

Moderators' Report/ Principal Moderator Feedback

Summer 2013

International GCSE English Literature
(4ET0) Paper 3

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Introduction

This paper is based on the study of Section C of the *International GCSE and Certificate Anthology* and the study of wider poetry reading. Students are required to submit one assignment that discusses six poems: three from Section C of the *Anthology* and at least three further poems drawn from outside of the *Anthology*, which can be chosen by the teacher or student. Centres devise the coursework assignment, which should enable students to respond critically and sensitively to a range of poems. An understanding of how meaning and ideas are conveyed through the language, structure and form should be demonstrated. Students do not need to draw comparisons between the poems, as this is not assessed. There is no prescribed word length for the coursework paper, but on average, responses are normally between 1000 and 1500 words. Responses can be hand-written or word-processed.

Paper 3 carries a weighting of 40% and carries a maximum mark of 30. It is recommended that centres distribute study time accordingly, so that enough time is given for the preparation of the other units.

General Comments

This year, the range of set poems in the Anthology continued, as would be expected, to determine the choice of themes for the coursework: mainly love; death; childhood; relationships between children and parents (or adults); power; and innocence and experience. On the whole appropriate poems were selected for all of these themes and the link to the chosen theme was maintained reasonably successfully though the less strong students often took an over-narrative approach.

Students, however, do need to double-check the meanings of the terms. Several named 'sufferance' as their theme when they meant, or at least wrote about, suffering. There was one intriguing theme given as 'the change from innocence to adultery' but it was adulthood that was actually being explored. The few students who attempted multiple themes struggled to blend these into a coherent answer while also dealing with three set poems in depth and three further wider reading ones. Some coped with this by treating the poems as three pairs, each pair on a different theme, at the expense of the unity of the work.

Treatment of the wider reading poems again varied greatly though there were very few cases where the requirement for six poems was not met. In addition, this time, the great majority, though not all, had been penalised by the centre accordingly. For the higher grades there must be some development of analysis of the wider reading poems, not just a single sentence. If students have engaged particularly with their choice of poems, then it is pleasing, but not a requirement, to see them go further to demonstrate that engagement. However, that must not lead to a superficial consideration of the three *Anthology* poems which represent, after all, the set text for this unit of the specification. It is a requirement that these poems are explored in depth, the development of meaning through each poem is clear and the analysis of style is detailed and thorough.

Many folders showed a mature and sophisticated insight into the meanings at different levels of the poems. However students at all levels struggled with *Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night*. Some interpreted it as a plea to the father not to die rather than an exhortation as to the manner of his death. Very few were able to analyse the meanings of the images used, apart from 'light' and 'night', let alone the language and too many simply ignored them and restricted themselves to the general idea. Some, otherwise strong, folders also missed vital parts of the set poems e.g. the volta in *Remember*, the escape into timelessness in *Half-past Two*, the developing photographs in *War Photographer* and the later parts of *Prayer Before Birth*. The marks did not always reflect this. Furthermore, there were common misreadings by strong students not picked up by the marker e.g. in *Piano* the woman singing softly in the dusk is not

Lawrence's mother nor is the 'great black piano appassionato' her piano. The timeless experience in *Half-past Two* is not entirely frightening and unpleasant as the word 'escapes' demonstrates. There are two speakers in *La Belle Dame sans Merci. A Ballad*.

There was much precise and consistent analysis of the poets' techniques and some folders fully deserved maximum marks. Some typical examples of sensitive and precise analysis were:

"Here Shakespeare has used repeated pairs of words 'love is not love' and 'remover to remove' which almost seems as if the words are mirrored and suggestive of a loving couple. In the sonnet love is described as a mutual feeling between equally important beings so the mirrored words imply that the lovers have to trust each other for there to be a 'marriage of true minds.'"

"Impossible love is also present in *La Belle Dame sans Merci* as the knight is human while the lady is described as a 'faery's child' who dwells in an 'elfin grot'. Apart from the ethereal references the poem is vague and the reader is left to construe the true identity of the woman. The title of the poem also suggests her difference as it plays upon words in French and English, combining the two languages. The use of the French words has the effect of making the woman seem exotic and from a different land which matches the description of a 'faery's child'."

Centres should be aware that it is important when awarding a very high mark that the detail and precision has been shown throughout. It was a shame that some students did not maintain this standard across all three *Anthology* poems, focusing one or two and appearing to tire after that so that the highest band marks should not have been awarded.

Another area where marks were often too generous was where students were able to name technical terms and were aware of the general emotions generated by the figures of speech but were not able to analyse the specific impact of word choices. High marks and comments in the margin of 'excellent analysis' ignored the fact that recognition of writers' techniques is the criterion for mark range 11-14 merely. Similarly phrases such as 'is powerful', 'brings a flow', 'makes it more important or dramatic', 'makes you share the experience', 'keeps the reading reading', or even 'linked to sea travel' and 'much focus on cooking' certainly show appreciation and as such are deserving of 15-18 but are not analysis.

Administration Issues

While some centres showed clearly that the work of students had been cross-moderated with useful comments from the other teachers, in others it was not at all clear whether this had taken place. There does need to be, at the least, the mark ticked and initialled by another teacher and a brief comment is even more helpful.

Moderators need to check the marks on the folders against the mark sheets so it is essential that there are top/cover sheets with the mark clearly shown and that these are indeed fastened on top. The student authentication sheet should not be put on top of the top/cover sheet.

Conclusion

Students overall showed obvious engagement with the material and had (mostly) enjoyed exploring and responding to them. As always it was fascinating to find a few new slants on familiar poems and to be reminded of, or even introduced to, less familiar ones – but please do include copies with the coursework.

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