



GCE AS EXAMINERS' REPORTS

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE AS

SUMMER 2017

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EDUQAS
GCE AS ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

Summer 2017

COMPONENT 1: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS AND CREATIVE WRITING

General Comments

This was the second time that Component 1 had been taught by centres and sat by candidates as part of the new AS Eduqas specification in England. Centres are now, no doubt, more familiar with the particular challenges of this unit and are on the whole preparing candidates well for answering question 1 on an anthology poem and an unseen text and question 2 which asks candidates to produce two pieces of creative writing and a comparative commentary. Candidates dealt with planning of time more effectively this year, and instances where candidates did not complete the whole paper, missing question 2iii entirely or only writing a few sentences, were fewer this time around. Candidates had one path through the paper, answering question 1 in Section A where the only variant in choice was whether they chose to pair the poem, 'Sonnet 43: How do I love thee?' with Text B or C, then answering the three questions in Section B, writing a magazine article, an extract from a speech and a comparative commentary.

There are marked responses available as part of OER, as well as online CPD resources on the Eduqas website to assist with the teaching of terminology as well as frameworks for supporting comparative responses. It is vital that centres make full use of the resources on offer to best serve the interests of their candidates.

Section A: Comparative analysis of poetry and unseen text.

Question 1

Question 1 asked candidates to compare and contrast how love is presented in Text A, an anthology poem which they would have studied in class, 'Sonnet 43: How Do I Love Thee?' by Elizabeth Barrett Browning, and either Text B, an extract from a talk, 'The Brain in Love' by Helen Fisher, or Text C, an extract from the novel *Our Mutual Friend* by Charles Dickens. 'Sonnet 43' proved an accessible choice, with the majority of candidates demonstrating sensible understanding of meaning in the poem, and many writing about it with enthusiasm. Though many wrote about Text C with clarity and secure understanding of the presentation of love, most chose the spoken Text B, with some candidates engaging with Fisher's description of love as an addiction. It is worth noting here the specification's requirement that one of the unseen texts will be spoken; this may be from a range including (but not limited to) a talk or speech, a spoken literary text such as a play script, monologue or audiobook excerpt, vlog and voiceover extracts, to name a few. These spoken texts may also be written or transcribed, and candidates should sit the exam prepared to comment on transcript features such as intonation, pausing and other features of discourse such as turn taking.

Candidates are instructed to comment on either Text B or Text C, though this year we did see a slight rise in the number of rubric infringements where candidates had not followed this instruction. A handful of responses compared the anthology poem to both texts B and C in Question 1, setting themselves the task of comparing three texts. Candidates can only be awarded marks in Unit 1 for their comparison of the poem to one of the unseen texts and it costs them marks and time to do otherwise.

The best responses this summer used a wide range of technical terms confidently (AO1), explored approaches meaningfully (AO2) and made thorough comparisons and contrasts between the texts (AO4). Successful use of terminology was demonstrated through accuracy of a wide range of terms, including terms from poetry and spoken language. The poem was accessible and straightforward in its language choices, and many candidates wrote well about the range of devices Barrett Browning uses to describe her love. Although context is not formally assessed here, some used some interesting details about Barrett Browning's own life to explore her reasons for writing this poem, and these comments were awarded under AO2 for assured readings of the text. Candidates dealt well with poetic form, and many commented on the significance of Barrett Browning writing in the sonnet form, though fewer noted other poetic features, such as caesura, enjambment, iambic pentameter, to name some.

Those candidates who chose Text B to compare to the poem largely focused on the similarities in the presentation of a powerful and all-encompassing love, though some showed confusion about the use of narrative voice and direct address and suggested, tenuously, that Fisher was talking very personally about her own love affairs. Most candidates who chose Text C were able to explore Headstone's use of hyperbole and desperate, intense tone.

Errors in the identification of terms was a sometimes an issue here, as in Question 2 (c). Errors which occurred most frequently were the misidentification of pronouns and narrative voice in the unseen texts and some problems identifying word classes in all three. Some candidates dealt very well with some challenging aspects of syntax in unseen texts, and this was pleasing to see, as they had obviously been very well prepared for the examination. Weaker responses often struggled to use technical terms, with many using just one or two basic terms; had difficulty linking the approaches identified to the meanings in the texts for Question 1 or in their own writing for Question 2 (c); and failed to compare and contrast effectively.

