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# **GCE EXAMINERS' REPORTS**

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**WJEC EDUQAS AS ENGLISH  
LITERATURE**

**SUMMER 2016**

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# ENGLISH LITERATURE

## AS

### SUMMER 2016

#### COMPONENT 1: PROSE

##### General Comments

There were some excellent responses to a variety of challenging and often lengthy texts. Examiners were particularly impressed with many candidates' ability to plan and develop interesting, thoughtful and often individual responses to questions. It was pleasing to read that most candidates demonstrated a confident understanding of their chosen texts, discussing how meaning is shaped with growing sophistication while taking into account the influence of relevant contexts and different interpretations. However, there were some candidates who did not address the AOs effectively and some who seemed too reliant on pre-rehearsed answers.

##### Section A: Prose Fiction Pre-1900

##### Points for Consideration: Extract

###### (i) A01

- It is important that candidates clearly engage with the given extract and select material relevant to the question, avoiding irrelevant comment on context or other parts of the novel.
- Although it may be useful to put the extract in to context (i.e. discuss whereabouts it takes place in the novel) candidates should be clear to link this to the question. A description of events before the extract without saying how these events have affected the presentation of setting/character/relationship in question serves only to waste time.
- Some candidates lost focus on the question and drifted away from, for example, the **relationship** between two characters to talk generally about characterisation or plot.
- Although candidates may choose to use context to inform their points, some relied too heavily on contextual ideas/critical viewpoints and this drew them away from the close analysis of the extract. It should be remembered that AO3 and AO5 are not assessed in Part i of this section.

###### (i) A02

- It was pleasing to see many candidates comment on writers' techniques, in addition to the use of language, when exploring how meaning is created. However, in some cases, candidates simply embedded quotations in order to produce a narrative re-telling of the extract with very limited analysis. It can be useful to think why a writer has used a specific word or technique and to discuss the connotations displayed.

## Points for Consideration: Essay

### (ii) AO1

- Effective planning is essential in order for candidates to produce a concise and clearly structured essay. There was some evidence of planning where candidates had taken time to think about their approach to answering the question. There was a balance of responses whereby some candidates chose to focus on character while others explored two separate parts of the novel: both are valid approaches.
- In a minority of cases candidates relied too heavily on re-writing what were clearly pre-rehearsed answers. Centres should encourage candidates to take an independent and individual approach to the **specific** question.
- Centres should advise candidates that the extract should be used as a 'springboard' into their essay response: candidates should not spend too long re-visiting the extract and should be discouraged from using textual references from the given section.
- Candidates should be conscious of embedding their contextual references (AO3), critical views (AO5) and their supporting comments from the text (AO2) with subtlety, clearly linking to the topic in question. Some candidates lacked both sophistication and relevance when attempting to integrate critical views and contextual information.
- As this was the first examination series for this Component it was pleasing to note that the majority of candidates had clearly engaged with the often complex and demanding ideas and concepts of their set texts. The majority of centres/teachers had clearly implemented the advice of the SAMs and the specification, resulting in some excellent work completed under tight time conditions.

### (i) AO2

- As with the extract responses, a significant minority of candidates embedded quotations without discussing how meaning is created. These candidates often scored highly for concepts (AO1) but were less successful with their analysis (AO2).
- Centres should advise candidates that although this is a closed book exam, there is an expectation that they will integrate and analyse textual support. It is not the case that a candidate must use a lot of quotations, but those they do use should be relevant and should support the argument they are making.
- It is worth noting that some of the more successful responses used AO2 as a springboard for AO3 and AO5 and that the most successful answers were when these three AOs were co-dependent and were used to answer the question directly.

### (ii) AO3

- The strongest responses remained focused on the **significance** and **influence** of contexts, using **relevant** information to construct an analytical discussion of the text.
- Centres should advise candidates that the closer the link between the contextual point and the text, the more successful the answer is likely to be. For example, the strongest responses linked specific contextual ideas to specific exchanges/textual support from the prose.

