

Examiners' Report/  
Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2012

GCE English Language & Literature  
(6EL03)  
Varieties in Language and Literature

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## **Introduction**

This unit comprises the examined component of A2 Language and Literature. Students are expected to apply their skills and knowledge of literary and linguistic concepts gained in the AS units, as well as wider reading, to explore varieties of language and literature. They need to synthesise their learning and make observations about how language works across a spectrum of written and spoken production. They choose one of four topic areas and answer two corresponding questions: one on an unseen extract in Section A and one on two prepared texts in Section B.

Section A involves the analysis of one unseen extract. Candidates are expected to present a continuous commentary on the writer's or speaker's choice of structure, form and language and draw conclusions on attitudes, values and ideas conveyed in the text.

Section B assesses candidates' knowledge of the contribution made by contextual factors to the understanding of either two chosen drama texts or two chosen poetry texts. Students are expected to compare writers' use of linguistic and literary devices.

Overall, there was a mixed range of responses for this series. Higher band candidates showed an ability to present integrated, well-informed answers, detailed knowledge of the texts and confident use of a wide range of terminology. Answers placed in the lower bands tended to be descriptive and did not tackle the writers' attitudes, values and ideas in any real depth. A large number of candidates could have spent more time looking carefully at the key terms of the question, considering the relevant concerns of their chosen topic and then planning their answers accordingly. When supporting their points, a significant proportion of candidates tended to rely on long, memorised quotations, rather than selecting examples that were appropriate to the demands of the question.

From a practical point of view, candidates must remember to answer both questions relating to their choice of topic (e.g. Family Relationships). A significant number of candidates tackled one topic area on Section A and another on Section B. The paper is designed to help students to prepare themselves efficiently: they will have been studying a variety of texts relating to a chosen topic and this encourages them to focus on a range of relevant features, contexts and ideas; they should also save time and unnecessary stress by going straight to the relevant unseen passage at the beginning of the examination instead of reading through all four passages.

### **Section A: Question 1**

#### **General**

Overall, candidates showed some encouraging approaches to the task, with even lower band responses showing some range of application of their knowledge and understanding, or at least being able to express themselves clearly. High-scoring answers demonstrated a wide range of analytical skills and discussed a variety of features in a confident fashion.

However, lower-band candidates often misread the extracts or spent too much time focusing on seemingly-trivial aspects. There was a tendency to feature spot rather than to engage with the attitudes or values of the texts. Many candidates did not really consider why the texts were written and thus did not grasp how the language had been shaped for particular purposes.

### **A Sense of Place**

The Bill Bryson extract was a popular choice and on the whole students were able to respond to the nostalgic tone and comment on the warmth of the writer's memories. The majority of candidates were able to identify a range of interesting features but very few chose to discuss the use of hyperbole or to fully explore the precise tone of the piece. Even some seemingly adept candidates missed too many opportunities on discussing both language use and attitudes/values hand-in-hand with Bryson's stimulation of the senses. A small number of candidates analysed ways in which the tone of the piece was used to re-create the sense of childhood excitement. Most answers discussed the generic features of the memoir/autobiography. Very few students had problems understanding the text, although a large number of answers concentrated on the opening paragraphs and did not get to grips with the last two.

### **The Individual in Society**

Candidates seemed confident dealing with the Mary Bethune piece, although only a few considered the radio audience and how this might have affected the way that the text was constructed. Most candidates preferred to focus on going through the piece chronologically and listing the main linguistic features. Most were able to discuss the use of abstract nouns and how the overall concept of the text was conveyed. However, they did not often explore the speaker's attitudes and value, and therefore missed an opportunity to engage with the rhetorical power of the speech.

