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Examiners' Report  
Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel International GCSE  
In English Language A (4EA1)  
Paper 2: Poetry and Prose Texts and Imaginative  
Writing

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## Introduction

This report will provide exemplification of students' work, together with tips and comments, for Paper 2 of the International GCSE Specification A in English Language. This was the second January examination of the new 'A' specification in IGCSE English Language 9-1. The paper consists of three components: Unit 1: Non-fiction and Transactional Writing - 60% (examination); Unit 2: Poetry and Prose Texts and Imaginative Writing - 40% (this examination) OR Unit 3: Poetry and Prose Texts and Imaginative Writing - 40% (non-examination assessment). Students may also be entered for the optional Spoken Language Endorsement (non-examination assessment). Unit 2 for Poetry and Prose Texts and Imaginative Writing is assessed through an examination lasting one hour and thirty minutes. The total number of marks available is 60. The reading and writing sections on this paper are loosely linked by the theme of the text from the Anthology which appears on the examination paper.

The focus of this component is:

**Section A – Poetry and Prose Texts:** study and analyse selections from a range of fictional poetry and prose texts.

Students should study the poetry and prose provided in Part 2 of the *Pearson Edexcel International GCSE English Anthology* in preparation for responding to a given extract in the examination.

The specification identifies that students: 'should be able to read substantial pieces of writing (extended texts) that make significant demands on them in terms of content, structure and the quality of language. Throughout the qualification, students should develop the skills of inference and analysis.'

Students are advised to allocate 45 minutes to Section A and there will be one essay question on a poetry or prose text from Part 2 of the *Pearson Edexcel International GCSE English Anthology* which will be made available in a booklet in the examination if it is a longer extract or will be in the Question Paper in the case of a poem.

Students will answer the question in this section and 30 marks are available. There are three bullet points to prompt the response and the third bullet always asks students to consider language and structure.

**Section B – Imaginative Writing:** explore and develop imaginative writing skills.

Students are advised to allocate 45 minutes to Section B. There are three writing tasks, to some extent linked by theme to the reading extract. Students pick one question to respond to and the response is worth 30 marks. The format of the tasks remains the same for each series. Question 2 follows the format 'Write about a time when you, or someone you know...', Question 3 follows the format 'Write a story with the title...' and Question 4 offers two images as a prompt for a response which is always 'Write a story that begins...' or 'Write a story that ends...'.

The Assessment Objectives for this paper are:

### Section A: Reading

<b>AO1</b>	Read and understand a variety of texts, selecting and interpreting information, ideas and perspectives
<b>AO2</b>	Understand and analyse how writers use linguistic and structural devices to achieve their effects

### Section B: Writing

<b>AO4</b>	Communicate effectively and imaginatively, adapting form, tone and register of writing for specific purposes and audiences
<b>AO5</b>	Write clearly, using a range of vocabulary and sentence structures, with appropriate paragraphing and accurate spelling, grammar and punctuation

It was clear that students were all able to respond to the poem from the Anthology in the examination, and that most had studied it before. Some students had been taught the context of and background to the poem.

Throughout the qualification, overall students had been prepared well and all had, at different levels, developed the skills required to answer the questions.

It was also clear that students used what they had studied in their reading to feed into their imaginative writing, which inspired them. As the specification identifies, the main aims for our students in this paper are:

- read critically and use knowledge gained from wide reading to inform and improve their own writing
- write effectively and coherently using Standard English appropriately
- use grammar correctly, punctuate and spell accurately
- acquire and apply a wide vocabulary alongside knowledge and understanding of grammatical terminology, and linguistic conventions for reading, writing and spoken language.

Students had, pleasingly, been given the opportunity to practise their writing techniques and planning and proofreading skills.

The responses of students had some positive features. Examiners were impressed by:

- evidence that many students had understood the content of and ideas in the poem
- the successful use of the bullet points within the question
- completion of the questions in the paper and coverage of the assessment objectives
- the references to context in response to the poem

- the range of vocabulary for AO5
- writing that showed creative ideas and suitable tone, style and register for audience and purpose.

Less successful responses:

- demonstrated a lack of awareness of the range of ideas in the poem
- failed to reference the question, with students simply writing all they knew about the poem
- followed a rigid structure in their responses, with a stanza by stanza approach
- had an insecure grasp of language and structure with a lack of understanding of how language and structure were used, feature-spotting or confusion of terms
- had limited comment on language and structure and relied heavily on description of ideas or events for Question 1
- failed to support points using appropriate textual evidence
- lacked organisation of writing
- lacked accurate spelling and secure control of punctuation and grammar.

It was clear that students had been able to understand the ideas in the poem and could comment on language and structural features. Their own writing was often enthusiastic and had a clear sense of purpose and audience in the voice and ideas used.

## **Question 1**

### **AO1**

The first two bullet points in the mark scheme relate to AO1 - read and understand a variety of texts, selecting and interpreting information, ideas and perspectives. The level of understanding of the text from the Anthology is assessed in the first bullet point, and the selection and interpretation of information, ideas and perspectives in the text in the second bullet point.

At the very basic level students tended to either explain what was being said in the poem. They were able to show some understanding of some parts of the poem, but the understanding was uneven. For example, a few misunderstood various elements which lead to some confusion, such as why the Sarajevans were carrying petrol in canisters in a pram, why they were carrying water onto a plane and exactly what the two young people in the poem were doing. There was often limited selection and interpretation of information and ideas.

Students at the Grade 4 borderline were at least able to identify some of the key ideas in the poem, although at this borderline grade there was often an imbalance where the focus was on identifying basic/valid ideas and information from the poem rather than being appropriate, apt or persuasive for the higher levels. For

example, students at this borderline grade often had not considered more than broad ideas, especially the relationship between the young couple. There was a lack of 'drilling down' into the poem to examine the more nuanced ideas considered by students achieving higher marks.

Students at borderline Grade 7 were more direct in approach, as they were able to select the relevant ideas from the poem in a detailed but succinct manner.

Students at this borderline at least covered the full text of the poem and understood juxtaposition between light and dark, war and hope, for example.

