

# Moderators' Report/ Principal Moderator Feedback

Summer 2013

International GCSE English Language  
(4EA0) Paper 3

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## Introduction

For this paper students are required to submit two assignments, one on reading and one on writing. The reading task is in response to Section B of the *International GCSE and Certificate Anthology*. The writing task should be a piece of personal and imaginative writing **either** to explore, imagine, entertain **or** to argue, persuade, advise.

Paper 3 carries a weighting of 20% and carries a maximum mark of 80. It is recommended that centres distribute study time accordingly, so that enough time is given for the preparation of the other units.

The majority of folders had well-judged marginal annotations as well as detailed summative comments. These comments were usually linked to the appropriate criteria, making it easy to understand decisions on marks. Most centres, where there was obviously more than one marker, had indicated signs of internal moderation. Where a mark has been changed because of internal moderation processes, it is helpful if there is some explanation of the change. Sometimes so many teachers had contributed to the process that it was hard to see what the consensus was.

There is no set limit for word length but the appropriate length needs to be considered. For the Reading assignment, very short essays are unlikely to have developed and sustained the analysis required of the highest bands; however, very lengthy responses can be repetitive and lack precision. For Writing, the format tends to dictate the length, and there were examples where pieces were definitely too long, with elaborate narratives losing control and becoming less convincing, and persuasive or opinion pieces losing their punchiness and reader impact.

## Reading

Responses to Section B of the *Anthology* included varied and interesting combinations and comparisons of texts. Some centres chose to focus on one poem or prose piece, whilst others based their questions on comparisons and contrasts between pieces, usually thematic ones. Comparisons can of course be within a single poem or prose extract. Where the assignment crossed genres it was surprising that few students explored the impact of the different genres in any way. Moderators have noticed how common it is for students to quote poetry as if it were prose, with quotations not set out with regard to line endings. More investigation of the effects of genre would certainly be beneficial to students' work.

It is important that appropriate tasks are set: they should direct students to writers' techniques and not merely to content and ideas in the texts. It was heartening to see tasks which linked by technique, such as the creation of tension or atmosphere. A small number of centres gave no title at all, so that students could only respond by writing in a very general and undirected way. Tasks such as 'An analysis of...' or 'A comparison of...' were usually unhelpful to the students. Tasks which required students to write about characters in 'A Hero' or 'The Necklace', for example, or to compare characters in two extracts, did not prompt students to examine writers' methods, and hence were limiting for the students. If the task had some development and asked for the writers' own attitudes, or the ways in which they influenced readers, students then were required to look much more closely at authorial techniques. A task comparing the main characters in 'The Necklace' and 'A Hero' might very well produce a descriptive account only, but a task which asked students to think how the structure of these stories affected the readers' responses could help students to achieve the higher band assessment criteria. Students do often find it difficult to write about form and structure, and it is worth spending time to think of tasks which will enable or encourage them to do so. Another way of looking at central characters is to ask in what ways writers develop and change the reader's opinions of their characters, which focuses on the author's craft and its probable impact.

Many centres chose to focus on the theme of war, or the effects of war, by comparing 'The Last Night' to 'Disabled' or 'Refugee Blues'. This comparison was often quite securely handled, particularly if differences in genre were noted and discussed, though it was surprising that students did not always note that an extract from a novel is quite a different kind of writing than a poem.

Teachers have to decide how much contextual information to introduce with the different pieces. In some centres, students had been given so much external information that their discussion and analysis of the actual text was limited.

In the discussion of poetry there were several examples of linear commentary which seemed to rely on similar points about the text. Some centres appear to compel their students to use a template, which is very often line by line exegesis and which does not allow the originality of interpretation which marks the highest bands. Any centres which encourage all their students to follow a particular line of argument, making the same points and using the same quotations are not encouraging them to demonstrate any originality of interpretation and evaluation. Opportunities for students to demonstrate their own interpretative and analytical skills are significantly reduced in such centres. In many cases, centres were over generous to students who needed more close textual analysis - mostly in the middle and lower ends of the range. Personal response seemed to be valued more than a critical response by some centres, but students need to root their essays securely in the text(s). A small minority of centres appeared to be applying the writing criteria to the reading responses.