### **Love and Loss**

The Katy Guest piece was the most problematic of the four unseen texts, probably because of the way that the topic of Love and Loss was represented here. Many candidates were unable to detect the writer's use of irony and took the whole piece at face value. Not many answers explored the variety of attitudes expressed by the different participants in this article. There was also a reluctance to analyse linguistic features. The inclusion of the three book extracts created confusion and a number of candidates were unable to consider the overall purpose of the text. In fact, some responses seemed to suggest that the article was a PR exercise for Mills and Boon. There were attempts to grasp the nature of the audience but these were often reduced to generalised references to social class.

### **Family Relationships**

The Ballard extract was also challenging for a considerable number of candidates who offered a very descriptive account of the content. Only a small number of answers were able to engage with the slightly detached

quality of much of the writing. Stronger answers analysed the portrayals of the grandparents (the reference to the “relics of the Victorian world” proving popular) and a large number of responses considered the war-time context. However, many answers suffered from a basic misreading of the relationships between those mentioned. Higher-scoring answers began to explore emotional, as well as geographical distances but, on the whole, candidates had difficulty with the overall tone of the piece.

At AO1, high-scoring candidates wrote fluently and used a wide range of appropriate terminology. They remained focused on the question throughout and discussed a wide range of linguistic approaches in a confident manner. Middle-range answers were written fluently but did not include a wide enough range of relevant terminology. Answers that fell in the lower band category displayed a number of technical inaccuracies and a narrow range of terminology.

At AO2, high-scoring answers engaged confidently with the texts, analysed relevant features in a confident manner and showed a detailed appreciation of the writers’ attitudes, values and ideas. Lower band answers tended to be descriptive and avoided analytical discussion of structure, form and language.

Here is an extract from an answer that was awarded full marks for AO1:

A sense of place.

Bill Bryson's first person account of his experiences of youth in Iowa are included in his childhood memoir, *The Life and Times of the Thunderbolt Kid*. The text is most likely to interest readers who enjoy Bryson's previous writing, such as *Brick Lane*.

The piece, though written in a fairly low register "Well, actually, who could say...", maintains a polysyllabic and articulate idiolect "the most vividly delicious..." including creative collocations of words "lecture of inspired brilliance." The focal feature of the text is nostalgia rooted in food and establishments for Bryson; "mouth-pleasing banana cream pie," utilising asyndetic listing to heighten the joyous and reminiscent tone of the text "department stores, restaurants, clothing stores..."

Bryson recreates the ambience of youth by contrasting the mature syntax with childlike repetition, using anaphora with the personal pronoun "we" and "we had" at the beginning of many sentences throughout the extract, also highlighting the autobiographical nature of the piece. This is also alluded to with the familiar terms of address used in the text, when naming the establishments "cream pie at Toddle House" "cheese cake at Johnny and Kay's".

Examiner comment:

The candidate employs a wide range of appropriate linguistic and literary terms in a persuasive manner. Expression is sophisticated, fluent and accurate.

Examiner tip:

Use a wide range of relevant terminology in an integrated fashion.

The following extract is from an answer that was awarded a mark in the middle band for AO1:

a 'real flow' of euros.

The purpose of this piece might be ~~to~~<sup>to</sup> inform those not around at the time of the war, what society and England was like as a whole, how it affected people. Also to warn about events at that time that not only took place in England but in Shanghai too, as it has changed immensely since then.

Its context is that of family lifestyle post world war one and two, England and its financial difficulties and the problems faced in other countries. This piece would therefore be suitable to a very varied and widespread audience, consisting of both genders, people of aged 'mid-thirties' and over, possibly a greater demand for those who also experienced the war and for those who are interested in pre and post war living.