## (ii) AO5

- Similarly to AO3, candidates must use other relevant opinion to **inform** their own discussion of the text and build a **personal response**. Indeed, some candidates quoted lengthy sweeping statements from critics and did not fully integrate them into their own reading.
- Centres should advise candidates that there are a number of ways to pick up marks for AO5:
  - (i) Offering **and engaging with** critical views (literary criticism)
  - (ii) Using critical perspectives (i.e. feminism/Marxism) to offer alternative readings of characters/events etc.)
  - (iii) Offering multiple readings/interpretations of events/characters etc.
  - (iv) Using tentative language to explore alternative interpretations of the text.
- It was, however, pleasing to see more autonomous candidates take the opportunity to engage with relevant critical opinion in order to link it directly to their own appreciation of the text.

## Notes on Texts

### (01) Jane Austen: *Sense and Sensibility*

There were some confident and perceptive responses for both the extract and essay question. However, the focus of the extract proved problematic for some candidates who did not fully explore the manipulative side to Lucy's character or the contrast between her character and that of Elinor's. The essay question proved accessible for most candidates, and examiners were pleased to read responses which engaged in a **debate** as to whether 'status and money always govern love', offering interesting counter arguments against the statement.

### (02) Charlotte Brontë: *Jane Eyre*

Although all five pre-1900 prose texts were taught across centres in England, *Jane Eyre* was, by far, the most popular choice. The majority of candidates engaged competently with the presentation of Bertha, however some responses were overly long and repetitive. Some candidates also became side-tracked by context. For example, whilst the idea that Bertha is presented as the 'colonial other' is a strong one, some candidates then drifted towards exploring context rather than exploring how this concept is created by Brontë's use of language/style/technique etc. The best responses also took in to consideration that the extract is told from Jane's narrative point of view and how this may have affected the presentation of Bertha. With regard to the essay's focus on there being 'no love without suffering', weaker candidates simply tracked through the text giving examples of the suffering of different characters. More successful responses engaged in an exploration of the different kinds of suffering undergone by the characters in the text (psychological/physical etc.), and this often led to a contextually informed discussion of the reasons for their suffering. Some candidates countered the statement in the question, and, whilst this is not a requirement of this section, it did allow candidates to score marks for AO5 as this approach allowed them to debate different readings of events/characters.

### **(03) Elizabeth Gaskell: *North and South***

There were some insightful responses to the extract here, but there were also some answers which struggled to explore the **relationship** between Margaret and Mr Hale and focused entirely on them as separate characters. The majority of candidates explored Gaskell's use of dialogue, however a number seemed somewhat unprepared for a section with less description and more dialogue. In terms of the essay question, as with the other set texts, the most successful responses took the time to develop a response to the specific question. Therefore, the strongest candidates explored the different kinds of 'rebellion' and 'dissent' in the novel, rather than simply tracking through the text and offering examples of each. Those who offered a range of different ideas also tended to score more highly for AO3, as it allowed them to draw on a range of different contexts.

### **(04) Charles Dickens: *David Copperfield***

Although this was a less popular choice of text, there were some very good responses which demonstrated a level of confidence when handling this long Victorian novel. The majority of candidates seemed well equipped to explore and analyse the descriptive passage and were clear to link the presentation of setting to ideas and concepts. The essay question was generally handled well, with candidates offering a range of different locations and how Dickens used these to 'criticise society'. When the essay was well planned, the candidates used different locations to allow them to integrate discussion of different contexts. However, in some responses there was a tendency to focus exclusively on the biographical context of Dickens' own life, something which ultimately limited the success of the answer.

### **(05) Thomas Hardy: *The Mayor of Casterbridge***

This was a popular choice of text and examiners saw some sophisticated and interesting responses. The majority of responses to the extract question picked up on the tension between Henchard and Farfrae and the differences between the two. The most successful answers explored the awkwardness of their relationship and the fact that the extract focused on Henchard's thoughts and feelings. Less successful responses, however, tended to offer an interpretation of their relationship and then lose focus on the extract, exploring the rest of the text in order to support this reading. With regard to the essay, for the most part, candidates engaged well with the statement that the 'desire for respectability inevitably leads to secrecy and deception', with the majority of responses discussing the wife selling event at the beginning of the narrative and Lucetta's deception.

