Mayella Ewell and the reputation of their family. Some students worked through each Ewell one by one to demonstrate their importance to the plot. Others used Atticus Finch as a contrast to Bob Ewell to present their arguments. There were some excellent interpretations that considered what the family stood for in the community and the social difficulties that led to their situation and actions. Students at all levels of ability showed that they knew the novel and there was little reliance on film versions that has been the case in previous series.

Q9(b) *To Kill a Mockingbird*

Q9(b) attracted a range of interesting answers at all levels of achievement and there was genuine engagement with the quotation used in the question. Some students chose to structure their response around the characters while others took a broader view of the theme and used characters to illustrate different facets. In a few answers, Scout was placed at the centre of the discussion, showing how she learns to show real courage rather than engaging in fighting.

Q10(a) *The English Teacher*

Q10(a) and Q10(b) were more popular than in previous series, but still relatively few answers were seen. There were some very impressive answers on Susila that considered her largely in relation to her effect on Krishna. Some mentioned her in the context of the role of women in India with some success.

Q10(b) *The English Teacher*

Q10(b) required students to write about settings in the novel and this caused a few problems with some not really understanding the nature of setting in a novel. There were strong answers on this question, however, that discussed the importance of different settings including the description of the toilet in which Susila contracted her fatal illness.

Q11(a) *Of Mice and Men*

This was by far the most popular prose text on the paper. The full range of ability could be seen in answers. In terms of Slim, students showed clear and sound knowledge of his character in most cases and were able to comment on his relationships with others in the novel. Some students confused him with Candy and there were some instances where students relied on the film version of the book. It was pleasing to see subtle and sophisticated responses dealing, for example, with Slim's relationship with Crooks and Curley's wife. Some showed genuine sensitivity and engagement. A significant number of answers narrated parts of the novel involving Slim with varying success.

Q11(b) *Of Mice and Men*

Q11(b) responses were in many cases refreshing in their consideration of work in the novel with comments on the women working as prostitutes in the town as well as more obvious discussions of the work on the ranch. Some answers were extremely perceptive and considered work as a unifying focus at a time of hardship balanced against the monotony and insecurity of transient labour. Common points related to Lennie's success in the work place and the relationship of work to the dream of owning a place. Some students went too far in this direction with their essays becoming focused too much on hope and dreams. Examiners reported some students writing too much about the novel's context and not enough about its content, style and themes. A number made unfocused comments comparing the conditions reflected in the novel with modern working conditions.

Q12(a) *Roll of Thunder, Hear my Cry*

Q12(a) and Q12(b) on *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* attracted relatively few answers with more students answering on the (b) option than (a). Answers on TJ and Stacey Logan in Q12(a) were largely secure and focused with use of references from the text to support views. In the best answers, contrasts and comparisons were made effectively to inform convincing arguments.

Q12(b) *Roll of Thunder, Hear my Cry*

Q12(b) responses were largely focused on the impact of racism and poverty with some interesting insights related to context. Powerful personal arguments were strongly evident in the best answers.

Q13(a) Pre Twentieth Century Short Stories

Relatively few answers were seen on the stories but numbers had increased since previous series. Q13(a) produced several very good answers that used close and detailed reference to the text to achieve convincing and perceptive arguments. Students writing in response to this question tended to show very assured and well applied knowledge and understanding.

Q13(b) Pre Twentieth Century Short Stories

Q13(b) attracted a range of answers across the levels with some using 'Lou the Prophet' as their choice of additional story, largely successfully. Comparisons were interesting and focused, reflecting sound knowledge and understanding of the collection.

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