



Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

November 2023

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE
In English Literature (4ET1)
Paper 3: Modern Drama and Literary Heritage
Texts

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Introduction

Candidates produced two coursework assignments, the titles of which were self-generated or devised by their teachers.

Assignment A (Modern Drama): This was based on a modern drama text chosen from the set list in the specification. Two Assessment Objectives were equally targeted:

AO1: Candidates demonstrate a close knowledge of the text and maintain an informed, critical personal engagement (15 marks)

AO2: Candidates analyse language, form and structure used by the writer to create meanings and effects (15 marks).

Assignment B (Literary Heritage): This was based on a Literary Heritage text chosen from the set list in the specification.

Candidates were assessed on AO1 and AO2 (10+10 marks)

Candidates were also expected to show an understanding of the relationships between texts and their contexts for AO4 (10 marks).

The guidance for length of assignments was 600 to 1000 words for each one.

Centres can choose their own titles for the assignments but the list of set texts is selected by Pearson and is the same as the text list for the alternative examination unit 4ETI 02. The mark scheme and Assessment Objectives are also the same as for 4ETI 02. Titles set for the exam alternative may be used by centres for their coursework, but centres are encouraged to differentiate both titles and choice of text to suit individual ability and interest. The standard set for the coursework unit where candidates have much more time to consider, plan and draft their responses, is much higher than the standard set for the exam alternative where candidates only have 45 minutes to produce their response. It is expected that candidates will be able to satisfy the assessment criteria and Assessment Objectives in much greater depth in the coursework.

General Comments

There was a range in the quality of the responses as well as the tasks set by centres. The best responses were those where candidates showed a degree of independence and developed their own personal response to texts, whilst also satisfying the required Assessment Objectives for each assignment. There was much enthusiasm and a confident tone in the majority of the coursework moderated, and students showed empathy with the characters and the situations they found themselves in. It was obvious that most centres had worked very hard with their candidates to teach texts thoroughly and help them to show their strengths and abilities in their responses. However, there was also evidence of some very narrative responses which did not cover the required Assessment Objectives and had been over-rewarded by centres. It is recommended that centres use the Board's exemplar material to help define the standard required at each Level before carrying out their internal moderation process.

Setting a task

The choice of title set by the centre was often seen to affect the outcomes of the candidate: titles which led them to consider the writers' craft and set a challenge led to a more perceptive critical style and personal engagement. Where the task set had a clear focus which was not too broad, the candidates found it easier to avoid descriptive and narrative responses.

Some centres construct titles which pose a question about a character or theme and in general terms it is these students who are less likely to focus on **A02** (analysis of language, form and structure) as there can be a tendency to provide detailed information about the characters and the 'plot' at the expense of meaningful analysis.

Assessment Objective 1 (AO1) (demonstrate a close knowledge and understanding of the text) was usually a strength and candidates working at all levels were able to access the meaning of the text they studied. However, the second part of this Assessment Objective (maintain a critical style) was often weaker.

There is sometimes a fine line between an answer that is long because it is well-developed and detailed and one that is long because it lacks planning, loses structural cohesion and becomes narrative. Centres should be advised against submitting over-lengthy assignments which lack a perceptive personal engagement with the task set.

Assessment Objective 2 (AO2) Quotations were often well-used to support and clarify points about meaning but centres should remember that the use of relevant references does not satisfy the second part of AO2 which is analysing the quotations for their effect on the audience / reader.

Therefore, it is important that centres choose titles that will allow their candidates to cover the relevant Assessment Objectives sufficiently.

Examples of effective titles:

This wording should lead to effective analysis of both AO1 and AO2:

'Explore the way Miller uses dramatic devices to present the theme of masculinity' in 'A View from the Bridge'. (Assignment A - Modern Drama).

'With reference to language and dramatic techniques, explore the theme of class and social responsibility in 'An Inspector Calls' (Assignment A - Modern Drama).

Assessment Objective 4 (AO4) (comment on the relationship between text and context). This is only assessed in Assignment B.

