



A-LEVEL

ENGLISH LITERATURE B

7717/C: NEA Theory and Independence
Report on the Examination

7717
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Introductory Comments

Students and teachers seem to have largely understood and embraced the requirements of this unit and moderators saw many examples of interesting and thought-provoking work this summer. The vast majority of students appeared to have been engaged by their texts and the critical ideas they were working with and there was a real sense of exploration, and often of enjoyment, in the folders that were looked at. There were relatively few rubric infringements seen this summer, although there were some, details of which are given below. Mostly the mark scheme was applied appropriately and teachers accurately placed work in the most suitable band. Teachers and students have clearly worked hard and the results were often very impressive so all involved deserve praise and commendation.

Theory

Elsewhere in this specification students approach their examination texts through the lens of genre, whereas in the NEA they explore their texts through the lens of critical theory. Many students clearly found this to be an interesting way to approach literature and for many there was a sense they were genuinely discovering a new reading by using critical ideas. Moderators saw work using all areas of the critical anthology this summer and no one section seemed to dominate over any other.

Where this aspect of the unit was most successful:

- students chose a critical school of thought that worked well with their text in that it allowed for genuine exploration and consideration of different ideas
- they avoided applying an 'obvious' set of critical ideas to a text because then debate, exploration and counter-argument became difficult – eg a feminist reading of a feminist text
- the ideas that were used from the critical anthology were well chosen
- students really understood the critical ideas they were working with and used them as a lens through which to read the literary text, rather just writing about the text in isolation and then tagging on critical ideas at the end.

Independence

This unit should give students some ownership of their work and enable them to make some choices and decisions about it. There are three areas of the unit where students can be given independence: choice of text, choice of critical ideas, choice of task. Some students can manage to make independent choices in all three areas, and there were impressive examples of this, but even if a little more structure and guidance is required in some areas students should still have a controlling hand in the production of their NEA work.

Where this aspect of the unit was most successful:

- students were given an appropriate amount of independence in their choice of text, task and critical ideas
- not all students in a group did the same thing
- even if the text was the same across a teaching group students chose different critical approaches and tasks, which led to very different readings
- students were able to choose texts that were relevant and of interest to them
- work was varied, interesting and engaging to read and suggested real enjoyment and discovery.

Task setting (Conventional Essays)

All of the questions on the examination papers in this specification are framed around AO5 – debate and exploration – and the NEA should be no different. The two main ways to frame a task tend to be to ask a genuine, open question or to give a viewpoint about a literary text and ask students to explore and debate it. Moderators reported very few, if any, problems with conventional tasks this year, although a small number of tasks did ask students to ‘describe’ or ‘explain’. If a student is given these command words they run the risk of producing a piece of work that does not cover AO5 and so they are best avoided.

The most successful and enabling tasks allowed the students to:

- construct a line of argument and reach a conclusion
- genuinely debate and explore different ideas about the text.

Journalistic Pieces

For this unit it is possible to produce a conventional response but to write it in the style of literary journalism. This can be challenging as students need to remember to not just focus on the writing style but also cover all of the AOs and engage in depth with the literary text they are studying. Few examples of journalistic pieces were seen this summer but the ones that were seen demonstrated impressive writing skills on the part of students.

Re-creative Pieces

It is possible to include one re-creative piece in the NEA folder, although it is not a requirement to do so. A re-creative piece includes a piece of creative writing that is rooted in the literary text that has been studied, and which is shaped by a critical reading, and a commentary that explains how critical ideas have been used to shape the new text that has been produced. There were more re-creative pieces than journalistic pieces seen this series but the overall number was still small.

The most successful re-creative pieces:

- provided a new reading of the base text based on literary critical ideas
- included a commentary that clearly explained how critical ideas had informed the reading of the base text and shaped the re-creative piece
- did not worry about re-creating the style of the original text – this is not a requirement
- shed new light on the base text and explored it from a new angle.

Rubric Infringements

There were relatively few rubric infringements this summer but there were some. Centres are asked to check the requirements of the unit very carefully in the specification to ensure they do not permit students to do ‘inadmissible’ texts.

The unit requirements are that students must study:

- one prose text that is worthy of A-level study and not on any of the 7717 examination units
- one poetry text (either a single authored collection of short poems or a single longer poem) that is worthy of A-level study and not on any of the 7717 examination units
- at least two different sections of the critical anthology.

In this unit students are not permitted to write about:

- any text on any of the 7717 examination units, even if they themselves are not studying it
- a drama text.

Administration

Administration is rarely an issue in this unit and mostly moderators reported exemplary practice on the part of centres.

Some administrative points to remember:

- please ensure work is with the moderator by 15th May
- do not put work in plastic wallets but secure with staples or treasury tags
- address summative comments on the work to the moderator, not the student, and focus on justifying why a particular mark was deemed the most appropriate
- if a mark is changed during internal moderation please explain clearly why this has been done and why the new mark is judged to be more accurate.

Overall, all those involved in this unit had clearly worked hard and a wide range of interesting and engaging work was the result. Many thanks to all concerned.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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