## **AO2**

The third bullet point in the mark scheme relates to AO2 - understand and analyse how writers use linguistic and structural devices to achieve their effects. There needs to be understanding of the language and structure used in the text, and the level of skill is also a discriminator. *Explain* is a mid-level skill, *comment* a lower level skill and *explore/analyse* higher-level skills, which gives students opportunities to achieve across the range.

At the lowest levels students often identified and named devices but did not demonstrate the skill or understanding to discuss their use. At this level responses were characterised by writing without any explanations – students here were good at finding both language and structure features, but not as confident at explaining them. The use of rhyme is a good example here that tended to be commented on but lacked any sense of what it was used for. The responses were much more at a descriptive level, with limited and underdeveloped evidence.

Students at the Grade 4 borderline were at least commenting on both language and structure. At this borderline grade students were commenting on and explaining language and structure, with appropriate and relevant references. Students at this borderline grade were able to pick out features in the poem to link back to the ideas – there were many references to metaphors such as 'star cleared sky' and alliteration such as 'death-deep, death-dark' but often there was little developed explanation of the effect of these features.

Students at the Grade 7 borderline were commenting on both language and structure consistently, confidently and succinctly. At this borderline grade students were exploring and analysing language and structure, with detailed and discriminating references. The majority at the borderline grade were able to explore less obvious features such as juxtaposition of romance and danger, symbolism of youth representing hope alongside the features of borderline Grade 4. The examples of language and structure used at this borderline grade were much more considered and selected than at borderline Grade 4, and often were linked confidently to context such as the issue of war.

The final bullet point in the mark scheme relates to selection and use of references from the text which has been studied for both AO1 and AO2. This is a very useful discriminator in this question. As previously mentioned, students were sometimes

unable to consider references that supported different ideas and information (rather than many references which illustrated the same point) where students perhaps missed key elements that would have demonstrated apt, persuasive selection of information and ideas.

Some comments from examiners include:

- 'The vast majority of students were able to say something on the living conditions most choosing gas canisters, lack of bread and/or dodging snipers.'
- 'There was a range of approaches taken in terms of structuring responses, with a chronological, stanza by stanza approach proving to be the most helpful. Others used the structure suggested within the question, mostly successfully.'

### Example 1

The writer presents the living conditions of the people of Sarajevo as a great struggle, an experience that many don't have to face throughout their life. The living conditions appear awful and extremely poor. We know this as in the first verse the writer explains the hard ship that the locals face everyday to obtain basic needs like food and water. An example of this is, "bread they're rationed to each day". This shows that food is very scarce as only little can be given. The writer also mentions the dangers that the people of Sarajevo have to face as he mentioned they often have to dodge snipers on their track to get basic supplies. However, to stay alive it must be done, this makes the reader understand the difficulties and scenarios that are set.

#### **Examiner Comments:**

This response achieves a mark of 6 in Level 1. There is definitely 'basic understanding of the text', Level 1 (there is perhaps 'some', although with a brief response it is difficult to argue this). Selection and interpretation of information/ideas/ perspectives is limited. There is potential for there to be some valid interpretation, but again brevity limits this.

There is basic identification and little understanding of the language and/or structure used by writers to achieve effects and the use of references is limited. All of Level 1 is met.



## Example 2

The writer starts talking about empty gas cylinders and queuing for the meagre grams, for every day. This shows that the conditions for people of Sarajevo were very difficult. ~~People of Saraj~~ "empty canisters of gas to get the refills".

People of ~~Saraj~~ Sarajevo had to fetch food and water every day being extra careful from snipers and ~~and~~ they also had to carry their food and water up the stairs, as written "dodging snipers on the way, or struggling up ~~som~~ sometimes eleven flights of ~~stair~~ stairs with water". This tells us that they were in great danger from the bullets and tiredness from carrying heavy water up the stairs.

The writer says that ~~the~~ young people take a stroll in a dark street, not knowing who the other person is, ~~They could~~ person could be Muslim, Serb or ~~that~~ Croat, However the ~~the~~ boys can tell the difference between a female ~~and~~ and a male <sup>even</sup> in these dark streets. As ~~would~~ written "in unlit streets you can't distinguish who calls bread hleb, or hleb or calls it kruh". ~~This~~ This tells us that ~~even~~ even though, how hard the life was <sup>in</sup> Sarajevo ~~a~~ young people still found ways to have friends and fun.

~~As the writer says~~ Young people used to ~~communicate~~ <sup>communicate</sup> only by very soft voice, because there ~~were~~ <sup>were</sup> no lights in the streets. When the girl was ~~satisfied~~ <sup>satisfied</sup> by the voice of the boy ~~they~~ then the boy would lit up a match or a lighter for a cigarette to see if he has gone further in ~~a~~ her heart. <sup>through her eyes.</sup> As written "Then match or lighter to a cigarette to check in her eyes if he's made progress".

There was a ~~people~~ <sup>couple</sup> who ~~managed~~ managed to pass the voice and match as a lighter test to ~~no~~ move up in ~~their~~ their relationship. ~~They~~ The boy take the girl to a cafe ~~in~~ which was lit by ~~a~~ candles to ~~a~~ have a ~~cup~~ coffee and there they held hands, as written "The dark boy-shaped leads ~~dark~~ dark girl-shaped away to share one coffee in a candlelit cafe". Even in those difficult-time young people still wanted to have someone special with them and they found a girl in those ~~dangerous~~ <sup>dangerous</sup> dark streets.

The writer use adjectives to separate different types of people for example "Muslim, Serb or Croat" and "The young". This help us to understand what types of people there are in the extract.

The first paragraph tells us about the conditions in Sarajevo and how difficult it is to get food and water. "empty ~~or~~ canisters of gas to get the refills they wheel home in prams".

The rest of ~~para~~ paragraphs are about young going out in those dark streets to ~~meet~~ meet with a girl in those dangerous ~~until~~ <sup>dangerous</sup> streets. "a girl's dark shape is ~~forced~~ <sup>forced</sup> by a boy."

