

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2015

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE
in English Literature (4ET0)
Paper 02

Edexcel Certificate
in English Literature (KET0)
Paper 02

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Introduction

This series has, once again, been very successful, with a record number of entries this year. 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

For this series, there were more responses to the unseen poem than there was to the unseen extract, but each question was awarded a full range of marks. 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 Rear Guard* by Siegfried Sassoon.

Question: *How does the writer convey the soldier's journey in this poem?*

From examiners' reports, it seems that apart from the very, very weakest, the poem allowed candidates to make some points to ensure entry to Levels 2 or 3 at least. They knew what to do but there were some who took a narrative approach without any reference to the poem, which was a pity as understanding was there. The question gave the candidates a good focus as most were able to say right away that the journey was 'awful' or 'horrible' and then pick out some relevant quotations, such as: 'groping', 'tripping', 'staggered', 'step by step'. These examples were usually followed with some explanation, such as the journey was 'very hard' or that the soldier 'couldn't see where he was going'. Most candidates understood that the soldier was 'alone' and were able to comment on how this would make the journey worse. Better candidates referred to the oxymoron 'rosy gloom' and made comment to various levels of success. Likewise, the poet's use of onomatopoeia and the 'boom' and 'muffled' provided contrasts. Some candidates struggled with the body the soldier stumbled upon, with some thinking that it was another person who was tired or had a blanket to keep him warm. Some candidates referred to the use of dialogue and made the link with 'savage'. A number commented on 'Dawn's ghost' and the 'twilight air', but only the very best moved beyond spotting the example and then providing a close analysis. For instance, most could link the 'twilight' air to being fresher than the tunnel, but the best could see that twilight was almost as gloomy as the tunnel. Some identified the repetition of 'step by step' with an appropriate comment and commented on the 'sweat of horror' and of the 'unloading hell' with some basic explanation. The more able candidates made the connection with

'hell' being the tunnel, yet he was entering the battlefield which would be another hell. There was some lovely original analysis where the blackening wound was compared to the plague and then the plague of war.

Too many candidates listed the rhyme scheme abb/cdcd, etc., with no comment, and counted the lines in each stanza. Much better was 'the irregular rhyme scheme reflected the chaotic nature of the journey'. Something simple just lifts the response. Likewise there were the vague clichéd comments such as, 'the poet's words were very good' and (better) 'puts a strong image in your mind'. Just a little further development and explanation would really lift these responses if the candidate considered *how*. It was maybe not a trend as I saw only one but it is worth noting that one candidate compared *The Rear Guard* to *Hide and Seek* as part of Q1. There were some misinterpretations, such as: 'winked his prying torch' interpreted as he was winking at the torch, as Morse code to communicate with HQ. Some misread 'prying' as praying and then explained why. 'Dawn's ghost' was interpreted by some as the soldier having seen his friend Dawn appear.

From other examiners, the following comments were made:

'The unseen poem responses to *The Read-Guard* were good. A wide range of responses came through, and they were really enjoyable to read.'

'I felt that the poem allowed a good and wide range of opportunities for candidates to comment on all sorts of dimensions of the poem. In particular:

- The way that the soldier is 'groping' along the tunnel
- Sensory (mirror smashed, colours, muffled sounds, darkness)
- The imagery of 'sweat of horror in his hair' and 'unloading hell' were popular choices to comment on
- The theme of the poem, as almost all candidates (albeit a handful) have good working knowledge of WW1 – though I was surprised that not one candidate remarked on Sassoon and his relationship with Wilfred Owen as I am sure many schools will teach 'Dulce et Decorum Est' which has similarly strong and jarring imagery
- The structure and form which is full of enjambment and caesura, indicating the soldier's uncertainty
- The cyclical form as it links between the 'step by step' from beginning to end, indicating the small incremental steps the soldier physically and figuratively takes to make it through
- The metaphor of 'Dawn's ghost' which offered several interpretations which were all good
- The personal responses showing engagement, creativity and thoughtfulness in interpreting the poem
- The oxymoron 'rose gloom' – a feature that many candidates commented upon.'

'The main point that candidates got stuck on was the 'unanswering heap'. A number of candidates misread this as a sleeping man or a homeless man, not a dead soldier who had already died ten days prior. This shows a hurried read of the poem, missing crucial and intense imagery that illustrates the truly horrific and disturbing realities of war. Some candidates also completely misread the

poem as a narrative of a homeless man making his way through a town looking for food and shelter.'

'All candidates whose responses I saw were able to write something about this poem. At the lower end, many of these concentrated on the idea of being in an unpleasant place and some omitted any mention of a soldier, despite this being in the question. Some failed to pick up on the fact that the humped figure was dead and others thought the soldier himself had been wounded.'

'Most tried to follow the bullet points and were able to pick up on various language points. Many chose to comment on the verb choices- 'groping', 'tripping', 'staggered' etc. and there were some insightful thoughts on the repetition of 'step by step' suggesting the length and unending cycle of his journey/the war. The phrase 'rosy gloom' was often selected and the better candidates wrote about the oxymoronic qualities and what the contrasting words might suggest: blood, quality of light, etc. 'Unloading hell behind him' provided some perceptive points and one or two picked up on 'unloading' as linking to the idea of a gun and thus the soldier's experience of warfare.'

