

# Examiners' Report January 2008

GCE

## GCE English Language and Literature (8179)

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## 6381/01 The Spoken Word

### Section A

Most candidates were able to make significant responses to these texts, although as usual Text A attracted much more comment than Text B. The majority of candidates conveyed understanding of the difference in mode between the texts, although a significant minority wrote about both texts as if they were records of real speech. Higher band responses were able to apply appropriate linguistic/literary frameworks as appropriate. There were relatively few candidates, however, who were able to comment upon the attitudes and values of the writer and/or narrator in Text B, with most candidates limiting discussion to the attitude of the teacher in that text. Candidates were more confident dealing with the transcript, and with identifying features of authentic speech.

Interestingly, candidates were divided in interpretation of Text A: whereas many commented upon positive relationships and mutual respect, other readers considered the students to be challenging or disruptive or disrespectful: either interpretation was credited as long as features of language were cited as evidence, but examiners did suspect, however, that at times simple features of the spoken word (for example, micro-pauses) were being read as 'faults' in speech. The challenge of the question (which most discriminates between higher and lower band responses) is the task of discussing features of the texts, rather than summarising the content of each extract - in other words, discussing relevant linguistic and literary features, not just identifying features.

Many strong responses on Text A demonstrated awareness of context on register, compared the lexis of the teacher and the students and discussed features of conversational structure. There was some speculation as to the gender of the teacher, which could be useful when it focused on specific features of language. (For the record, however, whilst the vast majority of candidates who expressed a view thought the teacher female, he was in fact male.) Higher band answers moved beyond simple identification of non-fluency features and explored features of language as discourse strategies.

On Text B, higher band responses clearly conveyed awareness of the form of the text, for example commenting on narration. Some lower band responses provided little comment on Text B beyond the identification of one or two features of speech. The better answers were able to see the piece as an attempt to catch the narrative voice of a child.

### Section B

Extract-based questions remain more popular on the whole, although (b) type questions are often answered extremely well. Candidates should be made aware that there is an expectation with (a) type questions that they make some attempt to address the language of the extract(s) provided. Where candidates omit to make reference to the language of the extract(s) they miss the opportunity to address the language focus in the question (and assessment objectives). There were some responses which seem to be hybrid responses to both questions.

There were relatively few answers on *Henry V*.

### Q2(a)

This question was reasonably well tackled, although some candidates omitted to make any reference to the provided extract, and some who did address it did not answer the question.

### Q2(b)

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

### Q3(a)

This was a popular question but some candidates struggled to comment on the language of the extracts provided and/or address the issue of dramatic function, beyond Don Pedro's general role as a matchmaker. The question produced some descriptive responses which ignored the key words 'presentation' and 'function'. Candidates tended to talk vaguely about the extracts and rely on narrating parts of the plot in which Don Pedro features. There were some, however, who were able to link him to central themes, for example suggesting that he is important in representing the structure of authority and hierarchy which the play questions.

### Q3(b)

This question was more successfully addressed, although a few candidates attempted it without having any relevant knowledge or understanding. The question drew some interesting and well-informed responses in which candidates were able to show the play's preoccupation with different kinds of signs. Weaker candidates tended to be thrown by the openness of the question and get side-tracked into plot narration, hoping to answer the question indirectly.

### Q4(a) and Q4(b)

These were answered very well by some candidates, but there were some candidates who struggled to demonstrate understanding of this play. For example, whereas some candidates found a range of interesting ways to explore the play's conclusion, some candidates were only able to summarise the plot which precedes it. As in previous years, there was a distinct gap between those who understood the nature of Wilde's humour and could talk about the satirical and subversive quality of his wit and those who were baffled by the play and relied on formulations such as a 'comedy of manners' to characterise it. Very few commented on 'dramatic methods'. The (b) question on names was answered very well by some candidates, with particular exploration of the significance of the name Ernest, as expected, but also understanding of the importance of birth and status in the play.

### Q5(a) and Q5(b)

As usual, these were very popular questions. Candidates were fairly evenly divided between (a) and (b). In the case of (a), some candidates tended to describe as many instances of bleakness in the play as they could, occasionally referring to the extract for textual support. Most candidates who wrote on (b) were able to produce a convincing character portrait of Helmer, though it was left to the better ones to comment on 'verbal and dramatic techniques' and to focus on the concept of pretence.

There were too few responses on *The Rover* and *Trelawny of the Wells* to provide meaningful feedback.