### Examiner Comments:

This answer achieves a mark of 10 in Level 2. This response meets the first bullet in Level 2 – there is some understanding of the text (there is not a sense that this is sound, so for this is does not border on Level 3). The second bullet point is met in Level 2 also as the selection and interpretation is valid but not developed. The third bullet point is more on the border of Level 1/2 as there is a lack of evidence that the student has more than basic/little understanding of language and structure. The selection of references is valid, but not developed. Level 2 is securely met, but this does not border on Level 3.

### Example 3

There are many ways in which the writer presents their lives. Firstly, at the start of the passage it states 'bread they're rationed to each day'. This conveys the lifestyle of Sarajevo people because they have to ration their food and it is stating that they are among a war. Another example is 'queuing for the precious meagre grams'. This tells us how desperate they are and how they depend on the meagre grams. Furthermore it mentions in the poem 'walking streets Serb shells destroyed'. This shows the reader their living conditions and is very vivid using 'shells destroyed' ~~Serbs~~ gives the the reader an image of what the streets of Sarajevo must have looked like. However later on it says in the poem 'the young go walking at stroller's pace'. Even though there is a war this tells us that the people are just trying to live their lives and not live in fear. In addition the poem ~~says~~ states 'dodging snipers on the way'. This tells us that they still have to be careful and stay on high alert because the people never know what is going to happen.

Furthermore, the relationship between the young couple is very uplifting. For example 'he's about, I think, to take her hand'. This shows the uncertainty he has about ~~the young lady~~ what to say and do to the young lady. He is thinking which shows he cares about the lady and doesn't want to make the wrong move. In addition 'bright and clear for bomber's eye'. This is stating the risk the couple are ~~willing~~ willing to take because the sky is clear for the bomber's however, that doesn't stop them from going out and sharing their love for each other. The relationship between them is quite mysterious for example 'dark boy-shape leads dark girl-shape away'. The couple are ~~anonymously~~ described as dark shaped which doesn't give the reader much information ~~and~~ reading in between the lines the way they are described could effect the way the couple want privacy about their relationship. The ~~contrast~~ ending is very heart warming 'Share one coffee in a candlelit café'. This is an example of bitter sweet love. The couple are just living their lives like the rest of the sarajevo people and the alliteration of C makes it more vivid and a ~~stronger~~ <sup>stronger</sup> meaning.

There are some poetic devices used. For example the poem is written in rhyming couplets 'pass/gass and prams/grams'. This gives the passage a rhythm and meaning. It is written in split into 6 stanzas which is very effective because whenever there is a new paragraph it is talking about something <sup>different</sup> ~~new~~. There is also the use of contrast 'blood-dunked crusts'. This is very vivid and a great technique to use. The use of sensory language 'sarajevo star-filled evening sky'. This lets the reader use their imagination to picture the image of the evening sky. Finally there is also a contrast between the start and ending of the poem for example 'queuing with empty canisters of gas' and 'until the curfew, and he holds her hand'. The start is stating how they are desperate and the ending is finished by a young couple holding hands. ~~This shows us how they have to live and face everyday~~

This shows us how they have to live ~~and face everyday~~ and what they have to face everyday as individuals.

**Examiner Comments:**

This answer achieves a mark of 16 in Level 3. The response meets the first bullet point in Level 3. There is sound understanding of the poem demonstrated throughout, with some personal interpretation. The second bullet point is also met in Level 3 as the selection and interpretation of information, ideas, perspectives is appropriate and relevant to the points being made. For AO2 there is some (Level 2) clear (Level 3) understanding and explanation of language and structure and how these are used by writers to achieve effects, including use of vocabulary and sentence structure. This bullet is more borderline Level 2/3 as some points are not so securely explained. The selection of references is appropriate and relevant to the points being made. The answer does not meet the top of Level 3 due to the slight lapses in explanation in places.

#### Example 4

This poem describes the lives of people living in Sarajevo: a place in which war is prevalent, yet life and getting by day-to-day can not and has not stopped.

In the first stanza, Harrison <sup>describes</sup> ~~paints the picture of~~ the people of Sarajevo "queuing with empty canisters of gas," and the "precious meagre grams" that they are "rationed." ~~As the~~ This image of people queuing for only the necessity and very simple "meagre" things in which they need to continue living ~~and getting~~ as they most-likely did before war broke out ~~is~~ highlights how truly dire the situation is. Items - such as gas - we, as the reader, may take for granted. However, the ~~writer~~ poet describes the ~~essentials of~~ ~~gas~~ food as "precious" and even writing that they wheel home refills of gas "in prams," likening the gas as fragile ~~not~~ as a baby; keeping it safe, close by and ~~not wanting~~ showing clear dislike to the thought of losing its possession. The clear clinging to essentials ~~proves~~ proves that war has ~~is~~ caused the living conditions of Sarajevo to be difficult - the people "struggling" to provide for themselves.

Throughout the poem, there are constant connections

of war and violence. Harrison describes the streets as "Serb shells destroyed" and imagery of war shown by "mortar... massacre... shellsears." These destroyed surroundings are a constant reminder to the people living there of <sup>the</sup> war and the violence that they live amongst. There is clearly no escaping this; it is something they have to cope with every day.

~~Due~~ Therefore, ~~the tone of the poem~~ seems to ~~be~~ although we don't know for certain who's ~~the~~ perspective the poem is from, the reader can gather it may be from someone who has been personally affected by the war, causing the tone to be numb to violence and showing a lack of emotion and empathy for the characters, causing it to feel detached.

Harrison uses the personal pronoun "I" to show the narrative voice's involvement in the lives of people in Sarajevo.

~~The~~ Furthermore, ~~the~~ Harrison describes the young couple's relationship with innocence in his style of writing, stating the young walk at a "stroller's pace". This emphasises ~~their~~



now used to war they are - so much so, they manage ~~not~~ to continue growing relationships with one another.

In the third stanza, a situation in which the boy lifts a lighter to check in the girl's eyes "if he's made progress yet" and this move is later described with the colloquial term: ~~match-test~~ "match-flare test." This child-like term and innocent tone which almost seems to ignore or fail to recognise the danger of the youth's surroundings is continuously combatted with violent language.

