



A-level

English Language and Literature

7707/2 Exploring Conflict

Report on the Examination

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Exploring Conflict: general comment

As ever, the paper was enjoyable to mark and the students clearly enjoy and engage with the texts that they have studied for Writing about Society and Dramatic Encounters. The students appeared to manage their time effectively across the paper and tasks. Students chose to approach the paper sensibly, either starting with Section A and completing the recreative task and commentary or starting with their response to Dramatic Encounters before moving onto Section A. However, dominating the marking of this paper was the error on *The Great Gatsby*, significant as so many students take this option.

We wholeheartedly apologise for the error on *The Great Gatsby* question, which inferred that the character of Mr Sloane was from West Egg and not from East Egg. This was discovered quickly and mitigation plans were actioned immediately to minimise any impact on the students who responded to this question. Amendments were made to the mark scheme used during the early stages of the marking period. This allowed for any response to the recreative writing question, for example accepting either where students presented Mr Sloane as a West Egger or as an East Egger. We also accepted any discussion of this in the critical commentary, overlooking inconsistencies here with the base text. Examiners were also encouraged to flag any responses that they could not award to senior examiners for advice and guidance, and additional sampling of marking was put in place to check that the guidance was being followed.

Another mitigation strategy was to look at the statistical information on student mark distributions on this question towards the end of the marking, and, reassuringly, this suggested that the full range of potential marks had been given to students answering Q5 – and in a comparable level to student responses on the other set texts. Indeed, the mark scheme itself aided avoiding penalising students as the flair and originality for Levels 4 and 5 was often shown through the shaping of the base text to an account with an identified and developed account receiver, in an imagined specific setting that added to the interaction and with the use of carefully selected details from the base text contributing to the overall quality of the writing. Thus, the levels of achievement were not connected with the students' own choice of approach as to whether Mr. Sloane was from East or West Egg, but with their execution of the task. However, we appreciate that the paper error could have contributed to anxiety and stress for students in not knowing if they had taken the right approach by either using the given information or ignoring it because of their own confident knowledge of the base text.

Section A: Writing about society

The questions this year focused mainly on minor characters, who only appear at a certain point of the original narrative – Dr Kumar's medical intervention on Hassan's harelip, Mr Sloane's visit to Gatsby's house, Ferdie Swanson's discovery of Chris's body. The level of success with these tasks depended on the choice of details used from the base text, the use of the original writer's cues from the base text to build the characterisation of the account giver and the use of a wider understanding of the whole text.

The most popular text was *The Great Gatsby* with well over 50% of students responding to this option and, unsurprisingly given the numbers choosing it, the success of responses was variable – notwithstanding the paper error on this question acknowledged in the general comments. *The Kite Runner* was the next most popular and similar in terms of the range of levels awarded, followed by *Into the Wild* and *The Suspicions of Mr Whicher*. As ever, *Into the Wild* responses tended to be successful and enjoyable to read. Adapting a non-literary text like this seems to lend itself to less temptation to pastiche and overuse clichéd language choices to emulate those used in the base text (eg motifs/symbolism). This

was also true of the few responses seen to *The Suspicions of Mr Whicher* as students again were not burdened by the base text writer's stylistic choices.

As ever, the recreative writing and critical commentary are assessed separately and this meant that students could write a successful analysis of their writing, even if the account itself had been judged as less imaginative or original. Students who performed best on the commentary kept the Assessment Objectives in mind – analysing their own creative choices and making connections to the creative choices in the base text, exploring intended effects. Another discriminator was what students chose to comment on, using their understanding of narrative and language strategies synoptically across the specification to offer an interesting deconstruction of their recreative writing.

Recreative writing

The following marks are awarded for assessment objectives:

AO5 (25 marks) – Demonstrate expertise and creativity in their use of English to communicate in different ways.

In this transformation task, expertise and creativity is being assessed through three different strands.

- flair and originality
- sustained use of style
- convincing use of base text.