This wording should lead to effective and integrated reference to the relevance of AO4 context:

'Taking into consideration the relationship of the play and its context, explore how Shakespeare presents female characters in 'The Merchant of Venice.'
(Assignment B – Literary Heritage Texts)

'Explore the ways in which Shakespeare presents the theme of deception in 'Macbeth'. Explain why deceit might have been more prevalent when the play was written. (Assignment B – Literary Heritage Texts)

Some centres set a quotation for students to consider, which, when linked to context, can produce a perceptive critical response:

'A modern audience might view Shylock as a controversial character'. Explore the dramatic role of Shylock in the play and consider why this statement might be true'.

Less successful responses were often as a result of an unfocused question which did not lead to the candidate covering the set Assessment Objectives.

Titles which ask a closed question such as: 'Was the Inspector real in An Inspector Calls?' (Assignment A Modern Drama – Priestley) and 'Is deception of appearance and reality a prominent theme in 'Macbeth'?' (Assignment B Literary Heritage Texts - Shakespeare) elicited good personal responses but did not lead to effective coverage of AO2 (language, form and structure) which is worth half of the marks.

Vague, descriptive titles like 'Shylock: The scapegoat or villain?' (Literary Heritage Texts – The Merchant of Venice) and 'Eva Smith and Socialism in 'An Inspector Calls' (Modern Drama Texts) led to descriptive and narrative responses based on AO1 but not AO2 as candidates struggled to maintain a critical approach.

It should be noted that the use of tasks taken from the alternative exam unit (4ETI 02) such as: 'Explore the theme of loyalty in 'Romeo and Juliet' or 'To what extent are lessons learnt in 'An Inspector Calls'?', whilst perfectly adequate for a 45 minute exam response, may not lend themselves to a sustained analysis of AO2 which is expected in the coursework unit where candidates have more time to develop their critical skills and cover the relevant Assessment Objectives in a much more thorough and considered way.

Assignment A

As in past series, in the **Modern Drama section** by far the most popular text was 'An Inspector Calls', followed by 'A View from the Bridge'.

Candidates often showed enthusiasm and a confident tone with the texts studied, and the large majority of candidates were able to show personal engagement with their chosen texts as well as adopting a critical style (AO1).

Candidates made obvious attempts to address the demands of AO2 and many students were successful. However, as usual, this was the weakest Assessment Objective and often not as strong as AO1. Terminology was regularly being used (often correctly) but at times this was not accompanied by any analysis or evaluation of the writer's purpose in using the devices identified. Often

quotations were relevant and carefully chosen but without exploration, becoming support for the point being made rather than being analysed for effect on the audience or reader.

Effectively analysing the playwright's methods and considering the audience reaction should form part of AO2 analysis for play scripts, and stronger responses were those where the text was seen as a performance with dramatic techniques and their impact on the audience being considered.

Tasks which asked 'How' the writer achieved effects produced responses more focused on AO2; e.g. 'Explore the ways in which Priestley uses dramatic devices to present the character of Sheila in 'An Inspector Calls'. This is more focused than the descriptive title: 'Strong parental love shown for Beatrice in 'A View From The Bridge.'

Some centres set tasks to deliberately encourage focus on the play as a performance e.g. 'What is the dramatic importance of Inspector Goole's character and what things would a director need to consider when casting this role?' This proved quite successful in covering AO2 but tended to lead to a less effective critical response for AO1. Therefore, it is very important that centres set a title which will successfully cover both.

Also it is important for centres to recognise that providing sentence starters to candidates which include signposting to language and structural analysis can lead to a very disjointed style which does not actually cover AO2 analysis e.g. 'Miller's use of language established Rodolpho as a direct threat to Eddie's relationship with his adopted daughter Catherine' or 'Priestley's structure made the Inspector an indispensable character who is structured to embody major themes'.

Here is an example of a **Level 5** response showing cohesive evaluation of language, form and structure, including consideration of dramatic effects:

A View From the Bridge: Title: 'Explore the way in which Miller uses language and dramatic techniques to present the theme of masculinity'.