## **Section B: Prose Fiction Post-1900**

### **Points for Consideration**

#### **A01**

- As with Section A, planning is essential for candidates to construct a perceptive and coherent discussion of the text. As stated on the 'information for candidates' section on the front cover of the Component 1 exam paper, it is advised that candidates spend **45 minutes** on Section B. Strict timings are essential in Section A in order to prevent candidates from running out of time and producing brief and underdeveloped responses for Section B.
- The questions are designed so that they offer candidates a contextual focus and a critical comment with which to engage. Centres should advise candidates that to score highly for ideas and concepts they should engage with the critical comment rather than just explore the theme that may also be included in the question.
- It was noticeable that with some candidates who had studied texts with a narrative link, (ie Jane Eyre/Wide Sargasso Sea) there was sometimes the tendency to conflate the two narratives. Whilst it is possible to use the other text as a contextual source, candidates should remain focused on the core, set text for that section.
- The strongest answers kept focus on the question throughout the essay, using the beginning and end of each paragraph to develop a perceptive argument.

## A02

- As with Section A, a significant number of candidates embedded textual quotations without discussing **how** meaning is created. These essays tended, therefore, to slip into narrative which undermined critical engagement.
- Centres should advise candidates that although this is a closed book exam, there is an expectation that they will integrate and analyse textual support. It is not the case that a candidate must use a lot of quotations, but those they do use should be relevant and should support the argument they are making.
- It is worth noting that some of the more successful responses used AO2 as a springboard for AO3 and AO5 and that the most successful answers were when these three AOs were co dependent and were used to answer the question directly.

## A03

- The strongest responses remained focused on the **significance** and **influence** of contexts, using **relevant** information to construct an analytical discussion of the text.
- As with the Section A Part ii responses, some candidates tended to drift in to long discussions of historical/social context which ultimately affected the direction and accuracy of their argument.

## A05

- Similarly to AO3, candidates must use other relevant opinion to **inform** their own discussion of the text and build a **personal response**. Indeed, some candidates quoted lengthy sweeping statements from critics and did not fully integrate them into their own reading.
- Centres should advise candidates that there are a number of ways to pick up marks for AO5:
  - (v) Offering **and engaging with** critical views (literary criticism)
  - (vi) Using critical perspectives (i.e. feminism/Marxism) to offer alternative readings of characters/events etc.)
  - (vii) Offering multiple readings/interpretations of events/characters etc.
  - (viii) Using tentative language to explore alternative interpretations of the text.
- It was, however, pleasing to see more autonomous candidates take the opportunity to engage with relevant critical opinion in order to link it directly to their own appreciation of the text.

## Notes on Texts

### Joseph Conrad: *The Secret Agent*

There was a balance of candidates responding to both questions and examiners enjoyed some confident and perceptive discussions of ideas about loyalty and about Winnie Verloc as a character. The strongest responses to Q6 explored different kinds of loyalty (personal and political) and debated the idea that 'no one is loyal to anyone or anything' using Winnie and Stevie as a counter argument. Q7 brought out some nuanced responses, a number of which explored Conrad's own ideas about Winnie. Despite this, however, a number of responses did not pay enough attention to the importance of context – there was a noticeable absence of relevant historical/social contextual detail in some answers.

