

GCSE

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English Literature (1213)

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Examiners' Report

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Introduction

The quality of the work produced was on a par with previous years. The written coursework was very similar in content and quality to 2004; and the first year of the 'Clean Texts' examination does not seem to have caused difficulty to centres or candidates. Often, the level of textual knowledge, and the ability to recall detailed examples, was very impressive.

The choice of texts was also very similar to 2004, as in the past, "Of Mice and Men" and "An Inspector Calls" are the favourites; while the literary non-fiction section has yet to attract large numbers. Overall, however, 20 of the 21 texts were taken up.

Coursework

Centres continue to produce a wide and imaginative range of assignments, and candidates were almost always given a chance to be seen at their best. The great majority of centres assessed their candidates' work accurately: in cases where there was some very slight degree of generosity, or undermarking, but an adjustment to the centre's overall mark was not justified, this will be reported back on the U9 form.

Most centres coped well with the administration of the coursework, and moderators are grateful for the punctual arrival of the sample folders: in fact many centres posted work to moderators well before the deadline. Moderators' comments were positive: one, for example, wrote "The majority of folders were effectively marked, with detailed supporting comments, by the teachers, which related to the assessment criteria." Folders had also been moderated thoroughly within centres.

A few centres still overlook the requirement to send to the moderator the folder with the highest, and lowest, marks for the centre, if these do not form part of the pre-selected sample (marked with an asterisk on the OPTEMS form). A minor irritation for moderators is that some work does not carry the candidate's number: this causes difficulty for moderators, and centres are asked to ensure that candidate numbers are on all material. Minor difficulties apart, however, the coursework generally served its purpose well, and the great majority of centres and candidates can take pride in the quality of the work produced.

Coursework Units

Unit 1: Pre-1914 Drama

As always the great majority of centres 'double up' with the Shakespeare unit from Specifications 1203 or 1204, and generally, the two sets of Assessment Objectives and requirements are met satisfactorily in a single piece of work.

'Macbeth' was once again the popular choice, though a wide range of plays is offered. Comparisons of the original with modern interpretations were quite common, while one moderator found that "textual and technical analysis in the Shakespeare units was excellent, though reference to impact on audience could have been better developed." In contrast another moderator found that "A full range of pieces was seen, from A* analytical assignments to brief re-tellings of the story: in the middle range the responses were based on characters and their development."

Unit 2: Pre-1914 Prose

A wide range of assignments was offered for this unit. Many centres rely on short stories, and all centres now seem to be aware that a minimum of two stories must be covered. These short story assignments are, however, not always particularly stimulating or ambitious in all cases, and may not always stretch the most able candidates. One moderator's experience was particularly disappointing:

"Again, short stories were more popular than full length novels. This year I was dismayed to read many direct comparisons which relied very much on the use of narrative and the stating of the obvious. There was little exploration of the way tension (to give one example) was built up through choice of vocabulary, careful use of atmosphere or by a character's (re)actions."

Against this, other moderators saw units on 'Tess', 'Silas Marner', 'Jane Eyre' and a wide range of other texts, and commented on the level of engagement and understanding which coursework tasks can elicit. The specification offers other suggestions for this, and the other units, should centres wish to review their approaches to the coursework assignments.

Unit 3: Pre-1914 Poetry

Whilst some moderators commented that there was again a 'narrative' approach from many candidates, there was also much work of a worthwhile nature. "Meaningful comparisons", reported one moderator, whilst other moderators spoke of an increase in the quality of technical analysis, and one moderator reported that "The Pre-1914 Poetry units were thorough and responsive, and candidates again displayed engagement with their chosen texts". The "Love and Loss" assignment continues to be widely chosen, although a range of material was offered. As stated above, the specification guide suggests starting points for appropriate collections of material.

Written Papers

General

Overall the quality of previous years was maintained. The major development, of course, was the introduction of the requirement for Clean Texts; and it seems that candidates had been very well prepared for this by Centres. While some responses were a little shorter, there was a marked decrease in candidates' reliance on notes and prompts, and the "feature spotting", so familiar from past years in the poetry questions, was much reduced. This is a welcome development.

Generally, candidates seemed to know the texts well. The poetry collections, which candidates have also prepared for specifications 1203 or 1204, were thoroughly grasped, in the great majority of cases. Take up of the newly introduced literary non-fiction section was very limited, and indeed there is a concentration on just a few of the very popular texts in sections B and C.

As always, the more successful responses were marked by an ability to focus on the question, and to use details from the texts in a purposeful way: the less successful candidates tended to follow a 'narrative' approach, even though the questions always demand more from a simple re-telling of the story.