'The character who provides the most interesting outlook on masculinity is Rodolpho because he challenges society's expectations of men and presents a modern representation of masculinity. This is evident when the audience learn that Rodolpho enjoys cooking, singing and 'attending the theatre'. These activities during the 1950s in the area of Red Hook would have typically been seen as feminine. The other men in the play are presented as stereotypically much more macho and Eddie's reaction to Rodolpho's behaviour shows that he judges him as weak and feminine. Eddie tells Alfieri that the longshoremen call Rodolpho 'Paper Doll and 'Blondie'. The derogatory noun phrase 'Paper Doll' has connotations of fragility as well as femininity, a nickname resulting from Rodolpho's unusual behaviour on the docks, including singing this song in a high-pitched voice. Rodolpho's behaviour makes Eddie feel uncomfortable as he sees

him potentially as a homosexual. The lyrics of the song: 'I'm gonna buy a paper doll that I can call my own' highlight the theme of control and having a woman completely under one's power. This is eerily similar to Eddie's relationship with Catherine and his desire to control her. The audience will be aware that the song is symbolic of Eddie's unnatural desire for his niece and will watch the dramatic build-up of tension as Eddie becomes more and more jealous of Rodolpho's attentions towards Catherine. This is Miller's way of questioning the need to be perceived as masculine in order to be accepted and loved by others.'

This response is well-focused and the use of contextual reference is used to enhance the reader's awareness so can be counted as assured knowledge and understanding of the text (AO1) even though context is not assessed in this section. There is cohesive evaluation of language, form and structure (AO2).

However, reference to context (AO4) should not be included at the expense of AO2 analysis or used as in the example below where unnecessary background knowledge has been used as an introduction:

An Inspector Calls: Title: 'By referring closely to language, form and structure, explore how Priestley presents the theme of inequality'.

'An Inspector Calls' is one of the world's most popular plays in the history of the Literature and was written by the dramatist Priestley in 1945 after the second world war. It was first performed in the Soviet Union due to its highly argumentative issues, as the play focuses on the idea of Socialism, which was a controversial topic that no one discussed at the time with such boldness. The play takes place in 1912 and at that critical time England was facing inequality which spread through the whole world. Priestley's ideas were to criticise the government as he was socialist and was concerned about the occurrence of a Third World War.

Priestley uses Mr Birling as the voice of the capitalist and the Inspector as the voice of the socialist (which is really his voice deep down). Birling says: 'A man has to make his own way, has to look after himself and his family too of course'. From this speech we can conclude that Mr Birling is a capitalist and the primary cause of Eva Smith's death after she asked for more money in his factory. This reflects the disharmony in the workers at the time and soon after this there was a General Strike'.

In this response the candidate shows a sound knowledge and understanding of the text (AO1) but has focused too much on context as an introduction rather than the theme of inequality which is the task set. There is no attempt to comment on language and form to cover AO2.

Assignment B

In the **Literary Heritage section** the most popular texts chosen were: Macbeth; Romeo and Juliet and The Merchant of Venice in that order of popularity. A few centres studied Pride and Prejudice and Great Expectations. Many candidates wrote more successfully about narrative techniques in prose texts, which makes it surprising that these texts are seldom chosen. Within these choices obviously different teaching groups studied a combination of these texts. Therefore, it was not unusual for one centre to have taught 5 or 6 texts and to have set a variety of tasks. This differentiated approach provided much more opportunity for candidates to show their ability and strengths than when centres studied just two texts and set two questions only for the whole cohort.

Where two plays were chosen for study, the lack of AO2 coverage, particularly dramatic techniques, became more noticeable.

As in Assignment A, there were some vague assertions made about language which did not constitute sustained analysis e.g. 'Shakespeare's use of language made Macduff an open book that can be read by Macbeth'.

Most candidates produced thoughtful responses and attempts were made to link the text with context to cover the requirement for AO4. There were, however, some responses which included substantial biographical detail on Shakespeare which was irrelevant to the task in hand and not integrated into the main body of the response. Often the comment on context (AO4) was not integrated well and served as a biographical or historical introduction rather than being detailed and sustained.