### **E M Forster: *A Room with a View***

This proved to be a popular text, with many candidates opting to answer Question 8 and explore how 'settings are more than just backgrounds, they bring about change'. Indeed, the majority of responses were able to explore a number of settings and their relevance to the key ideas/concepts in the novel. Weaker answers relied on description, whereas stronger responses directly engaged with the critical quote in the question and explored the different kinds of change that setting is used to symbolise. Particularly effective was the use of criticism in both questions, and particularly the use of 'Ecocriticism' which proved useful when candidates were answering Q8. Q9 also proved popular, with many candidates agreeing with the statement that 'Forster's sympathy does indeed lie with social outsiders' and offering interesting analysis of the Emersons. Most impressive was the range of different contexts some candidates explored in responding to both questions; from discussion of Forster's involvement with The Bloomsbury Group to discussion of the emergence of the Suffragette movement, the majority of candidates used context to support and develop their arguments.

### **Emyr Humphreys: *A Toy Epic***

For the limited number of candidates who had studied this text, there was not a marked difference in popularity between Question 10, which asked candidates to explore the presentation of growing up, and Question 11 on settings. On the whole candidates approached these questions confidently, integrating apt political context in to their answers.

### **Jean Rhys: *Wide Sargasso Sea***

This was the most popular choice of post-1900 prose text with many candidates opting to answer Question 13 on identity and the idea that *Wide Sargasso Sea* is 'a story about the struggle to find one's place in the world.' Indeed, the majority of responses were able to engage directly with this idea of 'one's place in the world' and there was some subtle discussion not only of Antoinette's displacement as a Creole woman but also of Rochester's sense of dislocation as a white man in the Caribbean. Question 12 also produced some very good answers, with the more confident candidates debating and offering different views on the different kinds of love presented in the novel. In the majority of cases context was relevant and used to support the argument being developed. The strongest responses linked contextual facts (such as the Emancipation Act for example) directly to events/characters/specific lines in the text (for example, many candidates linked the Emancipation Act confidently to the opening lines of the novel and developed their argument from there).

### **Kazuo Ishiguro: *The Remains of the Day***

This text was also a popular choice. It was enjoyable to read so many thoughtful, perceptive and subtle responses. Q15 was the more popular choice, and the majority of candidates offered interesting ideas about political and personal loyalty. The strongest answers acknowledged that Stevens' loyalty to Lord Darlington resulted in him being disloyal to his own wants and desires, and there was some perceptive commentary and analysis on the closing section of the narrative. Q12 also produced some effective answers, with the best responses debating whether 'It is Stevens' refusal to adapt to the changing world around him which causes him the most unhappiness' and offering ideas about change. In a significant number of responses candidates demonstrated a real ability to use literary criticism to build and develop their argument. These candidates produced sophisticated and perceptive answers which were very enjoyable to read and examine.

**ENGLISH LITERATURE**  
**AS**  
**SUMMER 2016**  
**COMPONENT 2: POETRY AND DRAMA**

**General Comments**

There were some excellent responses across the texts and examiners were impressed by the way that candidates had handled the balance of AOs in the first year of this specification. There was a good deal of evidence that teachers had prepared candidates carefully for the differing demands across the paper. However, there are still some candidates who are not addressing the AOs effectively.

**Section A: Poetry (Open Book)**

**Points for Consideration:**

**A01**

- Both questions on this section name a poem and require candidates to select another poem/poems themselves. Some candidates did not focus on the question and seemed to undertake a systematic analysis of the named poem (and another), without much reference to the question.

**A02**

- Many candidates produced some excellent analysis of writers' techniques and handled the demands of choosing and moving between poems very well.
- A significant number relied heavily upon looking at structural features of the poem and then used these to make comparisons with other texts. Much of this was very assertive and candidates should guard against making lengthy claims about what the number of lines in a stanza might signify.
- Similarly, many assertive claims were made about the impact of enjambment.
- Centres should encourage candidates to limit their use of terms taken from English Language study, as these often distract from literary analysis.

**A04**

- In this section the mark scheme is weighted towards AO4 and making connections between poems. The best responses had clearly been planned and therefore the candidates were able to build their responses around points of comparison. Some candidates produced good analysis of the texts but only made basic links through the focus of the question.
- Candidates who reached bands 4 and 5 for AO4 often did so through comparison of the writer's techniques within the poems.