Paper 2F - Foundation

Section A - Modern Poetry

"In Such A Time As This" and "Identity" are equally popular, while "Nature" is less frequently studied. Most responses paid due attention to the need to compare poems (stated in all questions), and there were various methods used to meet this requirement. Some candidates referred to the two (or more) poems "side-by-side" throughout their essays, while others wrote about one poem at a time, drawing comparisons later: either method can work successfully.

In foundation responses, the bullet points were often used sensibly, forming the structure of the response.

F1

The choice of the second poem was important here: in some cases it was inappropriate and the responses suffered because of this. "Dulce et Decorum Est" was admissible, although a few candidates were at pains to point out that the soldiers in that poem are returning to their lines, rather than "going into battle", as the question is phrased. Weaker responses were marked by a simple "narrative" approach, just re-telling the story - a comment which could be repeated for most of the poetry questions, if not all sections.

F2

This more popular question was generally well done. One examiner reported "I really enjoyed reading these as pupils often came up with original ideas, close references, and discussion of language. Literary terms were also used to some purpose."

F3

Generally quite well done. Popular choices for comparison were any of the Heaney poems in this section, particularly "Mid-Term Break". Better responses focused on the "how" in the question.

F4

This popular question brought a range of responses. Some candidates stuck to the question and engaged with details of the poem: others retold the narratives, with little worthwhile comment. Generally, the poems seemed to be well enough understood, and candidates had been prepared well: unfortunately they did not all show equal discipline in responding to the exact demands of the question.

F5

Very much the minority choice, but both questions from Section C were handled well.

F6

See above.

Section B - Modern Prose

It's very hard not to be repetitive: re-telling the story, on its own, leads to very modest achievement: using well chosen details from the texts in a purposeful way, to formulate a response to the precise demands of the question, is what examiners reward.

F7

The overwhelmingly popular choice in Section B. This is a very direct question, and most candidates gave obvious answers - Lennie's failure to integrate into normal society, and so on. Appropriate details were often given, and all but the weakest responses moved beyond simple description of what their 'dream' was. As so often on this text 'The American Dream' appeared from time to time, though not always with much relevance. In some cases 'prepared' essays were not fully adapted to the needs of this question.

F8

Many narrative accounts of Curley's part in the story were offered, whereas some reflection on his 'role' was necessary to achieve higher grades. The bullet points were often followed closely, forming the basis for the response.

F9

Responses tended towards the narrative here, though more thoughtful candidates wrote about the different perspectives of Jem and Scout, for example.

F10

This was a very inviting question, it seems, and responses often showed a sound general understanding of the themes: perhaps the 'mockingbird' 'lesson' was the one most frequently highlighted. Generally, this was better done than F9.

F11

There was general agreement with the proposition, and the broad outline of the plot was often used as evidence to support this.

F12

Squealer was generally seen as propagandist, Napoleon's mouthpiece etc. Generally this was well done.

F13

Narrative accounts tended to dominate this question.

F14

This question produced some quite thoughtful responses, often suggested by the bullet points.

F15

Insufficient responses to form a general comment.

F16

Insufficient responses to form a general comment.

F17

Insufficient responses to form a general comment.

F18

Insufficient responses to form a general comment.

It is interesting that, of the above texts,, 'Animal Farm' and 'Lord of the Flies' have a reasonable 'take-up' at Higher Tier, whereas 'The Other Side of Truth' and 'Twenty-One Stories' are chosen by few centres at either tier. The most popular texts at Foundation Level, 'Of Mice and Men' and 'To Kill A Mockingbird' are also popular at Higher Tier.

Section C - Modern Drama**F19**

The obvious speeches were frequently quoted, and it was clear that the great majority of candidates knew the play well.

F20

Equally popular, equally well done, in general. Some weaker responses tended simply to re-tell the events, however, with little focus on the question as a whole. Overall, this play continues to be popular, and, to judge from the way in which it is known and understood, it continues to be well taught.

F21

F21 produced some fairly enterprising responses about the general ideas of the play without, however, focusing closely on Rita's needs, and how far Frank, and the academic world of which he was a part, met them. A few also talked a bit about Frank's needs, a legitimate extension of the question.

F22

In some cases candidates revealed a close knowledge of the text and were able to comment perceptively on language: this was however, a less popular choice.