Summary of key points: key considerations for centres

- Responses need to use integrated study and apply a wide range of accurate terminology, including terms from poetry analysis and spoken language
- Candidates should engage meaningfully with a range of terms relevant to poetic study and should explore the way the poet has structured their poem for a particular impact
- Centres should teach a structure which allows the candidate to successfully compare and contrast two texts
- Section A responses are often rich with terminology sometimes struggle to explore meaning or impact for AO2
- Other Section A responses included barely any terminology and were difficult to reward given that one text has been studied and prepared before the examination

Question 2:

The key to doing well on this section relies on effective time management and planning in order that enough links and connections are embedded in the two written pieces so that pertinent connections can be made in 2 (c) at relative speed. Candidates needed to pay careful attention to genre, audience and purpose in the written tasks and should have made sure that they were producing the text type that they have been set. Candidates are advised to aim to write approximately 200 words for each task, and it is worth them seeing what 200 words of their own handwriting looks like in advance of this examination; examiners were

seeing pieces which exceeded 500 words for these tasks. Over-long pieces are time consuming and often do not gain any extra marks: expertise and creativity can be assessed in 200 words and it would be better for candidates to use any extra time to either plan their pieces or write their commentary in 2iii.

2 (a) An extract from a magazine article

2 (b) An extract from a speech

Responses were generally sound in 2 (a) and most candidates demonstrated a secure awareness of the appropriate genre, audience and purpose for the task of magazine article writing. This proved to be an accessible task and lots of candidates wrote convincingly for a magazine, giving advice to readers on how to improve their relationships. Most chose romantic relationships as their focus, and some used the presentation of love in question 1 as inspiration for their guidance; others wrote about friendships or family relationships. Successful pieces used a lively, engaging tone to engage their audience, with many playing with puns, phonology and idioms to explore the topic. The advice ranged from the sensible (spend more time with each other, ways to communicate more effectively, focus on positives etc-) to the sometimes intentionally humourous and tongue in cheek. Candidates who manipulated syntax deliberately for impact and who thought about the structure of their article extract were successful, as were those who wrote with a friendly and sympathetic tone. Many articles contained a wry, sarcastic humour as an element of the purpose to advise, and lots wrote with an impressive maturity. Some responses were unable to select the sorts of credible advice that would be given in a magazine, and so very general descriptions of romantic problems with no constructive advice given were less successful. In these responses, it was hard to see any recognition of appropriate audience and purpose.

For 2 (b), candidates were asked to write an extract from a speech given at a party to celebrate a friend or relative's wedding anniversary. Most candidates showed a familiarity with and ease at writing in the speech genre and produced pieces fit for purpose and audience. On the whole, most responses featured a narrator who spoke affectionately about the married couple, though some misinterpreted the task and wrote a speech delivered at a wedding. Some adopted a more pejorative tone, and gentle humourous digs at the married couple turned into more inappropriate rants against one half of the couple and praise at the other half who had 'managed to put up with' him or her for so long. Sometimes, this was done with humour, and examiners could see where this was an attempt by a candidate to follow the instruction on the paper to 'consider whether the tone should be serious or light-hearted', but in some instances it moved beyond light-heartedness and into the realms of vitriol.

Technical accuracy and quality of written expression was a problem for some candidates in both written tasks, and lapses in spellings, technical errors in punctuation and lapses in clarity all impact on AO5. Examiners are mindful that candidates are writing at speed, trying to juggle creativity, fluency, the need to build in features to comment on in 2 (c), but some responses contained some significant slips in accuracy, which was a shame.

Candidates should be warned against 'lifting' material from the unseen texts in Question 1 and using it as their own creative writing in questions 2 (a) and (b). It is fine for candidates to show the ways in which they have been inspired by the texts in Question 1 and sometimes strands of imagery or particularly resonant phrases are used creatively and reframed originally in the writing pieces (many speeches in 2(b) contained ways in which love could be measured and quantified) but it must be said that candidates will not be awarded marks for simply copying sentences / chunks of the unseen texts out and trying to pass them off as their original work.