'The third bullet point often proved to be the discriminator and, whilst some said little beyond the fact that the poem was in verses (or paragraphs), the better responses linked the increasing stanza length to the length of the journey and the verses representing the different stages. Candidates also picked up on the use of direct speech as giving a sense of immediacy/frustration/anger.'

'Some candidates had clearly studied the First World War and could use their knowledge to good effect but must beware of moving away from the poem into a dissertation about the general horrors of it all.'

Overall, the majority of the feedback was very positive.

Question 2

The unseen prose extract was taken from *Jamaica Inn* by Daphne du Maurier.

Question: *Explain how the writer presents an uncomfortable journey in this extract.*

Again, the question helped focus candidates on particular aspects of the passage and all but the very weakest could pick out some weather features with a comment which gave them access to Levels 2 or 3. Some were a bit stuck on the idea of it as a bus (thinking of it as a modern-day bus), yet commented on the horses. Most were able to identify the simile 'like a drunken man' and successfully comment on its effect. Likewise, 'groaned' was picked up as personification and most gave an explanation along the lines of frightening the passengers or that it must have been really uncomfortable. These types of comments allowed access to higher levels along with 'cloaked in mist'. There was a general lack of comments on structure and form, limited at times to 'it is in four paragraphs'. Better candidates saw the division within the paragraphs. This was offset by a range of techniques being correctly identified as above and so did not deter the best candidates from accessing the highest level. The best misinterpretation of a technique was the 'fatal fantasy' for pathetic fallacy. Also

there seemed to be 'lots of dynamic verbs' and even the 'olfactory sensory synonym of 'mizzling'.

There was evidence of candidates being well prepared, but just falling short on the day with some vague comment, such as '... presents the uncomfortable journey by using the word 'the' repeatedly.'

Some examiners' comments include:

'The extract from *Jamaica Inn* was a good choice for the exam, with lots of imagery and choice to comment on. What worked well for this extract of prose was:

- The setting of a cold, dark, winter's night in the rain
- The imagery of the inky rain on the leather seats
- The comparison of the coach to that of a drunken man (a popular choice)
- The very wide range of adjectives and detailed descriptions for candidates to choose from
- The focus on various characters from the driver to the speaker to the other passengers
- Some candidates were able to move from paragraph to paragraph, interpreting each one in a structured way and were able to comment on the structure (though not across the board)
- The straightforward passage left little room for candidates to become sidetracked with any other strange interpretations, which can sometimes happen!

'What is challenging for candidates in prose is to explicitly comment on the structure and form.'

'Overall, this was a good choice for candidates who felt they could comment on the range of adjectives, metaphors and descriptive language to explore the scene and its events.'

'Candidates were all able to write something about the terrible journey, though some thought it was set in Jamaica, for example: 'this weather is strange as it is normally a hot country', and others were concerned about the passengers' safety on the bus 'as the seatbelts weren't working.'

'Most worked methodically through the extract but there were a number of comments about verses and enjambment that suggested they thought that they were writing about a poem. There were a lot of comments about the miserable weather, ranging from the not very helpful: 'It was a cold, grey day in late November'- this suggests that November was cold and the sky was grey" to explorations of the use of pathetic fallacy.'

'Many picked up on the onomatopoeia and personification of 'creaked and groaned' and appreciated the simile of 'rocking...like a drunken man'. Many liked 'huddled' and several likened the passengers at this point to penguins. 'A great passage with ample opportunity to explore creative use of language though structure and form not so easily or competently tackled.'

The full range of marks was awarded.

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. Some centres have sought clarification during the year and therefore this serves as a reminder for all centres. The two poems **do not** have to be compared, but there should be some balance in the treatment of the two. It seems that, in some cases, candidates were constrained by trying to find comparatives when they did not need to do this. I should like to draw all centres' attention to the third bullet in each of the marking levels. The bullet states that either *Limited, Some, Sound, Sustained or Perceptive connections are made between particular techniques used by the writer and presentation of ideas, themes and settings*'. It is important to note that this refers to each individual 'writer' and the 'connections' means that the candidate understands how the writer uses techniques to convey his or her ideas for each separate poem. 'Connections' is not an alternative for 'compare'.

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 in some instances 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.

Centres are reminded that candidates should discuss the language, structure and form in both of the poems. Often, candidates will consider how the ideas are conveyed through language, but do not consider the structure and form. If candidates do not consider the structure and form, a mark lower in the level is applied. It is advised that centres look carefully at the mark grids and the wording in each bullet. The second bullet in each mark band is assessing the candidate's knowledge of the language, structure and form.

Question 3

The question: How are powerful images presented in *War Photographer* and *The Tyger*?

