



# Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2022

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE  
In English Language A (4EA1)  
Paper 02: Poetry and Prose Texts and  
Imaginative Writing

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## Introduction

This report will provide exemplification of candidates' work, together with tips and comments, for Paper 2 of the International GCSE Specification A in English Language. This was the January series of the 'A' specification in IGCSE English Language 9-1 which followed a second 'extraordinary' November series. It was therefore a very small series.

The specification 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). Candidates 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.

This focus of this component is:

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

Candidates 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 prose extract or poem in the examination.

The specification identifies that candidates: '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, candidates should develop the skills of inference and analysis.'

Candidates 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.

Candidates 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 candidates to consider language and structure.

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

Candidates are advised to allocate 45 minutes to Section B. There are three writing tasks, to some extent linked by theme to the reading prose extract or

poem. Candidates 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 1 follows the format 'Write about a time when you, or someone you know...', Question 2 follows the format 'Write a story with the title...' and Question 3 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**

#### **A01:**

- read and understand a variety of texts, selecting and interpreting information, ideas and perspectives

#### **A02:**

- understand and analyse how writers use linguistic and structural devices to achieve their effects.

### **Section B: Writing**

#### **A04:**

- communicate effectively and imaginatively, adapting form, tone and register of writing for specific purposes and audiences

#### **A05:**

- write clearly, using a range of vocabulary and sentence structures, with appropriate paragraphing and accurate spelling, grammar and punctuation.

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

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

It was also clear that candidates 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 candidates 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.

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

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

- evidence that many candidates had understood and engaged with the content of and ideas in the poem
- the successful, integrated use of the bullet points within the question, particularly bullet point 2
- coverage of the assessment objectives required for this paper
- the range of ideas and creativity for AO4
- the attempt to vary vocabulary and punctuation for AO5
- writing that showed at least appropriate tone, style and register for audience and purpose.

Less successful responses:

- demonstrated a lack of knowledge of the poem and/or lack of awareness of the ideas in the poem relevant to the question
- failed to reference the question, with candidates simply writing something about the poem or writer very broadly
- rigidly followed the bullet points in the question so that language and structure points were almost an 'add-on' at the end
- 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 the poem or paraphrasing of it for Question 1
- failed to support points using appropriate textual evidence or used over-long quotations
- lacked organisation in their writing
- lacked accurate spelling and secure control of punctuation and grammar.

It was clear that candidates had been able to find at least some information about how readers could feel sympathy for the soldier and could comment on language and structural features. Imaginative writing was often interesting, engaging and 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. Overall, candidates clearly engaged with the poem. The bullet points were followed by the vast majority of candidates and helped them to focus on the question. The second bullet point, in particular, allowed the candidates to focus on the contrast with the soldier's life before and after and make, at least, some comments. Juxtaposition was used well here.

At the very basic level candidates tended to comment very broadly on what was being said in the poem. They were able to show some understanding of the poem, but the understanding and focus was uneven in terms of the idea of sympathy. There was often limited selection and interpretation of information and ideas. Lower end responses tended to use the bullet points as headings and then had chunks of the poem copied out with limited comment.

Candidates at the Grade 4 borderline were at least able to identify some of the key areas of the poem which would create sympathy for the soldier, although at this borderline grade there was often an imbalance where the focus was on identifying basic/valid ideas and information from the poem that had some connection to sympathy (for example, the contrast between before the war and when the soldier comes back) rather than being appropriate, apt or persuasive for the higher levels. For example, candidates at this borderline grade often had not considered more than broad ideas. There was a lack of 'drilling down' into the poem to examine the more nuanced ideas that were considered by candidates achieving higher marks, for example where one examiner noted: 'I liked the personal response 'the reader is submerged with eagerness to bring this soldier some kindness', 'he is someone only God can save'.'

Candidates at borderline Grade 7 were more direct in approach, as they were able to select the relevant ideas from the poem relating to the creation of feelings of sympathy in a detailed but succinct manner. Candidates at this borderline tended to cover the full poem and offered detailed points. At the higher levels examiners felt that that 'I was pleasantly surprised at the number of very good, sustained, thoughtful and perceptive responses...personal response was clear'. Some typical ideas were:

- the soldier's youth, his life before when he was admired by girls and how they react now. Some candidates did misunderstand 'old' and assumed he was in his old age now rather than the war made him look old. Better responses linked his youth to vulnerability and naivety. As one put it 'women don't give him the eye anymore'.
- the soldier's helplessness and/or dependency on others. At the highest levels, candidates saw his passivity and the use of the passive voice. Most

used the wheelchair as evidence but the best responses focused on 'wheeled' to show utter dependence. At the highest levels responses explored his alienation from society, and saw his vulnerability and likened him to 'a child the reader needs to protect' commenting on 'mothered'.

- the 'unfairness' of the soldier's situation with most candidates using a quote describing the cheers for a goal and then his arrival home. A few candidates mentioned betrayal, linking it to hearing of Meg in the beginning but she never appears again.

## A02

The third bullet point in the mark scheme relates to A02 - 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 candidates opportunities to achieve across the range.

At the lowest levels candidates often made reference to language and structure as a brief add-on at the end of the answer. Candidates here often identified and named devices, but did not demonstrate the skill or understanding to discuss their use, and did not link these to the question. At this level responses were characterised by writing without any explanations - candidates here were good at finding both language and structure features, but not as confident at explaining them. The responses were much more at a descriptive level, with limited and underdeveloped evidence.

Candidates at the Grade 4 borderline were at least commenting on both language and structure. At this borderline grade candidates were commenting on and explaining language and structure, with appropriate and relevant references. Candidates at Grade 4 borderline were able to pick out features in the poem, but often there was little developed explanation of the effect of these features. The majority at the borderline grade were able to comment clearly on, for example, simile, metaphor, emotive language, contrast, vivid imagery, repetition. Some explanations at this borderline grade were non-specific and unrelated to the question: 'The writer uses language and structure to engage the reader.' Many commented on colours, especially 'grey' in the opening stanza, lights in the town, purple blood, losing his colour. There were various interpretations of "dark" equalling death. I loved the "yearning for oblivion" and "as if death was equal to freedom as it would liberate him for his suffering". Also interesting was "...gothic language 'dark' 'ghastly' contrasting with 'budded' not to forget "metaphor of the zombie - he lost his colour far from here".

Candidates at the Grade 7 borderline were commenting on both language and structure consistently, confidently and succinctly. At this borderline grade candidates were exploring and analysing language and structure, with detailed and discriminating references. At the higher level, candidates were able to explore less obvious features, such as the tone of the poem and use of passive voice, 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, showing a perceptive understanding of the way the poet

creates feelings of sympathy and the effect of details selected on the readers, for example references to tone. An example of succinct, perspective analysis is 'In the 3<sup>rd</sup> stanza there's a clear contrast of colours with the word 'artist' suggesting a full palette of colours that clashes with the expression 'he's lost his colour'.' This demonstrates a subtle personal response and is followed by analysis.