For example, in the fourth stanza, ~~a~~ young couple are described: "he's about... to take her hand." There seems to be spouts of hope in the poem, like this one. This is reflected in the beautiful imagery of the clouds that have "cleared away" and the "star-filled evening sky." The sensory imagery and symbolism of clouds clearing away, paired with youth, creates a sense of hope for the reader that life in Sarajevo will not always be difficult. ~~This~~

However, this is instantly combatted with the eerie ~~escape~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~boy's~~ ~~final~~ ~~statement~~ "clear for the bomber's eye."

Harrison also writes that the boy looks up

and sees "fragments of... Pleiades" which is contrasted with "death-deep, death-dark wells." The clever use of alliteration ~~and~~ helps to ~~and~~ emphasise the contrast between romance and war. This is reiterated in the cosy imagery of a "candle-lit" cafe and "AID flow sacks."

with love connotations

Language such as "flirtatious", "fancied" and "fender" are all constantly opposed by language with war connotations: "rade", "shell scars".

This poem reminds me of the quote: "love is a battlefield," which for the youth of Sarajevo, is clearly true because of the consistency of the contrast between love and war.

#### Examiner Comments:

This response achieves a mark of 23 in Level 4. This response is a good example of where there is sustained understanding of the text. The plan is promising, and the response does deliver the points the student makes here. The second bullet point of the mark scheme is met in Level 4 in the main, as the selection and interpretation of information, ideas, perspectives is appropriate and detailed, but not always fully supportive of the points being made.

For AO2 there is thorough understanding and exploration of language and structure and how these are used to achieve effects (Level 4 fully met). The final bullet point in the mark scheme is again partly met in Level 4 - the selection of references is detailed and appropriate, just in some cases not always fully supportive of the points being made.

### Example 5

Carrying the themes of war, hope & remembrance, the Bright Light of Sarajevo is written as an attempt to educate society on the ~~the~~ effect of war on civilians & ~~to~~ people make them and their situations more relatable.

Harrison, the writer, straight away sets the mood of the passage by calling the people of Sarajevo "Bright Lights". Light has connotations of strength, ~~and it shines~~ <sup>as it appears</sup> only when in - & despite - darkness. Harrison further emphasises the resilience of the civilians by not only calling them "lights" but "bright lights". The adjective bright intensifies the description and lets the reader know how strong the Sarajevians are.

He starts off the first stanza by giving the reader some context. Writing that the Sarajevians pass hours only "queuing ... to get refills" of "precious meagre grams of bread", he is depicting the hardship each person has to go through to receive something that we in the west can get so easily. The fact that he is describing the

~~measures~~ weight of the bread in grams reminds the reader of gold, as it here is weighed in grams. This is further emphasised by the adjective "precious" proving the scarcity & basic need of this bread.

Harrison describes the people as wheeling home "canisters of gas" in prams. This strikes the reader as odd & creates a lasting image in their mind as prams usually contain babies: something that is considered to be very precious. This further emphasises the raw need of these basic things that we receive and get almost subconsciously. The need for these items are so intense that they carry them in the pram that usually contains their most beloved.

Harrison continues by describing the people as "often dodging snipers". ~~at the end of the day~~<sup>on</sup>. The verb 'dodging' carries an almost playful ~~at the~~ connotation to it which the reader finds surprising. Harrison is trying to help the reader understand the normality of the war & bombing like the sarajevans. That war, death <sup>every day</sup> & chaos is just another part of their lives.

In the next <sup>two</sup> stanzas, Harrison begins to depict the "flirtatious plays" a young boy ~~may~~ might carry out if he fancied "a girl's dark shape". The sudden theme of romance surprises the reader as they never imagined that something as basic & common as romance, could be present in a war-torn country.

In the fourth stanza, Harrison surprises the reader by using the personal pronoun "I" <sup>when</sup> describing the couple that he sees. This ~~is~~ change in tone & voice from his normal third person removed unsettles the reader & makes the couple & their experiences all the more real & personal.

In this stanza, Harrison skillfully weaves in the themes of love and war, hope and death, in so close together, that it almost seems to the reader, that one could not possibly exist without the other. Mentioning that the boy leads the girl away from where they're standing on "two shell scars" where a breadshop queue was massacred reminds the reader of the

war; reminds them that this isn't just some random romance poem all about love, but rather a poem about how war cannot stop humanity, - society- from fulfilling ~~the~~ the rituals that make us human. That to be human is to be able to find hope in any given situation.

The final stanza depicts the couple as sharing a cup of coffee in a "candlelit cafe" until curfew. The quiet and peaceful atmosphere present in the ending scene massively juxtaposes the mad chaos of their situation & the war. The way that the ~~Sarajevans~~ Sarajevans situation is presented as almost normal unsettles the reader & leaves them with confused thoughts & a poem that they'll never forget.

The entire poem is written in iambic pentameter with a few breaks & in the rhythm to emphasise a certain lines contents. Such as line 5 containing only 8 syllables. The reduced amount of syllables reflects the "meagre grams of bread" they're "rationed".

The entire poem is made up of rhyming couplets which is almost ironic as it gives the poem a sort of simple - almost nursery rhyme like - flow to it. The simplicity of its rhyme massively contrasts the hardship and horror contained in the poem and emphasises the themes of war & death in the poem.

The entire poem was written with the intention to educate us on the true effects of wars and help us relate to & understand the people & civilians present in the power struggle of governments.

#### **Examiner Comments:**

As with the previous answer this begins with a plan, which is delivered in the answer, and there is a clear introduction and conclusion (not a requirement). The student demonstrates some perceptive understanding of the poem (Level 4/5) in their answer, and there is some apt and persuasive selection and interpretation of ideas, information and perspectives (Level 4/5). The AO2 bullet point is mostly met in Level 5, although there are some points that are more thorough than perceptive. Some examples are not discriminating in terms of the point being made (for example the 'two shell scars' example is not well-used to illustrate the point being made), but this is a secure Level 5 answer, achieving a mark of 28.

## Writing

At the lowest grade boundary students tended to offer a basic response. They always had straightforward use of tone, style and register, with audience and purpose not always clear. At this level students tended to express but not always connect ideas and information, with limited use of structural and grammatical features and paragraphing. There were few responses that only achieved Level 1 – this was mostly because these students hardly wrote anything, offering a basic response, or the sentences did not make sense at all.