The generic nature of the task asks students to recast the base text into an 'account', allowing students freedom to make representational decisions about the use of dialogue, speech and thought, narrative modes and genre. Indeed, it is the quality and execution of these choices that determines whether 'flair and originality' is demonstrated - a requirement to get into Levels 4 and 5.

Several students attempted to write an apparent piece of spontaneous speech, even calling it a transcript, and adding in fillers and pauses. This was unhelpful and showed a misunderstanding that a transcript cannot be scripted, as it is a representation of naturally occurring speech in everyday interactions. Others created scripts but without genre conventions such as stage directions, so these also appeared too speech-like and did not allow students to demonstrate imaginative and creative touches. Students would be wise to remember that the task is to create an imagined narrative moment and call upon conventional narrative devices. Obviously, they are free to choose specific genres but they need to use their associated genre conventions to creative advantage.

Letters were still a very popular choice this year (especially for *The Great Gatsby* and *The Kite Runner*). Sometimes there was an undeveloped understanding of the purpose and functions of personal letter-writing, as this is not an activity that students today undertake themselves and with which they are familiar. Therefore, the choice of letter receiver and the reasons for writing were sometimes unclear. This was especially true of *The Great Gatsby* as, unlike for *The Kite Runner* where the account-receiver was a family member, one of the choices to be made was which West Egg resident was receiving the letter and why they would be interested in an account about a visit to Gatsby's house. The best letters understood how to use interactive features to engage their implied reader and understood that signoffs showed relationships to the implied text receiver. *The Kite Runner* showed unconvincing formality in sign-off, eg writing to a parent or loved one but signing-off as 'Dr Kumar'. Similarly, letters from Mr Sloane in *The*

Great Gatsby were often to a close friend but signed off very formally. Letters seemed to be an easy way for students to meet the task, but often students had not really thought about why this letter would be written at all. For *The Kite Runner* letters worked well to indicate that Dr Kumar was still in Afghanistan, missing home and writing about his experiences. For *The Great Gatsby* there was often no real reason for the letter and this led to students struggling to know how to end their recast, some simply saying very generally that they did not have time to write anymore and so ‘goodbye. Phone calls worked well for *The Kite Runner* as there was a reason for Dr Kumar to call home and interviews were effective for *Into the Wild*.

Some students spent a long time scene setting, drawing on motifs from the novels (both *The Great Gatsby* and *The Kite Runner*) This led to some flair but sometimes content was thin as there was not enough time/space left to flesh out the narrative. Some students, those who spent a long time scene setting, tried to pastiche Fitzgerald or Hosseini, often using colour imagery (Fitzgerald) or pathetic fallacy (Hosseini) to establish tone/mood and this worked reasonably well but only if used judiciously.

In the past there has been an overreliance on dialogue, which often fails to sustain interest or to show imaginative elements. While this was still very prevalent, noticeably this year more students showed that they could use reporting clauses, suspended quotations, and descriptions of non-verbal communication to convey characters’ attitudes to others, and perhaps as a method to subtly reveal their designated character’s motivations. Monologues were also a risky narrative strategy for students who lost sight that the task is to give an account to another. Students who handed this better sustained the sense of interacting with another or even used an interior monologue as part of their narrative toolkit, interspersing this with other narrative devices such as different types of speech presentation. Some students also showed the powerful use of thought presentation to give another view than that which is said aloud to another character as direct speech, or to create the sense of a remembered experience or feeling – often using the base text details as inspiration.

Students who showed wider knowledge of the texts generally wrote more convincing pieces, eg knowledge of the political turmoil in Afghanistan at the time of Hassan’s surgery; Chris’s interests in reading, nature, self-survival etc., others who had succumbed to disaster in similar ways, *Gatsby* and Daisy’s relationship or later demise at the hand of Wilson.