# Statistics

## Unit 1: The Spoken Word (6381/01)

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	100	69	59	49	39	30
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

### Notes

**Maximum Mark (Raw):** the mark corresponding to the sum total of the marks shown on the mark scheme.

**Boundary mark:** the minimum mark required by a candidate to qualify for a given grade.



# Edexcel Advanced Subsidiary and Advanced GCE ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE (8179/ 9179)

## Set texts

### Range of reading

'English Literature' includes American and Commonwealth writing, and significant works in translation may also be included. The set texts are drawn from a range of historical periods between 1370 and the present day, and candidates are required to study a range of texts, which must include:

**AS** • a range of literary and non-literary texts, including a minimum of two texts covering two literary genres (prose, poetry and drama) one of which must have been published before 1900. The non-literary texts must include both spoken and written language.

**A2** • a wider range of literary and non-literary texts, including two additional literary texts and at least one text published before 1770 ensuring coverage of prose, poetry and drama. The additional non-literary texts must include both spoken and written language.

The following texts are set for this specification:

### Unit 1: The Spoken Word (Closed Text)

#### Section A: Unprepared Analysis

This section will consist of an unseen extract which may involve a transcription of spoken language.

#### Section B: Pre-1900 Drama Unit

The following texts will be set in January 2006, June 2006, January 2007, June 2007, January 2008 and June 2008.

- Shakespeare: *Henry V*
- Shakespeare: *Much Ado About Nothing*
- Wilde: *The Importance of Being Earnest*
- Ibsen: *A Doll's House*
- Aphra Behn: *The Rover*
- Pinero: *Trelawny of the Wells*

Candidates study one of the above texts.

### Unit 2: Desk Study

This unit sets pre-released textual material for writing tasks.

### Unit 3a: Shorter Fiction Study

There will be a free choice of text for this unit.

### Unit 3b: Shorter Fiction Study (Open Text)

The following texts will be set in June 2006, June 2007 and June 2008:

- Angela Carter: *The Bloody Chamber* (Vintage ISBN: 0099588110)
- W Somerset Maugham: *Collected Short Stories Vol. 1* (Mandarin ISBN: 074930345X) or *Collected Short Stories Vol. 1* (Vintage ISBN: 0099287390)
- James Joyce: *Dubliners* (Penguin ISBN: 0141182458)
- Alice Munro: *Selected Stories* (Vintage ISBN: 0099732416)
- F Scott Fitzgerald: *The Diamond as Big as the Ritz and Other Short Stories* (Penguin Popular Classics ISBN: 0140622381). All stories in this volume are prescribed.

Candidates study one of the above texts.

#### **Unit 4a: Writing for Different Audiences and Purposes**

There will be a free choice of at least two texts selected from a variety of literary and non-literary sources for this unit.

#### **Unit 4b: Writing for Different Audiences and Purposes**

Candidates will be given two texts as stimulus material. The texts will be drawn from literary and non-literary material.

#### **Unit 5: Wider Reading (Open Text)**

The following texts will be set in June 2006, June 2007 and June 2008:

##### **Section A: Pre-1770 Poetry**

- Chaucer: *The Merchant's Tale*, editor Hussey (CUP ISBN: 0521046319)
- Milton: *Selected Poems* (Dover ISBN: 048627554X)
- Dalglish (editor): *Eight Metaphysical Poets* (Heinemann ISBN: 0435150316)
- *Edexcel Poetry Anthology* (Section Two)
- Pope: *The Rape of the Lock* (OUP ISBN: 0198319584)

Candidates study **one** of the above texts.

##### **Section B: Modern Literature**

###### **Drama**

- Friel: *Translations* (Faber ISBN: 0571117422)
- David Mamet: *Oleanna* (Methuen ISBN: 0413626202)
- Tom Stoppard: *Jumpers* (Faber ISBN: 0571145698)

###### **Poetry**

- Sylvia Plath: *Selected Poems*, editor Hughes (Faber ISBN: 0571135862)
- Grace Nichols: *The Fat Black Woman's Poems* (all four sections) (Virago ISBN: 0860686353)
- *Edexcel Poetry Anthology* (Section One)

###### **Prose**

- Margaret Atwood: *Surfacing* (Virago ISBN: 0860680649)
- Julian Barnes: *Flaubert's Parrot* (Picador ISBN: 0330289764)
- Doris Lessing: *Memoirs of a Survivor* (Flamingo ISBN: 0006493254)

Candidates study **one** of the above texts.

#### **Unit 6: Genre Studies (Closed Text)**

This unit will focus on unprepared texts and extracts. Students will be required to read and understand the stylistic features and characteristics of both whole texts and extracts from the following areas: a) travel writing; b) letters, diaries and journals; c) biography and autobiography; d) speeches; e) reportage; f) scientific writing. Examples of suggested texts for this unit are given in the list of *Textbooks and Other Resources* on page 37 of the Specification.



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