The writer uses very descriptive language of people and places throughout the text. I in particular noticed his use of sentence structure throughout which changed depending on his attitudes and ideas towards certain people or places, "I think they distrusted me or might" and "Both my sister and I caught amoebic dysentery and were severely ill." By the writer making these sentences, short and simple, it indicates to me there were times which distressed or upset him as he does not

the descriptive language of compound sentences like his other utterances ~~the~~ ~~the~~ within the extract. He also uses a short sentence when illustrating the danger and poverty in Shanghai in the 1930s: "cholera, smallpox and typhoid were rife in Shanghai". He may use this linguistic technique as a 'shock factor' to the audience. In the first paragraph we see a complete contrast to the short sentences, the whole paragraph is formed purely of compound sentences describing his attitudes towards his grandparents and their home. His language is very negative throughout using phrases such as "rigid, unchangeable minds". He used adjectives like "uninterested, heavy, uncomfortable" creating a dark and negative portrayal of his grandparents. The audience can tell from his language alone that his time with his grandparents was unpleasant, "brief glimpses of the sun" and even "the air we breathed" was rationed. It is clear that his grandparents were stuck in their past during the war and could not adjust to the new ways of living in society, the writer ~~also~~ describes them as being "living relics of the Victorian world" which I found was a helpful use of imagery, in creating a picture of them in my mind. His use of repetition of "mean" really elucidates to the audience ~~that~~ how bitter society was after the war.

Examiner comment:

This candidate expresses ideas in a clear, fluent fashion but there is an absence of relevant linguistic terminology.

Examiner tip:

Use appropriate terminology to identify key linguistic and literary features.

This answer was placed at the top of Band 3 for AO2:

This piece comes from the Arts section of the Independent. Therefore it would have quite a wide readership, it is for people who are looking to find out more about literature. It was written in 2009, during the recession, giving a certain tone to the piece. The writer will discuss why Romantic novels had become more popular and also give descriptions and recommendations on a few.

The title 'We're all heroine addicts now...?' grabs the readers' attention. It looks very similar to the word 'heroin' being a play on words related to drug addicts, drawing the reader in with this controversial statement. Ellipses are used, leading the reader into the piece. There is also a sub-heading giving a more detailed view of what will be covered in the article. 'Katy Guest reports on the boom in romantic fiction' This sets the agenda and gives the audience expectations. Subject-specific adjectives are used 'steamy' following with the theme.

The article begins with three separate descriptions of romantic novels. The first presents a character that many of the readers may feel sorry for, there

is hyperbole used in describing her change of circumstances 'Her life changes forever after one searing glance'. There is also use of simile 'scorches her body like the hottest flame' this refers back to her hair colour and also shows literary influence on this writer. Parenthesis is used after the description of the book to inform the reader of information on the book.

The next of the mini reviews shows the book to be using antithesis 'gorgeous hero... tragically increasing'. This gives the reader an idea of what the book will be like and the struggle for the 'heroine', this is a typically female subject and plays along to stereotypical views of love that might be found in a novel like this.

Guest then goes onto the third short book review, here the word 'love' is brought up for the first time even though this is what the entire piece is about. She has used tipping to begin her story with examples of romantic novels. There is a paragraph here of only two sentences, marking out the theme of the article. There is a semantic field of 'love', as this is the topic.

**Examiner comment:**

The candidate has attempted to address attitudes and values to varying degrees of success. There is some acknowledgement of structure, form and language but features could have been analysed in greater detail.

**Examiner tip:**

Consider how a writer's choice of features might convey attitudes, values and ideas.

Here is an extract from an answer that was placed in Band 5 for AO2:

The text portrays the writer's attitude to childhood in a particularly favourable light, referring to the 1950's as a comfortable, happy time for Bryson, speaking of eating ice cream after swimming as a child being "the finest feeling of well-being a person can have."

The theme of class is also touched upon in the text, although no direct comments are made, there is a brief mentioning of the opulence surrounding a young Bryson "handsome, most elegant rustic swimming pool in the world, with the skinniest, tinniest female lifeguards."

Although a non-fiction piece, Bryson demonstrates experience with writing in his account, including figurative language in the text with metaphors such as "into the bowels of the earth"

The piece begins with a fairly colloquial syntax, using initial position conjunctions "But then most things in Des Moines" giving a more personal feel to the crafted text, not unlike real speech in style.

