

Examiners' Report Summer 2009

GCSE

GCSE English Pilot

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GCSE English Pilot: 5731A 1A

The performance of candidates in this unit was consistent with previous series. Standards of assessment were also maintained between this unit and the equivalent mainstream unit.

As in recent past sessions, it was necessary to make adjustments to the marks of only a small minority of centres, in cases where there was some generosity : there was no example of centres marking too harshly.

The range of assignments was impressive, and centres tailored activities to the needs of their own candidates skilfully. Individual talks are a problem for some candidates, but centres generally handled this aspect with sensitivity. Small group work varied in style and content, though it was often linked to English literature work, in some way. Discussion activities were the main focus of both Advisory and Moderation visits, and these generally proved constructive and popular with centres.

The Board's procedures for moderating Speaking and Listening are as follows. In brief, Advisory visits, which involve the visiting moderator and the centre arriving at an agreed mark, take place at the end of the autumn term or early in the spring term; and Moderation visits, where the visiting moderator has a role similar to that of a moderator for written work, are conducted towards the end of the academic year.

In the great majority of cases, it is agreed between the moderator and the centre, in advance of the visit, that the moderator will provide a task, thereby saving the centre the burden of preparing a special activity. Also, the visiting moderator can carry out the function of standardising assessment more effectively and objectively with a consistent task; and the element of 'rehearsal' is removed. The visit requires the centre to provide 12 candidates, who should represent some range of ability; and a suitable venue. The centre's nominated teacher-examiner must be present, and it is often possible to accommodate other colleagues, which helps with both professional development and internal standardisation.

As in past years, the Principal Moderator can report that although some centres were apprehensive on being told that such a visit was due, in the great majority of cases they found it to be a reassuring and positive experience.

Training for the Assessment of Speaking and Listening is also available in the form of the Inter - Board CD materials , distributed to all centres.

GCSE English Pilot: 5731B 1B

Administration

Administration was much improved from previous series. Centres remembered to include the highest and lowest candidates and to replace withdrawn candidates for the most part. Centres were also much better at sending authentication forms.

There are three points that centres need to be aware of:

- 1) There is an expectation that centres annotate candidates work to justify the marks given. This can be done on screen and should not result in centres printing off candidates work and then scanning it back in. Centres merely need to change the colour of the font and type in their comment.
- 2) The sample sizes have changed. Centres need to refer to information published by Edexcel to see how this impacts on their centre.
- 3) The most important point that centres must address is the submission of tasks from the previous series examination paper. It is confusing how candidates could so readily remember the questions from a past paper and maybe centres need to be vigilant about allowing students access to the network and practise responses.

Reading

Candidates responded well to the websites. The best responses came from candidates who used the bullet points to structure responses. Image and presentation continue to dominate most candidates' responses. Top candidates tend to be distinguished by their ability to analyse language.

There were two obvious areas that prevented candidates from accessing the higher bands: 1) A lot of candidates tended to make overly generic comments. Centres would benefit from guiding students in selecting specific examples and commenting on these specifics.

2) Comparison is an important descriptor in the mark scheme. Candidates would find it difficult to access Band 4 if they commented on the texts separately.

The responses to the non-fiction texts were characterised by an imbalance between the argument of the writer and the language used. There were centres who entirely focused on following the argument and there were centres who encouraged their candidates to write a language analysis. Although the latter is obviously more sophisticated, the point of this task is to produce an integrated response. Candidates should be able to follow the arguments and use comments about language to explore the viewpoint of the writers.

Writing

Written responses showed a sound appreciation of audience and purpose. Moderators commented on their enjoyment of the blogs in particular, candidates showed a particularly impressive understanding of the form and the voice that was expected.

Centres are still over penalising candidates for AO3 iii. Centres should look closely at training material provided to review their understanding of the standard here.

GCSE English Pilot: 5732A 2A

Introduction

The vast majority of candidates responded successfully to the reading and writing tasks in the June 2009 examination.

Again the overwhelmingly choice of Shakespeare play was *Romeo and Juliet*, with over 90% of candidates; *The Merchant of Venice* had approximately 8% of responses; *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was less than 2%.

The Writing task produced a wide range of interesting responses on the subject of uniform.

General points

The advice given under the following **6 Key Issues** will help teachers prepare their candidates.

1. Time management

The examination is divided into two sections, with 40 marks for each; the four parts of the Section A question are each worth 10 marks.

Once again, examiners expressed concern about candidates' time management; some candidates wrote at great length answering part a of Section A, leaving little time to answer the other questions; other candidates wrote at length in answering all parts of Section A, leaving little time for the writing task in Section B. Candidates should spend equal time on both Section A and Section B.