Examiners' comments included:

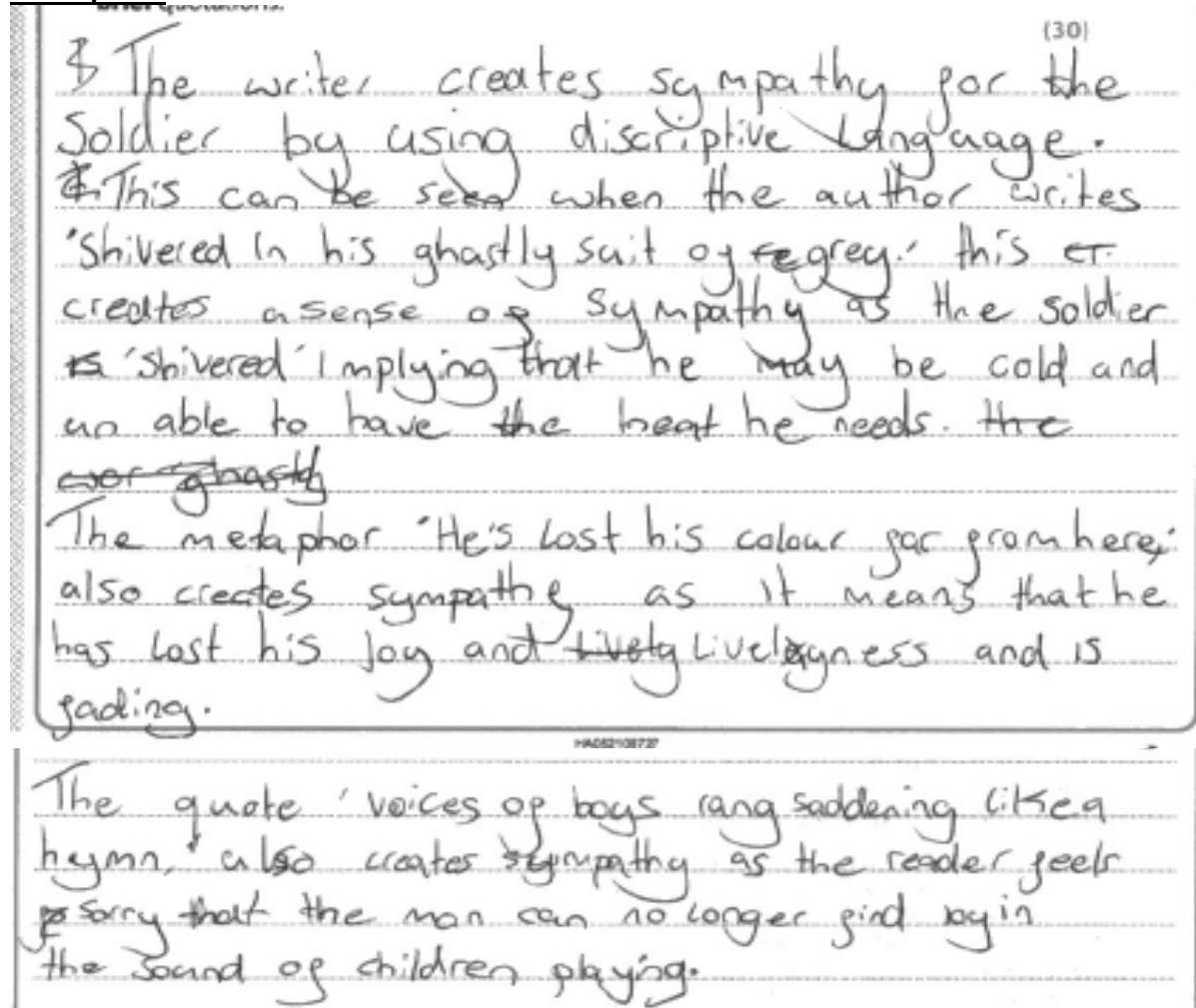
- Many candidates commented on tone. Sad at the simplistic end moving to bitter/ironic/ regretful. Many also talked of nostalgic, and I particularly liked wistful. Some very subtle interpretations: 'throwing away his knees' - this carelessness may make the reader scornful if they were not aware of the scorn the soldier feels for his young self 'no fears of fear yet'.'
- Most good language points rose naturally from interpretation of ideas:
  - 'the soldier feels a yearning for warmth not just a temperature but a heat which is only sourced through physical touch and love'
  - 'we are privy to the conspiracy of the recruiting officers who encourage and collude with the patriotic and drunk young man'
  - 'a lexical field of light and warmth is created and contrasted with'
  - 'linking suddenly like a hymn to his mourning his former life'
  - 'the brave and fearless soldier contrasted with the seemingly most bizarre and simple things like nurses not coming to put him to bed'
  - 'interestingly the word war is never used'
  - '...make him look good - his vanity led to his injury'
  - 'sacrificed his knees and by extension his life'

There were not many comments on structure noted this series. Rhyme, the final questions, juxtaposition and the short stanza were the most common ones. Better responses focused on the dash as a means of pausing and to signal regret, the beginning and ending of the poem in the hospital creating a cyclical effect, highlighting his continuous isolation, the ending creating a sort of epiphany for the reader. One examiner noted 'The point was made effortlessly: 'the dash clearly presents how he is regretful of what he did.' Just ticks the structure box without the candidate doing an awful lot.'

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



### Example 1



### Examiner Comments

This answer opens with some comment on descriptive language, and there is a literal description of the quotation. The reference to the metaphor is linked to the idea of sympathy, but there is a lack of connection to the effect of this and a lack of development. The quotation about the voices is relevant and shows some understanding.

This is quite a basic response in terms of its brevity and coverage. There is some understanding of the text, although basic. The selection and interpretation of information is valid in the sense that it is linked to the question, but there is not much of it. There is some attempt to comment on language and the references, although limited, are valid, but not developed. The 'best-fit' for this response is just into Level 2 with a mark of 7.

## Example 2

(30)

The poet creates sympathy using devices descriptions and structure to make us feel sorry for the soldier.

The writer uses colour to illustrate how good and happy the world looked to the soldier before his injury. The phrase "Glow-lamps budded in the ~~street~~ light blue trees" makes the reader imagine the lights glowing around the town, glancing off the trees in the darkness. The poet

does this by using imagery which makes the reader imagine a scene using powerful and descriptive words. The word "Glow-lamp" is used to describe the street lamps and the use of "glow" suggests the light in the town and "lamp" suggests the warmth and cheery atmosphere of the town.

Light is used to demonstrate the mood of the poem. An example of this is the second line of the poem "And shivered in his ghastly suit of grey". The colour grey suggests dullness, boredom and the closeness to death. This makes the reader feel sorry for the soldier as he is cold, bored and near to death.

Colour is also used to compare the poet's past and present. When the poet discusses his past, he describes with bright colours like "light blue trees", "Jewelled hilts" and "Plaid socks". These phrases show his happy and bright past and show the difference between him now and then. Dark colours describe his past and the tragedies of it, "Purple & spurts from his thigh" and "Ghastly suit of

grey." show how dull is present is and other quotes "Girls glanced levelier" show how much better his past was.

Regret is also shown in the poem to show how sad the man is which makes the reader feel sympathetic towards him. Phrases like "An artist was silly for his game" and "He's lost his colour far from here" show that the man regretted signing up to be a soldier because he was a wonderful and promising man who was "one of the 'Strong men who were whole' not a man who's 'back would never brace'".

The poet also uses emotive language that promotes either a negative or positive response. The poet does this to compare the man's past to future. The words "A leap of purple sputtered <sup>from</sup> his thigh" makes the mood dark and serious as it shows how the man has gone from healthy red blood up his leg to an unnatural purple leg which makes the reader disgusted as purple means diseased or un-healthy leg. This compared to "Warm their subtle hands" makes the reader feel

sympathetic and sad for the man as he has fallen so far and will never get back to that time.

The poet uses poetic devices like oxymorons to compare the times "Voices of boys sang sadly like a hymn" And an ~~ABAB~~ ~~ABBA~~ ~~ABBA~~ rhyme scheme is used to make the poem more descriptive and interesting.