Bryson successfully transports the reader to his nostalgic childhood memories, engaging the reader with accessible concepts such as food and drawing the reader in with a clear devotion to his hometown "... they were at least ours," appealing to reader's in its accessibility.

notably, Bryson revisits a childlike manner of speaking by including a plethora of comparative language and suffixes "fastest baked goods" "crispiest fried chicken" illuminating the text with regularity and an immature pride.

Bryson dominates the text with his inner child and strong nostalgia, using casual contractions "you'd" dated Americanisms "junk food" and subject matter occasionally verging on taboo "(And the best parts afterwards..." creating an excitable young character for the readers to relate to.

The text contains an amiable juxtaposition of content, with the collocation of the semantic field of food and a piece of text about "Dahl's" supermarket, in which Bryson uses parentheses ~~to~~ and hyperbole to create an image of the alliterative "kiddie cornals" playpen, describing the production of comic books as "produced in massive numbers in...the 1950's - one billion of them... -"

Bryson also uses personification of the nameable groceries "positively refreshed" to bring the childlike way of thinking through the text, as well as collective terms "everyone loved and admired it anyway" in *Sweepings*

Examiner comment:

The candidate has explored a wide range of values and attitudes, showing a good appreciation of Bryson's intentions and approaches. The candidate is able to evaluate the effects created by Bryson's choice of linguistic features.

Examiner tip:

Discuss a wide range of features and their effects in an integrated fashion.

## Section B: Questions 2-5

### General

As usual, the plays proved more popular than the poetry texts, with Love and Loss being the most popular topic area. High-scoring answers showed that contexts had been well-researched and knowledge was applied appropriately. These candidates adopted an integrated approach to the task and skilfully compared the texts throughout. However, lower-scoring candidates depended on communicating taught knowledge rather than on displaying applied skills. A worrying number of students failed to include any contextual knowledge whatsoever. Their analysis and exploration of the texts was often perceptive but the essence of the task was not completed.

In addition, comparison between texts was often tenuous. Generally speaking, a significant number of poetry answers candidates analysed the poems in considerable depth but neglected to offer an integrated comparison between texts.

### A Sense of Place

There were some very convincing answers on the poetry, with candidates able to select contextual information and use it to discuss the specifics of some well-chosen poems. Lower-scoring answers tended to discuss individual poems, instead of adopting a broader approach to the poets' work. Candidates who wrote about the plays often focused on Powell and Vietnam in *Stuff Happens*, as well as the impact of history in *Translations*. Lower-band answers compared individual characters, rather than analysing a range of dramatic features. References to context were often narrow and were not always tailored to the demands of the question. There were a number of rehearsed answers and some candidates clearly had an agenda, regardless of the wording of the question. It was however pleasing to see that *Stuff Happens* had been well-taught and most candidates were equally at home with this, as well as *Translations*.

### The Individual in Society

High-scoring students of *Othello* and *Equus* offered focused responses, with some pertinent, detailed references to a range of contextual factors and an ability to explore language in some depth. They also analysed dramatic features in a persuasive manner. The study of *Othello* and *Alan* offered the chance to look at the question in detail but candidates also used the opportunity to explore Iago and Dysart, and also the female characters.

Lower band candidates had difficulty with the terms of the question and tended to ignore the key terms entirely. They made only basic references to context and tended to offer only rudimentary discussion of language. These answers tended to focus only on *Othello* and *Alan*; *Dysart* was hardly mentioned. There was also a reluctance to acknowledge these texts as plays, so marks were lost at AO2.

There were no poetry answers in this topic area.

## **Love and Loss**

This question was a popular choice and a large proportion of candidates answered on *Betrayal* and *The Glass Menagerie* (perhaps influenced by recent productions of both plays.) The best answers were often a pleasure to read, demonstrating a sophisticated knowledge of the texts and making detailed, cogent comparisons. Many high-scoring candidates were able to show how the autobiographical elements of both plays would have been unknown to their original audiences and so the life-changing elements contextually happened later.