As a general overview, the most successful responses:

- chose their form/genre wisely and understood how it functioned in terms of presenting and developing characters.
- used choices about setting and location to enhance the narrative and to show a secure understanding of the base text.
- selected the details to use from the base text carefully to enhance the representation of events from a new narrative point of view, using the right amount to allow for their own creativity.
- adopted sensible genres for the characters to use, given the base text and the character being presented.
- used a range of devices such as speech and thought presentation, flashbacks, structural devices (in media res, cyclical structures) and setting to create a sustained and original narrative.
- thought about the way that the character would use language, crafting a convincing idiolect and sustaining the chosen register.
- built the relationship with the account receiver and often created a convincing characterisation for them too, recognising that narratives use relationships to develop the narrative trajectory, explore themes etc.
- addressed all the bullet points, understanding that these are an integral part of the question.

- controlled the narrative from the beginning to the end, sustaining the reader’s interest.

As a general overview, less successful responses:

- gave literal and chronological retellings of the events in the springboard extract, adding little additional perspective given the changed point of view – particularly true of *The Great Gatsby* and *The Kite Runner*.
- showed a lack of knowledge of the base text, confusing, omitting or making errors about key details.
- wavered between tenses and even first and third-person perspectives.
- did not create a sense of the account receiver, creating a seemingly interior monologue without an external audience.

Q1: *Into the Wild*

Students used the fact the account receiver was someone official to their advantage, allowing them to consider register/stylistic choices ie often using their schemas of police interviews to create the interaction convincingly and to characterise the State Trooper in a more developed fashion.

Successful responses:

- used temporal choices thoughtfully, either setting the recast immediately after the discovery and arrival of the state trooper or the next day at the station. The immediacy meant that the point of discovery and different people’s reactions could be presented effectively. The next day scenario allowed for reflection on the event and the shift of setting to a more official and investigative one.
- created an effective register for each of the participants, eg contrasting the more colloquial dialect of Ferdie Swanson with the more official and interrogative register of the State Trooper.
- using the structural devices of an interview to construct the interaction, for example adjacency pairs.
- thoughtful carefully about how to represent the attitudes of each participant in the language used, eg the State Trooper’s suspicious and questioning tone as compared to Swanson’s defensive or shocked one.

Less successful responses:

- used base text knowledge less convincingly, eg naming Chris as the body in the bus, despite the text showing that it was some time after the discovery that his identity was confirmed.
- focused on the buildup with the hunting trip and therefore ran out of time to cover the discovery of the body.
- chose a monologue form which did not engage with directly with the specified account receiver of the State Trooper.

Q3: *The Suspicions of Mr Whicher*

Successful responses:

- presented the two detectives thoughtfully, contrasting the older more experienced detective with a younger one to explore recollections of Mr Whicher and a newer less experienced recruit.
- created a realistic setting for the interaction such as a police station or walking the streets of specific places relevant to the text such as Camberwell.

- used the interaction to explore the Victorian obsession with Mr Whicher and as an opportunity to explore some of the ambiguities around him.
- offered a more literary response, as a contrast to the factual base text, using narrative devices to craft the account.
- focused closely on the representation of the police for the era depicted eg the creation of London accents, as well as showing of a consciousness of the Victorian attitudes to this relatively new profession.

Less successful responses:

- showed very limited understanding of the base text, making broad comments about how hard the investigation must have been but without any other reference to the two detectives' roles/cases.

Q5: *The Great Gatsby*

There were many straightforward and derivative responses to the task, retelling the extract almost word for word. However, examiners also very much enjoyed the many characterisations of Mr Sloane: from someone dripping with disdain for Gatsby, to someone so much more interested in himself to be overly concerned about Gatsby. Settings for interactions were varied, occurring in speakeasies, at dinner parties, whilst horse-riding, in offices, or in domestic settings of houses/mansions. Such imaginative and thoughtful settings showed a sound understanding of his characterisation in the base text extract, from which they could build his attitudes to other characters.

Much thought also went into the characterisation and presentation of Fitzgerald's nameless 'lady' in the base text. Sometimes she was used as the account receiver and sometimes was used in a referenced role as Mr Sloane's wife, sister, or mistress. Observable too were the representational choices evident in students opting for her sister, to either remain a nameless entity to be symbolic of the dismissive attitudes to women Fitzgerald suggests in the novel, or named 'Ruby', 'Lily' etc. to link to Fitzgerald's symbolism in the base text.