### Examiner Comments

This answer opens with focus on the question, and there is some attempt to comment on the use of colour and light. The candidate tries to focus on language, although the examples used are not really offering evidence of powerful and descriptive language ('glow'). The idea that 'glow' suggests light and 'lamp' suggests warmth is a little confused, and shows a lack of security in understanding. There is a definite attempt to make points about light, and colour, but the evidence is not always securely linked to the point being made (the example of light is actually an example of colour). There is some understanding of the contrast between past and present, but this needs more development to be secure that there is clear understanding. The sense that the soldier's past was much better is not developed. The point about regret is well-made, but the references used to

support it are not especially valid. The focus on the colour purple shows a real attempt to comment but is not particularly convincing.

There is 'some understanding of the text' here, Level 2. The selection and interpretation of information is valid, but really comes back to the same point - that there is a contrast between past and present. There needs to be more connection to the question. There is some comment on language and this shows some understanding, although not always secure. The points at the end are just identification of language and structure features. The use of references is valid, but not always relevant to the points being made.

The candidate meets the first three bullet points from the mark scheme in Level 2. The final bullet point is only just met in Level 2 - references are valid, but not developed or linked to the points/question. A mark at the higher end of Level 2 is appropriate, and 11 is awarded.

### Example 3

The writer creates sympathy by describing how he is treated like a "queer disease." They use juxtaposition to show how his life was to now it is now. For example in the ~~first~~ second paragraph the writer uses words like "swing so gay", "lovelier", or "warm" to the reader this makes them feel safe and in a happy setting, which describes

how he feels looking back on his past. The writer quickly changes the tone and uses words such as "queer", "old", "lost his colour." The sudden change in tone causes shock to the reader which will make them feel more sympathy for the soldier.

The writer also uses similes to describe how the soldier feels. For example, they write how "voices of boys rang saddening like a hymn". The description of the boys' ~~voices~~ voices, who in the next line are shown to be playing, to a ~~hymn~~ hymn shows the longing he has to be able to play like those boys again. Hymns are usually associated with ~~church~~ church or a holy setting, so describing the voices as Hymns creates a sense of ~~unreal~~ or an ~~ethereal~~ ~~magical~~ unreal, wondrous feeling, or makes you think of angels or god. This shows how far away or impossible the

soldier feels, ~~however~~ and the longing and desperation to be able to be like them again.

In the third paragraph the writer describes the injury he got while at war. The writer says how it was "younger than his youth" which describes how young he was at the time of the injury that he never got to finish his youth. "Now he is old" follows which describes how, even though he is not much older than when he went to war, his youth has been taken from him and he will never be able to do more than the elderly can and properly enjoy his life. The writer then says "hes lost his colour" which in a literal sense could mean how you lose the warmth in your skin when you are ill, however it could also describe how he has lost his personality and ~~hope~~ to happiness.

"half his lifetime lapsed before his eyes" also describes how he may have a sooner expected death as he is more prone to infections now, however it also could mean how he ~~is~~ has lost his lifetime in experiences because of how the injury will affect his life. The overall tone of this paragraph is sad and hopeless and shows the brutality of the war.

The next paragraph juxtaposes the ~~last~~ previous one. The writer described how once the soldier didnt mind blood on his leg after playing football. They describe how he was "carried shoulder-high" and how enthusiastic and happy he was. ~~before~~ they also use colloquial language in this paragraph such as "Aye". This creates a carefree feeling as before he would use slang which tends to be associated with casual convosations. The writer describes how

~~crowds~~ crowds would cheer for him after a goal and now only ~~to~~ very few cheered for him after war. The writer describes one ~~as~~ of the ~~to~~ people who cheered as a "solemn man" who "inquired about his soul" both of these words are very formal which juxtaposes with the use of "Aye" before.

The writer talks about how women's eyes passed by him, which is a reflection of the first ~~par~~ two paragraphs ~~how~~ where the writer describes his life before the injury and "~~women's~~ ~~warm~~ hands their "warm" hands. "To the strong men that were whole" describes how he feels less than the people who still have their legs. He isn't "whole" to them, and instead a piece of something else.

overall the writer ~~describes~~

creates sympathy to the soldier ~~to~~ by comparing his old life, most likely one more similar to the reader's life, to his ~~new~~ how he has to live now. by comparing the two we can put ourselves in the soldier's shoes and sympathise ~~with~~ with everything he has been through.

### Examiner Comments

This is a response that shows mostly sound understanding of the poem and links to the question, despite the fairly random starting point. There is a clear idea of the contrast between past and present, and how language is used to create the sense of positivity about the past. There is a sense of a change in tone, although it is arguably 'sudden', and the point here could be explained further. Selection and interpretation of information and ideas is clear - there is a feeling of longing for the past (although again, this could be explained more convincingly), the feeling of lost youth, the loss of colour and how this shows literal and metaphorical loss, the feeling of hopelessness, the past carefree feelings, the reactions of women to the soldier.

For AO2 there is some clear understanding and explanation of language and structure techniques (the descriptive words linked to positivity, the negative words, similes, loss of colour, the use of colloquial language), but also some more

descriptive language points, more towards the end. AO2 is mostly achieved in Level 3.

Overall, there is sound understanding of the text (Level 3), appropriate and relevant selection (Level 3), some clear understanding and explanation of language and structure (some comment which is more Level 2) and appropriate references. The response meets most of Level 3, and it achieves a mark at the top end - 17. It is not quite bordering on Level 4.

#### Example 4

(30)

In the text "Disabled", the writer creates sympathy for the soldier by describing five stages of his life over the course of seven stanzas. This helps the reader sympathise with the soldier as they understand the events of his life. It also illustrates the effect of war on his life.

In the first line, the soldier is described as "he". The abstract pronoun helps create sympathy for the soldier immediately as he is not given a name. Furthermore, this also implies that there are other soldiers like him that are struggling with the abhorrent effects of war. "He" is shown to be "waiting for dark". This phrase creates a sad and morose tone in turn building sympathy as he is "waiting for dark". The adjective "dark" is vague but it could be implying that the soldier is "waiting" for death. Furthermore, the writer will feel upset by this as a once young soldier is now waiting to die.

~~This is directly juxtaposed to~~

In addition to, the phrase "ghastly suit of grey" highlights the soldier's bleak emotions. The colour "grey" is very dull and this could

be a reference to his current life. This is in direct contrast to the past as he used to be "carried shoulder-high". The reader will feel sympathetic to the ~~read~~ soldier as he vividly ~~recalls~~ recalls playing football with his friends and getting drunk with when they won. This highlights how over time he has become ~~is~~ unhappy and continuously reflects on his past. Furthermore, the war

Furthermore, the writer shows how the effects of war have had an impact on his town. He ~~describes~~ reveals that "the town used to swing so gay". This is stating that the town used to be jubilant but ~~at~~ after the war it has become monotonous. ~~The war~~ This creates sympathy. As a result, sympathy

is created for the soldier as it ~~is~~ is not just him that got affected, his town did and with it he feels he has lost his livelihood and his way of life.

The soldier is described to be "lame, sewn short at elbow". The caesura implies that his arm is amputated. In addition to, the <sup>also</sup> adjective "short" reveals that he is physically lacking and it also implies he is mentally weak. This is a reference to the constant flashbacks he has of "voices". The repetition of "voices" shows that his sad memories appear frequently and that only sleep helps him. "Till gathering sleep had mothered them from him", the personification of sleep shows that it comforts him through his trauma.



