
EXTENDED ESSAY REPORTS – MAY 2003

Dutch – Group 1

The range and suitability of the work submitted

The range of topics this year proved to be restricted to the literature of the 20th century, merely focusing on the modern novel. 12 extended essays were submitted, with the following topics:

- *Mulisch, The Assault,*
- *Van Lieshout, Brothers,*
- *the influence of the sixties in two novels of Remco Campert,*
- *characterization of women in three novels of Maarten 't Hart,*
- *impossible love in two novels written by Tessa de Loo and Joost Zwagerman,*
- *cultural backgrounds in two novels written by Adriaan van Dis and Marion Bloem,*
- *murder in three novels written by Renate Dorrestein,*
- *guilt in The Name of the Father written by Nelleke Noordervliet,*
- *the influence of Judaism in two novels written by Leon de Winter,*
- *faithfulness and unfaithfulness in two novels written by Joost Zwagerman,*
- *the image of the Germans in two novels*
- *the cold war and its impact on the Dutch songs written in the sixties and seventies.*

In general the quality of the extended essays was less than in previous years. Most of the extended essays were of mediocre or satisfactory quality. One essay was according to the general and subject specific criteria of very poor quality and one was of nearly excellent quality.

Candidates who focused on a topic that aroused their enthusiasm produced better work. The extended essay is defined as "an in-depth study of a limited topic within the subject". Candidates are expected to do independent research before writing the document. Two candidates discussed only one novel without defining a very clear research topic. In such a case there is no evidence of an "in-depth study".

Candidates' performance against the criteria

Most candidates succeeded in their attempt at formulating a clear research question but there were also some that were too general, such as: "Cultural conflicts in two novels..." and "The influence of the fifties on the novels of..." Only more specific topics create an opportunity for a sound analysis. A relevant choice of research question, carefully made in consultation with the teacher, is the start of a successful enterprise.

In some of the extended essays there was a lack of balance between descriptive material and analysis. Most candidates choose the biographical approach. They discussed the main character of novels as if they were identical to the author's biography. Most extended essays do not discuss, or discuss very superficially, literary aspects of the works studied.

It is pointless to write an extended essay in a very elaborated register, with well-known general statements without any personal involvement. In the extended essay there has to be a sort of 'compromise' between the views of experienced critics and the introduction of personal elements.

Most candidates studied secondary literature. There are quotations from these works, but sometimes the quotes are not correct or supported by footnotes. Some candidates mention secondary sources

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without any reference to these works.

The abstract of the extended essay has to be a synopsis of the argumentation and conclusion of the essay. But in most cases, candidates treated the abstract as an introduction.

Many conclusions in extended essays are more or less a repetition of what is already stated in the introduction. An extended essay of good quality consists of a careful analysis of source material followed by personal views.

The comments of supervisors were sometimes very superficial, especially in cases of mediocre or weak performance. Not all the teachers completed the cover sheet giving information about the guidance given to students.

Recommendations

Special attention should be given by teachers to the following aspects:

- The most important part of the supervision by the teacher is helping the candidate to define a concrete, productive and manageable research question, not too broad in scope. Discuss with students several options before they make their definite choice of topic. See to it that they make a **limited choice of aspects to be investigated**.
- Teachers should stress upon the fact that the research should be of a **literary** nature and not primarily biographical.
- It is also important to give guidance in the use of secondary sources, in taking notes, keeping records of sources, writing footnotes, using quotations.
- It is also important to receive more detailed comments from supervisors. If the essay is written for example in an unusual sophisticated way it would be useful for the corrector to know that this is indeed the candidate's own style, equal to other written work of the same candidate.
- Formal aspects. During their guidance, teachers have to inform students about the formal aspects of the extended essay (word length, quotations, numbering of paragraphs and pages) as stated in the General Guidelines.