

English Language & Literature

Advanced GCE A2 H473

Advanced Subsidiary GCE AS H073

OCR Report to Centres

January 2013

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This report on the examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the examination.

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CONTENTS

Advanced GCE English Language and Literature – H473

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OCR REPORT TO CENTRES

Content	Page
F671 Speaking Voices [Closed Text]	1
F672 Changing Texts	5
F673 Dramatic Voices	7
F674 Connections Across Texts	8

F671 Speaking Voices [Closed Text]

General Comments

This was the fifth January session of F671, and the second 'outing' for the second wave of texts. In Section A, candidates were selecting from *Oranges are Not the Only Fruit*, *The Remains of the Day* and *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha*. In Section B the choice was *A Handful of Dust* or *The Child in Time* or *Persuasion*.

It is necessary to have learned a range of linguistic and literary concepts and approaches, and to be confident and discriminating in applying them to the set texts and to the 'unseen' material in each section. Indeed, the purpose of the unseen passages is to give candidates every chance to show what they have understood and what they can do. Since this is a 'closed-text' paper, apt and precise textual references are likely to be at a premium; and judicious candidates will make the best use possible of the details in the passages on the question paper, and from the 'cue-quotation' in Section B. Candidates should ensure that they are precise with the use of terminology such as syntax, lexis and register and ensure they make reference to any relevant examples.

This does not mean that they should confine themselves only to these passages: relevant quotation from elsewhere in the whole of their chosen novel will always be helpful. But answers which owe their structure to half a dozen all-purpose learned quotations rather than to a careful reading of the question will always produce disappointing results. Candidates who tried to fit work they had previously completed on a similar topic into their essays were not well rewarded, as they almost always missed the focus of the question in front of them and did not pay close attention to the features of the passages.

All of the above underlines the need for candidates to develop linguistic discrimination – the ability to see what is genuinely significant in the use of language to construct meaning. This is a high-order skill, difficult to demonstrate under the pressure of examination conditions, and one which can only be developed by practice with a wide range of texts.

The best answers on this paper are regularly those in which a candidate engages in hand-to-hand single combat with texts, employing what has been learned of combined approaches to explore what's on the paper and to relate it to what's been understood (or even partly-understood) of the chosen novel(s).

Question-specific comments

Question 1: *Oranges are Not the Only Fruit*

There was a good deal of sharper critical work than there had been in June 2012.

Successful answers revealed:

- less 'drift' into general discussion of Mother's influence and Winterson's/Jeanette's homosexuality
- shrewder understanding of the biblical/religious lexis
- more careful reading of how speech style is used to construct character
- accurate specific reference to features of language, e.g. the non-standard grammatical feature of double negation in *We don't care about no prayer meeting ...*
- further useful contrast between the religious formality of the Faithful (the "Holy Joes") and the informal/colloquial speech (including reference to accent and/or dialect) of the men from the British Rope Factory

- apt references to relevant moments elsewhere in the novel, mainly concerning the bad behaviour of neighbours
- generally astute reading of the interaction between Carl and Nina as co-operative
- genuine analysis of how non-fluency features construct meaning.

Question 2: *The Remains of the Day*

There were relatively fewer answers on this text in this series. Generally, candidates wrote well about interaction between Stevens and Miss Kenton in Passage B and in the rest of the novel, but relatively poorly about Passage A.

Successful answers revealed:

- good knowledge of the rest of the novel, and the historical context
- thoughtful understanding of the emotional dynamics of interaction between Stevens and Miss Kenton
- particularly well-developed discussion of the contrast between Stevens' cherished professionalism and Miss Kenton's more emotional reaction
- a broad (but seldom a developed) appreciation of the roles of the speakers in Passage A.

Question 3: *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha*

Candidates were often diverted from the question by partly-understood ideas about the *bildungsroman* genre, and made generalised assertions about Paddy maturing through the course of the novel. In trying to link such ideas to linguistic features, some were reduced to arguing that later in the novel Paddy's narrative style develops, his lexis broadens and he learns how to use more advanced sentence structure and punctuation. These approaches often led to candidates failing to look carefully at what was in front of them in Passage B. Nonetheless, the linking theme of persuading-children-to-eat worked well to encourage more careful readers to look at details of language. Less successful answers tended to identify features of spoken language but did not analyse construction of meaning, e.g. they noticed Jeff Mills's hesitation/repetition *and one vegetable from a (.) a (.) platter* but simply attributed it to "nervousness" rather than commenting on how he might have been searching for the low-frequency lexical choice *platter*.