At the Grade 4 borderline students tended to at least have straightforward and at best appropriate use of tone, style and register, selecting material and stylistic or rhetorical devices to suit audience and purpose. At this borderline level students tended to connect, but not always develop, ideas and information, with some structural and grammatical features and paragraphing. There was a tendency in the majority of responses marked at this borderline grade to set out a stronger description in the start of the story and then focus more on plot towards the end where planning had let the students down. In some cases, the stories lacked development to move higher into the mark scheme for AO4. At this borderline grade the use of vocabulary and syntax tended to be appropriate but repetitive and at times limited to vague simile/metaphor, use of short sentences, questions and exclamations for effect. The level of AO6 at this borderline was appropriate but overall formulaic, where it appeared that students had been advised to include plenty of adjectives or similes in their writing and felt the need to include them at all times.

In the best responses, students tended to at least have successful and at best touches of subtle use of tone, style and register, managing ideas and stylistic or rhetorical devices to suit audience and purpose. At this borderline level students tended to manage, but not always manipulate, ideas and information, with a range of structural and grammatical features and paragraphing. Responses at this level had some creative ideas, humour and withholding information to the end as a technique. The Grade 7 boundary tended to have some selective vocabulary used for specific effect rather than just to demonstrate knowledge of particular multi-syllabic words.

The assessment objectives for these tasks effectively discriminated the quality of responses. Advice to centres would be to encourage students to avoid thinking they need to write a whole novel or even short story in the time available – they need to have a clear organisation and direction in mind, and to perhaps not ‘over-season’ the pieces with vocabulary and syntax.

The main areas that discriminated the writing responses were:

- whether students could meet both parts of the first part of bullet one in the mark scheme for AO5 – for example they often expressed ideas to achieve in Level 2, but these ideas lacked the order for the second part of that bullet. In Level 3, they may have connected ideas but not developed them.



- the success of tone, style and register in AO4.
- the spelling of basic vocabulary in AO5.
- the accuracy of punctuation and use of varied punctuation in AO5.
- the use of a range of sentence structures for AO5.

Sentence structure was clearly an area centres had focussed on: varying the way sentences begin; more use of subordinate clauses to begin complex sentences; effective use of one-word sentences and one-sentence paragraphs to demonstrate conscious crafting. Some students attempted to use ambitious vocabulary while some seemed to steer away from ambitious vocabulary in order to maintain accuracy. A key message to centres is to focus on crafting and organisation whatever the nature of the task. This was a common weakness running through all but the very best answers. The more 'pedestrian' answers showed a lack of organisation and often demonstrated a lack of planning and direction. Be ambitious in the structure, vocabulary and range of ideas and try to be creative and original.

In terms of register it was clear that the majority of the students knew how to write an imaginative piece, however there were some that produced responses that were more like an essay. Examiners noted that students need to manage their time better, as even responses that started off strong appeared unfinished or rushed at the end.

Some comments from examiners include:

- 'Students overall demonstrated good use of vocabulary and narrative structure when answering the writing questions.'
- 'In successful responses, students managed to create the setting and mood successfully, often using direct speech and imagery as well as some structural techniques, such as one-sentence paragraphs for effect.'
- 'Some students used punctuation to aid meaning and also tended to deal with more personal, meaningful and emotive topics.'
- 'Other successful students wrote very imaginatively, for example about fantasy and science-fiction scenarios.'

**Question 2: Write about a time when you, or someone you know, saw something surprising.**

In this series this question proved the least popular. The question offered students the opportunity to write about a range of surprises. Most featured the student as the protagonist and examples of surprises were finding something, going somewhere unexpected or meeting someone.

**Example 1**

I heave open the boot of my car and grapple with the heavy boxes for one last time. Tomorrow I move into my dream house, with my dream husband and my dream car. Panting from the physical exertion I take one ~~look~~<sup>glimpse</sup> over my shoulder to look at the sunset. The Shurgard self-storage sign frames the angry sky blood red.

Whistling happily to myself, I enter the lift; cobwebs fill my vision and I thrash around frantically. Once a space is cleared, I press the big red button which judders the old beast to life. The dim lights flicker on and off whilst 70s music plays on repeat over the loud speaker. I tap my fingers impatiently against the trolley - all I want is to go home and prepare for the move. Creak, shudder, groan. <sup>After what feels like years,</sup> the dilapidated lift finally comes to a stop. Eagerly, I thrust the trolley out of the musty lift and onto the first floor. The trolley's wheels grind against the rockhard ground as I weave my way through the labyrinth of corridors. Even after

Seven trips I still struggle to find room 211 in the feeble lighting.  
'200, 201, 202...' I mutter to myself as I scan the walls for clues. Bingo!

The keys jangle loudly as I squeeze them into the lock. The door swings open and I begin. I work as if I am in a trance - so desperate to get home that every movement becomes automated. 10 boxes, 9 boxes, 8 boxes, footsteps. Surely no-one would be here at this time of night? I listen hard: nothing. My palms are soaked in nervous sweat as I shake my head; I ~~just~~ dismiss the noise as my exhausted mind playing tricks on me. 7 boxes, 6 boxes, footsteps. Again, I pause, this time for longer. The footsteps seem to be closer now; I peer down the next corridor to see a mirror engulfed in darkness. Squinting through the gloom I see a person reflected.

Time stops. My heart stops. My whole body is frozen in fear.

Then I laugh; a relieved, untroubled laugh. I am the person reflected. How could I be so stupid? Chuckling to myself, I am about to return to my final boxes when I see a shimmer<sup>or something</sup> out of the corner of my eye. A second figure. And even from this distance I can see the unmistakable glint of a knife.