2 (iii) An analytical commentary

In this report last year, I commented that it was in responses to this question that candidates who had not managed their time effectively struggled. On the whole this year this was less of a problem, and it was really pleasing to see far fewer incomplete and unfinished exam scripts. Centres are obviously finding successful strategies for candidates to improve their time management.

The key to success here was in the strength of the links made between the two written pieces, and it is sensible to suggest to students that they should prepare and plan for these links by including similar and different features in their two pieces. Some were lost for what to compare and offered very general comments, often venturing into evaluation of what was and what was not successful in their written pieces, which is not necessary. Whilst there are a range of approaches that could be taken in this question, those who opted to analyse linguistic and literary features of both pieces concurrently did well, as did those who used the frameworks of language (broadly, Form and Structure, Grammar, Lexis, Imagery and Phonology) loosely to structure their connections, but who moved beyond it in order to improve the quality of their links. Whilst terminology (AO1) is worth only 5 marks here, it seems the use of a range of terms is crucial to their analysis of language choice and impacts too (AO2), which in turn has an impact on the quality of links (AO3). The best responses for 2 (c) were ones which avoided commenting at length on 'general' similarities of content, organisation and audience; it was best to get stuck in to the linguistic analysis of the two texts and make good use of integrated study to compare features and their impacts.

Summary of key points:

- Section B, Question 2 (c) responses need to comment on and explore connections between written pieces thoughtfully and this is best done when candidates embed into and then comment on a range of linguistic and literary terms
- Comparisons are key to Question 2 (c), and responses needed to do more than just comment on one written piece and then another
- Candidates should be reminded that the creative tasks in 2 (a) and (b) should be approximately 200 words; there is no need to write more than this
- Plagiarism is an issue when candidates overtly lift material from the unseen texts in Question 1 and use them in the creative tasks in Question 2.

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COMPONENT 2: DRAMA AND NON-LITERARY TEXTS

General Comments

For the second season of this new specification it was pleasing to see so many candidates who had been carefully prepared, and who appeared to have enjoyed studying the texts on offer. As with last year, those who responded with a clear idea of the assessment objectives for each question, and who maintained a focus on the set question scored the most highly. There was evidence of very perceptive responses, which clearly addressed how the writers achieved certain effects, and many were able to successfully integrate contextual discussion into their analysis. However, as with last year, this varied greatly between centres, and there were also a number of candidates who simply relied on narration as part of their response, at the expense of analysis (AO2). Again, in a course which places such heavy weighting and importance on the use of literary and linguistic terminology, it was disappointing to see so many candidates self-penalising through not using this as an integral aspect of their discussion. Without a **range** of terminology, candidates are limiting the marks they can be awarded for AO1, and their discussion needs to go beyond the simple identification of sentence moods and use of stage directions. There were also a number of candidates who again did not specify which word they were discussing in a quotation, simply referring to the 'noun' without any identification of which word was the said 'noun'. As candidates are under great time pressure in this examination, it is advisable to only use brief embedded quotations rather than overlong ones which do not form any part of the ensuing discussion, as too frequently candidates wasted time copying out quotations which were of no relevance.

Issues with context (AO3) were fewer than last year, but there is still a number of candidates who insist that by including 'bolt-on' biographical information they are addressing this AO. In some cases this can be relevant, but it can only form a small aspect of the overall influence of context on the production and reception of the text being studied. Without consideration of the more demanding social, historical, political and cultural influences on the text, AO3 is not being addressed in sufficient detail.