Successful responses:

- thought carefully about when/where the recast was set, eg after Gatsby's death and so reflecting on the meeting sometime after it had occurred.
- chose the account receiver purposefully – sometime a made-up character such as business associate or close friend, or iterations of the lady, or real characters in the base text such as Wolfsheim.
- if writing a letter, had a clear reason for doing so eg a fellow businessman
- did not over or under-select details from the base text, using a nuanced approach to reliving the event for another and allowing Mr Sloane to reveal his feelings about the experience and Gatsby. For example, using information such as Mr Sloane's lack of speech, his refusal of hospitality, the way that he sat, the social significance of the horse and the behaviour of the lady to make inferences about his attitudes towards women, status, Gatsby, and Tom Buchanan.

Less successful responses:

- set their recast either at the time of the event; this could work but did not always allow for reflection of characters etc.
- chose unconvincing and vague text receivers eg dear friend.
- either over-relied on the base text, adding nothing new to the shifted perspective of Mr Sloane's, or overlooked it completely and using parts of the text that they seemed more familiar with such as Gatsby's parties.

Q7: *The Kite Runner*

The Kite Runner worked well with a minor character as a focus, with many students understanding the significance of Dr Kumar's account as an outsider, both to Afghan culture and to the family he was helping. Many understood that this could be used to their advantage as they depicted what he observed as part of a wider social/political attitude towards minorities such as the Hazaras and the complicated interplay of relationships he witnessed.

Successful responses:

- showed a subtle awareness that Dr Kumar was from New Delhi such as how he spoke about his experiences and his understanding of Afghan culture and language.
- considered temporal choices effectively such as setting this on his return from surgery or writing a letter as he was there.
- used setting effectively, often back in his home, creating a realistic domestic scene.
- built a backstory for Dr Kumar and his interest in plastic surgery and offered personal reasons for his concern for Hassan.
- used his role as a doctor, as well as useful details from the base text, to create his character as compassionate and observant.
- created a relationship with the family member, considering carefully the implications of telling his mother, wife, or brother about his experiences.
- understood that as an observer to the family Dr Kumar could perhaps see the complexities in the relationships between father and son and between the children.

Less successful responses:

- misunderstood the base text, thinking that Hassan's cleft palate was a sign of his ethnicity and thought that Baba was trying to erase this.
- struggled to reference Baba without calling him Baba.
- did not select carefully from the base text but allowed Dr Kumar to retell it exactly as it occurred.
- lacked any variety in narrative devices with imaginative elements being confined to a few more descriptive noun phrases.

Critical Commentary

Many students constructed responses that showed their ability to comment on their creative decision-making considering the text they had studied and in an interesting manner. However, quite a lot of students this year offered very broad discussions, quoting from their recast and offering a general

discussion of the intended effects with limited focus on specific details. There was often quite a stark difference between the levels of achievement in the recreative task to their commentary and examiners felt that they were awarding more students in Levels 1 and 2 for AO2/AO4 than in previous years. Sometimes there were no references to the base text and no marks could be given for AO4 as no connections were being made at all.

The following marks are awarded for the three assessment objectives:

AO2 (15 marks)

The mark scheme shows that this assesses two distinct strands: identification of language features used and analysis and evaluation of decisions made to shape the text.

Examiners noted that:

- students commented effectively on the meanings they had intended to create, reflecting on narratorial choices – 1st/3rd person including flashbacks etc., characterisation, use of speech/thought etc.
- some students reflected on specific language features precisely and explicitly; some students made only brief reference to a few, not very useful, features.
- some were overly descriptive of their own choices. Although AO1 is not assessed explicitly, it is implied through the level descriptors that refer to language for both AO2 and AO4 and students should explore the meanings of specific language choices.

AO4 (10 marks)

The mark scheme shows that this assesses one strand: making connections (similarities and differences) between their own decisions as writers and the decisions and effects achieved by the writers of the base text.

