

Examiners' Report/  
Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2014

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE  
in English Literature (4ET0) Paper 02  
and  
Pearson Edexcel Certificate  
in English Literatures (KET0) Paper 02

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## Introduction

There are two sections in the exam paper, equally weighted. In Section A, candidates have a choice between the unseen poem and the unseen prose extract. In Section B, they can choose Question 3, which has two named poems or Question 4, in which one poem is named and the candidate chooses a suitable poem to discuss with it.

In both sections a full range of marks were awarded. Responses varied from the very brief and basic to the fully developed assured and perceptive. Overall, the quality of responses across the paper was good, with some noticeably outstanding answers. Responses for Section A often seemed to be stronger than the taught poems in Section B, with several candidates continuing on extra paper.

## Section A

It was good to see a fair balance of Question 1 and Question 2 responses, both questions saw a similar number of responses.

Careful close reading of the unseen poem or extract is essential in this part of the paper. Some candidates had not read the materials closely enough or had not supported their ideas with relevant examples from the chosen text.

## Question 1

The unseen poem was *The Road Not Taken* by Robert Frost. The question asked candidates to consider how the poet conveys the importance of making decisions.

Candidates generally demonstrated a good understanding of this poem and could explain how it was a metaphorical journey for the choices faced in life. More successful answers explored the ambiguous nature of the ending and were able to debate as to whether the author regretted his choice or not. Stronger candidates were able to explore the use of imagery, structure and form, and the use of techniques with confidence.

More developed responses grounded their discussions in the poem, selecting examples of repetition, rhyme and imagery to explore meaning. Less developed responses were more general, perhaps referring to the

opening line as a way in to a broad explanation of the difficulty of decision-making.

One examiner commented: '*The Road Not Taken* seemed to provide an effective test in that most candidates of all abilities were able to offer a sound reading of the fundamentals of the poem, whilst it also offered material that offered the more able scope to demonstrate their abilities'. Another examiner felt that: 'One problem centred around the discussion of the structure and form of the poem. Most students wrote about rhyme schemes, stanzas, figures of speech and rhythm without relating these features meaningfully to their contribution to the impact of the poem. The tendency was either to ignore their significance or, alternatively, to suggest forced and improbable roles in their contribution to the success of the poem'.

A full range of responses were seen, but on the whole most candidates were able to show some understanding of the poem. Candidates gaining marks in the higher levels were able to demonstrate effective and very perceptive responses which demonstrated clear focus and engagement with the text. Likewise for the candidates who gained marks in Level 2 could illustrate that they understood something and were able to show some engagement. Where students did not score so well, responses lacked supporting evidence or had only discussed one part of the poem.

## Question 2

The unseen prose extract was taken from *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini.

The question asked candidates to explain how the writer creates excitement in the extract.

Most examiners commented on some excellent responses seen for this extract. Candidates were able to show that they could engage with the text and relate to the techniques used to present excitement. Candidates of differing abilities were able to illustrate understanding through the use of a variety of evidence.

The vast majority of candidates achieved, at the very least, a basic understanding of the passage and thus were able to respond appropriately according to their abilities. Complete misreadings were very rare.

Many candidates could comment on the excitement created in this piece, identifying pace, structure and language techniques used. Many commented on the reference to war and the significance of the anticipation of the tournament ahead. Some candidates were able to identify how the author described the tournament as a highlight in the cold weather and explored the contrast of excitement in a bleak setting or time.

Some candidates tended to get lost in the comparison to war and therefore veered away from the specific task or only concentrated on some parts of the extract (this was not true of all responses, but was a frequent observation); however, on the whole, the candidates' responses did read as though they had enjoyed writing them.

One examiner commented: 'Candidates responded well to the unseen extract from *The Kite Runner*. Many made a link between the tournament and war. Stronger responses were analytical and made comment about linguistic devices such as: 'If the kite was the gun...'

Another examiner said: 'This passage offered a test in which virtually all students were able to respond to in a manner which reflected their abilities. Writing about '*how the writer creates excitement*' was a task which most felt fairly secure in tackling with some confidence, whilst the most able could demonstrate their capacity to make discriminating connections and use relevant examples. In some respects, this was the most successful of all four questions in terms of the answers it produced'.

## Section B

Of the two Anthology questions, Question 3 was the more popular, but not always the most successful option for candidates. Some candidates struggled with the understanding of the poems other than at face value which, at times, was not always accurate.