2. Reading the questions and identifying answers

In Section A, candidates should clearly identify the four parts of their response (a, b, c and d). Although most candidates respond to the questions in the order they appear, some answer in a different order, or move between different parts of their response; this makes it difficult for the examiner to separate the parts of the response and so award the appropriate marks.

Candidates should be advised to use not only the correct letter, but to separate each answer by leaving a line or two, or by starting each answer on a new page.

Candidates will benefit by underlining or highlighting the key words in each question. For Section A, this will help them identify the correct:

- Part a: the section of the play and whether it leads up to or follows on from the extract
- Part b: character/s, as seen in the extract
- Part c: aspects, as seen in the extract
- Part d: feature in another part of the play that lies outside the extract-

3. Writing answers in the correct pages of the Answer Booklet

A minority of candidates incorrectly answered the part b of Section A in the Section B Writing Task (pages 11-16). Other candidates answered Section A in the Section B pages; some candidates even crossed out the Section headings and then reversed them - this causes major problems with the 'ePen' system of marking the scripts. It would be helpful if candidates were familiar with the layout of the Question Paper/Answer Booklet and Extracts insert. Any notes or plans should be made in the

answer booklet and then crossed out; additional pages for making notes should **not** be given to the candidates.

4. Lack of familiarity with the requirements of the four part Section A questions

The areas of weakness that examiners noted in responses in the Shakespeare play may be because some candidates either lacked familiarity with the question style, or did not fully understand the explicit requirements of the four part question.

Marks are awarded to answers that match the specific requirements of the question. There is no transference of marks between, for example a candidate's part b answer on character and part c answers on aspects of staging or language.

Candidates need to understand clearly the demands of each section and answer appropriately. They should not offer the same material to answer two parts. Detailed specific advice on answering the four part questions is given below.

Examiners commented that perhaps the number of candidates wrongly answering the part a question on **Romeo and Juliet** indicates that these candidates did not read the question carefully enough.

5. Presentation of work

- Writing must not go outside the marked area into the margins
- Handwriting should be legible; the candidate's communication is impaired if the response is difficult to read. In the writing task this may also lower the AO3 iii marks for spelling and punctuation
- Only black ink should be used
- Section B essays should be paragraphed, but large gaps of several lines, or even pages, should not be left between sections of writing.

6. Glossary of key words used in the examination

It will help candidates' performance if they understand the key words they might find in the questions. Helpful definitions given below are in the context of this examination:

- **affect**: to produce an effect or have an emotional impact on a character
- **aspect**: a particular component or feature in staging, performance or use of language
- **attitude**: a settled feeling or opinion held about someone or something
- **effective**: successful in producing a strong or favourable response (on the audience)
- **influences**: the power that someone or something has over other people's thinking or actions; the effect of something on a person
- **relationship**: connection, or emotional association, between two or more characters
- **significance**: importance; (in addition) having a meaning which may be concealed, unstated, or not realised at the time (of an event or a speech)
- **theme**: an abstract idea that emerges from the play's treatment of its subject matter.

Section A: Shakespeare

General points on Part a

The part a question asks the candidate to give a brief outline of a designated section of the play **leading up to** or **following on from** the printed extract, with the key directives given in bold print. Candidates are, where appropriate, given a helpful signpost of a key event to help them identify the correct section of the play, e.g. in this series: *Q2a. Give a brief outline of the key events that follow on from this extract up to when Juliet discovers Romeo is a Montague (Act 1 Scene 5).* In future question papers the signposted information may be given, without the Act and Scene reference, so as to avoid any possible confusion for the candidate.

Candidates who misread or ignored the key directive and signposted information penalised themselves by giving material that could not be credited; examiners awarded marks to candidates for the *brief outline* of the main events of the part of the play indicated in the question.

The key words in this part a question are *brief outline*; a detailed account of events is not required. Some candidates penalised themselves by devoting time to unnecessary discussion of the significance of the key events; there are other parts of the question that ask for that discussion. Maximum marks are awarded to candidates who give an accurate synopsis of the main events of the section asked for—nothing more is required; many candidates achieved marks in the highest Band with their responses.

Some candidates gave narrative accounts of film adaptations, and although there are many benefits from using alternative interpretations of the text, the play text should be the central focus of candidates' examination preparation.

A Midsummer Night's Dream: Part a

There were few responses to this play.

Most candidates were able to give an account of the performance of 'Pyramus and Thisbe' and the ending of Act 5; in many responses key events from Act 4 and Act 5 were omitted.