Examiners noted:

- again, a continued overreliance on discussing social and historical contextual factors for *The Great Gatsby* such as the Jazz Age, capitalism, and the American Dream at the expense of exploring language or narrative connections; this resulted in lower marks for AO4, despite their being connections made as they could only be ‘limited’ or ‘general’.
- that some focused solely on content with little understanding of the writer’s stylistic choices.
- some made very little reference to the base text, instead focusing solely on their own writing.

AO5 (5 marks)

The mark scheme shows that this assesses two distinct strands: organisation of the commentary and accuracy of writing.

Examiners noted that:

- most students were aware of this Assessment Objective and paragraphed their commentaries, organising their analysis into key topics.

- most errors were related to spelling and punctuation but some sentence construction errors occurred because students were unsure how to include quotations into their comments.
- handwriting was sometimes challenging to read.

As a general overview, the most successful responses:

- understood that the task was assessing their ability to select carefully narratorial and language choices relevant to the brief given and explore these choices analytically.
- carefully selected the most interesting aspects such as the stylistic choices used to create the character of the account-giver and the reasons for this characterisation.
- developed their discussion, rather than listed features without comment and analysis
- showed their detailed knowledge of the base text and the stylistic choices made by writers to achieve certain effects.
- confidently discussed similarities and differences with the base text based on the changed point of view to their character.
- structured their commentaries around the assessment objectives and the weighting of the AOs – ie more marks for AO2 than for AO4 (although an approach that began with a connection to the base text was as successful as one that started from their own writing)
- wrote accurately and organised commentaries around key topics.

As a general overview, less successful responses:

- did not always label the language features they were using, selecting quotations only to support their point which made comments general and broad.
- were unable to comment on point of view beyond identifying if they had used a first-person or third-person pronoun or homodiegetic/heterodiegetic narrator. Just asserting that these allow for the presentation of the character's feelings or opinions is not supported simply using a pronoun.
- did not analyse any specific language features used by the base text writer, commenting only on content or context.
- reference to the base text was sometimes limited to the content in the given passage and weak responses tended to ignore the base text altogether, or offered only isolated comments.
- focused only on how they had copied aspects of the base text's writer's style.
- did not check their spelling, grammar, and punctuation.

Section B: Dramatic encounters

A Streetcar Named Desire was by far the most popular text with approximately 70% of the responses, followed by *Othello* and *All My Sons* but, as ever, only a few were seen for *The Herd*.

The following marks are awarded for the three Assessment Objectives.

AO1 (15 marks)

The mark scheme shows that this assesses three distinct strands:

- use of concepts, methods, and terminology
- selection of and analysis at different/appropriate language levels
- expression and presentation of ideas.

Examiners noted that:

- there was a tendency for some students to focus on identifying repetitively a pattern of a language features, perhaps thinking that this would guarantee level 4. Identifying a pattern in itself is not something that is valued on this specification, rather in how patterns can lead to meaning being created. This can be across the whole text, as much as individual sections of the text. Many responses to *A Streetcar Named Desire* this year did explore effectively the pattern of exclamatories and interrogatives as Blanche attempted to find out what Stella knew about her reputation, as well as exploring Blanche’s pattern of euphemisms across the play as a way of trying to obscure negative aspects of her reputation and covering up her actions.
- language features identified were sometimes restricted to sentence functions and individual word classes in responses. Students should be encouraged to identify and analyse features from a range of language levels.
- gender theories were still being applied by some students (seen in references to Lakoff etc.) but these rarely added anything to responses and they are not a requirement of the specification. Students would be better served by concentrating on how the playwright crafts and shapes meanings and characters’ identities than spuriously trying to link 1970s/1980s gender theories based on real-life spoken interaction to constructed texts mostly written before these.
- some students raise ideas about positive and negative face but either link to examples that do not illustrate these - perhaps as they misunderstand what these mean - or do not explain how they are FTAs or try to protect aspects of face. Similarly, references are made to maxims but incorrectly in identifying quality/quantity, or not providing any detail about them.
- power concepts (eg positional, social etc.) were used more explicitly and were as effective, if made relevant to the question, as politeness concepts. In terms of applying concepts, there is no specific checklist or hierarchy that need including, so students should be encouraged to engage with concepts that both they feel confident with and that further their analytical points.
- some students assumed that all pronouns are person deixis, that any use of ‘as’/‘like’ is a simile, labelled modality incorrectly, used some general terms, eg phrase, word, the quote etc. or identified a sentence as complex without an explanation of the significance of this.
- reference to speech acts were secure – not seen in as many responses as previous years – with those who did address commissives or perlocutionary acts doing so very effectively.