Successful answers revealed:

- understanding of the TV documentary context of Passage A
- understanding of elements of its semi-spontaneous, rehearsed, conventional approach
- (in some cases) well-developed and thoughtful links to textual details – for example, analysing the precise timing of Katrina Cardoza's pauses and seeing them as absolutely typical of TV presenters
- appreciation of how the Chef uses the politeness strategy of formal address terms (*young sir ... young man ...*) to Steven, and how Steven reciprocates with the polite *may i have ...*
- understanding of how in both passages food is constructed linguistically as exciting: Jeff Mills points out that *different colours can help entice children to try ...* while Mister O'Connell *made them mash ... He shovelled out the middle of the mountain till it was like a volcano*
- realisation that Da is less powerful than his utterances might suggest, or than he might think
- appreciation of the difference between Paddy's usual attitude towards Sinbad (annoying but occasionally useful for experiments) and his rather touching protectiveness towards him here (as united against the common enemy Da)
- some ingenious application of knowledge about spoken language, with one candidate arguing that Paddy's 'trick' of back-tracking on a strong opening declarative at the start of

an episode – here, *Mister O’Connell made brilliant dinners ... he didn’t make them, he brought them home* – is the narrative equivalent of a false start and a repair/reformulation. (Clearly this is not true of all of the episodes in the novel, nor is it always an accurate analysis of Paddy’s ‘voice’ – but it was a clever and entirely valid reading of this passage.)

Section B

Question 4: *A Handful of Dust*

The task in this question was to *examine ways in which Waugh presents rumour and gossip*. The cue-quotation offered the description of Brenda as *the imprisoned princess of fairy story who was filling a want long felt by those whose simple, vicarious pleasure it was to discuss the subject in bed over the telephone*. The best essays avoided overstating assertions of connections between Waugh’s life and his satirical intentions and that gossip and rumour were rife in the 1930s.

Passage A was a series of entries from the diaries of Henry ‘Chips’ Channon.

Successful answers revealed:

- clear engagement with the question-focus: gossip and rumour
- some sensible use of the cue-quotation in terms of the fairy-tale lexis, and as a way in to Waugh’s satirical style – shrewd readers picked up the ironies of *simple, vicarious pleasure*
- some relevant comparison with Passage A: Beaver being launched into society by Brenda being like Mrs Simpson being *launched* by the Prince of Wales
- exploration of the ways in which information or misinformation is communicated in the novel, and how this forms part of its narrative fabric
- effective use of rumours about Tony in the jungle at the end.

Question 5: *The Child in Time*

This question invited examination of *ways in which McEwan presents characters struggling to take control of their lives*. The cue-quotation offered the extended criticism of Stephen from his tennis coach: *You wait for things to happen, you stand there hoping they’re going to go your way ...*

Passage A was a story from a 1980s self-help book, with the moral that *we all make our own sandwiches in this life*.

Successful answers revealed:

- clear engagement with the question-focus: struggling to take control of one’s life
- relevant examples from the novel: the progression of Stephen’s responses to the loss of Kate, compared with Julie’s reactions; Charles’s regression to childhood as assertion of control or loss of control
- understanding of the tennis coach’s advice as metaphorical, with some detailed attention to the lexis and syntax of the cue-quotation
- awareness of the growing popularity of self-help books and pop psychology in the 1980s
- awareness of the prevailing political orthodoxies of the 1980s in the UK and the USA, with both Thatcher and Regan encouraging independence and self-reliance
- attention to McEwan’s narrative methods, appreciating that the novel is subtle, while Passage A is explicit, spoon-feeding the reader.

Question 6: Persuasion

This question invited *examination of ways in which Austen presents social status ("rank and consequence")*, and the cue-quotation was the introduction of Lady Russell.

Candidates had little trouble with the question-focus in either its Austen-formulation or its gloss as *social status*. It was encouraging to see that very few tried to apply modern notions of social class, and most answers were free of over-simplification of the status of women.

Some candidates did have trouble with Passage A, often assuming it bore meanings and implications which more careful reading would have avoided.