F23

One experienced examiner commented:

'At this level, I have to report, there was a tendency by the weaker candidates to wander off the jealousy theme. The more secure ones were able to produce some structured, if essentially simplistic, answers. Some managed to say that jealousy was the trait which did most to undermine Eddie's position. There were some firm parallels drawn between the respective nexi between Eddie and Beatrice, and Eddie and Catherine. I suppose it's refreshing to find that candidates now discuss openly Eddie's feelings for Catherine, compared with 7/8 years ago when there was acute reticence, or indeed innocence. Teachers too seem more confident about confronting this subject'

F24

'Add drama and interest' were sometimes taken rather broadly, meaning little more than a narrative account: however, the play seemed generally to be quite well known and understood.

F25

Insufficient responses to form a general comment.

F26

Insufficient responses to form a general comment.

F27

Straightforward character sketches were offered here, generally quite competently. The bullet points were sometimes overlooked, surprisingly.

F28

This was generally handled quite well, with obvious examples offered and discussed: common school backgrounds were often mentioned, for example.

F29

Insufficient responses to form a general comment.

F30

Insufficient responses to form a general comment.

Section D - Modern Literary Non-fiction

F31

Insufficient responses to form a general comment.

F32

Insufficient responses to form a general comment.

F33

Insufficient responses to form a general comment.

F34

Insufficient responses to form a general comment.

F35 (0 responses)

F36 (0 responses)

F37

Insufficient responses to form a general comment.

F38

Responses to this question mostly featured a narrative account of the family's affairs, though there was some attempt to discuss the author's treatment.

F39

Insufficient responses to form a general comment

F40 (0 responses)

F42 (0 responses)

Paper 3H - Higher

Section A - Modern Poetry

"In Such a Time as This" and "Identity" are equally popular, while "Nature" is less frequently studied. Most responses paid due attention to the need to compare poems (stated in all questions), and there were various methods used to meet this requirement. Some candidates referred to the two (or more) poems "side-by-side" throughout their essays, while others wrote about one poem at a time, drawing comparisons later: either method can work successfully.

H1

Various interpretations of the character of Kay's mother, the precise nature of her illness and her eventual fate, were offered. In 'Death in Leamington' there was a perceived lack of 'caring' on the part of the nurse, as opposed to much comment on her 'professional' attitude. Some mature and insightful comparisons were offered.

H2

The treatment of 'Refugee Blues' was in some cases a little superficial, but some interesting choices for comparison often made this a successful question. 'You Will Be Hearing From Us Shortly' was a popular, and appropriate choice and allowed candidates to make a range of worthwhile comparisons of 'methods', as the question asked.

H3

The most popular poetry question (by far) gave candidates a solid focus for their responses. One examiner commented 'H3 often elicited thoughtful - if dark - responses. Many saw Heaney's pride in his father's expertise, and the role reversal of his sad decline. The dry humour in 'Old Man' was less frequently perceived, as was the poet's love for her father and his need for help. There were impressive analyses of tone and style, on this question.'

H4

The military imagery in 'The Barn' was often mentioned, and 'Death of a Naturalist' was a frequent choice for comparison. More perceptive candidates commented on the purpose and effect of the imagery in both poems. Generally, this was well done.

H5

'The Stag' was most frequently linked with 'Trout', 'Nettles', or 'Roe-Deer.' Analysis of the poet's themes was often very sound, with man/animals/nature often discussed in a sensitive way. Some good analysis of language was also offered on the poems in this question.

H6

This was a straightforward question, linking poems which have much in common, and most candidates produced straightforward, competent responses.

Section B - Modern Prose

It's very hard not to be repetitive: re-telling the story, on its own, leads to very modest achievement: using well chosen details from the texts in a purposeful way, to formulate a response to the precise demands of the question, is what examiners reward.

H7

As with F7, the dominant choice in section B. Many candidates interpreted 'isolation' as 'loneliness' (which isn't quite the same thing, and which is quite disappointing at Higher tier). This was an obvious and clear-cut question on this text, and it served as a stimulus for a wide range of responses. The other chosen character was almost always Curley's wife, although Candy also appeared. For many candidates, this question was the opportunity to discuss the social context, racism, sexism and so on - often very well.

H8

Too many narrative accounts of the relationship, where reflection on it might have served candidates better. Those who did offer analysis usually suggested that the relationship, had some 'two-way' aspects.

H9

Well done, generally, highlighting obvious areas such as racism, and often showing a sophisticated awareness of the social and historical context. (The use of this text, and 'Of Mice and Men', for the Diverse Cultures coursework in English 1203, may well be reflected here).

H10

A wide range of characters was presented though some responses were a little vague and unfocused - not as well done as H9, overall.

H11

This rather abstract question was often quite well handled, although some candidates struggled a little to find a focus. Accounts of the pigs' doings, and of Napoleon in particular, formed the basis of many responses

H12

This was, perhaps, an obvious question on Orwell's technique, and responses were mostly straightforward, without any particular insights or originality.