Romeo and Juliet: Part a

The question asked for a brief outline of key events after the extract, where Benvolio seeks out Romeo (Act 1 Scene 1), up to the when Juliet discovers Romeo is a Montague (the end of Act 1 Scene 5). The vast majority of candidates clearly knew the plot of Act 1 and many gave excellent accounts of the banquet scene (1.5); many candidates mixed up the events of 1.2 and 1.3. Too often the film versions confused candidates, especially with Mercutio's involvement in Act 1.

Again, a significant minority of candidates misread or misunderstood the question and answered on the events from the start of the play leading up to extract.

The Merchant of Venice: Part a

Most candidates showed excellent knowledge of the play; there were many Band 5 answers with very detailed and accurate accounts of the trial scene, but the majority of candidates missed any reference to Act 3 Scene 5, the scene between the extract and Act 4 Scene 1.

General points on Part b

The part b question asks the candidate what is learned from the extract about the named character or relationship between named characters. The key words are 'From the extract'. Candidates need to keep their comments on what is learned about the character (or relationships) from the extract and not drift into a general character assessment as seen in the whole of the play. Candidates may validly refer briefly to details outside the extract in order to underline a point being made about the character as seen in the extract, but there is a danger in this especially for less able candidates who look outside the extract, either to other parts of the play or to film versions, to find material for their answer. Many excellent answers showed analysis and evaluation; however in many cases too much material from the extract was copied out, supported only by brief, superficial comments or paraphrase. Quotations, where used, should be brief and apposite in support of the analysis. Weak answers gave a narrative account or a paraphrase of the events of the extract without analysis of the relevant details that revealed the character.

A Midsummer Night's Dream: Part b

Most candidates offered limited, but generally valid comments on the character of Bottom. Many answers were paraphrases of Bottom's words.

Romeo and Juliet: Part b

The question was on the character of the Romeo. Almost all candidates made some valid comments on Romeo such as: he was in love, romantic, poetic, sad or upset. The main weakness was candidates not using the extract as their main focus; too often candidates allowed their knowledge of Romeo's character from the rest of the play to colour their answers. Better answers commented on the use of oxymoron to illustrate the confusion seen in Romeo's character and referred to Romeo's brief comments on his father and the fray. Some candidates were confused about the cause of Romeo's unrequited love, identifying Juliet instead of Rosaline.

The Merchant of Venice: Part b

There were some outstanding answers on the character of Portia. Many good answers offered insight into her witty comments on the foibles of men; weaker candidates misread the humorous side of her character as seen in the extract.

General points on Part c

This part offers an opportunity for candidates to explore the wide range of performance or language aspects to be found in their play's extract. The question asks clearly *how and why each aspect is effective when performed*. Candidates' comments should be focused on what the effect is in performance i.e. the effect on the audience. More is needed than simply saying that an aspect would 'show Portia's feelings', or 'be interesting' without explaining **how** or **why**. For marks in the higher range, it is important that candidates write about not only **how** the aspects may be played, but also **why** this may be effective to an audience when performed. The words '*when performed*' in the question implies an audience, but unfortunately some candidates seemed unaware of the dimension of an audience. Too often comments referred to 'the reader', which may be an indication that performance aspects have not been considered. A significant number of candidates relied heavily on film adaptations for their ideas about performance, especially Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo + Juliet*.

A small number of candidates went outside the extract and offered ineligible material.

Some candidates did not clearly identify the aspect they were responding to, and of those that did, many failed to make the most of **how** and **why** each aspect was effective when performed.

A lot of unnecessary quotation was used to identify the aspect in the extract; a brief line of quotation or line reference is sufficient. It was pleasing to see so many candidates referring to performance features in their answers and it is encouraging that many candidates, it seems, have performed scenes from the play as part of their examination preparation.

Other low-scoring answers gave narrative accounts of parts of (or all of) the extract, or gave a director's guide to what each actor would do and say for the entire extract. To earn high marks candidates must clearly respond to the request: *'Briefly explain how and why each aspect is effective.'*

Candidates should balance their answers fairly equally between the two chosen aspects. Whatever aspects are chosen, credit is given to what the candidate makes of the effectiveness of each of the aspects individually. High marks are not awarded to answers that are only statements of detail, such as what lights are used, or what costumes are worn, or where the actors are positioned. High marks were awarded to answers that gave an analysis of the effectiveness of two identified aspects.

A Midsummer Night's Dream: Part c

There was a clear choice of material: the four lovers or Bottom awakening. The better answers were usually on how Bottom's words or actions might be made effective for the audience; too often answers reworked the material for the part b responses. Many of the answers on the four lovers went outside the extract.