Successful answers revealed:

- clear engagement with the question-focus: Austen's presentation of social status
- well-chosen examples and quotations from elsewhere in the novel about the importance (or not) to various characters of social status
- judicious comment on Austen's presentation of more minor characters, such as Mary and Mrs Smith
- some detailed attention to the lexis of the cue-quotation, with an appreciation of the significance/connotation of terms such as *charitable* and *correct* in Austen's times
- awareness of the narrator's ambivalence about Lady Russell
- willingness to read Passage A carefully – one candidate wrote a scorching critique of how it showed the desire of the upper classes to be seen as charitable whilst simultaneously enforcing the social divide.

F672 Changing Texts

Most centres choose to enter candidates in June for this unit and the number of entries for the January session has, over the lifetime of the specification, been limited to a small group of centres. This pattern was repeated in this, the last January entry for AS and A Level units. Centres that did enter candidates for F672 this January submitted work which demonstrated a good range of responses in both the analytical and creative elements of the unit.

Principal Moderator Reports for this unit in the past have encouraged centres to develop the range of texts studied in both literary and multimodal form and whilst there is *some* evidence of this happening it would be encouraging to see more examples of candidates choosing their own text combinations for Task 1, and creating a range of original multi-modal texts for Task 2. In order to develop the range of texts analysed by candidates a good approach taken by some centres is to study a text pairing together as a class by way of exploration of the issues of multi-modality before the candidates then work on a new pairing for Task 1. A list of suggested literary texts from a range of different genre and periods, with examples of related multimodal texts, are given to candidates by the centre - or the candidate could choose their own. This approach encourages consideration of a wide range of texts and approaches. It helpfully foregrounds those aspects of Task 1 which can get overlooked as candidates explore a narrow comparison of what's similar and different in the two versions. Broader questions such as why some texts are particularly receptive to transformation and what has to be adapted to meet the expectations of the new form and audience can be given interesting weight by this approach.

Task 1

The pairings of texts compared in the Analytical Study this session included *Wuthering Heights* with the Sparkhouse Drama version for the BBC (2007); *Emma* with the film *Clueless* (1995); *Jane Eyre* with Cary Fukunaga's film version from 2011; *Macbeth* with the BBC Retold version and *The Taming of the Shrew* with *10 Things I Hate About You* (1999) All candidates demonstrated their ability to explore relationship between the two texts studied. The very best of this work not only considered how the related multimodal version re-imagined the source text but also how the exploration of this text illuminates their previous understanding of the literary text. A discussion of how texts can be read in relation to one another was an aspect of some of the strongest work submitted. Where candidates can illustrate this debate with an exploration of key moments of comparison and contrast in both texts and explore language choices with a range of linguistic, literary and other analytical terminologies they can produce very sophisticated work for this element. Less successful work creates an overview of what is different between the literary and the multimodal text without fully addressing *why*; that is how has the new text been shaped for a new audience and purpose. AO1 and AO2 require candidates to look closely at language, structure and form and to use approaches from literary and linguistic study. In some cases there was only very limited close analysis of language and little linguistic terminology applied. Where this is the case it is very difficult to justify a mark above Band 3 irrespective of how effectively candidates explore relationships between the two texts.

Task 2

A variety of different genres were produced in this session by candidates for Task 2. Many of these enabled candidates to produce creative and original work as a re-creation of the original text. However some text choices did seem rather limiting in terms of challenge at this level. Illustrated stories for children can be particularly problematic in this regard especially if aimed at a very young audience. The necessity to write in a language that is accessible to young children can lead to the creation of texts that are simplistic as well as being simple. If candidates do want

to write for children it is safer to aim either at a young adult audience or to produce a text that would be performed, or at least read, to children.

Again in this session some candidates produced a whole text comprised of a *faux* transcript of spontaneous speech. This is problematic and should be avoided as there is no clear audience or purpose for such a text. It is possible to have elements of recorded spontaneous speech as part of, say, a journalistic report and in such cases some transcription conventions could be utilised.

Candidates should be reminded that there is a requirement that the text produced should be *multi-modal* and therefore should employ at least two different modes. As has been the case in previous sessions, there were some examples of Task 2 where it was difficult to see how this requirement had been achieved. It is important that when choosing the genre in which to write for Task 2 it is one that ordinarily utilises two or more modes rather producing what would normally written form and adding, sometimes rather gratuitously, images, illustrations and the like. It is essential that a record of work for Task 2 is presented for moderation in a paper-based form. Those skilful candidates who design actual web pages and the like will need to present a screenshot of their work for moderation.