AO2 (20 marks)

The mark scheme shows that this assesses three distinct strands:

- an ability to interpret and evaluate the question focus
- selecting appropriate detail
- analysis of authorial craft.

Examiners noted that:

- some students only gave a cursory focus on different parts of the play (and were often more descriptive in their approach to these than to the extract where there was more of a close focus on specific details); this restricted students from offering different interpretations of the question focus and move up the levels of achievement.
- some students were still overlooking the playwright’s decision-making and crafting.

AO3 (10 marks)

The mark scheme shows that this assesses two distinct strands:

- generic conventions of drama (specific dramatic conventions and the affordances of the stage such as soliloquy, asides, use of theatrical space, stage directions)
- the influence of contextual factors on the negotiation and shaping of meaning (these include the social, historical, political, and literary influences on the production and reception of the play).

Examiners noted that:

- the use of quotations from literary criticism was far more evident this year and, when used relevantly, these allowed for evaluation of the question focus. It was less helpful when students just made vague references to Marxist interpretations and class, and Feminist interpretations and gender. (As a reminder, this specification does not outline that there must be any critical lens on interpretations.)
- students' understanding of historical and social contexts is still uncertain, sometimes led to sweeping assertions and inaccurate comments eg that domestic violence against women was to be an expected behaviour from men in the 1940s and that *A Streetcar Named Desire* was set just after the Civil War and the slavery had only just been abolished.
- some students still do not recognise the dramatic genre as important to comment on, despite this being one clear element of the AO3 mark scheme; some simply referred to stage directions as the only examples of genre conventions.
- With *Othello* and *All My Sons* responses particularly, the discussion of genre conventions was often lacking and students should be encouraged to explore Shakespeare's and Miller's use of these so that they can explore these explicitly.

As a general overview, the most successful responses:

- applied speech acts, face theory and maxims successfully and used these to explore the presentation of the question focus.
- offered detailed and varied response to the question themes, making texts choices from throughout the text and exploring these analytically.
- signposted different parts chosen from the play clearly, demonstrating their link to the interpretation offered.
- applied a range of terminology from different language levels accurately and meaningfully for the question.
- selected contextual factors that added to the interpretative point and/or question focus. This was often used in opening/concluding paragraphs, as well as integrated throughout the essay.
- demonstrated their understanding of the playwright's uses of dramatic genre conventions for deliberate effects in line with the question focus.
- showed detailed knowledge and understanding of the play studied through their text selection.

As a general overview, less successful responses:

- made only brief reference to the particular text outside of the extract, often descriptively and without analytical focus on language or the question
- did not apply linguistic terms, used terms very generally, or relied on labelling sentence functions such as exclamatories only
- referred to Grice's Maxims/FTAs in quite a general way, without clear exemplification to explain how/why
- did not always focus on the actual question, but recast it to the question they wanted to answer

- made minimal reference to genre or over asserted social and historical factors such as men's behaviours and women's lack of rights.

Othello

There was no overwhelmingly popular question this year with similar numbers choosing Q9 and Q10. Most students responded well to each question theme, focused closely on either conflicting sense of duty (Q9) or suspicions about others (Q10). AO1 was usually well handled with students identifying and exploring specific language features but there was less certainty with AO3 and dramatic conventions. Critical responses were often used effectively.