Also, the writer claims that people touch him "like a queer disease". This highlights that people are disgusted of him due to his amputations. The simile reinforces this idea and shows that despite his heroic and valiant contribution in war, he is forgotten and discarded by lots of humanity. Furthermore, it also illustrates that he is no longer good looking like he used to be. ~~that~~ In the past, ~~the~~ "girls glanced lovelier as the air grew dim". This highlights how girls used to be attracted to him because of his good looks and this contrasts the belief that he looks like "a queer disease".

The metaphor "poured it down shell-holes" implies that he gave his life at war.

However, the verb "poured" shows that the soldier believes he wasted his life. ~~For~~ On the other hand, before he went to war there was "an artist silly for his face". This creates a sense of naivety as the soldier lost his youth through war. This draws sympathy from the reader as they sympathise with him because he gave a lot of his life in war.

At the end, ~~we return~~ to it is implied that the soldier is in a carehome alone and he thinks that everyone is repulsed by him due to his amputations. This is shown as it states "why don't they come". This is a reference to his care home and the question mark reinforces his solitude and isolation, which evokes sympathy from the ~~end~~ reader.

### Examiner Comments

This response opens with a very clear focus on the poem and the question, the five stages of the soldier's life over seven stanzas.

The response shows quite sustained understanding of the poem, and there is a real attempt to respond to the question and material. The idea of the soldier being representative of other soldiers is an interesting one, as is the sense of the 'abhorrent effects of war'. The feeling of the mis-match between youth and being close to death is explained, the 'bleak emotions' covered, the contrast between his past and his present, the continuous reflection on the past, the impact of war on the town as well as the soldier. The focus on the question is sustained throughout the response, and the idea of being both physically and mentally affected is evident, with the interesting sense of needing to be 'mothered'. The sense of the contrast between what the soldier gave for his country versus what he now 'gets back' from people is an interesting point to make.

For AO2 there is definite clear understanding and explanation of language and structure and how these are used by writers to achieve effects (the reference to colour, the description of the town, repetition, the verb 'poured', language to show naivety, the question asked at the end). There are some touches of quite thorough understanding, but this is not explored enough - for example the use of abstract pronouns, the personification of sleep, the simile 'like a queer disease'. The selection of references is appropriate and is relevant to the points being made. Bullet point 1 of the mark scheme is met in Level 4. Bullet point 2 is met in Level 3, and there are occasional touches of detail (Level 4). AO2 is met in Level 3, and there are some points that show exploration (Level 3/4). The references are quite detailed, but not always, so a mixture of Level 3 and 4 here. On balance, and using the 'best-fit' principle, a mark of 22 just in the middle of Level 4 is awarded.

### Example 5

(30)

In the poem ~~is~~ 'disabled' the writer creates sympathy towards the soldier through regret, "Voices of boys... Voices of play." ~~Owen~~ The soldier is reflecting on his past childhood, ~~s~~ representing how the soldier is moving backwards rather than mentally succeeding. The repetition of "voices" represents his joy of the ~~past~~ his past life, as if he is living two complete different lives. ~~The~~ Owen hints to the reader that the soldier wants to

be ~~his~~<sup>the</sup> younger innocent "boy", as his life has permanently changed causing mental strain to the soldiers confidence. The reader may appreciate life as it is, and feel as if the soldier is being mistreated, as he Obided by duties for the well being of others.

Moreover the

~~the~~ poet, ~~the~~ Wilfred Owen, creates sympathy for the soldier through the judgemental minds of others. Owen has compared the soldiers past life as a dream-like world, however in present tense he is treated with large differences.

"Touch him like some queer disease," the soldier was used to gaining attention from women, however due to his amputation society rejects him. Moreover Therefore, he is seen as an outsider leading to his present loneliness. The writer deliberately ~~presents~~ reinforces the soldier to be suffering in this manner, as Owen aims to spread his strong opinion and views. Owen aims to educate the reader, and so ~~has~~ dramatically creates a depressing and lonely tone through

describing ~~the~~<sup>in</sup> the present tense. This juxtaposes with his description of the soldiers past life, where he did not feel as vulnerable and alone. ~~Furthermore~~ Furthermore, the reader may identify societies limited views, and the discrimination taking place due to the lack of education.

The reader could feel as if the soldier was rejected, and so feel empathetic towards the soldier. The speaker ~~aims~~ purposefully aims for the readers to feel ~~in~~ this way, to educate them himself and so give the voiceless a voice.

Furthermore, the structure of the poem 'disabled' ~~differs~~ differs, including ~~five~~ stanzas with a rhythm. The order of rhymes represents the past happiness, ~~of~~<sup>of</sup> how delightful his childhood was. Owen presents his poem in a non-chronological order, showing a lack of order in the soldiers life.

This makes reading the poem more difficult for the reader to comprehend, this may reflect on the soldiers mindset of

the societies norms, and how they are unmercifully dehumanising the soldier unmercifully. The soldier himself may be confused as he fought for the country and citizens who do who look down on him, rather than respect him. However, the reader may further respect the soldier, and feel thankful towards for his service. The poet also deliberately changes the poem from past to present tense repetitively, this may represent the soldiers thought and reflections of his younger self. This deeply symbolises his regret as he thinks about his new self, the reader may feel anxious towards the soldiers treatment throughout his life, therefore they may aim to make a difference to society.

Moreover, Owen ~~continues~~ continuously creates a sympathetic emotion towards the reader. "Put him into bed? Why don't they come?" Owen <sup>abruptly</sup> ends the poem with a series of rhetorical questions which represents the uneasiness of the soldiers mindset. The soldier has had a traumatic

experience with lasting memories of terror, however his ~~own~~ memories are infered as the last on his mind but women leaving is the sold what the soldier seems to consider as important. This may The sinister tone is reinforcing his fear of being on his own entirely. This is due to the ~~traders~~ pleasures of his past juxtaposing the ~~frustration~~ suffering of his ~~future~~ and present, and so he is not used to being harshly rejected in this way. The reader automatically assumes this with the suffering will continue until his future, due to the highly closed mindsets of others. ~~Although Society~~ This is due to the reader realising societies ~~prejudice~~ views are largely limited, ~~the~~ this may impact the readers and lead them to feel frustration towards prejudism.

Throughout the poem, the speaker uses hyperbole, cesura to create an uneven pace throughout. Owen uses language for the reader to reflect whilst reading, including dashes which slower the pace giving the reader time to think and empathise.

## **Examiner Comments**

The response starts with definite focus on the question, and explores the idea of the movement of the soldier mentally moving 'backwards', contrasting elements of his life. The point about how he had given his service for the wellbeing of others but is mistreated after that is quite perceptive. The focus on the past life as almost 'dream-like' compared to the judgemental treatment in his present life is perceptive and the selection and interpretation of information is apt and quite persuasive in clarifying the points the candidate is making, for example the intentions of the poet to 'dramatically' create a 'depressing and lonely tone'. The ideas of discrimination and rejection and a chaotic and disordered feeling are quite perceptively covered, and this feels like a personal response to the question. There is the idea of 'dehumanising' the soldier, the feeling of regret, a sense of unease and almost sinister tone and language and structure points are weaved into the response, showing understanding and analysis. There is confidence in points made about how language and structure are used by the poet to achieve effects, with a fairly personal and assured response.