Romeo and Juliet: Part c

How the relationship between Benvolio and Romeo might be performed, along with the many language aspects in the extract provided candidates with a lot potential material. Most candidates chose to comment on how the actors playing Romeo and Benvolio might interpret their characters; one danger for candidates of choosing how Romeo might be played is the recycling of material already offered in response to part b.

The Merchant of Venice: Part c

Portia's performance in front of Nerissa offered a variety of language and performance features for candidates; high marks were scored by candidates who commented on how the actor playing Portia's might effectively use action and gestures in front of Nerissa. Occasionally, weaker candidates misinterpreted Nerissa's reactions to Portia's words.

General points on Part d

This question always takes the candidate outside the extract by asking for a response that shows knowledge and understanding of other parts of the play; this includes features such as themes, events in other scenes, character or relationships which have a link with the extract. Although this question relates the extract to another feature of the play, candidates should not recycle material already offered. Candidates must look beyond the extract in order to achieve marks.

A Midsummer Night's Dream: Part d

Few candidates offered any insight on the theme of dreams.

Romeo and Juliet: Part d

Candidates were asked what they learn about Romeo's views on love from what he says during the banquet scene. The majority of candidates made something of what Romeo says about Juliet, but very few showed close knowledge of his words about love in the banquet scene, even though Scene 5 was part of the nominated Act 1. Some candidates recycled material already offered in answer to 2b - what Romeo said to Benvolio about love; these answers scored few or no marks. Some candidates chose to answer a potentially more difficult question by comparing what Romeo says about love in the extract with what he says about love in 1.5; however too often the focus of these responses was more on the extract than on 1.5 and so high marks were rarely achieved. The highest marks were given to responses that analysed what Romeo said about, and to, Juliet, supported with detailed textual references.

The Merchant of Venice: Part d

Although most candidates made a good attempt at the question about the importance of relationship between Nerissa and Portia, there were few outstanding answers. Most dealt competently with the events in Belmont, but only a few candidates managed to use their knowledge of the two characters to analyse their relationship in order to bring out its importance in the play. Most candidates were aware of their different social standings, but were unable to offer any sustained insights into how Shakespeare uses the relationship in the play.

Section B: Writing to Analyse, Review, Comment

General points

Candidates should be reminded that this writing triplet is **Analyse, Review, Comment** and the key writing skill will be clearly indicated in the question, so before starting to write their response they should identify clearly for themselves the **form, audience and purpose** of the task. Candidates need to be aware that the form of the response will be, typically, an article in a magazine, journal or newspaper, letter, speech, formal report, web log or contribution to a media programme. The target audience, where appropriate, will be given.

Because there is no tiering in this English Pilot GCSE, bullets are given in this **Analyse, Review, Comment** task. This is to help candidates by suggesting some ideas for their content. The use of bullets has both advantages and disadvantages: although bullets give less able candidates a structure on which to hang their material, some candidates think they must follow the bullets slavishly and only the bulleted topics can be used. Candidates should be reminded that bullets are always given, but they are only suggestions or starting points for their responses.

The writing task covers the triplet **Analyse, Review, Comment**, and the word **analyse** was used in the question. The task was to write a speech to be delivered to a school/college council which gave an analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of school uniform. Almost every candidate produced a valid response to a topic which most candidates seemed to find interesting. The best responses were from candidates who kept the word **analyse** clearly in mind, along with the purpose, audience and form. The highest marks were awarded to candidates who clearly analysed the advantages and disadvantages of school uniform. Responses which had a clear sense of form and audience, were well organised with a lively introduction,

logical development and conclusion scored high marks. Some candidates fell into the trap of turning the task into an argument essay without a clear sense of audience or form.

There were many interesting points made for and against uniform; the most popular advantages included: an analysis of why uniform might reduce the incidence of bullying; the appeal of a strict uniform to parents and prospective parents; how it encouraged pride and unity; preparing students for the world of work; and several factors surrounding the identification of students through uniform, such as school trips, accidents and shoplifting! The disadvantages overwhelmingly offered were: lack of individuality and personal expression; the discomfort of uniforms, especially in the summer months; how uniform encouraged fights between rival schools! Many speeches included comments about deterioration in standards of work and discipline on non-uniform days. Another old chestnut brought up was the point that teachers should be forced to wear uniform!

The marking grid for Organisation (AOi & ii) gives *'broadly appropriate paragraphing'* as a characteristic of Band Two writing. Paragraphing was generally good, with some cohesive devices evident at a basic level. Generally, punctuation was adequate, while some of the more able candidates used more advanced punctuation appropriately, such as the correct use of semi-colon and apostrophe. A wide range of candidates showed errors in basic homophones your/you're, their/there/they're, to/too. Examiners reported that although candidates were sometimes weak in spelling this did not inhibit their attempt at using wider vocabulary.