The whole world seems to stop; my heart is beating at a million miles an hour. ~~Yet~~<sup>Yet</sup> we stand transfixed by the other's presence. My brain screams at my limbs to move but they remain rooted to the ground in terror. Time goes by relentlessly. Then, when I almost believe that he is a

fragment of my imagination, he starts walking towards me. His ~~knife~~ knife the only thing visible in the darkness. My adrenaline filled body finally reboots itself and I step backwards, tripping over the three remaining boxes. I cry out in pain as I land badly on my ankle. Nevertheless, fear causes me to jump up and half-sprint, half-stumble around the corner. My eyes scan every corridor for a perceived way out. He is the Minotaur and I am trapped in his labyrinth. Every few steps I look behind me to check his progress. His constant footsteps haunt me with every breath that I suck in. I wonder how many breaths <sup>that</sup> I have left... My ankle throbs as I virtually drag it across the ground in my horror-stricken state. Panic rises in my throat as I realise that I have been running in the opposite direction to the lift - the only way out. With the growing realisation that I will soon reach a dead-end, I dart down a corridor filled with empty trolleys. I silently slide underneath them and hold my breath in an attempt to make no noise. Thud, thud, thud. My clammy hands clasp the lifeless trolleys. Thud, thud, thud. I have the metallic taste of blood in my mouth. Thud, thud, thud. There is no one here to rescue me. Thud, thud, thud.

From under the trolleys, his shadow eats my light source, plunging me into darkness. Silence. After what feels like hours he starts to pull the trolleys out from around me. I feel naked and defenceless as I lie here waiting for the inevitable. The last trolley is pulled away and I instinctively back into the corner. He towers above me, his knife glinting.

### Examiner Comments:

For writing it is important to consider the mark scheme descriptors in terms of the average student. Perceptive, subtle and sophisticated does not have to mean worthy of publishing. This response achieves 18 marks for AO4 and 12 marks for AO5.

For AO4 the student creates a sense of tension and building fear with skill, and their communication is perceptive (in terms of the way it is presented) and subtle. Their response is sharply focused on purpose and the intended reader. In terms of the style of writing there is sophisticated use of form, tone and register. Full marks does not mean perfection.

For AO5 Level 5 is fully met (we may say more securely than it is for AO4). The ideas are not necessarily complex, but they are manipulated in a complex way (the climax that is an anti-climax for example). The student utilises a range of structural and grammatical features to support coherence and cohesion.

Extensive vocabulary is used strategically, and we could not identify any spelling errors. Writing is punctuated with accuracy to aid emphasis and precision, using a range of sentence structures accurately and selectively to achieve particular effects.

### Example 2

In a gloomy and stormy night me and <sup>TP\_AU</sup> Monza were walking into the 'Death Forest', my <sup>my friend</sup> friendly Monza was very brave and daring but I still said "Monza ~~we~~ we should head back home bro" I was worried as my guts were screaming danger. After half an hour into the forest we heard a a crying noise so ~~we~~ <sup>Monzo</sup> and I followed it "What in the world is this" as Monza put his hand on my mouth "Be quiete don't even say anything" I could not believe what Monza and I had just witnessed, I was not allowed to utter even a single word we was in shock our minds blown away as we saw a small

creature crying. The creature then vanished into the dark as it laughed, a sizzling drop of <sup>rain</sup> ~~was~~ just burst ~~was~~ Monzo and I as the monstrous laugh continued. Monzo shouted to me "Run for cover!!!" as he held tight on ~~to~~ my hand and sprinted ~~to~~ under a large tree. We was then hit with a tree log which took us to sleep or made us even faint as we wake up it was ~~a~~ a beautiful garden with rivers bright sunny day it was very alluring and incredible but we could not move. I was in hospital but the heaven like ~~down~~ place was just a dream sadly but the small restaurant still lives on til this day!

### Examiner Comments:

In this response there is evidence of Level 2 achievement, but it does not border on Level 3 (there is a lack of clarity in the ideas expressed). The response communicates in a broadly appropriate way (with some bits lacking clarity). There is some grasp of the purpose although not always of the intended reader. There is very straightforward use of form, tone and register (not always securely Level 2).

For AO5 the student expresses and orders information and ideas (just about). There is use of two paragraphs although not a range of structural and grammatical features (Level 1/2). In terms of vocabulary the student does meet Level 2 as there is use of some correctly spelt vocabulary, and some is quite varied, for example screaming, witnessed, creature, vanished, monstrous. In terms of punctuation it is used with basic control (Level 1), and the sentence structures are quite repetitive although there is something of a range in the use of speech. Using 'best fit', this meets the top of Level 2 for AO5. Marks of 6+4 are achieved, a total of 10.

### Question 3: Write a story with the title 'The Meeting'.

This question was the most attempted question, and where attempted students showed a variety of thoughtful, subtle and creative ideas about meetings. The vast majority of students were able to craft a story with a beginning/middle/end. Most tried to vary sentence structure and introduce varied vocabulary and punctuation. Some students really let their imagination go, for example the student who looked at the beginning of the universe with atoms meeting.

#### Example 1

U D AU

The Meeting

Suddenly I woke up to the sound of my alarm clock ringing in my ear. ~~It~~.  
~~It~~ It was Tuesday. I sat on the edge of my bed getting my thoughts together for a moment. I had been waiting for this day for so long and now it was here, well... I felt uneasy. I dragged myself to the shower to wake myself up a bit, the water soothing my soul. I'd already got my clothes ready for the day although they did seem pretty bland for such a day, but maybe that was a perfect reflection of one's self.

I set off out into the ~~the~~ cold winter's morning still feeling uneasy about the whole situation, but decided it was for the best, I'd only regret it if I didn't. The walk to the train station was long and tedious especially in this winter wonderland of ice and frost. Whilst on the train my mind started to ~~remanise~~ remanise, ~~my past had been~~ ~~or~~ ~~okay~~ Thinking of what

my life had been so far, was it all a complete waste of time or was everything for a reason, is there even a reason for anything. As I drew closer to my destination, I could feel myself doubting what I had done. I felt sick, hot and irritated. My palms started to sweat as if I'd dipped them in a bowl of hot water.

The train stopped and the doors opened as if in slow motion, at this point my heart raced. My mind working overtime. Feeling slightly scared, I stepped off looking around like a hawk. My eyes were everywhere at once, looking, looking at everyone. I took a deep breath for my eyes had found what I was looking for, my body began to wobble walk me to where I needed to go. With ~~me~~ my heart in my ~~throat~~ throat, I reached out and touched what I can only describe as an Angel. ~~My~~ My Mother.