H13

This was often done with enthusiasm, and the Centres which had chosen this text seemed to have prepared candidates thoroughly. Jack was the obvious focus, for most candidates, and the question was often answered very well.

H14

Again, often answered in a way which reflected good knowledge of, and engagement with, the text.

H15

Not often chosen, but done quite well.

H16

Insufficient responses to form a general comment.

H17

Insufficient responses to form a general comment.

H18

Insufficient responses to form a general comment.

Section C - Modern Drama

H19

Widely chosen, though not always wholly successful: some candidates wrote more about socialism today (for example) than about the play. This question did provide a stimulus for able and thoughtful candidates, but the more direct and 'concrete' H20 (equally popular) was perhaps a more secure and focused starting point for some.

H20

Generally very well done. As well as the behaviour of the Birlings and Gerald, even Daisy was accused of 'deceit'; and the Inspector's role was also seen as deceitful. The best responses, of course, responded directly to the whole question, rather than simply re-telling events to illustrate 'deceit'.

H21

Handled in a variety of ways, though frequently with some insight into dramatic structure.

H22

Again, there was little pattern to the responses, but they tended to reflect a good level of knowledge of the text.

H23

Both questions on this play suggested that candidates knew the text very well, and that they could apply their knowledge to the needs of the questions. In H23 good responses related the named incident to its context clearly, and used detailed references to the text in doing so.

H24

Here also the level of detailed references was impressive. Concepts of law and justice were often introduced, as 'the theme of loyalty' was considered in the abstract as well as in terms of characters and relationships. Eddie, obviously, was the focus of most responses.

H25

Little pattern here: a range of other monologues was offered.

H26

Insufficient responses to form a general comment.

H27

One experienced examiner commented:

"Generally well done, if not treated exhaustively, and in sufficient depth. Osborne's maturity, kindness, placidity were often commented on as was his pedagogical profession, entailing goodness and honour. Qualities of courage, consideration for the men, efficiency and professionalism were also noted but all too rarely supported by specific instance or apt quotation."

H28

One experienced examiner commented:

'Most failed to see beyond the final scene; Stanhope 'mending fences' with Raleigh, caring for him, the symbolic candle guttering and the dugout doom-ladenly collapsing. Few saw the inspiring qualities of human courage, compassion and endurance, though humour was frequently commented on, if rarely adequately illustrated.'

H29

Insufficient responses to form a general comment.

H30

Most responses concentrated on Bamforth: generally this text was handled competently though with few outstanding responses.

Section D - Modern Literary Non-fiction

H31

Generally, those candidates who offered this text seemed to know it very well. There was often a strong focus on 'how successfully' here, too, rather than simply a succession of character sketches.

H32

Also done well, with detailed textual references offered in support of views expressed

H33

Insufficient responses to form a general comment.

H34

Insufficient responses to form a general comment.

H35

Insufficient responses to form a general comment.

H36

Insufficient responses to form a general comment.

H37

This was the most popular text in this section, although the 'take-up' is still only a fraction of the popular texts in Sections B and C. This question was very straightforward, inviting candidates to justify a reading of the author's personality: in most cases it was well answered, with a good level of detailed evidence.

H38

Done equally as well as H37.

H39

This text, also was offered by few candidates, but those who did write about it seemed to have been well taught. Knowledge of the text seems secure and insight was often shown.

H40

As for H39.

H41 (0 responses)

H42 (0 responses)

Statistics for GCSE English Literature 1213

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Unit/Component	Maximum Mark (Raw)	Mean Mark	Standard Deviation	% Contribution to Award
Paper 2F	126	45.6	13.4	30
Paper 3H	126	75.1	13.7	70

Paper Boundaries - Foundation Tier

Grade Boundary	Max. Mark	C	F
Boundary mark	126	59	21
% of candidates		16.4	95.7

Paper Boundaries - Higher Tier

Grade Boundary	Max. Mark	A	C	D
Boundary mark	126	84	59	51
% of candidates		26.2	89.6	96.5

Option 1 - Coursework, Paper 2F

Grade	Max. Mark	C	D	E	F	G	
Boundary mark	100	49	38	27	16	5	
% of candidates		14.0	52.0	82.4	95.2	99.3	

Option 2 - Coursework, Paper 3H

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E
Boundary mark	100	79	69	59	49	40	35
% of candidates		7.2	28.7	64.3	91.0	98.0	99.0

Overall

	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Cumulative %	5.1	20.3	45.4	68.4	84.5	94.1	97.9	99.1

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