



Pearson
Edexcel

Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel International GCSE
In English Language A (4EA1)
Paper 3: Poetry and Prose Texts and Imaginative
Writing

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Introduction

This was a small series in comparison to the larger summer entry and comprised of some full centre entries but a large number of candidates who were potentially resitting and as such submissions from some centres were small and comprised of only one or two candidates.

Administration

Most centres submitted folders in a timely way. However, we did have a number of centres this time that experienced administrative errors and sent folders extremely late – almost at the point where grades were being awarded across the components. Centres are reminded to check their entry information carefully so as not to run the risk of candidates work being lost or separated.

It is also worth reiterating how folders should be presented. Most centres do submit folders with the cover sheets in place and with folders securely treasury tagged or stapled, but there are still occasions where work is received with folders comprised of loose sheets in plastic wallets, which again puts candidates work at risk of being lost or separated.

Ensuring all candidates print work in a clear and legible font of 12 point would also be appreciated.

As we have said, some centres did submit small samples of folders this time, but it is still a requirement that the highest and lowest marked folders are submitted along with the generated sample.

Task Setting

On the whole, in this series, the tasks that had been set for candidates were in line with the new specification and were working very well. Some candidates do not explicitly type the task that they have been set on the top of their submission and simply write the titles of the texts studied or 'creative writing'. In these cases it would be useful if the centre could enclose a list of the tasks the students have actually been set. This would allow for moderators to check they are in line with the specification and to be fully aware of what the candidate was working to achieve.

Assignment A:

There was a pleasing range of tasks set for the reading assignment and it is very encouraging to see how many centres have acted on the advice in previous reports and constructed tasks which lead candidates confidently towards the assessment objectives in the correct balance. I saw far fewer candidates in this series taking a generalised

'comparative' approach and far fewer who focused on AO1 to the detriment of the more heavily weighted AO2.

In the main, the most favoured texts remain 'Disabled' and 'Out, Out', however, far more centres are now making use of some of the newer texts and taking slightly more adventurous approaches which is again encouraging. Disabled worked well when discussed alongside 'The Bright Lights of Sarajevo' and I saw a very interesting essay discussing the effect of the night time setting in this poem alongside 'Whistle and I'll Come To You'. This extract from The Woman In Black is popular with students across the board and provides some very rich material for AO2 analysis when handled well. Responses connected with gender and identity also worked well for students with the Maupassant and Chopin stories remaining a popular choice as well as Angelou's 'Still I Rise'.

However, in the Reading Assignments I must point out that the marks are for AO1 and AO2. Large swathes of contextual paragraphs are not creditworthy for candidates and yet so many essays begin with dates and details of, for one overused example, Owen's stay at Craiglockhart Hospital. Candidates should really focus on exploring the text and, if they do this successfully, the writer's possible wider intentions will form part of the response naturally and subtly.

Commentaries

Fewer issues arose with commentaries this time than in the summer series and the vast majority of candidates produced commentaries addressing the correct assessment objective in a sensible, explanatory fashion. As we said in the summer, centres who submitted pieces of approximately 300 words, clearly labelled as the commentary, and including interesting explanations of choice against the backdrop of the rest of the texts were the most successful.

I saw far fewer centres this time, where the commentaries focused on AO2 rather than AO1. However, in some cases, there was no mention of other texts studied other than the ones in the essay and centres are reminded that this is part of the purpose of the commentary: to show that the remaining texts in the anthology have been read and understood and that the candidate has made a selection from that reading.

Assignment B:

On the whole in this series, the Imaginative Writing task has been a pleasure to read and to moderate. Many students make the decision to submit narrative work and across the board, work here was competent and engaging to read. At times, I did see stereotypical plot lines creeping in, or the influences from films or video games. However, this was definitely not widespread this time. Indeed, some of the narrative work was exceptional and there are clearly many talented writers out there. An impressive array of themes had been chosen and some candidates produced beautiful work based on the war poetry in the anthology,

considering the experiences of war, the impact on the veteran and moving first person pieces. More able students who had made a free writing choice often produced work which could have been published.

Alongside the narrative pieces, there were many engaging accounts of experiences of travel, which are also often extremely successful.

For many students writing is a real strength and is extremely accurate and reaching into the higher bands of the mark scheme for AO5.

Assessment, annotation and internal moderation

In terms of assessment, where there is leniency in marking, it is more often pronounced in the Reading assignments and I think it would be useful for centres to really think about the key words in each level of the mark scheme. Is the work really thorough, detailed and exploratory – clearly higher order skills – or are the points made sensible, sound, clear and relevant? Perceptive ideas happen rarely – they are the fresh insights we haven't seen before, the evidence of original thought that is the discriminating factor of the highest achieving candidate.

Conversely, where there is severity in assessment, it is more often found in the writing section. I would encourage centres to look closely at the AO5 descriptors as this is an area where some candidates can be under rewarded.

It does have to be said there is a real disparity between the ways some centres assess and moderate their folders compared to others. Those centres showing the best practice annotate candidate work formatively pointing out skills, which then lead to an overall judgement. This judgement is then checked by a second pair of eyes, with evidence on the work, and either ratified or amended. The final marks are then placed on the cover sheet with an overview comment justifying the mark.

Where there is only one teacher, it is obviously difficult to moderate internally but it is still advisable for a second pair of eyes to check the rank order of the folders. Indeed, for all centres, a useful final check would be to read the sample in rank order from the least able to the most able before they are dispatched. This is what I do with the sample and it is a very effective way of checking that the rank order is secure.

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