Successful responses:

- explored conflicted duties in detail with reference to Othello as General with duties both to the state and as a husband; Desdemona as wife and daughter. Points here were well linked to ideas about context, discussing ideas about attitudes towards race when discussing Othello, and gender when discussing Desdemona. Some also referenced Emilia – her duties as a wife but also her duty to Desdemona and where the conflict between these come to a head in Act 5: Sc2. Some discussed Iago's lack of conflicted duty, showing only a duty to himself (Q9).
- handled well ideas about suspicion, mainly focusing on Emilia's. Roderigo's suspicions were also addressed well, seeing this as the turning point for his relationship with Iago (Q10).
- chose other thoughtful sections of the text ie Othello's growing suspicions about Desdemona (Act 3: Sc3) and Iago's role in inciting these, charting the development in subsequent scenes until Act 5: Sc2 and linking to the tragic trajectory (Q10).
- made interesting points about how Iago's suspicions about Othello (real or imagined) are the catalyst for the tragedy as a whole and the basis of Shakespeare's plot (Q10)
- addressed other character's suspicions such as Brabantio's suspicions of Othello – linked to ideas about race and how easy this was considering Othello's othering (Q10).
- surprisingly few students focused on the handkerchief as a motif used to sow suspicion – those who did offered some detailed discussion (Q10).

Less successful responses:

- could outline the nature of the duties associated with specific characters but could not explore their significance to the play as a whole (Q9).
- recognised that suspicions ran rife throughout the play but did not quite engage with specific methods used by characters/Iago to sow suspicion (Q10).
- overlooked conventions of the dramatic genre and made barely any reference to context or genre at all.
- lacked a close focus on contextual factors, or made very sweeping contextual points on gender roles and offered only some reference to tragedy. Some valid contextual comment, although still quite sweeping when addressing gender roles.

All My Sons

Q11 (concerns about reputation) proved twice as popular as Q12. Q12 (tensions between male and female characters) was less successfully addressed as students tended to simply identify that tension existed, rather than exploring Miller's use of this for thematic or dramatic effects.

Successful responses:

- were able to address ideas about reputation well, mainly focusing on Keller's attempts to hold on to his, but with some students also addressing George's attempts to reclaim his family's reputation (Q11).
- compared Keller's reliance on reputation with Chris' rejection of this, although did consider Chris's own focus on reputation in his wartime role. Some students addressed Kate's strategies to protect Keller's reputation, but relatively few, and really most students focused on the idea of reputation without focusing too closely on language used to assert/protect/challenge reputations (Q11).
- explored tensions between the different male and female characters as originating from different sources ie Sue and Jim's tensions over money, Chris and Ann's over their current and future desires etc. (Q12).
- made some useful contextual comment: Miller's attitudes towards capitalism, post-war economics etc.

Less successful responses:

- made less developed reference to genre, either as a drama or as a tragedy with associated conventions
- took a rather narrow interpretation of the text as just a clash between generations. While this had relevance and merit, it seemed limiting to only consider this as Miller's motivation.
- focused only on Keller's reputation (Q11).
- did not interrogate ideas about types of tension between male and female characters (Q12).
- were overly descriptive throughout their responses and did not consider Miller's role.

A Streetcar Named Desire

Q13 (concerns about reputation) was more popular, but Q14 (disappointments in others) was probably more successfully addressed. For Q14, students seemed to be able to explore disappointment in depth and could link to most characters in the play. The focus on different characters and their disappointments allowed students to explore the question theme subtly, perhaps more so than for Q13. Q13 showed less specific focus on reputation, sometimes just wanting to discuss conflict or Blanche's character. Those who did address reputation tended to mainly prioritise Blanche rather than consider how other characters' concerns about their own reputations were important.