A significant number of candidates were actually able to discuss the irony implicit in Pinter's reverse chronology and relate it specifically to the wording of the question. There was also some very effective discussion of Williams' biography but it wasn't always relevant. The best answers here used the contextual information selectively and concentrated on effective comparisons.

Lower-scoring answers tended to rely heavily on rehearsed contextual material; indeed the discussion of context often obscured references to the texts themselves. There were a number of poetry answers here and these tended to be stronger on Plath than the Metaphysical Poets, with plenty of detailed analysis of the former but some fairly superficial treatment of the latter. Again, there was a tendency to discuss individual poems, as opposed to adopting a broader view of the set texts.

## **Family Relationships**

This was also a popular choice but responses were mixed. Although the majority of candidates demonstrated secure knowledge and understanding of both texts, a considerable number found it difficult to present an integrated analysis of structure, form, language and context. The question offered plenty of opportunity to explore a range of contextual factors, as well as analyse a variety of dramatic features. However, many candidates overlooked the key terms of the question, preferring to copy out rehearsed answers about the American Dream and patriarchal "Victorian" society.

Many low-scoring answers ignored the wording of the question but high-band responses tackled the word "nature" and discussed different levels of communication (and the lack of it.). Again, a significant number of candidates copied out quotations but did not discuss the specific lexical or syntactical choices. Discerning answers explored communication as a means of control and communication which went unsaid, the theme of secrecy.

There were no poetry answers in this topic area.

At AO1, high-scoring candidates wrote fluently and used a wide range of appropriate terminology. They remained focused on the question throughout and discussed a wide range of linguistic approaches in a confident manner. Lower-scoring answers were usually coherent but used a limited range of terminology.

At AO2, high-scoring answers engaged confidently with the texts, analysed generic features in a confident manner and showed a detailed appreciation of the writers' attitudes, values and ideas. Lower band answers tended to be descriptive and avoided analytical discussion of structure, form and language.

At AO3, high band answers presented detailed comparisons of the texts, in an integrated fashion, and referred to a wide range of contextual features. Lower-scoring answers tended to make generalised references to contexts and tended to discuss texts separately.



of his society  
overhearing judges, "Double your pleasure, Double  
your sin with Double must, double must, double must  
gun" these almost enclosures highlight how  
Alon attempts to outwardly conform to his <sup>consumer</sup>  
based society.

This is unlike 'Othello', where the eponymous  
protagonist constantly wishes to be fully understood by  
his Jacobean appearance-based society as he  
breaks from his stereotype as a second-class citizen  
due to early modern racial prejudices - evident through  
the pejorative term "the Moor" as well as the  
derogatory synecdoche of "thick-lips" - he attempts  
to break these stereotypes by speaking adphing a rich,  
multisyllabic, exotic lexicon as he speaks of "Anthropophi-  
sog" and intertextual references to Greek and mythological  
Gods when describing Desdemona's beauty - "Dion's  
visage". This highlights how Shakespeare ~~wishes to~~  
Othello wishes to break from his appearance  
based assumptions of the racial-prejudice of sixteenth  
century Venetian society.\* Similarly, his breaking  
from stereotypes in attempt to be understood by  
society is seen through Emilia's extended metaphor,  
"they are stomachs, and we the meat they feed on",  
here Emilia wishes for her patriarchal audience  
and the misogynistic Venetian society to understand

Examiner comment:

This candidate's articulate expression demonstrates confident knowledge of the texts and the ability to construct a convincing argument. A wide range of appropriate terminology has been used throughout.

Examiner tip:

Remember to use linguistic terminology for the Section B answer.