This response meets the first bullet point in Level 4/5. The candidate definitely shows sustained understanding of the poem and it is perceptive in parts. The selection and interpretation of ideas and information is appropriate, detailed and fully supports the points being made (Level 4). There is evidence of persuasive, apt selection (Level 5). For AO2 there is a mixture of a few parts of thorough exploration (and some explanation at the end, which is a little rushed) but there is also some perceptive analysis of language and structure (Level 4/5). The selection of references is detailed, appropriate and supports (mostly fully) the points being made (Level 4). They do attempt to clarify the points being made (Level 5). Level 4 is met, and there is enough evidence of Level 5 achievement to move this to the lower end of Level 5 with 27. The personal interpretation is very evident.

## **Examiner Comments**

### **Writing**

Examiners felt that 'The standard was overall very good' for writing. It is worth noting that examiners always enjoy reading the writing responses, with one saying 'I really enjoyed the writing. Nearly every piece had a little bit of something to lift it'.

At the lowest grade boundary candidates 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 candidates tended to express but not always connect ideas and information, with limited use of structural and grammatical features and paragraphing. Pleasingly, there were few responses that only achieved Level 1 and where they did this was mostly because these candidates hardly wrote anything, offering a basic response, or the sentences did not make sense at all.

At the Grade 4 borderline candidates 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 candidates 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 and then focus more on plot towards the end where planning had let the candidates down. In some cases, the writing 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 candidates had been advised to include plenty of adjectives, adverbs, or similes in their writing without considering their purpose.

In the best responses, candidates tended to have subtle use of tone, style and register, managing ideas and stylistic or rhetorical devices to suit audience and purpose. At this borderline level candidates 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 and conscious, successful crafting. 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 candidates to avoid thinking they need to write a whole novel or even short extract 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 these responses were:

- whether candidates 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.

Varying sentence structure and punctuation were areas 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 candidates 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 were formulaic, showing 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. There was some excellent description and evidence of crafting at all levels.

In terms of register it was clear that the majority of the candidates knew how to write an imaginative piece, however there were a few that produced responses more like an essay. Examiners noted that lack of control could let candidates down and that control of language was also a problem at times.

Some comments from examiners include:

- ‘Lower Level 2 responses were mainly because of weak expression which was, at times, hard to decipher. These often were unpunctuated but did have paragraphs.’
- ‘The vast majority of responses used paragraphs and were clearly selecting vocabulary’
- ‘Many candidates really tried to introduce varied punctuation with question and exclamation marks being the ‘go to’ though ellipsis was used effectively.’
- ‘There was clear evidence of students varying the starts of sentences and using one-word sentences and one-line paragraphs’.

**Question 2: Write about a time when you, or someone you know, had to be brave.**

The numbers of each writing response were small given the small entry. Examiners noted a wide range of responses to this question being offered which allowed the full range of marks to be applied, since all candidates were able to offer ideas about a time that they or someone else needed to be brave.

A range of reasons for having to be brave was offered, for example in difficult times such as examinations or other tests, in sport or other competitions, in making a decision or doing something never done before. Most responses tried to hook the reader but at the lower end of the mark scheme responses were a little formulaic, for example starting with ‘This is about a time I had to be brave’. Most did try and build up the narrative. Some had touches of description, while others introduced a bit of tension (for example where there was a need to overcoming a fear or difficulty).

### Example 1

It was a casual, icy Sunday morning. The day began. The sun had risen. The weather was strange. ~~Unusually~~ <sup>Unusually</sup> strange. I continued with my normal routine. My morning was perfect, almost ~~perfect~~ <sup>perfect</sup> as perfect, I had doubts of what was yet to come. At 12 PM sharp, I received a text message with details of an unknown ~~area~~ <sup>destination</sup> area, the ~~message~~ <sup>notification</sup> attracted my attention, immediately I ~~recovered~~ <sup>manoeuvred</sup> my way out of bed, remembering through the door, I asked myself ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> most one question ~~to~~ <sup>to</sup> should I? I was ~~hesitant~~ <sup>hesitant</sup> not to but I recovered. As I made my way, my eyes engaged the fact that this was an unusual set of colors, I had finally arrived at the destination, ~~but~~ there was ~~nothing~~ <sup>no</sup> sign of ~~anything~~ <sup>anything</sup> apart from the sewage system underneath me, so I went in. I remembered my way

through the dirt, grass, disgusting sewer, the horrendous smell was like being sensations travelling through my nostrils, then there was a door, an unusual door. I was contemplating whether to even look or not a series of questions ~~to~~ <sup>were</sup> approaching my mind ~~to~~ <sup>to</sup> should I even look? Here I ~~stood~~ <sup>bit</sup> of more than I can chew? Is this safe? Is it works it? Like my father once said "Without bravery, we can't go far in life". I slammed open the door with all my might and there he was. My father. My ~~long~~ <sup>long</sup>-lost ~~father~~ <sup>father</sup>.



## Examiner Comments

In this response there is evidence of full Level 2 achievement in AO4, and the candidate just moves into Level 3. The response communicates in a broadly appropriate way, with some appropriate ideas (Level 3). The narrative is a little quick in its development, and therefore lacks what would be needed to be clear or effective. There is some grasp of the purpose and the intended reader, and the use of form, tone and register is a mixture of straightforward and appropriate (not always securely 'appropriate').

In AO5 the candidate is secure in Level 3 using the 'best-fit' principle. They offer some varied vocabulary spelt with accuracy, for example *unusually*, *manoeuvred* (this could be considered to be quite 'extensive', but it is important to remember that credit is for extensive vocabulary used strategically, rather than used to demonstrate knowledge of different words), *meandering*, *horrendous*, *contemplating*. There are some errors in other spellings. There is an attempt to adapt sentence structures, for example short sentences and questions, but the style can be quite straightforward.

8+6 = 14

## Example 2

Chosen question number: Question 2  Question 3  Question 4

The word "fear" doesn't do it justice. Joe ~~was~~ <sup>was</sup> terrified of heights. So scared, that he ~~can't~~ <sup>couldn't</sup> enter lifts. So scared that he ~~can't~~ <sup>couldn't</sup> cross bridges. So scared that he ~~can't~~ <sup>couldn't</sup> even walk down a flight of stairs without gripping the banister for dear life.

~~Joe and I~~ Joe and I were at Clip and Climb, an indoor climbing area. It was full of climb towers, ropes and walls to climb. There was even an almost vertical slide that you could climb up ~~and using a~~ ~~grapple bar that an employee would pull up the slide,~~ ~~as you grip onto it.~~ and slide back down, if you were brave enough. The tallest tower was about twenty five feet tall, and required ~~intricate~~ skillful footwork to conquer. For

For an adrenaline junkie, this sounds amazing. However, if you're scared of heights... Not so much.

As we entered the building and saw the colorful, bright climbing equipment, Joe's all of the color from Joe's face was drained. Although it was his idea to visit, I asked him.

"Are you sure you want to do this?" I tested my hand on his bony shoulder. "Yes, I've been fearful of heights for too long. I need to get over it somehow..." He stuttered like a toddler. I gave him a reassuring nod as we entered the climbing area.

As the employee was connecting our safety equipment, Joe was beginning to bumble. His ~~even~~ ~~the~~ his hands were in fists clenched into fists and his jaw ~~was~~ had a slight tremor.

Joe had been terrified of heights since he was a toddler. When he was only three years old, he fell from the top of ~~his~~ <sup>the</sup> stairs at his grandma's house. Since he managed to fracture both of his arms, and needed surgery to repair them. Since that day, he had avoided any level of leukaemia from the ground - until today.