Successful responses:

- explored the significance of Blanche’s reputation as compared with Stella’s lack of focus on her reputation. Many students discussed Stanley’s reputation as alpha/toxic male, as well as more subtly his reactions to Blanche and Stella’s verbal assault on his reputation. Some students focused on Allan’s death by suicide as an indicator that he could not live without the loss of his reputation and Stanley’s sexual assault of Blanche as a way of destroying her reputation completely and asserting his control (Q13).
- saw perceptively how contextual factors and Williams’s use of dramatic and tragic genre conventions foregrounded reputation as a significant focus in the play. Many commented on the motifs of light and bathing, as well as the elements of plastic theatre such as the spilling of the drink and the Blanche’s changing costumes from the beginning of the play, to evaluate how these presented her Southern Belle reputation (and attempts to control this) from the start to her tragic downfall in Scene 11. Others explored Williams’s use of expressionist and realist devices to present reputation, as well as seeing the tropes of the Southern Gothic in relation to the question (Q13).
- used references to Old South and New South thoughtfully to evaluate how the changing nature of America at the time of production linked to Williams’s characterisation of Blanche and Stanley, linking these ideas effectively to the reputations they were trying to upload. As ever, Stella was seen as the bridge between the Old and New South, with more subtle interpretations showing how her lack of concern for her own reputation, in addition to her lack of understanding about why it is so important to Blanche, foregrounded her changed social allegiance. Students often linked this to detailed discussion of Stella’s minimal responses and dismissive reaction to Blanche in the extract (Q13).
- offered focus on different characters’ disappointments. Blanche: in her situation, in Mitch, in Stella’s marriage, and some students even addressed her disappointment in her family for not having taken due care of Belle Reve which has culminated in this current state. Mitch’s disappointment in Blanche was addressed by most students with exploration of his responses in the extract to illustrate this – sometimes contrasting this with the hope that he had in earlier scenes. Also, some focused on Stella’s disappointment in Stanley, if somewhat overstating this, but making some valid observations when addressing the final scene (Q14).
- saw patterns in language used to represent characters’ concerns about reputation across the play eg Blanche’s use of zoomorphic language to try and demean Stanley’s reputation and express her dismay in Stella’s choice, as well as the zoomorphic language used by Williams to depict the fragility of Blanche’s reputation in the references to moths and butterflies (Q13).
- offered focus on different aspects of tragedy, reflecting on Aristotelian, domestic, and some students addressing Hegelian forms – all allowing for close exploration of how disappointment / focus on reputation can lead to character downfall.
- stagecraft handled in some detail, addressing lighting, sound/music, proxemics/haptics, motifs and considering elements of plastic theatre.

Less successful responses:

- unlike for other questions, focused mainly, or solely, on the given passage whilst others only touched very briefly on the given extract (other questions showed some reference to the passages and then the wider play). This seemed unique to these questions, and mainly for Q13.
- mainly addressed reputation with reference to Blanche, overlooking the significance of reputation to other characters (Q13).
- made some sweeping contextual comment about roles of women, domestic violence etc. and lots about Williams' own sexuality and Rose's mental health (although stronger responses made this explicitly relevant to reputation or disappointments).
- focused on inaccurate information such as believing that Stanley is an immigrant himself.
- offered some language detail but on only a narrow range of features eg Blanche's exclamatories and pauses. (At least this year for Q13 students did go on to explore evaluative adjectives etc. and the metaphors in her monologues.)
- used the term 'quote' to label their quotation without further language labelling.
- used terms eg hamartia, anagnorisis, catharsis etc. without development.

The Herd

Of the few responses to this text, most chose Q14 (resentment of others) as opposed to Q15 (reactions to the arrival of others).

Successful responses:

- focused on Carol and her relationship / attitude towards Jackie. Some students saw this as reflective of wider resentment of social services etc. (Q14).
- some focus on Carol's resentment of Claire and Ian when selecting from the wider play, with stronger responses interpreting meaning from these (Q14).

Less successful responses:

- seemed to want to discuss unhappiness with others rather than resentment – they worked hard to make it fit, but not wholly successfully
- made little contextual comment other than Kinnear's own attitudes and family circumstances, especially concerning his sister
- did not focus on language detail either, honing in on taboo lexis but not much else.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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