The following extract is from an answer that was awarded a middle band mark for AO2:

because  
as selfish; the characters would like to keep their current lives the same yet indulge in an affair ~~and~~ fall into a new love, "this isn't a home," "You have a home. I have a home... ~~And~~ And children. Two children in two homes. There are no children here, so it's not the same kind of home?" The use of syntactic parallelism allows direct comparisons to be made, ridiculing the new environment they have created as an ~~escape~~ attempt of escapism from their lives. ~~Emphasising~~ Emphasising each must return to their normal life and must not cause this affair to interfere ~~with~~ and potentially change their life. However it does ~~not~~ change the dynamics in their 'normal' lives, breaking the marriage between Robert and Emma. The tag question reveals how Jenny's ~~feels~~ <sup>attitude</sup> about the affair, "it's not a marriage."

However ~~contrasting to~~ this contrasts greatly to The Glass Menagerie, Williams's setting of a poor living standard, "hive-like conglomerations" provided a ~~the~~ claustrophobic environment with building tension and suppression on Tom's ~~dreams~~ <sup>desire</sup> for adventure, "blivet... peaceful St Louis". The desperation for money, " (Annamaria) conducted a vigorous campaign on

the telephone, roping in subscribers to..." This Military ~~the~~ semantic lexis adds to her focused desperation for money.

~~Amazons~~ is the character most able to ~~present~~ to Both plays appear to be slightly autobiographical, Pinter presents his play in reverse chronology which provides a sense of enigma within the audience ~~while~~ <sup>while</sup> Williams opts for a retrospective approach. Williams is able to look back and comment on how his life changed, he does this by creating the persona of Tom, being the narrative mediator. Tom constantly uses the alienation technique in order to communicate to the audience, "I am gangster in back time" Tom also provides an insight into the family, "we were somehow separated from" he is revealing how ~~unhappy~~ they were separated from reality. ~~This is able to~~ ~~is~~ In turn revealing the motif behind the title, "The Glass Menagerie" not only is this Laura's passion, but it is the metaphorical imprisonment from which these characters were trying to escape. Laura and Tom were born into it whereas Amanda fell in love and found her life was changed and she became trapped with nothing but her ~~memories~~ memories.

Examiner comment:

This candidate demonstrates confident knowledge and understanding of both texts. He or she presents a convincing argument overall, although discussion of texts, their generic features and their contexts is not always integrated. Generic features could have been analysed in greater depth.

Examiner tip:

Remember to explore generic features in detail.

Here is an extract from an answer that was awarded a Band 6 mark for AO3:

of the society  
souvereign judges, "Double you pleasure, Double  
your sin with Double must, double must, double must  
gun" these almost insubstantial highlights how  
Alon attempts to outwardly conform to his <sup>consumer</sup> ~~consumer~~  
based society.

This is unlike "Othello," where the eponymous  
protagonist constantly wishes to be fully understood by  
his Jacobean appearance-based society as he and  
break from his stereotype as a second-class citizen  
due to early modern racial prejudices - evident through  
the pejorative term "the Moor" as well as the  
derogatory synecdoche of "thick-lips" - he attempts  
to break these stereotypes by speaking adjectives rich,  
multisyllabic, exotic words as he speaks of "Anthropophi-  
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Gods when describing Desdemona's beauty - "Dion's  
visage". This highlights how Shakespeare wishes to  
Othello wishes to break from the appearance based  
assumptions of the racial prejudice of sixteenth  
century Venetian society.\* Similarly, his breaking  
from stereotypes in attempt to be understood by  
society is seen through Emilia's extended metaphor,  
"They are stomachs, and we the meat they feed on",  
here Emilia wishes for her patriarchal audience  
and the misogynistic Venetian society to understand

the effects of the objectification of women. For Shakespeare to create a female character with such subversive views highlights how she wishes to be understood in an attempt to break from the suggestion women were second class citizens <sup>in the universal hierarchy</sup> who can only be "trumpets" of the patriarchal "good wife".