## Notes on Texts

### Thomas Hardy: *Poems Selected By Tom Paulin*

- 1. Re-read 'The Going' on pages 50-51. Explore connections between Hardy's presentation of loss in this poem and in at least one other poem in the collection.**  
Candidates were successful in connecting relevant poems and drawing insightful conclusions about Hardy's presentation of loss. The named poem was analysed in some detail in most cases and there was sensitivity to the conflicting tones in 'The Going' as the persona comes to terms with loss. A few candidates were less successful in drawing comparisons with 'Drummer Hodge', misreading the latter as wholly celebratory.
- 2. Re-read 'A Broken Appointment' on page 14. Explore connections between Hardy's presentation of sadness in this poem and in at least one other poem in the collection.**  
A small number of candidates chose this question and examiners saw some detailed analysis of the named poem. A number of responses did not foreground connections between poems, making only basic links through the focus of the question.

### Ted Hughes: *Poems selected by Simon Armitage*

- 3. Re-read 'The River in March' on page 55. Explore connections between Hughes' presentation of suffering in this poem and in at least one other poem in the collection.**  
A range of responses were seen to 'The River in March'. Most were able to present a relatively close analysis of language, form and meaning, working systematically through the poem. A few candidates made fleeting references to other poems, rather than making meaningful connections. A few responses presented an ecological reading of the poem, while others related the text to Hughes' theme of the power of nature.
- 4. Re-read 'Examination at the Womb-Door' on page 37. Explore connections between Hughes' presentation of ideas about life and death in this poem and in at least one other poem in the collection.**  
There were some highly perceptive responses which engaged with the text in a sophisticated fashion and presented a range of interpretations. Many candidates related the named poem to other crow poems and had interesting points to make about the symbolic relationship between crow and death. Some candidates focussed more on ideas about death than life and others had a conceptual grasp of the relationship between life and death.

### Seamus Heaney: *Field Work*

- 5. Re-read 'The Badgers' on pages 18-19. Explore connections between the ways in which Heaney creates atmosphere in this poem and in at least one other poem in the collection.**  
A range of responses were seen. Some candidates explored the named poem at a literal level and there was some misreading due to lack of familiarity with some of the vocabulary in the poem. There were also very good examples of informed and engaged responses which made successful pairings with other poems.

6. **Re-read 'High Summer' on pages 41-42. Explore connections between the ways in which Heaney writes about weather and/or seasons in this poem and in at least one other poem in the collection.**

A small number of candidates chose this question. Some presented a surface reading of the text but others were able to write about the atmosphere and symbolism of the poem.

**Gillian Clarke: *Making Beds for the Dead***

7. **Re-read 'Virus' on page 56. Explore connections between Clarke's presentation of the natural world in this poem and in at least one other poem in the collection.**

Very few responses were seen.

8. **Re-read 'Aftermath' on page 76. Explore connections between the ways in which Clarke writes about settings and/or landscapes in this poem and in at least one other poem in the collection.**

Very few responses were seen.

**Carol Ann Duffy: *Mean Time***

9. **Re-read 'Disgrace' on pages 44-45. Explore connections between the ways in which Duffy writes about sadness and/or regret in this poem and in at least one other poem in the collection.**

'Mean Time' was the most popular of the poetry texts. There were some sophisticated responses to the named poem and many candidates were able to make high level connections to other poems through AO2. As with all of the poetry texts, the less successful answers were those where candidates analysed poems independently and only made brief connections in the introduction and conclusion.

10. **Re-read 'Litany' on page 5. Explore connections between the ways in which Duffy writes about the past in this poem and in at least one other poem in the collection.**

Again, this was a popular choice of text and question. Many candidates chose to link the named poem to other poems that present childhood. There were some interesting responses which included 'Beachcomber', where candidates produced subtle readings of the past on quite a conceptual level.