Here are two examples of **Level 5** responses where the relationship between text and context has been integrated convincingly and made relevant to the task set:

Macbeth: Title: 'Explore the way Shakespeare uses dramatic techniques to show how important ambition was to Macbeth'.

'As a 'brave' soldier, Macbeth had no ambition to be king until the idea was planted in his head by the three weird sisters who suggested that he could alter his fate and become king. The Jacobean audience would have been shocked that Macbeth listened to their prophecies as they believed that witches had the power to disrupt the natural order and make good things evil. Their chant-like assertion that 'Fair is foul, and foul is fair' would make this obvious to all but Macbeth who from then on has the ambition to become king.

When Duncan announces promotion of his eldest son Malcolm, it exposes Macbeth's secret thoughts about his place in the great chain of being which Jacobean believed was the natural order of life given by God. Macbeth's command: 'Stars, hide your fires: Let not light see my black and deep desires' reveal his secret ambition to usurp Duncan's power and alter his fate. The

plosives 'black and deep desires' show how strong his ambition has become, so much so that he will be prepared to plot against and kill his king, God's representative on Earth. With these thoughts and actions he will turn to darkness and shut out the light, which is symbolic of his move from goodness to evil. Light and darkness will become a recurring motif in the play as Macbeth descends into the dark world of supernatural and the audience will see his ambition as now leading him to be a traitor rather than the hero he was at the beginning of the play'.

Here the candidate displays 'assured knowledge' of the play (AO1) with an 'integrated' understanding of the relevance of context (AO4), supported by 'cohesive analysis of language, form and structure' (AO2).

Pride and Prejudice: Title: 'In what ways does Jane Austen use letters to enhance her narrative style?'

'The novel is set in the early nineteenth century during which time the main form of communication was letters. They are used extensively in the novel by Austen and, without doubt, play a very important role in the advancement of events from the exposition, introducing characters along with their notable characteristics and disposition, through to the rising action and climax of the novel, where they are used to show the reader the true motives and weaknesses of individuals.

'Pride and Prejudice' is written from a third-person omniscient perspective allowing the narrator to know everything about the characters' thoughts, opinions and feelings throughout the novel. Nevertheless, Austen chooses to use nearly forty letters in the novel to help readers unravel the plot and develop opinions of the characters for themselves. The first is written by Mr Collins. This letter is an initial portrayal of the pompous complacency of Mr Collins' character, convincing the reader that his personality is already very shallow. His formal lexis: 'I have been so fortunate as to be distinguished by the patronage of the Right Honourable Lady Catherine De Bough' reveal that his priorities are the acquisition of status and wealth as he expects to inherit Mr Bennett's property, suggesting to the reader the gender inequality of the Regency period. His constant references to Lady De Bourgh show his pomposity and condescension, fawning over the wealthy class and excessively boasting about his future inheritance. The reader will see from the letter that Austen is portraying him as an untrustworthy social climber'.

This is a well-focused introduction which considers the writer's purpose and perspective using a 'perceptive critical style' (AO1). The title helps to steer the candidate into 'cohesive analysis of language, form and style' (AO2). The understanding of relevant context is 'integrated convincingly' (AO4).

As in assignment A, titles which were focused on the writer's craft and were not

too wide, proved most successful. Titles such as: 'Is deception of appearance a prominent theme in 'Macbeth'?', and 'Which characters are the most proud and which are most prejudicial in 'Pride and Prejudice' are too wide ranging for the candidate to focus specifically on the relevant Assessment Objectives, particularly AO2, and often led to descriptive answers lacking in a discriminating and perceptive critical style.

Similarly, tasks which set a question e.g. 'Do you agree that Lady Macbeth is the fourth witch?' and 'How does Shakespeare make Portia a successful female character?' often elicited a well-developed personal response and critical style but did not lead to effective evaluation of language, form and structure for AO2. Titles such as: 'Explore the dramatic role of the witches in 'Macbeth'', proved to be more successful in eliciting focused responses which considered the playwright's intentions as well as his craft.

Tasks which focus on one theme or character are usually more successful than a title which is too wide-ranging.