(\* as well as breaking the stereotypes inflicted on a "Moor" by the audience - Shakespeare's only other black character was the villainous Aaron the Moor in Titus Andronicus thus showing how Othello wants to be understood not only by his Venetian society but also by the judging Jacobean audience).

This breaking from stereotypes is reiterated in "Equus" through Dysart's confessional dialogue through core monologues with direct audience address as he breaks the fourth wall and the realism of the piece to in a desperate plea to be understood by an also judging audience. His short, declarative sentence e. "You see; I'm lost" employs the first person and direct audience address to show how Dysart wishes to be understood through confessional monologues with the audience. He, Dysart, like Emilia and Othello, wishes to break free from the constraints thrust on him from his judging society. This is seen through his confession to Helmer of his

jealousy for Alan and his criticism of the 1970s "sterile world"; he has felt a passion more ferocious than I have felt in any second of my life". However, critics have argued such as John Russell Taylor argue Shuttle merely wishes to "romanticise madness". However, this can then suggest Dyson's subversive view and jealousy. This can be linked to "Othello" as both playwrights create characters who <sup>wish to be understood by</sup> question their appearance based societies.

Unlike Othello, Emilia and Dyson's necessity to be understood by society from the beginning of the play, Alan, on the other hand, wishes to remain misunderstood by his society however then progresses to wishing to be understood. Alan's original wish to remain misunderstood by his society is shown through <sup>his</sup> the letters in the flashback. However, the claustrophobic setting for this can be shown through his anarchic neologism, Alan's attempted neologism, "chuckle-chuckle" and his chanting of genealogies mimicking the Bible, "Flankus beget Spankus". This shows how Alan breaks away from his capitalist 1970s ~~sterile~~ "sterile" society to have his own world, with his own language and an unbridled passion. The juxtaposition of Alan's reality and his However, Alan then gains the necessity to be understood by Dyson as he ~~is~~ caters everything to Dyson in a claustrophobic setting.



secret ~~the~~ audience.

~~That~~ In contrast to Emilia, who wishes to be understood by predominantly mainly the audience, by Act 2 Scene 35, Alon wishes to be understood by his society as well as the complicit audience of the film for a placebo drug and the true effects of his distortion of worship, love and sex are revealed to Dyratt and the audience. Alon wishes to highlight how his <sup>evil</sup> ~~scholar~~ was not moralities (as a Jacobean and right-wing 1970s society would believe) but instead the consequences of his socialist film, religious mother and the necessity to conform.

Alon wishes for his Similarly, Alon's ~~frustration with society~~ frustration with society to be understood but instead feels he has to hide his organic right riding horder because of the judgements ~~that~~ inflicted on him if he tells anyone. Although, Alon feels he will never be understood, he takes comfort in his empathy with horses, "no one understands... except cowboys"; this shows how Alon feels united with horses in ~~order~~ ~~the~~ ~~idea~~ ~~no~~ ~~one~~ ~~will~~ ~~understand~~ ~~him~~, or the thoughts of horses. However, ~~his self~~ ~~frustration~~ ~~with~~ ~~society~~

Alon's necessity to be understood can be misinterp-

Examiner comment:

This candidate draws interesting and sophisticated comparisons between characters in both texts. He or she demonstrates detailed knowledge of the context of production and reception. He or she considers a range of contextual features in a sophisticated way.

Examiner tip:

Remember to apply knowledge of the context of reception to the demands of the question.

The following extract is from an answer that was awarded a Band 4 mark for AO3:

because of the uproar that it caused. It was not only the 'story' of the play but Ibsen had a clear way of presenting it. He designed the backdrop to be a replica of an ordinary home at that time, to make the audience ~~totally~~ effortlessly relate to the play. He also did this with the clothing that the characters would have worn and the props used. The lighting throughout was also a significant but less obvious feature that lured the audience in to the ever growing tension and final unexpected scene on stage, almost completely dark and Nora leaving her ~~husband~~ home and family. Like Ibsen, Miller used similar features of stagecraft and dramatic techniques, however his time period was later than Ibsen's. All My Sons was set in the late 1940s in middle America. Socially there was naivety near as unbalanced as it was back in 1879 but there was still a hint of male superiority. Miller felt there needed to be a change in middle American society after the effects that world war two brought. There was a new generation filled with controversial attitudes taking over society, they wanted honesty and a sense of community. The lack of honesty and communication during the war had ended lives, people wanted a dramatic change.

