

Examiners' Report January 2007

GCE O Level

GCE O Level English Literature (7171)

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7171 English Literature

General Comments

There was an extremely small entry this session, the last of the January sessions for this specification. When an entry is so small it is difficult to make meaningful generalisations. However, on the whole, most candidates were well prepared and knew their texts in some detail.

Detailed Comments

Section A

Drama

The most popular texts were, once again, the two Shakespeare plays with Romeo and Juliet attracting the most candidates.

Q1(b)

This was the most popular of the Julius Caesar questions and answers to this question often showed a thoughtful response. Stronger candidates were able to assess Antony's opinion as well as offering their own well reasoned response.

Q2(a)

This question attracted most answers on Romeo and Juliet and most were able to display a full understanding of the various characters' attitudes and motivations. Some candidates wrote too much in answer to part i) and did not leave themselves enough time to respond to part ii) in a satisfactory manner.

Q4 and Q5

An extremely small number of candidates responded to these questions.

Section B

Poetry

Q5

The unseen poem was once again a very popular question with the vast majority of candidates choosing it. The range of responses was very wide. There were those candidates who were unable to grasp the meaning of the poem at all whilst others were able to respond at high level. Some candidates did attempt to identify poetic techniques but they were then often unable to discuss the effects of these techniques. Those candidates who were able to understand the poem wrote some very interesting responses which showed a high level of appreciation.

Q6

Very few candidates responded to this question.

Q7

This question required candidates to focus on assessing the success of the chosen poets, however, too many candidates ignored this aspect and instead presented summaries of the poems.

Section C

Prose Pre-1950

There were at least one or two responses on most of the texts in this section but 'The Great Gatsby' and 'Far From The Madding Crowd' were by far the most popular. Whilst most candidates know the texts well it is sometimes a source of disappointment that candidates do not make greater use of quotations to substantiate their answers. Each of the most popular novels had questions on them which required candidates to say how far they agreed with certain views or statements. It is of the greatest importance that candidates do state clearly the extent of their agreement or disagreement. The response should then offer reasons for their responses making close use of the text.

Unfortunately it appears that every report has to make some reference to the weaker candidates who continue to disregard the exact terms of the question and present summaries of the stories or incidents with little, if any, focus on the question.

The empathetic questions in this section were not at all popular this session.

Prose Post -1950

As with the former section there were some responses to all of the novels in this section, albeit only one or two in some cases. 'Things Fall Apart' was the most popular and this was followed by 'Roll Of Thunder Hear My Cry'.

Candidates would be well advised to look very carefully at the terms of the question. In response to Q.13a) some candidates did not note that they were required to show only two or three different ways in which characters deal with racism and they wrote about more ways. This obviously limited their ability to explore characters' responses in detail. Responses to Q 15a) showed that candidates had been prepared well and had a sound understanding of the notion of things falling apart. Candidates must always be reminded of the importance of focusing on the exact terms of the questions.

Examiners of this specification can often be impressed by how well the candidates know their material but it is, too frequently, a source of frustration for examiners to see that this knowledge is not always used to the very best effect. A critical eye, a personal response, detailed reference to the text and carefully chosen quotations along with a sharp focus on the question itself are all elements which must be present if the candidate is to attain high grades.

Grade Boundaries

English Literature (7171)

Grade	A	B	C	D	E
Lowest mark for award of grade	92	71	51	43	27

Note

Grade boundaries may change from year to year and from subject to subject, depending on the demands of the question paper.

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