**Section B: Drama**

**Points for Consideration: Extract**

**A01**

- It is important that candidates maintain focus on the extract. Whilst it is likely that some candidates will allude to the wider play, in order to inform their AO1 analysis, there is no requirement for contextualising the extract within the wider play. A number of candidates seemed to be working through the extract and systematically making links to the play as a whole, at the expense of AO2.

## A02

- Candidates chose quotations well and were clearly thinking about the extract as a piece of drama. Less successful responses were the ones where candidates embedded textual quotations without discussing **how** meaning is created.
- A large number of candidates spent time discussing how the extract 'foreshadowed' various moments in the plays. Whilst this was productive to some extent, often it led to lengthy discussion of what went on in the wider play at the expense of close analysis of the extract.

## Points for Consideration: Essay

### AO1

- Candidates across all of the drama texts demonstrated knowledge of the wider play, referring to a range of scenes to support their arguments. It was pleasing to see that very few relied upon reference back to the extract for this section.

### AO2

- The use of quotations was very impressive, given that this is a closed book question.
- As noted above, candidates who did less well on this AO tended to embed quotations in order to make AO1 points, but did not go on to analyse the impact of the quotation/dramatic technique.

### AO3

- This AO is very heavily weighted and therefore candidates need to be armed with a range of contextual material with which to answer the question. There was some excellent and creative use of varied contextual links, however, a significant number of candidates relied upon very general contextual ideas and tended to be quite assertive about these.
- Candidates should guard against extensive use of biographical material as context. Whilst this can be informative, it needs to be handled carefully and clearly linked to wider contextual issues.

## Notes on Texts

### Christopher Marlowe: *Doctor Faustus*

In general, candidates responded well to the extract and were able to engage with it as an example of persuasion and manipulation. The stronger responses were very focussed on the subtleties of Marlowe's language choices.

Part ii responses demonstrated an impressive range of contextual material ranging from broad ideas about Renaissance learning and philosophy to Marlowe's use of religion in relation to magic.

### Oscar Wilde: *Lady Windermere's Fan*

A few centres chose to study this play. Candidates found much to say about Wilde's stage directions and language choices, in their analysis of the relationship between Lord and Lady Windermere (extract).

In part ii, the stronger responses drew upon a range of contextual ideas. In some cases there was reliance upon generalised points about gender roles in Victorian society.

### **Tennessee Williams: A Streetcar Named Desire**

This was the most popular choice of drama text. Candidates responded well to the extract and clearly understood the various tensions and motivations at work in the presentation of the relationship between Stanley and Blanche. Some candidates wrote extensively about foreshadowing, which is clearly a feature of the extract, but often this led them to other parts of the play and a loss of focus on the extract.

Responses to the question on masculinity demonstrated that many candidates had an informed knowledge of the contexts of production and reception in relation to soldiers returning from WWII and the emerging 'alpha male' of the new South. Some of the stronger responses compared characterisation of Stanley to others within the play, such as Mitch, or explored the symbolic function of Stanley and Blanche and evaluated the final scenes as the playwright's critique of the brutal emergence of the new South. However, there was evidence of a lot of very general ideas about the context of gender, which might apply to many time periods.

### **David Hare: Murmuring Judges**

A small number of centres chose to study this play and responded well to the ideological differences evident in the presentation of Sandra and Barry (extract).

Candidates responded in a variety of ways to the essay question on Barry and ideas about prejudice and/or stereotyping. More candidates chose to focus on prejudice and drew upon a broad range of contexts to inform their essays. Some of the stronger responses were able to make links to recent events, which led to fruitful exploration of the context of reception.

### **Joe Orton: *Loot***

A small number of centres chose to study 'Loot' and examiners saw some engaging responses to this play. In the responses to the extract, candidates had a pleasing focus upon the absurdities of the presentation of Truscott and Hal.

The essay question on how Orton uses Truscott to present social and political issues of the 1960s, saw candidates employing a broad range of contextual knowledge. Some impressive responses had a clear grasp of the genre of farce and used this as a springboard to ideas about censorship, religion and the changing face of theatre.



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