



General Certificate of Education

**English Language and Literature
5721**

Specification A

**NA3M&P The Study of the Language of
Prose and Speech**

Report on the Examination

2007 examination - June series

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General

The examination for this unit has two distinct parts to it and centres need to prepare candidates for the challenge of handling two 45 minute questions. In Section A the printed extracts should be the focus of candidates' answers with appropriate reference to the other relevant parts of the set text. As noted in last year's report, the analysis of these passages should represent a significant part of the answer. In Section B candidates need to engage closely with the meaning of the speech extract by discussing and analysing the ways in which speakers interact and how their discussion of the topics conveys opinions and expresses attitudes.

Successful candidates:

- kept the question at the heart of their answer by making careful reference to the passage
- displayed good knowledge of the wider text, using quotations effectively when writing about stylistic matters
- supported linguistic, literary and stylistic analysis with carefully chosen evidence from the extract
- showed a clear understanding of the features of speech and engaged with the meaning that the speakers in the extracts conveyed
- balanced out their time across both answers.

Less successful candidates:

- showed a poor understanding of their set texts, making broad and extraneous comments
- paraphrased the printed section or gave a plot summary of the text they had studied
- had little awareness of how to select material for discussion from set texts or from the printed passage
- showed minimal knowledge of the features of speech and how to write about speech in general
- produced unbalanced answers, often at the expense of Question 5.

Section A

Unit NA3M

Eden Close – Anita Shreve

This has become a well established and popular text. Candidates made effective use of the descriptive detail (of Eden on the bus, for example), the varied syntax and the narrative perspective, including flashbacks, embedded within the extract. There were often thoughtful references to wider contexts of Andy and Eden's relationship, their behaviour by the pond, for instance, or her reactions to other boys. Better answers commented on the importance of this episode in the emotional growth of Andrew and how it has repercussions nineteen years later; there were also succinct comments on the sexual jealousy in the Close household as well as comments on the emptiness of TJ's marriage to Didi. Weaker answers, predictably, focused only on Eden.

An Evil Cradling – Brian Keenan

Candidates generally answer effectively on this text and many obviously enjoy studying it. There were many references to the way Keenan highlights the use of humour in the extract, both as a means of releasing tension and also as its way of cementing the bond between the two prisoners. The extract offered good opportunities for candidates to comment on a wide range of features: descriptive vocabulary, varied syntax, telling use of pronouns interspersed with snippets of dialogue and, of course, the use of demotic language. There were plenty of relevant references to other episodes in the book which also revealed the strength and complexity of the two men's relationship, such as the time when Keenan was to have his beard shaved off or when he is eventually released.

Enduring Love – Ian McEwan

This set text is increasing in popularity, despite its complexity of plot and difficulty of subject matter. Candidates responded with some flair about the emotional state of Jean Logan, and the narrative viewpoint which Joe brings to the occasion, commenting on his detached state to begin with but how he is eventually affected, albeit selfishly, by her emotions. Effective links were made to Joe's relationship with Clarissa and their aspirations, which often led into some sound analysis of other themes. Candidates looked closely at the dialogue and discussed how the sympathies of readers were manipulated by McEwan through use of simile, technical language and unusual syntax.

A Handful of Dust – Evelyn Waugh

Very few answers were seen on this text. Of those who did study it, many coped well with Waugh's pen portrait of Messenger and how he has an important role in the narrative. The nuances of his character and his contradictory nature were well covered, as was his understated death. Very few candidates commented on the apposite nature of his name though, and how he is effectively, a messenger of death for Tony Last.

NA3P

Great Expectations – Charles Dickens

This is a very popular text, and this question was well received by the majority of candidates. Many made effective use of the extract to explore the presentation of Miss Havisham, focusing on the description of the wedding dress, the sense of atmosphere surrounding her character, as well as her relationship with Pip and with Estella. Many followed up the development of Pip's links with her in the book, or focused on the events surrounding her death. There was also effective exploration of the links between Miss Havisham and Satis House. There were ample opportunities for candidates to discuss the various stylistic features evident in the extract, including references to the use of colour, imagery, adjectives and imperatives.

What Maisie Knew – Henry James

No answers were seen on this text.

Wuthering Heights – Emily Brontë

This is the most popular set text by some way. It was especially disappointing then, that candidates dealt with this question very poorly, with many, it appears, not understanding what the term "dwelling" meant. Given that the extract focused upon Lockwood's first impressions of *Wuthering Heights*, it is worrying that candidates could not see what the question was alluding to, in the event of not understanding the word. In the worst cases, candidates simply wrote about the novel as a whole, completely ignoring the passage. Some focused on Lockwood, and others on Heathcliff. All these efforts gained little reward. Better answers explored the sense of atmosphere present within the chosen passage, commenting on viewpoint, and contrasting Lockwood's presentation of the dwelling with other narrators' viewpoints. Some candidates successfully explored the links between dwelling and inhabitants; noting the effectiveness of the pathetic fallacy in the description, and also comparing and contrasting *Wuthering Heights* with *Thrushcross Grange*. Some commented on the functions of this extract in setting the tone for the rest of the novel and for introducing key motifs such as barriers, windows and nature.

Persuasion – Jane Austen

Surprisingly, there were relatively few responses on this text. Candidates drew successfully on the dialogue in the extract to explore the relationship between Anne and Wentworth, both here and more widely across the text particularly with reference to earlier meetings between the two. Many noted the nuances of the conversation, and the references to events at Lyme. There was good understanding shown of Wentworth's qualities and his sensitivity to Anne's responses with much being made of implicit and explicit comparisons to other characters.

Section B: The Study of the Language of Speech

The length and diversity of the transcript offered plenty of opportunity for analysis of features of speech, and the situation presented clear options for comments on the speakers' attitudes. Some candidates squandered their efforts in discussing the roles of the speakers, with an unhelpful number basing their answers on power struggles between the four males, and then inserting status and dominance theory (Grice, Lakoff etc) which led candidates away from the true nature of the exchanges. These exchanges were essentially co-operative, although with some powerful posturing taking place concerning topic and attitude. There was consequently much sweeping generalisation and sterile stereotyping, often without any support or evidence to back up the points made. Centres need to be aware that this question is not set to catch candidates out; it is there to help them discuss features of speech in everyday recognisable situations where they are not having to second-guess what the conversational agenda might be.

What is apparent is that many candidates' grasp of technical terminology relating to speech is becoming more assured and there were some excellent answers which explored opinion through declaratives, interrogatives, hedging, playful banter and use of imagery. Co-operative speech allows candidates to mention adjacency pairs and turn-taking; when these features were understood, candidates were often able to make intricate comments about the way the conversation progressed.

There was an abundance of opportunities for constructive comments about attitudes (AO5) in this exchange, with much to be said on informality, differences of opinion on drinking places and sport, the flirtatious manner of Abi and the good humour of Matt, despite his being the focus for much of the banter.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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