We made our way over to ~~a~~ ~~dim~~ the smallest climbing frame. A flat, ~~short~~ ~~stubby~~ ~~wall~~ with a flat wall that was approximately twelve feet tall. It was black with blue and green studs to hold your hands and feet onto.

I ~~stood~~ gave Joe a pat on the back and stood back, allowing him to make his move. He held onto two green stumps and planned where to place his feet. He used his right foot to lift himself off of the solid ground for all of three seconds.

"Joe, do you need help?" He hesitated before turning and muttering "yes". I ~~stood~~ ~~behind~~ ~~marched~~ ~~behind~~ him and got hands to support him. "If you fall, I will be here to catch you, okay?". He

He nodded and ~~pushed~~ pushed himself up again. He resembled more of a young child attempting to climb, rather than a teenager, but it was a start. After a few seconds, his he raised his left foot, placing it onto a ~~se~~ blue stump. He ~~grab~~ gripped onto the stumps for dear life. He was only ~~a foot off of the ground~~ two feet off of the ground, however, that was the highest Joe had ever climbed in his life.

"That's it. Do you think you could go any further?" I questioned. But, I got no response. I stayed behind Joe, ready to support him.

This time more confidently, he raised his stinky arm and pulled himself further up. He ~~raising~~ ~~his~~ ~~left~~ ~~but~~ ~~his~~ right foot, one

again, ~~he lifted himself~~ he attempted to test his foot on a higher stump just above his knee. ~~He stopped.~~ His foot lightly grazed the plastic. Though he missed it. & Despite this, he slowly ~~raised~~ raised his leg again. This time, he held his foot at an angle in an attempt to have better grip. + Successfully, he landed his foot onto the stump. ~~then~~ he had a brief moment of celebration before lifting his left foot, as he thought his right foot was secure.

This was not the case. Joe fell slipped and fell off the wall; he landed ~~on me,~~ <sup>and on</sup> on top of me. We both fell to the floor with a hard thump. <sup>boof</sup> Thankfully, for the safety mat, we were both okay. We both laughed it off, but ~~decided that was enough~~

We both laughed it off, but decided that was enough for now and went to go and get <sup>some</sup> ~~some~~ lunch.

#### Examiner Comments

This response has a very engaging opening. The candidate is really striving for effect with the repetition to create a sense of tension. There is a secure realisation of purpose and the expectations and requirements of the intended reader. There is effective use of form, tone and register in the feelings of fear and tension Joe has, and the support offered by the narrator to him. The structure is well-handled, for example not starting with why Joe has the fear of heights, but weaving that in later. There is mostly successful communication (it could be argued some of the description is more clear than effective), and therefore a mark toward the top of Level 4, 14, is appropriate for AO4.

For AO5 information and ideas are managed, and deliberate effects are created, for example with the use of short sentences. Vocabulary is varied and quite wide in places, for example *conquer*, *adrenaline*, *equipment*, *reassuring*, *clenched*, *levitation*, *approximately*. There are occasional spelling errors. The candidate uses something of a range of punctuation for clarity (for example ellipsis, speech marks, question mark) and does manage sentence structures for deliberate effect. A mark of 9 credits that there is some ambition in vocabulary, syntax and punctuation here but also reflects that there are some lapses in accuracy.

### Example 3

Chosen question number: Question 2  Question 3  Question 4

Oh no, I whispered. How did I find myself in such a perilous situation?

Two years ago, my friends and I decided to go to Guinea during <sup>summer</sup> vacation to let go of the stressful atmosphere of school. It ~~was~~ had been our dream destination for a long time as we all were huge fans of windsurfing. And as the wind was extremely powerful in Guinea - almost violent - we believed it was the best destination we could choose.

The first day we arrived we decided to go directly windsurfing. My first feeling when we arrived at the spot was fear: ~~there~~ I had never seen such a powerful wind. The enormous stretch of sand ran through kilometers of length. The sea, this endless immensity, usually blue, was now draped with a white sheet, like a sheet covering a dead body; the wind shook the water so violently that the amount of foam produced, so great, had changed the color of the water. The spot was crowded <sup>with</sup> ~~with~~ a ~~lot~~ myriad of athletes: surfers, windsurfers, kitesurfers, and even some people were running on the hot sand. I was absolutely terrified. The sun was burning my eyes as I tried to evaluate at what speed the sailors were going. But it was a vain attempt to reassure myself and my apprehension grew greatly.

We ~~slowly started~~ <sup>tried</sup> to get ready but the gusts of wind did not make the thing easy; they were to

powerful that it was impossible to walk ~~straight~~ straight. As soon as we were getting the material ready, my fear started to mature into excitement. I was more impatient to feel the grainy surface of my board on my feet and to place my hand on the cold metal of the boom. I could not wait to feel the ~~power~~ <sup>power</sup> of the wind in my sail. I was hectic. I ~~the~~ checked one last time that I got all my ~~the~~ material and went in the water.

One, two, three. Water to the knees, I jumped onto my board and opened my sail to let the wind get it gently. But instead of that, it violently crashed into it, giving ~~it~~ <sup>it</sup> enormous power. I quickly sat in my harness to compensate with the gust's strength. My board directly started planing over the water and then I felt it. ~~then~~ The <sup>rush of</sup> adrenaline filled me with satisfaction and it made me think of a drug addict craving for drugs. The speed was insane. ~~I had to be a~~ NO my senses were alert as I needed to keep ~~the~~ extreme concentration in order to avoid crashing with other people - which at this speed can be fatal.

As I was looking everywhere around me, I realised that I ~~had~~ <sup>forgot</sup> forgotten my life jacket. I ~~was~~ knew, I really knew that I should ~~had~~ <sup>have</sup> go and get it, but my body refused to let go of this amazing feeling, even for a second. Moreover, I trusted my skills and my experience enough not to do a dumb mistake. But if only I had known...

The wind seemed to get stronger and stronger and it

becoming harder and harder to keep control over my board. I tried repositioning my feet to gain power, but for the fraction of seconds during which I was not looking, there was another windrunner right in front of me. My body reacted instinctively and tried to move the sail in a hopeless attempt. But it worked. My board turned just enough to avoid the tragic collision that was about to happen. However, my sail was now facing the wind. And one second later, I found myself being cranked on the surface of the water, the sail above my head and me underneath.

Oh no, I whispered.

It happened so fast that I did not have the time to catch my breath. Panic started to grow as I realized that I was stuck in my harness and underwater. Going ~~to~~ from extreme enjoyment to a tragic accident was something my brain could not process yet. And there I realized that it was now or never. Now or never that I had to be brave like I ~~have~~ <sup>had</sup> never been before.

~~It~~ It was an internal battle between me and... Death. ~~It~~ <sup>It</sup> was everywhere, waiting for me to give up my last hopes and open my mouth, to let the water penetrate my lungs like knives would cut fresh flesh. But what she did not know is that I had no intention of giving up. My mind looked for all the courage that I had hidden during all those years while my body was moving fearfully.

But it was not working, I was in great danger and finally stuck. But I continued. I knew that there would be no one to save me. I knew that it would be me, only me - it had to be me - that needed to set me free so I tried, again and again, despite the fear, the pain and the agony.

Suddenly, I felt the pressure in my harness come up. My feet pushed my board while my arms tried to push the sail above my head. And it worked. The burning rays of the sun. The sound of the ~~water~~ violent gusts of wind. And fresh air. I was living again.

When I told ~~my~~ my friends about what happened when I was out there, they were absolutely amazed about how brave I was to keep fighting despite the terrible situation I was in. And I just answered: "I would have been really brave if I had been able to go back to the beach and take my lifejacket". ~~Answer~~

And from that day, I never forgot my lifejacket.