Some centres obviously allowed their students to choose their own combinations of texts, which certainly helps originality and freshness of response. However, the teacher generally needs to ensure that tasks specifically address the assessment criteria, ensuring that students can demonstrate analytical skills, as well as convincing and supporting interpretation. A task which offers a specific point of view about a text or texts could be useful in prompting students to consider and evaluate alternative readings.

## Writing

The quality of writing and the knowledge and usage of sophisticated vocabulary, in the personal writing tasks was at times, superb. The 'explore, imagine, entertain' section was the most popular with some very empathetic creative pieces. The point was made in a previous report that tasks which required students to add on an extra chapter to a novel did not always work well. Pastiche-style tasks were used in some centres for weaker students, but there were some cases where students were marked more for their reading, than their writing ability. Some responses were inappropriate in tone and content with a number of students producing stories which were very violent and narrative-driven. The lack of control of structure was noticeable in some work, with stories spanning many years in what appeared to be an arbitrary fashion. Attempts at genres such as science fiction were often not as successful because of the lack of purposeful and controlled shaping. Some centres seemed to encourage their students to write what was termed 'Gothic' stories but were really more in the horror genre. It seemed that a substantial number of these might have been more comfortable writing in a more personal or descriptive way. Writing tasks were often more successful if the students were set some clear framework for the work - whether it is a persuasive speech, a story with a flashback, multiple narrators and so on.

Autobiographical and personal writing was often powerfully expressed, with students making effective use of their own experiences, crafted and re-presented for the reader. The best work exhibited range and variety, but always showed evidence of shaping and crafting.

The 'argue, persuade, advise' section was less popular but there was good work here, with deliberately chosen language effectively used, and a strong sense of an intended readership. There were some strong arguments produced and it was encouraging to see the passion conveyed by students writing on subjects they knew and cared about. There were also enjoyable touches of humour at times. Students did need to ensure that if they used information from other sources to support their arguments, they used it sparingly and purposefully integrated it into their own writing, rather than including chunks of information.

Some centres gave the same stimulus to all their students, whilst others allowed greater freedom of choice. Centres need to think about the relative strengths and weaknesses of all their students so that all are given the opportunity to demonstrate their skills and creativity. It seemed a pity when all students were required, for example, to write a short story: for some, this gives an opportunity to shine but others would have fared better with a different kind of writing task. Weaker students chose the perhaps more obvious love predicaments and violent narratives, which tended to over-rely on clichés. Students should be encouraged to think beyond stereotypical scenarios.

There were many lively and humorous accounts of personal experiences, amusing articles and soundly argued persuasive pieces. Centres should bear in mind that there are alternatives to the imaginative narrative piece.

All students needed closer attention to their spelling, punctuation and grammar as, in many cases, where their content was in the higher bands they were let down in Assessment Objective 3(iii) by silly mistakes being made because of the lack of proofreading in the draft stages. A number of centres awarded high marks for Assessment Objective 3(iii) when there were numerous errors in punctuation, particularly of direct speech. Others applied the criteria here very strictly. Moderators will pick up on centres which routinely display this kind of generosity.

There was much impressive, varied and well-assessed work submitted for both Reading and Writing, a credit to centres and students.



## **Administration**

The majority of centres carried out the administrative process carefully and efficiently.

There were, however, a number of problems which did recur:

- Speaking and Listening (Paper 4) records for the selected sample should be sent with the written coursework.
- Centres should supply a Coursework Authentication Sheet for each student. Many centres failed to include the authentication sheets but these are mandatory.
- Centres must supply top and bottom students if they are not already included in the sample; similarly, they should substitute another student for any student in the sample who has withdrawn.
- The top copy of the OPTEMS should be sent to Pearson Assessment at Hellaby, and not to the moderator.
- Marks need to be double checked before submission. In a number of cases, the marks on the work were not the same as on the front sheets. Please also ensure that the same marks are transferred to the OPTEMS.
- The whole folder of work should be attached securely together by stapling or tagging.

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