Section A: Post-1900 drama (open book)

Examiners mark candidate scripts in accordance to the relevant Assessment Objectives for each question. In this section of the examination, the extract based part of the question should only address AO1 and AO2. The advice and guidance for this response has always been that candidates should only address these two AOs here, as discussing context (AO3) is not relevant and is not assessed. It is therefore a waste of valuable time to discuss contextual elements when responding to the extract, as candidates should focus entirely on thoughtful and precise analysis of the extract, using literary and linguistic terminology. Candidates should also ensure that they only refer to the set extract in their response. A number of candidates again wasted time and marks by drawing on other areas of the play as part of their discussion. Whilst they may be relevant, there is no benefit to this approach, as candidates are assessed on this knowledge in part (ii) of the question. Candidates should also be guided to remember the mark allocation for this section. There are 20 marks available for part (i) and 40 for part (ii), so it is advisable that they do not write more, or spend more time on part (i) than part (ii) of the question.

This year, there seemed to be an increase in the number of rubric infringements in evidence when responding to part (ii). The question informs candidates that they are to ‘refer to **at least two** other episodes from the play’, and there was clear evidence of candidates not following this instruction. Some simply discussed one episode, whilst more spent time discussing the extract from part (i). Candidates have already been rewarded for discussion of the set extract, and this question is an opportunity for them to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the whole play, rather than discuss material previously explored. With responses to part (ii), it is also advisable to encourage candidates to begin with a brief contextual overview, almost like an aide-memoir reminding them that AO3 needs to be addressed in this response. Whilst there were some superb responses which examined the influence of context as an integrated aspect of their essay, there were also some which either relied too heavily on contextual exploration, or ignored any reference to its validity at all. There needs to be contextual discussion throughout the response, but as with all essays which discuss literature, the driving force needs to be analysis (AO2), even though AO3 carries a larger marking allocation.

Alan Bennett: *The History Boys*

Once again, this was a popular text which was clearly enjoyed. Both questions were attempted and candidates explored a range of episodes. Question 1 part (ii) allowed candidates to discuss a range of different themes from the play, and it was pleasing to see so many incorporate ideas of gender, educational and historical aspects of conflict which they felt were in evidence. When asked to discuss the characters and situation in the extract in question 2, many focused too narrowly on one specific character. Whilst they were rewarded for what they had written, the plurality of the question encourages candidates to explore a range of characters and they should be advised to follow the precise instructions of the question. However, this text continues to provide candidates with many opportunities to discuss the features which they have enjoyed.

Diane Samuels: *Kindertransport*

Both questions enabled candidates to explore this play widely, and its popularity continues. The extract in question 3 examined the burgeoning relationship between Lil and Eva after she had arrived in England. The extract subtly pointed to the innate prejudice in evidence, and candidates were quick to then explore this throughout the whole play, with the majority focusing on Eva’s treatment at the hands of the Border Official, Organiser and Postman. This enabled them to make effective contextual points regarding attitudes towards religion and race in the build up to World War II. Question 4, on attitudes towards loss, was equally accessible, and the majority of candidates explored Eva/Evelyn’s attitudes towards losing her family and then being reunited with her mother, and how the loss of her cultural identity had changed her attitudes.

Edward Albee: *Who's Afraid Of Virginia Woolf?*

This text continues to be popular with a number of centres, and whilst some may feel the subject matter too divergent, the text offers many opportunities for candidates to engage with language and material which enables them to discuss issues in a mature and purposeful manner. Unfortunately in question 5 part (i), some candidates did not fully engage with the notion of how dramatic tension was created, instead choosing to focus entirely on the presentation of the relationship between George and Martha. Whilst this is central to the extract, there were other aspects they could, and should, have discussed with regards to creating dramatic tension. There were some interesting responses to question 6 part (ii) as candidates examined the relationship between Martha and her father, and how the two couples present their feelings regarding their childlessness.

Brian Friel: *Translations*

Question 8 on this text proved to be the more popular, and a number of candidates commented on the humour in evidence in the extract. This also led them to successfully explore communication difficulties throughout the play, with the more successful responses drawing on political aspects and ideas of colonisation as part of their contextual discussion. There were some responses to question 7, and in these, candidates tended to examine the differences in Irish people as aspects of their response to part (ii). This enabled them to select issues and episodes they were familiar with, and draw on a wide range of themes from the play.