Both plays have very similar themes throughout, the

Lack of honesty within family relationships, the pressures from society that individuals face, money, parental and familial obligation and the twisted nature of communication.

From the very beginning of *A Doll's House*, Nora is never honest with Torvald, down to trivial ~~topics~~ <sup>matters</sup> like ~~the~~ eating macarons, "she stuffs the bag of macarons in her pocket and wipes her mouth" foreshadowing the fact that she has something to hide. Torvald's use of language for Nora's character in Act One leads the audience to believe that this is a happy and normal marriage. Helmer's use of pet names "skylark" and "my pretty little pet" portray to the audience that they are normal and stable in their relationship. The stage directions include para-linguistic features that relate to Nora's sickly ~~utterances~~ utterances "[talking with his coat buttons]" It makes the nature of their communication 'normal' but also it shows how manipulative and childish Nora is with her words she can easily convince Helmer into giving her money. Money that she is secretly putting towards her debts, she uses flirtatious and affectionate communication to cover up her secrets.

But later we see Nora talking with Mrs. Lindel about how Mrs. Lindel has had to work and fend for herself and her family, Nora seems almost jealous of Mrs. Lindel for having

such independence, "to work like a man" this is when Nora begins to hunger for her own independence. It is Tom Stoppard allowing Nora to talk to her mother that makes Nora realize what she wants from her marriage and life. Without this chance to communicate ~~the~~ truthfully with someone Nora may not have begun her journey of self discovery.

Later in the play we see Nora's behaviour and attitudes changing. She has little communication with Helmer in fear of questions he might ask her about her changing persona. However one form of communication that Nora does use is that of the tarantella. She allows her "hair to fall loose" (controversial at the time shows she is trying to break the mould that society has set for her) and dances in a way that expresses what she cannot bring herself to say. This is a key scene that elucidates the nature of ~~the~~ the communication involved in their relationship.

In Act three when the letter arrives, it exposes everything, all that Nora has been hiding from Helmer, all of what she could never physically say. The letter is a catalyst in the play, it brings about complete role reversal, Nora is calm and collected unlike Torvald "struggling to keep his composure". ~~Just so~~ The communication between the couple has never been better, they are being

trust with each other something that has never featured in their relationship before. I don't see gestures like this taking and short ~~sentences~~ sentences from Nona to emphasize the lack of control that Keller now has. If the nature of their communication had been honest or honest the whole of their marriage, Nona may not have felt so greatly about trading free from her home.

All My Son is the same, honesty is not the basis of communication in the Keller household. Keller hid from his family the truth about what really happened the day the faulty cylindrical heads were sent out, ~~the~~ society wouldn't have allowed it. Due to his strong sense of pride, status, wealth and familial obligation Keller never openly communicates with his family about what had done. It is only when George arrives that the truth begins to spill, George is the catalyst in All My Son. Once again it is a letter that speaks the truth, ~~from the Keller~~ neither Nona or Keller explicitly admit their secrets.

Both plays end with a loud noise symbolising the loss of a character but also a new beginning. If communication had been more truthful, honest and upfront in both plays families would not have been hurt and men wouldn't have been so difficult. It is

Examiner comment:

Some comparisons have been made between the two texts but the candidate does not present a discussion in an integrated way. Contextual knowledge has been demonstrated but this is not often applied to the demands of the question.

Examiner tip:

Plan your answer carefully so that you can compare and contrast texts in an integrated manner.

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