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# **Examiners' Report**

## Principal Examiner Feedback

### Summer 2018

Pearson Edexcel IGCSE  
In English Language (4EA0) Paper 03

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## **Introduction**

For the coursework one assignment is required based on an in-depth study of three poems from the Anthology to at least three further poems which may be drawn from outside the Anthology.

Assignment topics are chosen by the centre/candidates but must enable students to respond critically and sensitively to a range of poems and to show understanding of how meanings and ideas are conveyed through language, structure and form. Assignments should allow the students to make comparisons but this is not compulsory.

There is no prescribed length.

## **General Comments**

Assignment topics concentrated on the main themes of the Anthology poems: love, death, memories, childhood, adult children relationships and these were all dealt with successfully by candidates at various levels. There were some unusual topics such as *Corruption in Society*. Candidates who tried to tackle multiple themes, such as *Love and Death* struggled with the amount of material required for more than one theme across detailed study on three Anthology poems and three wider reading poems.

Where responses were particularly focused was when the question itself had a clear focus. Some good examples from this year's cohort of this type of task setting, which elicited sound and well-focused results are:

*Several poems in the anthology present victims. Explore their presentation, referring to three poems in detail and to at least three other poems from your wider reading.*

*Compare how different poets have expressed their experience of retaining humanity in an unforgiving and cruel world.*

*All the poems studied portray different experiences of childhood. Show how successful each poet has been in presenting an aspect of childhood and explain which one you consider to be most effective.*

Less successful responses were often as a result of an unfocused question. One centre just gave the title '*Children and Adults*' as a base for discussion whereas another had candidates trying to focus on a very wide ranging topic: Children and lessons taught and learnt. The result was that, barring the most confident, the majority of candidates struggled to produce focused responses. A question such as A

*Study of Childhood in Six poems* does not lend itself to precision. As a result candidates would struggle to produce focused responses.

Too narrow a question can also limit candidates in fulfilling their potential. A few candidates from one centre this year attempted the following task: *Explain how narrative verse involves the reader*. Even the most confident struggled to respond in a developed and sustained manner.

There were a few candidates who did not choose poems relevant to their topic and either strained to make links or abandoned the topic at some point moving away from the requirements of the question. It is important that topics and selected poems are carefully matched.

The majority of candidates met the specification requirement of exploring three Anthology poems and three wider reading but a few did not and this was not always evident that the marks awarded took this omission into account.

Most of the evidence pointed to the fact that the wider reading poems were usually chosen with suitable care. Some centres chose other poems from the Anthology and were on the whole successful as there are sufficient examples in the Anthology to provide for both the set poems and wider reading.

Most candidates successfully integrated all six poems into their responses, some however, addressed the poems one by one with a final paragraph comparison and conclusion. This was successful in some cases but did tend to limit candidates to the lower end of the mark scheme.

Problems were caused by the balance between the attention paid to the Anthology poems and the wider reading. The specification requires **in-depth** exploration of the Anthology poems which are after all the set texts for this unit. An enthusiastic response to the chosen wider reading poems is to be welcomed, but not at the expense of the Anthology poems.

Similarly a comparative approach is admirable, but it must ensure that important ideas from the chosen Anthology poems are not missed, because they do not fit neatly in with the comparison. This can mean that the full picture of each poem is not given. There were many candidates who were successful in this approach, but there were also a fair number who were not.

Some candidates spent a long time describing the structure and rhyme scheme of their poems, but unfortunately for this appeared to be an end in itself with little or no attempt, to associate it with the message of the poem. A holistic approach would ensure a deeper understanding of the themes. However, a totally empathic approach does not lend itself to deeper analysis either. There must be a balance.

A strength of the coursework was the use of quotation in writing about the poems and many candidate used this to lead into some precise analysis. There was however, a tendency among the less confident candidates to let quotations speak for themselves without any deeper analysis. For example the following candidate when writing about *Once upon a Time* noted that: *In the text he uses a lot of metaphors such as "I have learned to laugh, too, to laugh with only my teeth and shake hands without my heart" this means that he actually learned how to lie.* This is a typical response in the lower range which was awarded a mark of 7.

The following example is from a more confident candidate, in the 15 – 18 mark range, who noted when writing about *Half-Past Two* that the expression *'Timeforkisstime'* is an invented word that is related to the concept of being a naïve character and thinking like a child. *This thing of being a naïve character and child character links with the other poems.* Although this comment is not developed the candidate has made an attempt at word analysis and has linked it to the other poems discussed.

A top level candidate discussing the same poem has named techniques and their effect on the poems in a succinct manner without labouring the point. A close personal engagement is also displayed as the candidate states that: *Fanthorpe uses the personification 'time hides tick-less waiting as to be born' to show that the ticking which denotes the passing of time is infinite. Here the reader is shown that the concept of time is clearly beyond the child's understanding and that the protagonist is isolated. He travels into the 'silent noise' and this oxymoron shows how the silent atmosphere is disturbing to the child thus further emphasising his isolation.*

This response was in the top range with a wide range of responses in between.

### **Administration**

With regard to administration, it is important to remember that moderators do have to check the candidates' names, numbers and marks against the mark sheets, so it is helpful that the folder cover sheet is fastened on the very top of the folder. Many moderators expressed their frustration at having to chase up centres about submitting folders with the highest and lowest marks, even if these are not specified in the sample required by the exam board. This is an examination board requirement.

Attaching the exam board's mark scheme, relevantly highlighted to indicate where marks were awarded, was also appreciated.

Many centres displayed clear evidence of robust internal moderation and most marked accurately according to the criteria and highlighted where the AOs had been covered. Some centres, however, tended to over-reward and sometimes

quite substantially at the 24/25 borderlines, or indiscriminately awarding full marks, often resulting in the folders having to be re-marked in full by the moderator.

Some of the more confident centres displayed a reluctance to award the highest grade when the candidate's work merited it. It seems that some centres are still assuming that a highest grade script must represent a perfect response, whereas the mark scheme does not require that. Some responses achieved the highest grade and some would have scored much higher than the maximum theoretically.

### **A brief summary**

It is important that the tasks set are sufficiently challenging and related to all the assessment objectives.

It is important that candidates are presented with a range of topics and ideas and are encouraged to choose one that appeals, thus encouraging a sound personal engagement.

The guidance for the assignment is 600 – 1000 words. Some responses were over 2500 words long. Quantity does not always mean quality and often narrative, or historical detail detracted from the core of the response. On the other hand, to cover the poems in sufficient depth detailed responses need to be developed and sustained.

All moderators without exception commented on how rewarding it was to see the strong personal engagement of the candidates with the texts and how they enjoyed reading some of the interesting, thoughtful and sometimes unusual interpretations.