Tennessee Williams: *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*

Again a very popular text which candidates clearly enjoy studying. Responses were varied in relation to both questions, but there was generally more success with question 10, although those who responded to question 9 in a mature and thoughtful manner wrote very convincingly on mendacity in part (ii). Part (ii) of question 10 enabled candidates to draw on a wide range of subject matter, especially ideas of marriage, and relationships between siblings and parents. There were also clear and productive references to the influence of context on the relationships and how the concept of the idealised family was beginning to be challenged.

Summary of key points:

- Only discuss the set extract in part (i)
- Avoid discussing the set extract in part (ii)
- Linguistic and literary terminology must go beyond identification of sentence mood
- Specify the terminology being discussed
- Context should be integrated throughout the essay in part (ii) and avoided in part (i).

Section B: Non-literary text study (open book)

In this section, 'In Cold Blood' and 'Once in a House on Fire' were the most popular texts, followed by 'Homage to Catalonia'. There were no responses seen on 'Skating to Antarctica' or 'A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius'.

Careful selection of specific 'episodes' from the text is central to success in this section. It enables candidates greater scope for close literary and linguistic analysis, which will help them access the upper bands of the mark scheme. As stated last year, prior to the

examination, candidates could select a wide range of episodes from the text they have studied for close exploration. Remembering that they will have the text in the examination with them, this should assist them in quickly identifying which 'episodes' are most relevant and plan their response accordingly. The selection of examples to support their argument is also addressing AO1, as this Assessment Objective considers their line of argument and the organisation of their response.

There was less evidence of candidates drifting from responding to the set question this year, and essays tended to fully engage with the questions, enabling candidates to demonstrate their extensive knowledge of the texts. Context was well managed, although as with Section A, there was some evidence of over-reliance on context and over-generalised comments, an example being that 'all women were in abusive relationship in the 1980s' when discussing violence in *Once in a House on Fire*. Contextual discussion needs to be relevant and specific, linked to the analysis of language, and have a clear connection with the set question.

Andrea Ashworth: *Once in a House on Fire*

This text continues to be popular with candidates and deservedly so. The power and force of the narrative enables candidates to engage with some quite traumatic subject matter. Question 11 was far more popular than question 12, perhaps because question 12 required candidates to be incredibly specific about the material they selected. For question 11, there was a wealth of opportunities for candidates to select, and whilst most decided to discuss the rather more obvious domestic violence in evidence, there were some interesting responses which considered examples of Sarah's self-harm, and the more psychological aspects and implications of violence.

Jenny Diski: *Skating to Antarctica*

No responses were seen on this text.

Dave Eggers: *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius*

No responses were seen on this text.

Truman Capote: *In Cold Blood*

Once again, the most popular text, and one which continues to engage candidates. Both questions enabled candidates to draw on a wide range of material. In question 17, the majority focussed on the somewhat unconventional relationship between Herb and Bonnie Clutter, and how Herb was an example of a dedicated and patient husband in difficult times. But there was also a range of examples, including Nancy and Bobby Rupp, Al and Marie Dewey, and Dick and his failed marriages and attitude towards women in general. For question 18, candidates tended to discuss Nancy and Kenyon at the start, but more engaged candidates continued to then consider the childhoods of both Perry and Dick, and examined how their different childhoods could have had an impact on their adult behaviour. This led into some very interesting contextual discussion regarding the psychological aspects of murderers.

George Orwell: *Homage to Catalonia*

Orwell continues to be popular with candidates, and contextually offers a wealth of material to discuss. There were more response to question 20, which asked candidates to explore the personal and/or political challenges he faced. There were impressive essays which

charted Orwell's journey and time in Catalonia, and the most successful ones integrated both personal and political aspects of his time there, from his difficulties with the language, his disappointment with the political changes in ideology, to his hospitalisation and injury.

Summary of key points:

- Selection of relevant material is essential for a successful response as it informs the line of argument
- Context should not dominate the response and should reflect the social, historical, cultural and political aspects of the text
- Avoid overlong quotations
- Technical accuracy and correct spelling is essential, as is the use of standard English
- Linguistic and literary terminology should be used for each quotation.



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