The best commentaries reflect in detail on the choices the candidate has made in producing their own text. It would be expected that part of this discussion would focus on particular language choices and employ some linguistic terminology to describe them as this is implicit in the first two bullet points for AO1, the single AO for this part of the assessment. Task 2 and the commentary can be viewed holistically in terms of the word count of 1500 to 2000 words and the allocation of the 20 marks.

Administration

Centres are reminded that all samples of work should be received by the moderator in advance of the deadline date. The sample should be sent in candidate order with all work clearly marked 'Task 1', 'Task 2' and 'Commentary'. Please ensure that each candidate's work is securely fastened using staples or treasury tags rather than paper clips. Please do not send work in bulky plastic folders or notebooks. Large format pieces such as storyboards should be sent for moderation in a form that can be contained in an A4 envelope. It is very important that all cover sheets are fully and accurately filled in. There were some instances where centre and candidate numbers missing. Teacher annotation on scripts should be detailed and evidence internal moderation. The audience of these comments should be the moderator rather than the candidate, with the purpose of justifying the marks awarded. It can be helpful to annotate using the language of the appropriate AOs but a broader annotation that highlights particular approaches and insights by the candidate is also very informative.

F673 Dramatic Voices

General Comments

The examination in this series was taken only by candidates re-sitting the outgoing texts. As a result, numbers were too low to make many useful or specific observations about performance or comparisons with any previous series. There were no reliable or discernible patterns of strength or weakness within the cohort or answers to a specific question.

The questions provided a consistently fair level of accessibility and provided clear opportunities for differentiation. As is usual, some candidates responded by offering a range of relevant interpretations and approaches.

Each question was attempted by a handful of candidates. The most popular choices were 1 and 4 on *The Crucible* and *Doctor Faustus*.

Successful responses

- engaged and stayed with the terms of the question set
- differentiated between the keywords
- engaged with opportunities for linguistic analysis provided by the passages in Section A
- took the opportunity in Section B to engage Assessment Objective Two – sometimes through analysis of dramatic form and structure – and produced essays which demonstrated an integrated approach to linguistic and literary study
- demonstrated overall cogency.

Less successful responses

- sometimes involving catch-all context-based introductions
- substituted generalisation for textual analysis and contextual evaluation
- engaged limited linguistic and technical aspects of the drama
- produce either literature essays, historical summaries or a combination of the two.

F674 Connections Across Texts

As in previous January sessions, there were very few candidates and it would therefore be invidious to generalise from such a small sample.

A number of candidates were unsuccessful in making a clear reference to spoken language texts. These can, of course, be scripted, but it is vital that at some stage in the discussion, candidates should attempt to deal with how the speech they are writing about shares (or doesn't) attributes of spontaneous utterance.

Task 1

There was much good work that showed an ability to compare texts and made use of insights gained from both literary and linguistic study. However, the third of the bullet points in the description of the unit (Specification page 16) is not, generally, being given enough emphasis. Candidates, particularly those wanting to claim marks in the top bands, must spend at least some of their time looking at the 'orthodoxies and attitudes' that have grown up round their texts. This could be helped by candidates aiming to deal with the substantial text more fully, using the other two as supplements along the way.

A number of candidates spent quite a lot of time announcing the scope of their study, rather than focusing on their analysis from the start. In a piece with a limited word limit, this can have serious effects on the depth of the points that are made later.

At times, candidates are attempting to pass off canonical texts as being something other, and this is not to be encouraged: one of the aims of the unit is to ask candidates to look at the rules and conventions that might govern literary acceptability of the status/reputation of a non-literary text, and this means that text choice here is crucial.

Centres should be wary about presenting texts that are translations. The specification is clear about it being English language and literature, and although a limited number of texts are allowed in translation on a literature exam, there is an issue of coverage here in relation to QCA text coverage requirements for a qualification in English.

Task 2

Candidates provided a wide variety of different sorts of writing and mostly demonstrated acuity in their ability to analyse, rather than simply report, on what they had written.

Centre marking

Most marking had been very soundly done, with careful reference to the Assessment Objectives. However, centres need to be wary of over-generosity. Their own candidates need to be seen within the context of national performance, and there is a danger that if centres are persistently over-generous and at the edge of tolerance for the unit, there will be a scaling applied that does injustice to some candidates whose work has not been read as part of the sampling process. For this reason, too, centres must ensure that the rank order of their candidates is absolutely reliable.

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