#### Examiner Comments:

The student achieves marks of 13+8 (21 in total). This is a brief response, but it meets all of Level 3 for AO4. The response communicates clearly, with a clear sense of purpose and understanding of the intended reader. The use of form, tone and register is at least appropriate. Given Level 3 is met, we look to see if there is evidence of Level 4. There is a sense that the student is successful in creating a story which has intrigue and mystery, so there is some achievement of Level 4. The response does not border on Level 5, but there is evidence of Level 4 achievement.



For AO5 Level 3 is fully met, although it can be difficult to demonstrate the range required for higher levels in a brief response. There is just enough to move into Level 4 as the student is managing their information and ideas, with some cohesive and deliberate use of structural features. The response does not move higher in this level given the errors.

### Example 2

The meeting  
Nothing. Absolutely nothing had happened that day. I arrived at work at my usual time - 8:57. That's three minutes early: one minute to enter the office, get set up and ready, one minute to check my emails and the last one to write an itinerary for the day. Then, ~~for~~ at 9:00, I am completely ready to begin my day. Today, I walked in and one sticky note on my computer was slightly irregular. I had to straighten it. I try to resist - Meg tells me to. I can't. It's like an itch I have to scratch.

My day progressed as it usually does: I did my work, ate my lunch, packed up my things and left the office. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6... 29. As I ~~try~~ yawn to shake the numbers out of

my mind, ~~on~~ my body cascades down the stairs. I always count them. I ~~have~~ must.

Rain tumbled from the sky and my feet splodged through the glistening reminders spattered across the car park. I got in the car and began to drive home to see Meg - my wonderful daughter. A completely usual day ~~so far~~ ... so far.

I turned the radio on - radio 4, as per usual. However, frightening news came echoing down the radio - an accident 5<sup>5</sup>mi fire miles ahead, hindering me from getting home at 5:15. That's the time Meg expects me and I can't be late. I can't.

A shift in the atmosphere had occurred... no longer was this a normal day. ~~Something~~ It was creeping up on me like a thief in the night - an all-encompassing feeling. I gulped and my fingers danced on the steering wheel. My body ~~shivered~~ wriggled in my seat and two drops of sweat raced down my forehead.

~~Fire was with me~~ My body was on fire because I knew I wouldn't make it home by 5:15.

Suddenly, <sup>which seemed like</sup> an earth-shuddering ring broke my ~~pan~~ haze of panick. It was Meg's face and number bringing on my phone screen.

Completely calmed by the familiar face among current chaos, I answered;

"Hey him! Sorry, ~~stuck~~ stuck in traffic becau -"

I was immediately cut off by sounds of desperate muffling;

"Dad! Dad! Come home, please! I think there's a fire in the kitchen!" she spluttered, in amongst sobs and uncontrolled breathing.

"Meg - I - what? What? How? <sup>Meet me at the back!</sup> Then, nothing.

The line cut off. For a brief moment, I was still calm. However, sudden realisation ~~&~~ unhinged its jaw and clasped me, dragging me into a state of ~~extreme~~ unimaginable fear.

My eyes widened and ~~&~~ inhaled this sudden elixir of truth, my heart pounding like a drum. How would she know where to meet me? I was utterly baffled by the entire situation, I couldn't say where to meet any quicker.

I must get home for this meeting, for my daughter, my Meg.

My body propelled me out of my car. My mind battled with the movements, unable to comprehend or control the unusualness and dire situation. I abandoned ~~it~~ the car right there - amongst the traffic. I ~~would~~ would not abandon my daughter. ~~I was~~ Determined to return for the meeting, I skated through the rain; ~~the~~ sounds of thunder and flashes of lightning spurred me on with the rain, masking my nervous sweat.

~~At least~~ I wasn't far... only one more turn and I would be on our road. I passed houses upon houses upon houses. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. No! I would focus on only Meg. ~~At least~~ My mind betrayed me, constantly distracting me from importance in life!

There it was. My house ~~is~~ burning in anguish. The flames burnt my heart and singed my thoughts. It was the only thing I saw. All at once, everything came into view: the fire brigade, police, ambulances. A kind neighbour must have called. A sea of heads ~~is~~ extinguished my view.

of the house ... where was Meg?

Sat on my shoulders was a panic, a ~~surge~~ rage fired up inside me and triggered my voice to shout and scream and cry. Where was Meg?

"Where is she?" An officer turned to me, her kind, yet worried face was of zero reassurance.

"Who?" She stammered.

"Meg - my daughter - she was in there!"

~~Hit~~

The world stopped rotating and every head ~~to~~ looked at me. I saw sorrow and gloom ... deep empathy. It hit me like a ton of bricks. A covered body lay sprawled in a stretcher. I gulped and prayed it wasn't her. I ~~didn't~~ ~~see~~ ran up and saw her golden locks sprayed on the pavement. Sadness didn't yet arrive.

I checked my watch. I knew it was coming.  
"5:16 ... sorry Meg."

#### **Examiner Comments:**

This is an example of a response that meets all of Level 4 for AO4. In this case we would look to see if anything had been achieved in Level 5. The student communicates successfully and there is a secure realisation of purpose and the needs of the intended reader. The use of form, tone and register is effective. There is evidence in some places of quite sharp focus on purpose, for example in the use of the obsessive-compulsive disorder idea and the crafting is quite sharp. There is just enough evidence to move into Level 5 for AO4.

For AO5 the student does manage information and ideas, with structural and grammatical features used cohesively and deliberately across the text. There is a wide, selective vocabulary with only occasional spelling errors and a range of punctuation for clarity, managing sentence structures for deliberate effect. Level 4 is fully met but given that the student attempts to manipulate the complex ideas of OCD and control the mark just moves into Level 5. The marks achieved are 16+11, a total of 27.

**Question 4: Look at the images provided. Write a story that starts 'Suddenly, without warning, there was a power cut'.**

All used the idea of a power cut though some neither began nor ended with the given words. The pictures did play a part with candles having to be found and checking out windows to see tower blocks completely in the dark. There were some interesting pieces on bringing the family together without 'phones. Some students understood the idea but could not go beyond describing the initial scene.