Although there is no requirement to compare and contrast the poems, a considerable majority of candidates did so. Centres are reminded that the two poems do not have to be compared, but there should be some balance in the treatment of the two.

It was certainly not unusual to find candidates had coped in a more accomplished manner with the unseen poem or extract than they did with the taught Poetry Anthology. As these were poems that candidates should have previously studied, it became evident that not enough time had been

spent studying them in preparation for the examination. Some candidates made a genuine attempt to answer a Section B question, but responses suggested that some poems had not been studied and were being attempted as unseen texts; however, it was refreshing to find fewer nil returns this series and almost all candidates attempted a response.

### Question 3

This question asked candidates to consider how death is presented in *Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night* and *Remember*.

Most students did demonstrate some understanding of the two poems, but the depth and scope of the responses varied considerably.

This was a more popular question than Question 4, presumably because the choice of poems was already presented or the candidates felt less confident with the named poem in Question 4.

Sound comments often linked the contrasting ideas about death in both poems, even though the contrast is not required. Some candidates used the fight against death explored in Thomas' poem to springboard in to a discussion about *Remember*, and the acceptance of death. Less developed responses selected words related to death to explain the poem's subject matter. Weaker responses failed to convey an understanding of what the poems are about, making speculative comments regarding subject matter.

One examiner commented: 'One difficulty I noted was that a great majority of students did not provide an accurate and meaningful interpretation of the *'wise', 'good', 'wild' and 'grave' men*. As these account for the content of four of the six stanzas, this naturally proved extremely problematical. I would say that literally only three or four of the scripts I marked coped with this successfully. Given that this poem was pre-prepared this was quite disappointing. *Remember* was generally dealt with far more confidently'. Some examiners commented about the lack of discussion about structure and form. Very few candidates identified that *Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night* is a villanelle or that *Remember* is a sonnet. Some explicit reference to structure and form is required in order for higher marks to be awarded in a band.

#### Question 4

For this question, candidates were asked to show how the poets convey their thoughts and feelings about life in *Poem at Thirty-nine* and one other poem from the Anthology.

As with Question 3 many candidates chose to write a comparison of *Poem at Thirty-nine* and their chosen poem.

Candidates selected a wide range of second poems. Every poem in the collection was seen during the marking, with many candidates making some appropriate and interesting points about 'life'.

It became evident throughout the marking of this question, that a few candidates had not read the question carefully or fully enough and often overlooked 'life' in the wording. For some candidates who had overlooked the key word in the question, the named poem fortunately lent itself to comments about 'life' and even if not explicitly referred to, relevant points were credited and a flexible approach was adopted.

Centres are reminded that the phrase 'thoughts and feelings about' or 'thoughts about' are standard phrases used within the stem of some questions. For further examples, please refer to the Sample Assessment Materials or past papers available on our website.

One examiner commented: '*Poem at Thirty-nine* was generally well done with candidates selecting a variety of poems to contrast with. Many candidates could identify and explore the images of this poem and the most able candidates offered a sophisticated analysis of the two poems. Less able candidates tended to rely on a narrative approach to this question. The vast majority of candidates were able to comment on the overall feeling of the poem and the relationship of the writer and her father and his influence on her life'.

Another examiner said: 'Candidate's found it difficult to relate Walker's poem directly to the question about 'Life', opting for a more general approach to the question and poem. Some candidates chose to use *Mother in a Refugee Camp* for their second poem, which were less successful. There was a sense in which candidates were trying to 'fit' this poem in to the question'.



## Conclusion

Where candidates were less successful, literary devices had either been identified without explanation or were simply listed. Greater success would be achieved if candidates analysed specific areas of the text and developed their ideas, supporting them with relevant examples. 'Feature-spotting' is no substitute for detailed analysis. The ability to examine the writer's methods and to connect these with the ideas and feelings in the poems were often the most successful responses. More comment relating to the effect on the reader would have benefited some candidates' responses.

The handling of form and structure was often disappointing in that there was mention of stanza, rhyming schemes, caesura and enjambment, but comment was often minimal as to how these contributed to the thoughts and feelings in the text.

Centres are advised to make greater use of past papers and Sample Assessment Materials (SAMs), available on-line, in order to make candidates more aware of question format and structure.

In some cases, more time needs to be given to the teaching of the *Anthology* poems in order to allow candidates the opportunity to access the full range of marks available. There was evidence of accomplished work produced during the examination and many centres should be congratulated on the thorough preparation of their candidates.

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