The most successful responses in this section are those which manage to cover all three Assessment Objectives equally, making AO4 (consideration of the relationship between the text and its context) relevant to the topic set in the task. For successful coverage of AO2, responses need to consider the use of dramatic or narrative techniques and their impact on the audience or reader. Some candidates wrote about Shakespeare's use of imagery and iambic/trochaic meter but forgot to consider the play as a performance with an audience.

Less successful responses used over long quotations to support points and lacked close analysis of AO2 (language, form and structure) as shown in this extract from a **level 3** response on 'Macbeth':

Macbeth: Title: what part does Banquo play in the tragedy of 'Macbeth'?
'When Macbeth committed the murder and became the king of Scotland, Banquo felt terrible but did nothing about it. He just said passively aside: 'New honours came upon him like our strange garments, cleave not to their mould but with the aid of use'. The imagery used here by Banquo is a metaphor showing that he preferred the rule of Duncan and that he felt Macbeth was not at all suitable to become king of Scotland. Macbeth had shown himself to be a brave warrior in the in the battle: 'Brave Macbeth, well he deserves that name!', but later Banquo shows he suspects him of murdering Duncan: 'Thou hast it all now: king, Cawdor, Glamis, as the weird sisters promised and I fear thou playedst most foully for 't. This leads to Macbeth fearing Banquo who used to be his friend and he says: 'our fears in Banquo stick deep' which leads to him plotting Banquo's murder'.

Here the textual references, though fully relevant, have been used merely to

support the line of argument rather than analyse language and its effect on the audience. It should be noted that well-chosen and relevant supporting references do not constitute analysis of language, structure and style. On the mark scheme these are two separate bullet points.

It is good to see that some centres are asking candidates to reference their sources. However, where a centre is asking candidates to submit a bibliography, any references to these sources should be checked carefully to ensure that the ideas have not been directly lifted so as to avoid plagiarism. Also, it is always more desirable to read the candidates' own critical opinion rather than have them refer to critical sources e.g. Bradley or Coot.

Administration

The system of electronic submission of coursework on the LWA was much more successful this series and several centres' folders were uploaded before the deadline of 7th November and in the correct format.

However, in some cases folders had been uploaded to the LWA site but the centre had not pressed the 'Submit Request' button so that the files were not submitted. If the submission is still showing as 'Pending' it means that the folders have been uploaded on the system but not sent through to the moderator so cannot be accessed.

Also, centres are reminded that the two assignments should be uploaded as one file and not separate scanned pages.

It is still a requirement that the necessary paperwork be uploaded with the centre's sample of scripts. Moderators do need to check details against the information held on Gateway so it is important that the signed authentication sheet is submitted with the work. (This can be a scanned electronic signature but not a typed one). Cover sheets should also be completed with candidate and centre numbers. **The work of the highest and lowest candidate must also be included even if these do not appear on Gateway as part of the sample.**

Centres should also remember that it is necessary to enter marks on the Gateway system as well as submitting cover sheets on the LWA.

All work should show evidence of teacher marking. Although the majority of centres provided detailed comments on the assignments, there were some centres who submitted clean scripts. The comments, both marginal and summative, should link to the wording of the Assessment Objectives in the mark scheme. It is very helpful to the moderators to have marker comments so that they can understand more clearly how the marks have been awarded.

Some centres did not appear to accurately apply the marking criteria to explain how marks were attained. Comments such as 'assured', 'perceptive' and 'sophisticated' were used on level 3 assignments and subjective comments like 'Beautiful summing up', 'Excellent understanding', 'Perfect point! Well done!'

appeared on some scripts addressed to the student. Centres should be reminded that all comments written on scripts should be worded in relation to the relevant level criteria on the mark scheme. Comments on candidates' work are there to support the judgement made by the centre in awarding the marks and should not be addressed to the candidate as feedback.

Many centres showed evidence of good practice in carrying out dual marking with two sets of comments appearing on the scripts. Some centres had submitted the separate moderator sheet linking the comments to the relevant Assessment Objectives on the mark scheme. Where internal moderation had taken place, the marking was usually a lot more accurate.