**Example 1**

U B\_AU

Suddenly, without warning there was a power cut. It was my brothers wedding, there were 1500 guests and all of a sudden the lights went. Me and my dad who were host mainly we had to rush to the generator for backup but it wouldn't start. My dad said "Now what do we do". I quickly called another generator guy so he could come and turn the lights on for the canopy and also it was very embarrassing for us. The guests couldn't see nothing. My <sup>big</sup> brother was embarrassed because it was his wedding, But

Thank god the generator guy was very near and he came within 10 minutes. My dad was worried because he didn't want the guests to leave.

I was the lifesaver at that moment the generator guy came within no time he plugged all wire to his generator and started it. All of a sudden everything went back to normal. It was time for the food. Everyone enjoyed the food and gave very good compliments about it. I was outside the canopy having a laugh with my friends.

All of a sudden I look back at the canopy again I see no light. I quickly ran to the generator guy but the generator was working absolutely fine. This time the wires got melted by touching each other and melting up. The whole wedding had turned into a

wreck. I ~~g~~ got very upset about what was happening to my brother's wedding.

I called the electrician and ~~pay~~ offered to pay him extra so he could come fast. The electrician took at least 15 minutes to fix the wires. In the meanwhile all I could see is nothing but dark and people talking. I was very concerned about what had happened. My dad was getting angry ~~it~~ rather than fixing the problem, which is very normal of him. I was just on the ~~g~~ electrician ~~telling~~ him "guy asking him" "is it done, is it done" at least it was done and the lights came back on. ~~I saw ha~~ I was shocked because half of the canopy was empty which meant only my close relatives remained seated and didn't leave.

Which was quite shocking for our family, but I was a bit calm that at least everybody ate food.



and I enjoyed it. It was time for my sister in law to leave with my brother. It is in our culture that when the bride and the groom leaves everybody leaves with them.

They started walking slowly as our holy guran got recited. They reached together to the car and we our family waved them off. It was a good day with two bad experiences. ~~The~~ Atleast we learnt a lesson to have two backup plans for next time. Everybody was happy and we all went home.

### **Examiner Comments:**

The final marks for this response are 9+6 (15 in total). There is enough evidence in this response of full Level 2 achievement for AO4, and there is some attempt to communicate clearly (Level 3) and some clear sense of purpose and audience. 'Best-fit' is just into Level 3.

For AO5 there is achievement of Level 3. The first bullet point is partly met in this level. The ideas are connected, but not developed, which prevents full achievement of Level 3 in this bullet point. There is some varied vocabulary (although some is repeated), for example *generator*, *electrician*, *recited*. This bullet is met at borderline Level 2/3. The final bullet point is met in Level 2 – there is some control of punctuation and some range of sentence structures.

## Example 2

Suddenly, without warning, there was a power cut. I went to ~~back~~ ~~to~~ restart the power at my house thinking it's ~~nothing~~ ~~nothing~~ major. After a few tries ~~was~~, still nothing.

Moments the windows start banging and the closets starts ~~to tilt~~ <sup>to tilt</sup> as if it's being ~~so~~ haunted by a ghost. In the next second ~~people~~ I hear people's screams and cry. ~~It immediately hid under~~ ~~the table~~ My legs moved on its own and I sprinted towards a table and hide under it as if I'm playing hide and seek when I was three, but no, this is much worse. The shock made my house look like as if it was made from paper. 'It's crumbling down!' My mind is yelling at me but nothing could be done, I crabed on the table legs like it's going to save me and screamed as loud as I can...

'Where am I?' I ask myself ~~hoping~~ in ~~the~~ hope of someone could answer me, but there's nothing. Only ~~was~~ a crack where I can still see the moonlight that shines upon me.

### Examiner Comments:

This answer achieves marks of 7+4, a total of 11. This is a brief response, although the writing is small. It is important to not assume these are likely to Level 1 responses. For AO4 the student meets all of the bullet points in Level 2. Communication is broadly appropriate with some sense of the purpose and reader. The form, tone and register are straightforward. This is a response to read aloud, as you can hear that the communication is not always clear but is broadly appropriate (it looks clearer on the page than when read out loud).

In AO5 the student uses paragraphs mostly correctly and information is ordered at a basic level. It could be argued that vocabulary is quite varied and spelt accurately, although we do not have the evidence to move this into Level 3. Punctuation is used with some control and there is an attempt to create a range of sentence structures including coordination and subordination. Again, all of the bullet points of Level 2 are met.

## Summary

Based on their performance on the paper, students are offered the following advice:

- Ensure you have studied the poetry and prose texts in the Anthology fully and use the examination time to remind yourself of the text, not re-read it.
- Even if the text is a short poem consider what the key points are linked to the question you are being asked.
- Make you are covering the whole poem from beginning to end in order to meet AO1 in the higher levels.
- Read the question carefully and make sure you are answering **this** question, not telling the examiner what you know about the poem you have studied. The selection needs to be relevant to the question you are being asked, in this case the lives of the people of Sarajevo.
- For AO2 (language and structure), make sure you are offering ideas about how language and structure are used. Many of you were able to give examples, but sometimes you did not offer a comment about the example was used.
- For AO2 try to cover points on both language and structure, commenting on the different techniques that have been used by the writer and how they link to the overall topic of the question, in this case the presentation of the lives of the people of Sarajevo.
- When you are writing, always think about your reader, what information and ideas you want to develop and how you want the reader to react at different parts of your writing; then choose the best words, phrases or techniques available to you to achieve those effects.
- Think carefully about how you will begin to write so that it is engaging for your reader from the very start.
- As you begin to write, know where you will end. This will help you to write in a manner that is cohesive and coherent for your reader.
- Take care throughout with accuracy: spelling, punctuation and grammar
- In writing, focus on crafting and organisation whatever the nature of the task.
- Be ambitious in your structure, vocabulary and range of ideas and try to be creative and original.
- Use the number of marks available for each question as an indication of how long you should spend answering each question.

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