GCSE English Pilot: 5732B 2B

Performance was very closely matched to previous years. The great majority of candidates gave a good account of themselves, and the majority of centres have a thorough grip on the requirements of the folder submission.

Almost all centres are thorough and accurate in the assessment of candidates' work, and internal standardisation is generally carried out well. In a few cases there was some generosity in assessing candidates, particularly at the top end. Also, a sizable minority of centres still overlook the requirement to send the top and bottom marked work and to replace the requested folders where candidates have withdrawn. A handful of centres also missed the deadlines for the submission of the folders.

The majority of centres chose stimulating assignments, which are now tried and tested as this Unit has become established. Often the tasks brought out the best in candidates across a wide ability range, with some very pleasing results.

For Piece 1, short stories still tend to be the most popular offering, and these frequently show much skill in planning and characterisation: weaker pieces, however, fail to engage the reader equally successfully.

'Of Mice and Men' is still the most popular choice, by far, for the prose piece and these essays frequently reflect the candidates' enjoyment and engagement with this text, as well as their detailed knowledge.

The poetry Unit, almost invariably 'doubled up' with Unit 5737, is the most varied in quality, ranging from examples of mature interpretation and linguistic analysis to weaker pieces which are little more than narrative commentaries. In some cases, the element of comparison is overlooked.

The usual full programme of Assessment Support Meetings will be held in the Autumn Term, as advertised in the National Programme.

GCSE English Pilot: 5733 01

The standard of work demonstrated that most centres are now working confidently with spontaneous spoken language data. Submissions at the top end of the range were excellent, and even at the lower end, candidates often had useful things to say.

Administration was much improved, with the majority of centres submitting the work by the due date.

Folders should contain all relevant material: the three transcripts, the analysis that goes with them identified by category, the script and the commentary. The cover sheet should be at the front, and the work should be held together in a way that facilitates reading. In some cases where candidates had shared transcripts, the transcript was included in only one folder. Every folder must contain all relevant transcripts.

Task 1

The aim of this task is to introduce candidates to the study of spontaneous spoken language. Their previous study of English will have focused on written language, even though spoken language is the primary form of communication, and its forms and structures are often found in electronic mediums of communication.

There is still a tendency among some candidates to see spontaneous spoken language as a debased form of written language. Comments such as 'she should have said,' followed by a form that would be more appropriate for written language are still occurring. Candidates should be encouraged to think about what forms would be appropriate in their own spontaneous spoken language with their friends, with their families and in more formal contexts.

Most centres are now producing folders in which the candidates engage with spontaneous spoken language and produce analyses that show a real sense of discovery. There are still some problems arising from poor data and from a lack of analysis.

Some candidates seemed to think they could mention a category and that would be sufficient. They must analyse if they are to achieve well. Consider the difference between:

I have called this Here and Now because we were all talking now

and

I have analysed this transcript as Here and Now, because the people are using modern slang with words such as 'hottie' that weren't used a few years ago. They also say Oh my god a lot which is something that young people use when they are talking (they also use it a lot in texting, only then it is omg).

The Here and Now category continues to be the most challenging, largely because the candidates are insecure with the concept of current, changing forms of language. The best analyses came from media examples, with reality TV and chat shows giving the candidates a lot of data to analyse.

The Over Time data raised a few issues. The candidates need to be guided towards material that will allow them the opportunity to analyse language change. This

frequently was not possible as there was no language change within the material (teenager and parent won't usually throw up that much to consider).

Some candidates were still making simplistic assumptions about the way people talk. They assume that older people speak more formally and use more standard language than younger people, and that older people do not swear. These features are then identified as issues relating to Over Time, whereas they are contextual. (Older people are less likely to swear in front of young people, especially in the contexts the candidates collect their data: parent/grandparent and child, teacher and pupil).

Some folders achieved less well than they should have done when candidates opted to analyse transcripts that were broadly similar in context and content, for example, three conversations with their peers, three football commentaries, three interviews with footballers. They need data that differs according to category, and by context.

Using the mark bands

The marking tended to be generous for Task 1. A response that is descriptive and contains little detail should only achieve at the level of Band 1.

To achieve in the higher bands, candidates must do more than point out features of spontaneous spoken language. They need to analyse: to consider the reason for their occurrence in this context, the ways the relationship between the speakers (how well they know each other, what the power relationship between them is) affects the language, the aspects of the language that relate to the category.

Task 2

The most popular formats for this task have been for some time now radio advertisements, soap scripts and novel adaptations. This year was similar. The level of achievement was good, and there were very few of the problems with novel adaptation that there have been in previous years. There was some excellent work, with candidates presenting scripts they had clearly enjoyed writing and the often represented a high level of achievement.