### Examiner Comments

This response takes the sense of bravery to sea with a story about windsurfing. The opening is secure and sets the scene, and there is a feeling of tension built up in the range of athletes around and the description of rising apprehension. The feelings changing from nervousness to excitement to panic and fear are definitely managed, and there is some evidence of complexity in the range here. There are some very perceptive touches of description of the water and the feelings of the narrator. These are not as cohesive or managed with the subtlety that they could be for the top marks in Level 5.

For A04, a mark of 17 reflects the successful and also perceptive communication. The task shows a secure sense of audience and purpose, and it is sharply focused on having to be brave, with a touch of humour attempted at the end. The form, tone and register are effective.

For A05, there is evidence of complex ideas, but they could be manipulated more for cohesion overall. The vocabulary is wide and selective, and in places quite extensive, although sometimes not always used strategically, for example

pernicious, atmosphere, apprehension, compensate, instinctively. There are rare spelling errors. There could be more of a range of punctuation, but what is there is accurate. Sentence structures are managed for deliberate effect. A mark of 11 is appropriate for A05.

17+11 = 28

**Question 3: Write a story with the title 'Everything Had Changed'.**

This question was completed by the majority of candidates for this series. There were some really wide-ranging ideas offered, for example uncontrollable climate change, the Berlin wall coming down, Suffragettes, thriller CIA, adoption of an Indian street girl, safaris, storms, moving to a new country, a few on the pandemic and brain tumours. Some looked at changes such as clean water for some communities and changes through the centuries, such as technology. Some responses were developed from changed within families. The range of ideas shows the creativity of candidates, which should be credited.

### Example 1

Everything had changed.

When I was born I had almost everything I could want or need. A loving mother, <sup>Siblings</sup> I idolised and got on well with and <sup>a great</sup> ~~an~~ <sup>entire</sup> whole play room to myself! Every day I would walk our family dog to the park with my mum. We would play run around and sometimes ~~select~~ collect conkers. When I was ~~5~~ <sup>Five</sup> ~~we~~ <sup>five</sup> we moved to a beautiful village with woods and fields all around. I went to a small school where my mum worked, ~~and~~ life was beautiful and peaceful. One <sup>snowy</sup> ~~toy~~ ~~winter~~ winter ~~to~~ my mum slipped on an icy bridge and broke her arm, at the time <sup>the</sup> ~~the~~ worst I thought would come from it was not having as ~~many~~ many hugs and for awhile I was right. However as my mothers bones healed ~~to~~ ~~a~~ her pain didn't lessen, in fact it got worse. The pain that started in her forearm traveled up to her shoulder and down her back and hips.



She went to her doctor of course but one visit turned to ~~two~~<sup>two</sup> and two to three, she was eventually referred to a neurologist after her ~~GP~~<sup>GP</sup> couldn't help her. She was passed from doctor to doctor and while she got no answers I ~~to~~ became comfortable in hospital and doctors waiting rooms. It was heart breaking to see someone like a parent who is supposed to be impossible to hurt or ~~damage~~<sup>break</sup> ~~be~~ heart be unable to function normally without pain and worst of all be unable to help. After

After two long years of pain and fear she finally got a diagnosis, something called fibromyalgia. This at first seemed a relief, finally a straight straight answer, but as we found out more we ~~discovered~~ found that is basically a diagnosis <sup>confirming</sup> recognising the ~~problem~~ pain but not explaining it. With this knowledge we also found out it isn't something curable and this finding hurt more than anything. My mum who ran around after after every one, some one who loving loved running and hiking would never live without pain again, this was

When I realised everything had changed and there was no way to go back to the days before of joy and woodland walks, now it was doctors waiting rooms.

### Examiner Comments

This is a secure example of Level 3 achievement. The response communicates clearly the idea of family and how it feels to have a parent diagnosed with illness. The opening is quite simply organised and quite straightforward in tone, but the feelings before the narrator's mother are diagnosed are clear. The feelings of sadness are clear, how the bones healed but the pain did not improve. Some phrases have some touches of effectiveness, for example 'one visit turned to two and two to three', but there are lapses in control.

For AO4 the response meets Level 3 securely. It communicates clearly, with a clear sense of purpose and understanding of the intended reader. There is appropriate

use of form, tone and register. It is secure enough to sit on the border with 11, but not successful enough to move into Level 4.

For A05 the candidate connects appropriate information and ideas and there is development in the narrator's feelings about the events. Structural and grammatical features and paragraphing make the meaning clear. There is use of varied vocabulary, for example *idolised*, *heartbreaking*, *diagnosis*, with some accurate spelling but some lack of accuracy in use of double consonants and in more ambitious words. The candidate uses accurate punctuation, but it is not varied. They do try to adapt sentence structures as appropriate. For A05 the candidate meets the middle of Level 3 and achieves a mark of 6.

11+6 = 17

**Question 4: Look at the images provided. Write a story that begins 'It was an unusual gift'.**

This question, as with Question 2, was attempted by fewer candidates than Question 3. Even with the few responses seen, examiners felt that the images provided proved thought-provoking for candidates and were used creatively, and that there were a range of different 'gifts' offered, from concrete, for example a ticket, a photograph or a letter, to abstract, for example 'I am the gift, a gift from God' or a gift of a message.

### Example 1

It was an unusual gift. Very small. I didn't think much of it at the time. Who would? It was a tiny little box tied neatly with a ribbon, I'd seen millions like it. And yet this one was special. I had always grown up in the same house as my grandmother. She was very poorly so my parents had to look after her. I never wondered much about a grandpa, just assumed he was dead, or simply just left. Mum and Dad never spoke about him, and whenever I would ask they would tell me to "hush and don't ask silly questions." And so I didn't. Until that day that would change everything. It was on average dreary Saturday. I woke up, as I always did, in my cramped attic room, shivering as it was winter. I looked at the calendar on my wall and remembered. It was my birthday. I muttered something about how this day was like any other day, I was just older. I never cared much for birthdays after seeing what age did to my grandma. I pulled on my usual t-shirt and jeans

and headed downstairs. Dad was in the kitchen making eggs and bacon. He wished me well then handed me a plate to give to grandma. As he did every morning. I dutifully carried a tray upstairs to her room. I pushed open her bedroom door with a creak.

My grandmother lay pale as a ghost, blending in with her white sheets. Her frail bony hands held a small neatly wrapped box. I nodded my thanks. I didn't like to speak to her in case my voice cracked with emotion. She was supposed to rest her voice too, so we couldn't exactly chatter away to each other. I placed her breakfast on her bedside table, took the box from her and scarpered.

I had been sent out to fetch more eggs, as Dad had used them all. I was hurrying down to the corner shop to see Paul.

Paul was the kindly old man that worked in "Paul's Produce". He would often greet me with toffees that got stuck in my teeth for hours at a time. I liked him a lot, and so did my parents. He would

sometimes give us a loaf of bread and some cheese when money was tight, so needless to say he was popular. That Saturday I didn't have enough. He still gave me a box of eggs to take back.

When I got back home I was reminded of my gift, by it's appearing on the kitchen table. I carelessly tore off the paper and opened the box to see a gold locket in the shape of a heart. It was very old, but still in good condition. I decided to pry open the locket and see if grandma had somehow stuffed in some money. What I saw shocked me to my core. It was a photo of grandma and a young man, both much younger than they would be now. The young man's face seemed rather familiar. It took me a few seconds to realise where I'd seen him before. And then it hit me. It was Paul.

