
GCSE ENGLISH LITERATURE

8702/1M

Report on the Examination

8702

November 2021

Version: 1.0

Further copies of this Report are available from aqa.org.uk

Copyright © 2021 AQA and its licensors. All rights reserved.
AQA retains the copyright on all its publications. However, registered schools/colleges for AQA are permitted to copy material from this booklet for their own internal use, with the following important exception: AQA cannot give permission to schools/colleges to photocopy any material that is acknowledged to a third party even for internal use within the centre.

General Introduction to the November Series

This has been another unusual exam series in many ways. Entry patterns have been very different from those normally seen in the summer, and students had a very different experience in preparation for these exams. It is therefore more difficult to make meaningful comparisons between the range of student responses seen in this series and those seen in a normal summer series. The smaller entry also means that there is less evidence available for examiners to comment on.

In this report, senior examiners will summarise the performance of students in this series in a way that is as helpful as possible to teachers preparing future cohorts while taking into account the unusual circumstances and limited evidence available.

Overview of Entry

This was a very small entry in comparison to a normal series with just under 600 students being entered for this paper. In the main, students knew how to approach the paper and the majority responded to just one task. Overall they used their time sensibly, although there were quite a few scripts where students had not written very much and therefore possibly not used the time available to their best advantage. A small number of students responded to several questions with inevitable consequences for their overall mark. In the majority of responses there was little evidence of planning, which, while not in itself a guarantee of good performance, is often an indicator of some thought having gone into the organisation of a response. However, there were also some lively and highly competent responses to some of the questions. These showed an enthusiasm for the texts and a pleasing grasp of the ideas within them.

Comments on Individual Questions

The vast majority of students responded to Question 2, on *An Inspector Calls*. Both tasks on this text elicited answers that demonstrated understanding of the play and were focused on the demands of the task. In Question 1 which focused on Gerald and ideas about responsibility, most students knew enough about the character to make some relevant points about his actions and attitudes throughout the play, though a significant minority confused Eric with Gerald and underachieved as a result. Most students however had a good understanding of Gerald and the better responses developed ideas about how the character is used by Priestley to examine upper-class male attitudes to social class and the position of women in society. Question 2, which required students to discuss the extent to which Priestley presents society as unfair, elicited many interesting responses and it enabled students to integrate contextual knowledge quite fluently. Not surprisingly many responses featured Eva Smith heavily in their analysis and the level of empathy for her character throughout the play was particularly pleasing. Some excellent analyses of her situation as a working-class woman in the society of the time led many students to consider today's society and to discuss eloquently how much has (or has not) changed. At the lower levels of both *An Inspector Calls* responses, however, students had a tendency towards simply narrative responses which showed some grasp of the text but assuredly not of the tasks.

Of the other possible responses to Section A, *Blood Brothers*, *Lord of the Flies* and *Animal Farm* were the most commonly used texts with a few candidates also responding to DNA.

Question 3 asked students to comment on Mrs Johnstone as a strong female character and some students responded simply by listing some examples of her words and actions in the play. The two questions on *Lord of the Flies* drew a roughly equal number of responses. However, whereas the question about Ralph and Piggy's relationship was often characterised by simple narrative and a lack of analysis, the more abstract question about the importance of rules and order provoked some truly fascinating and thoughtful responses, grounded firmly in the text and ranging widely across several contextual issues. Question 17, which asked students to assess the extent to which Boxer in *Animal Farm* is presented sympathetically, garnered several splendidly engaged and well-informed responses and allowed students with a range of abilities to answer on this popular but not always straightforward text.

Concluding Remarks

- Overall, students who think carefully about the actual task set before they start their response will do better than those who simply jump straight in. Focused answers which are clearly framed to respond to the particular needs and demands of the question enable students to use their time most productively. Those students who simply present what looks like a prepared answer regardless of the question will not be able to access the higher reaches of the mark scheme for AO1/ AO3.
- There was also an improvement in terms of AO3 by students who understood that they needed to focus on the task and frame their response in terms of the ideas and themes suggested by the question.
- Students who considered such issues as characterisation, structure, symbolism and plot development, as well as (or sometimes instead of) more traditional features like simile, metaphor, alliteration and so on, performed well for AO2.
- Students are increasingly skilled at responding appropriately to AO3 as it is indicated by the question, instead of bolted-on context which does not focus on the task and the ideas implicit within it.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.