It was rewarding to see some very strong personal engagement across the ability range of the candidates and to read thoughtful responses often produced under difficult circumstances. Centres should be congratulated for setting individual tasks which allowed the candidates to choose titles to suit their strengths and knowledge. There was evidence of much good practice and careful moderation within centres which made it much easier for moderators to uphold centre marks. Moderators commented on how enjoyable it was to read developed responses which were so assured in their depth of knowledge of the texts, which is what this coursework unit encourages.

A brief summary

It is important that the centres take into account the following:

- The importance of setting a task which is sufficiently challenging and related to all the relevant Assessment Objectives for the assignment.
- All questions set should be tightly focused (preferably on just one theme or character) and allow the candidate to develop a personal response as well as an analysis of language, form and structure.
- It is important that candidates are presented with a range of topics and ideas, and are encouraged to choose ones that appeal, thus encouraging personal engagement and independence.
- The analysis of drama texts should focus closely on dramatic techniques, audience reaction and stagecraft.
- It is important that AO4 (the relationship between text and context) is well integrated into the response and relates fully to the question set. Substantial biographical detail on any of the writers is irrelevant and detracts from the task in hand.
- The guidance for each assignment is 600 -1000 words. Quantity does not always mean quality, and unnecessary narrative or historical detail can detract from the core of the response. However, in order to cover all the Assessment Objectives sufficiently responses need to be developed and sustained.

- The best practice is to internally standardise all marking even if there is only one teacher teaching the specification. Small centres in the same geographical region should share good practice.
- Scripts should show evidence of teacher marking with comments that relate to the wording of the marking criteria and refer to relevant Assessment Objectives. Looking at the Board's exemplar scripts for this unit should provide greater guidance for small or new centres.
- All folders should be submitted as one file, with signed authentication forms and the work of the highest and lowest candidates.

Addendum: Guidance to Centres on Effective Titles :

Section A (AO1 /10 AO2 /10):

An Inspector Calls

'We don't live alone. We are members of one body. We are responsible for each other'. What is Priestley's aim in *An Inspector Calls* and how does he achieve it?

To what extent does the conflict between Mr Birling and the Inspector affect the audience? In your response refer to language, form and structure.

With reference to language and dramatic techniques, explore the theme of class and social responsibility in 'An Inspector Calls'

Explore how Priestley used *An Inspector Calls* to convey his ideas about social injustice. You should consider the use of language, form and structure, and the effect his methods affect the audience.

How does Priestley put across his ideas about the need for social change? Focus on one character in particular who has the potential to make a difference and explore their role in the play.

A View From the Bridge

Explore the way Miller uses dramatic devices to present the theme of masculinity in 'A View from the Bridge'

Alfieri is not one of the main characters in *A View from a Bridge*, but critics do not doubt his importance in the play. How crucial is Alfieri's role in *A View from the Bridge*?

To what extent does Miller present Eddie as a character with whom we can sympathise in *A View from the Bridge*, and how does he achieve this?

Section B (AO1 /10 AO2 /10 AO4 /10):

Macbeth:

Explore the ways in which Shakespeare presents the theme of deception in 'Macbeth'. Explain why deceit might have been more prevalent when the play was written.

To what extent do you think Shakespeare presents the character of Lady Macbeth as a 'fiend-like queen'? Do you feel that we would have more or less sympathy for her today?

Merchant of Venice

'A modern audience might view Shylock as a controversial character'. Explore the dramatic role of Shylock in the play and consider why this statement might be true.

'Despite their flaws, Shakespeare wins sympathy for all the characters in *The Merchant of Venice* because they are all struggling against their bonds'. Explore the way that Shakespeare shapes an audience response in any one of the characters in the play.

Romeo and Juliet

Explore the way that Shakespeare presents the theme of fate through his use of 'star-crossed lovers'. How might a Jacobean audience react differently to the tragic events of the play?

To what extent do you agree that Friar Lawrence is one of the most important characters in the play? What do you think Shakespeare wanted to show us about religion at that time?