It may be useful for centres to consider issues that may affect the standard of the candidates' work. Radio advertisements are by their nature very short. They must remember 30 seconds minimum is for the spoken voice, and directions and sound effects, though important to the overall script, must be extra to this. A short soap script does not need to contain all the drama that is usually extended across several scenes or even several episodes. Some submissions managed to include a divorce, a crime, a pregnancy and death into a 2 minute script. They can use their commentary to explain the context of the events. Candidates should be advised against rewriting a scene they have viewed.

It's important that candidates remember the difference between script and spontaneous spoken language. Some things can't be scripted because they are spontaneous. This includes interviews, commentary and spontaneous chat between presenters.

Commentaries

The commentaries were often illuminating and helped the moderating process by explaining clearly the intentions of the script. Where the commentaries developed from and discussed aspects of planning, they were excellent. Where they were written as an afterthought, they were less successful. In some cases, the candidates confused tasks 1 and 2, and used their commentaries to analyse the scripts as though they were spontaneous spoken language.

GCSE English Pilot: 5734 01

In the large majority of cases, the work presented by centres for the moderation sample was efficiently labelled and well organised, which greatly assisted the moderation process. In a few cases, work was presented randomly, with poor labelling - for example "Steve's project" written in pen on a DVD with no further information about candidate number. This delayed the process significantly. In some cases it would have been advisable for more secure packaging of DVDs; the work from one centre arrived with two DVDs broken in half and under-protected in folded paper.

At their best, responses for the AO4 Analyse component demonstrated a secure grasp of generic conventions and the techniques used to produce meaning, based on well-paired texts which provided ample room for productive comparison. The most able candidates were able to write fluently and perceptively with sophisticated insights into the use of media language, offering detailed comparative references tied to key media concepts. Where responses were less successful, answers lacked focus and specificity, tended towards narrative description and generalised comments on the conventions of the horror genre rather than providing the detailed references to the particular features of moving image language which are used to create meaning. The most enabled candidates clearly identified two short scenes for really close comparison, and encouraged them to demonstrate their awareness of media techniques, camera angles, and editing points, and also employed specialist terminology more effectively. In a few cases the two sequences studied involved a comparison of films where the narrative and generic differences were so extreme that there was a tendency to write descriptively, with a 'feature-spotting' approach, which prevented access to the higher mark bands.

Annotation of candidates submitted assignments for AO4 was most helpful where it gave a clear indication of how the teacher felt the piece had matched the criteria for the awarded mark. This approach clearly recognised that, where possible, moderators look to reward achievement identified by the teacher and that teacher comment is often very helpful in understanding the way marks have been allocated.

A wide range of interesting work was produced for AO5 Production. Although the majority of productions were advertisements, trailers or music videos, some ambitious film openings were produced and some documentary work was presented. It was noticeable that where candidates had produced a trailer for a horror movie, the study they had done for their work on this genre for AO4 often productively informed the work they presented for AO5. Where candidates chose to work with the music video as their genre, results were often impressive. However, it is worth noting that this is a far more demanding genre than it might initially appear. Successful music videos require precise editorial decisions about synchronisation of sound to beat, the relationship of images to lyrics, and a sense of pace and energy. Less successful work seemed to indicate that candidates had not studied music videos in any depth. Although it was possible to identify evidence of pre-production planning, too little attention was paid to the selection of the most appropriate camera angles, effects or editing techniques. Although not all music videos adopt a linear narrative structure, it is a central element for many. A stronger concern for narrative would have significantly improved those productions which ended up simply relying on fights, chases, anarchic or random edits, and laddish behaviour, often with little or no attempt to match the soundtrack rhythmically or visually through appropriate imagery.

The best centres' submissions of Production work was helpfully organised and clearly labelled and the supporting documentation provided which identified the individual contributions of each candidate. Although the minimum requirement is for every candidate to both film and edit some material, and for that contribution to be detailed on Form E, some centres provided significant additional detail and this enabled moderators to clearly understand how marks had been allocated. At the other extreme, there were some instances of four candidates all signing the same Form E, but each claiming they had "done everything". This is not a sustainable position, given that the AO5 component is giving 25% of an entire GCSE award in English Studies.

GCSE English Pilot: 5735 01

Administration

Administration was much improved from previous series. Centres remembered to include the highest and lowest candidates and to replace withdrawn candidates for the most part. Centres were also much better at sending authentication forms. Deadlines were the only major concern. Moderators reported having to spend a lot more time chasing samples that had not arrived within a week of mark submission.