## Examiner Comments

The story crafted here is effective and successful. The candidate uses the opening line well, and the tension suggested is carried through with the idea of the day 'that would change everything'. There are some aspects of the story that are not as convincing, for example forgetting the birthday, but overall the story engages and draws in the reader. The idea of family secrets is introduced early on with the narrator's grandparents. There are some touches of effective description, for example the voice possibly cracking with emotion and the 'scarpering away', the sticky toffees, and some well-chosen phrases such as 'needless to say' and 'I carelessly tore off the paper'. The twist at the end of the story is well handled and quite effective.

Overall, Level 4 is met for AO4, with successful communication of a family secret and secure realisation of purpose and the expectations of the intended reader, who is surprised by the ending. There is mostly effective use of form, tone and register, and we assume that there are some attempts at humour to show feelings, such as 'stuffed in some money'. A mark of 15 is achieved.

In AO5 the candidate is secure in Level 4. All of Level 3 is met, with varied vocabulary, for example *remembered*, *scarpered*, *carelessly*, *familiar*. Spelling, however, is very accurate. They are really trying to manage ideas and the meaning is clear. The candidate uses accurate punctuation, not especially varied, and they attempt to adapt sentence structures as appropriate, with an effective opening style. A mark in the middle of Level 4 is appropriate, 9.

15+9 = 24

## Example 2

It was an unusual gift. I found it sitting there, perfectly parallel to the imperfect wooden planks in which it lay on. ~~There~~ there was a deep sense of mystery flooding through my mind as I decided to unwrap the ~~most~~ neatly wrapped ~~parcel~~. Why was ~~the~~ it ~~so~~ just sitting there? Who placed it there? Or more ~~importantly~~, why was my ~~name~~ name written on it?

As I hesitantly opened it the few ~~whisper~~ wispy clouds covered the sun, casting a ~~a~~ darkness upon me, - almost warning me of ~~the~~ what could possibly be inside the box. Inside, lay something wrapped in a dark plastic bag, too dark to see through but the shape of the object beneath gave hints to what it was; a long but thin ~~rectangular~~ rectangular object. I wanted to leave it alone and move on with my day but ~~the~~ the deep sense of curiosity which lurked ~~got~~ gripped on ~~to~~ my thoughts and I had to see what was inside. I opened the bag, reached ~~in~~ inside and gripped on the foreign object. There was a warm, viscous liquid instantly ~~cover~~ covering my ~~whole~~ hand and ~~breasts~~.

the liquid was a metallic, cold then. \* Obviously, I ~~wasn't~~ ~~had~~ ~~my~~ ~~unrestricted~~ ~~my~~ ~~had~~ ~~hand~~ ~~from~~ ~~the~~ ~~ruffling~~ ~~bag~~ ~~and~~ ~~was~~ ~~met~~ ~~with~~ ~~the~~ ~~disgusting~~ ~~sight~~ ~~of~~ ~~my~~ ~~hand~~ ~~being~~ ~~dunked~~ ~~in~~ ~~a~~ ~~deep,~~ ~~dark~~ ~~red~~ ~~liquid~~.

The sight ~~about~~ ~~a~~ ~~caused~~ ~~instant~~ ~~nauseation~~ ~~and~~ I was forced to fight back the urge to ~~regurgitate~~ ~~whatever~~ ~~was~~ ~~in~~ ~~my~~ ~~stomach~~. It had ~~now~~ ~~flowed~~ ~~down~~ ~~my~~ ~~arm~~ ~~and~~ ~~dripped~~ ~~all~~ ~~over~~ ~~my~~ ~~clothing~~. There wasn't a single inch of my body not ~~soaked~~ ~~in~~ ~~this~~ ~~liquid~~. Just as ~~fast~~ ~~my~~ ~~mind~~ caught up to the situation I heard a ear bursting scream in close proximity to me, as I turn around, my eyes lock onto two people staring at me in horror. It was all a big misunderstanding, I stated as I tried to convince them against what all logic and intuition told them. But it was no use, they had run away as soon as they could, leaving my words of ~~innocence~~ ~~to~~ ~~be~~ ~~trivial~~ ~~avoid~~.

Puzzled, Frightened, anxious, those were all flowing through my head as I sat there, - Frozen by the overload of ~~what~~ ~~had~~ ~~information~~ ~~that~~ ~~had~~ ~~just~~ ~~entered~~ ~~my~~ ~~brain~~.

I saw my ~~had~~ ~~hands~~ ~~turn~~ ~~a~~ ~~&~~ ~~distinctly~~ ~~deep~~ ~~blue~~, then a deep red, amplified by the blood which had stained my skin. Was this my ~~body~~ ~~body~~ ~~reacting~~ ~~in~~ ~~shock~~? ~~No~~, it couldn't be, for the blood was also turning blue, almost as if it were reflecting an external source of light. That's when I could finally process the sound around me. The blisteringly loud screams of sirens, echoed by the tall, looming trees ~~in~~ ~~near~~ ~~me~~.

I looked up and was greeted to the sight of multiple police officers pointing their fire firearms at me. ~~&~~ They shouted and screamed at me but ~~nothing~~ ~~would~~ ~~process~~ ~~in~~ ~~my~~ ~~brain~~, it all faded into a calming white noise. However, this white noise would be interrupted with a loud bang. The world seemed to start ~~to~~ ~~moving~~, tilting forwards whilst also getting darker. ~~Some~~ ~~then~~ ~~I~~ ~~was~~ ~~knocked~~, I ~~felt~~ ~~felt~~ ~~as~~ ~~if~~ ~~one~~ ~~realized~~ ~~that~~ ~~the~~ ~~world~~ ~~wasn't~~ ~~moving~~, I had just been falling and that I had just been shot. ~~&~~ There was no pain, no joy, no emotion at all as even the white noise began to fade. - and then everything else began to fade into nothingness.

## Examiner Comments

This response uses one of the images to inspire their writing. There is a feeling of mystery built up with the use of repeated questions about the gift. The sun being covered by clouds creates an effective and quite perceptive symbolism, as the narrator says, 'almost warning me'. The description is layered once the box is opened, with a feeling of fear alongside curiosity, and the personification of the curiosity gripping the narrator is perceptive. The gruesome discovery is detailed, as is typical in crime fiction, and the change of colour from red to blue to reflect the arrival of the police is very effective and sharply focused on the typical crime fiction reader.

For AO4, a mark of 16 reflects the successful and also perceptive communication. The task shows a secure sense of audience and purpose, and it is sharply focused on confusion, fear, possible mistaken identity. The form, tone and register are effective (Level 4 here - the tone can be a little heavy-handed). For AO5, there is evidence of complex ideas, but they could be manipulated more for cohesion overall. The vocabulary is quite extensive, for example *hesitantly*, *rectangular*, *lurked*, *curiosity*, *viscous*, *regurgitate*, *proximity*, *intuition*, although there are some rare spelling errors. There is something of a range of punctuation, question marks and dashes, and sentence structures are managed for deliberate effect. A mark of 11 is appropriate for AO5.

16+11 = 27

## Summary

Based on their performance on the paper, candidates 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.
- Read the question carefully and make sure you are answering **this** question, not telling the examiner what you know about the text you have studied. The selection needs to be relevant to the question you are being asked, in this case how the writer creates a feeling of sympathy for the soldier.
- 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 points about how the examples were 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 how the writer creates a feeling of sympathy for the soldier.
- 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. We are often incredibly impressed with your creativity and ability to write in such an imaginative way in the time given.