There are two points that centres need to be aware of:

- 4) There is an expectation that centres annotate candidates work to justify the marks given. This can be done on screen and should not result in centres printing off candidates work and then scanning it back in. Centres merely need to change the colour of the font and type in their comment.
- 5) The sample sizes have changed. Centres need to refer to information published by Edexcel to see how this impacts on their centre.

Analysis

Centres are better understanding the needs of this assignment. There was some excellent analysis of language in a variety of digital forms. There were still too many generic responses where centres were still referring to all websites or all blogs. However, these were in the minority this series.

Centres are reminded that comparison is an important descriptor in the mark scheme. Candidates should be encouraged to look at how the medium of the digital communications can impact on the language used - therefore moving between two texts and commenting on the differences. Candidates will find it difficult to access Band 4 without clear comparison between texts, no matter the sophistication of the language analysis on individual texts.

Production

Centres very much fall into two camps. There are centres who have clearly understood the criteria and are now able to experiment with different digital forms. I was excited by the number of digital videos, podcasts and websites this series. However, there are still centres who see this task as an original writing task in PowerPoint. These productions tend to get no further than Band 2 in the criteria. These centres are strongly advised to attend training in the autumn.

GCSE English Pilot: 5736 01

A wide range of candidates successfully demonstrated their knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the Drama and Prose texts they had studied.

Candidates were expected to make two responses, one on a Drama text and one on a Prose text in one and a half hour, forty five minutes for each response. Candidates chose whether to respond to a 'four part' style question or an essay question.

The entry this summer was a similar entry to last May's. There were no changes in the layout and wording of the examination, although mark schemes constantly change with each series and set of new questions, the examination is constantly under review.

Candidates rarely missed out on marks because they did not read the questions carefully. Most centres are familiar with the expectations from this examination and have aired their confidence in this paper during training events. However, there are still some centres that are obviously not clear about what skills and techniques need to be taught, in all parts of the 'four part' style question.

Fewer candidates, who had opted for the essay type question, gained top marks in Range 5. Many candidates lacked focus, responses were often narrative and undeveloped; candidates retold the story and its key events and rarely engaged with the text. This was noticeable in the essay question for 'Of Mice and Men' where candidates needed to focus on the importance of Curley and Curley's wife. These candidates chronologically worked through the key events, involving these two characters, and few truly explored their relationship and significance in the novel.

Attendance to the feedback, training and standardisation events is both crucial and compulsory; it is a rare opportunity for teachers to meet each other as well as to meet face to face with myself. It is a support mechanism necessary for centres entering their candidates and aiming to make the most from this examination.

The dates for next autumn's training will shortly be published both on the Edexcel site and in the English Circular, which is sent to centres twice yearly.

Candidate Choices - Texts

Unsurprisingly, candidates opted for the familiar texts of 'An Inspector Calls' and 'Of Mice and Men'.

However, there was a lot more diversity this series, in that there were more 'Ethan Frome', 'The Hound of the Baskervilles' and 'Paddy Clark ha ha ha' responses.

Pre-1914 remained the least favourable; the Prose texts 'The Awakening' and 'Spies' remained the least popular novels.

Candidate and Question Choices

Most candidates chose the four part question. As expected, most candidates fitted the trend where the higher marks were achieved in parts 'a' and 'b'. This expected trend is part of the graded nature of the questions as parts 'c' and 'd' require some analytical skill.

Fewer candidates opted for the essay type question than before. Successful responses were those that clearly focused on the key points of the question, developed these points fully showing insight and analysis and used apposite evidence from the text to support the commentary and analysis.

Good Practice

It was again encouraging to see that there was a clear indication that good practice at KS3 and within the classroom was transferred into many candidates' responses, (PEE).

For sections 'b', 'c' and 'd' many candidates paragraphed each separate point then followed it by using a quotation to evidence their statement; this would then be followed by some explanation, often focused and in higher ability candidates with insight and detailed analysis.

Advice for Centres

1. Time management

The examination is divided into two sections, with 40 marks for both; candidates should spend about 45 minutes on Sections A and B.

Each part of the 'four part' question is worth 10 marks; candidates should spend ten minutes on each section; focused responses score highly.

2. The 'four part' examination

As in all examinations, candidates should take care when reading each question. Candidates might benefit by highlighting the key words in each question to avoid any misunderstanding, words such as, 'up to', 'following on', the character for part 'b', Mrs Birling, TWO aspects for part 'c' and links with the rest of the text for part 'd', 'in one other part'.

Thank you to those centres that encourage candidates to clearly identify the four parts by separating each answer and ideally starting each part on a new page.

Part 'a'

This question asks candidates to give a brief outline of a section of the text leading up to or following on from the printed extract. It is acceptable to bullet point only in this part.

Fewer candidates gave accounts of the text that were not asked for but many gave only a few words instead of a short sentence, such as, 'Lennie shot in the head' instead of 'George pointed the gun at the back of Lennie's head and shot him'.

Part 'b'

This question asks candidates what they learn of a character from the extract. The best answers support perceptive commentary with brief and appropriate evidence taken from the extract. These candidates offer insightful and detailed material to the character and are therefore credited with higher marks.

Part 'c'

This question asks candidates to select two aspects and requires them to focus on the 'what', 'how' and 'why' each aspect was effective.

On the whole candidates' responses demonstrated a greater preparation to the question. Not many candidates went outside the extract.

Part 'd'

This question always takes the candidate outside the extract by asking them to consider other features of the text such as themes, events or character(s) that may be linked with the extract.

Fewer candidates recycled material already offered in previous answers of the three other parts to the question. Candidates looking beyond the extract achieved marks in the higher ranges although few responses gain full marks, I will focus some of my training on part 'd' this autumn.

3. KEY WORDS

Affect: to produce an effect or have an emotional impact on a character

Aspect: a particular component or feature in staging, performance or use of language

Attitude: a settled feeling or opinion held about someone or something

Effective: successful in producing a strong or favourable response (on the audience)

Relationship: connection, or emotional association, between two or more characters

Significance: importance; (in addition) having a meaning which may be concealed, unstated, or not realised at the time (of an event or a speech)

Theme: an abstract idea that emerges from the play's treatment of its subject matter.

GCSE English Pilot: 5737 01

Performance was very closely matched to previous years. The great majority of candidates gave a good account of themselves, and the majority of centres have a thorough grip on the requirements of the folder submission.

Almost all centres are thorough and accurate in the assessment of candidates' work, and internal standardisation is generally carried out well. In a few cases there was some generosity in assessing candidates, particularly at the top end. Also, a sizable minority of centres still overlook the requirement to send the top and bottom marked work and to replace the requested folders where candidates have withdrawn. A handful of centres also missed the deadlines for the submission of the folders.

The majority of centres chose stimulating assignments, very well suited to the needs of a range of pupils. These appropriate and well judged tasks were highlighted in the individual Reports sent to many centres. Constructive marking is also a clear feature of many folders.

For Piece 1, 'Romeo and Juliet' and 'Macbeth' predominate. Often the responses seem a little mechanical, but at the top there is real originality and insight. The prose Unit is perhaps the most successful for the majority of candidates, and a pleasing variety of texts is used. Poetry assignments continue to present a challenge to less able candidates, with some rather unstructured pieces of work which fail to demonstrate much understanding of or engagement with the texts.

The usual full programme of Assessment Support Meetings will be held in the Autumn Term, as advertised in the National Programme.

GCSE English Pilot: 5731A Grade Boundaries

Paper No	Max Mark	*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1A	40	36	31	26	21	16	11	6	1
UMS		36	32	28	24	20	16	12	8

GCSE English Pilot: 5731B 1B Grade Boundaries

Paper No	Max Mark	*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1B	80	77	67	57	47	36	25	14	3
UMS		54	48	42	36	30	24	18	12

GCSE English Pilot: 5732A 2A Grade Boundaries

Paper No	Max Mark	*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
2A	80	61	54	47	40	32	24	16	8
UMS		36	32	28	24	20	16	12	8

GCSE English Pilot: 5732B 2B Grade Boundaries

Paper No	Max Mark	*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
2B	40	36	31	26	21	16	11	7	3
UMS		54	48	42	36	30	24	18	12

GCSE English Pilot: 5733 01 Grade Boundaries

Paper No	Max Mark	*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
01	40	36	31	26	21	16	11	6	1
UMS		90	80	70	60	50	40	30	20

GCSE English Pilot: 5734 01 Grade Boundaries

Paper No	Max Mark	*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
01	40	39	33	27	22	18	14	10	6
UMS		90	80	70	60	50	40	30	20

GCSE English Pilot: 5735 01 Grade Boundaries

Paper No	Max Mark	*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
01	40	38	32	26	21	17	13	9	5
UMS		90	80	70	60	50	40	30	

GCSE English Pilot: 5736 01 Grade Boundaries

Paper No	Max Mark	*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
01	80	77	67	57	47	37	28	19	10
UMS		90	80	70	60	50	40	30	20

GCSE English Pilot: 5737 01 Grade Boundaries

Paper No	Max Mark	*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
01	40	36	31	26	21	16	11	7	3
UMS		90	80	70	60	50	40	30	20

Note: Grade boundaries may vary from year to year and from subject to subject.

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