Although comparison is not required, some candidates approached this question as a comparative one, which can be successful for more able candidates but limiting to others. Some could have made more and better language points on each poem rather than struggling with comparisons, thus getting more marks. *War Photographer* was on the whole better addressed than *The Tyger*. Having said that, *The Tyger* really did allow top candidates to shine with some very

perceptive responses linking the poem to the Industrial Revolution and to the beat of the blacksmith's hammer -or some said heartbeat. Most understood the religious imagery and the questioning of the tiger's deadly nature being made by a God. The more able candidates got the contrast between the lamb and the tiger, but only the very able got the religious symbolism involved, which was a discriminatory factor. Too many at the lower levels did not understand the poem at all and one said so! One candidate thought the tiger was being tortured and wrote a long piece....heart breaking. Only very few did not write on two poems, though there were a few rubric infringements.

Most identified the photographer's images as sad, especially the one of the children (some excellent candidates could even place the photo correctly). Most saw that he had a job to do and the idea that people saw them and felt bad, but only for a while. Better candidates picked out more examples and worked with 'ghost image' and 'all flesh is grass'. The best identified the church-like atmosphere and the ritual in the darkroom and linked it to his homage of the dead. Some picked up on his changing emotions, though some stubbornly felt he was still doing his job. Weaker answers were less balanced, with only a paragraph or so on one poem. Better answers were well balanced with some real in-depth analysis, which in the time given were amazing. Some lovely original analysis: '*The Tyger* produces a more hypnotising structure where it is written in trochaic tetrameter with the stressing and un-stressing of syllables to mirror the growing curiosity of the question raised'.

Other examiners' comments:

'This was my favourite exam question to mark and a popular choice for candidates. *War Photographer* and *The Tyger* have such a large range of figurative language and imagery, as well as many ways that they can be compared. Although comparison was not a criterion, many candidates did choose to include some element of comparison because the poems lent themselves so well to links of colour, religion, fear and violence. There were many excellent responses to these two poems, which were enjoyable to read. Even weaker candidates were enabled to pick out even basic elements of the poems' use of imagery. This was a really strong choice of poems, which allowed candidates a lot of room for good commentary.'

In particular, some of the positives that came out of this exam question were:

- The way the two poems deal with religious imagery
- The way the two speakers ask questions and also struggle with the respective subjects
- The way the two speakers feel fear and communicate that fear
- Language devices in both poems (metaphor, simile, etc.)

Where responses typically fell short were:

1. Commenting in a meaningful, detailed and sustained way on language. Instead, many candidates 'feature spot'.
2. Many candidates make comments that are too vague, such as: 'the writer uses this device amazingly...'; 'it makes the reader want to read on...'; 'the writer uses powerful imagery...' and might give an example but fails to connect how that example is powerful. This was a common shortfall that candidates should be aware of in their exam

preparations in schools.

Another examiner commented:

'Many candidates dealt more confidently and competently with *War Photographer* and analysed it at some length, sometimes allowing little time for *The Tyger*. Most were able to talk about the horrors that the photographer had witnessed and there were perceptive comments on the 'spools of suffering' but this and the idea of a 'dark room' are historical terms almost for photography now and several thought the photographer had shut himself away in a dark i.e. gloomy room to isolate himself. Many understood the message of the poem and used example of the powerful images to illustrate this.'

'*The Tyger* was far more problematic but I did see some truly impressive analyses explaining the religious theme and linking the poem to the industrial revolution with comments on the regular rhythm imitating the sound of the blacksmith's hammer. There were some excellent comments such as 'the use of trochaic tetrameter mimics the heartbeat' or as one wrote: 'Blake is trying to harness the power of the Tyger through his neat rhyming couplets and structure'. A few simply chose not to write about the poem and others did not get much beyond 'It's about a tiger in a forest and he gets hunted and killed by spears.'

Again, the full range of marks was awarded for this question.

Question 4

The question: Show how the poets convey people's behaviour in *Telephone Conversation* and **one other** poem from the Anthology.

All candidates got the point that the landlady was racist, or as one put it 'the landlord lady'. The majority picked up on the capitalisation of 'HOW DARK' and commented on tone and that this showed rudeness. Better candidates picked out 'West African sepia' to show he was better educated and that she was not actually that well-bred. Some picked up on him stereotyping her; most tried with humour or mocking tone. I mainly saw this paired with *Once Upon a Time, My Last Duchess, Half-past two, If* and *Hide and Seek*. All allowed candidates to make further points on behaviour, some very interesting ones on the controlling, sexist behaviour of the Duke and lots of valid ones from *Once Upon a Time* so allowing access to the higher levels. The vast majority did quote from both poems, but some had a narrative approach which did show understanding but provided no evidence. A pity! Some original comments, 'Button A Button B - it's as though she was pushing his buttons, being treated no better than the telephone'.

Other examiners' comments:

'The poem *Telephone Conversation* offered candidates some good examples of behaviour to draw on and a wide range of other poems from the Anthology were used as well. Popular responses were *Once Upon a Time, A Mother in a Refugee Camp* and *My Last Duchess*, though some candidates chose a poem from question 3. In my allocation it seemed that responses to *A Mother in a Refugee Camp* were more personal responses, but the stronger responses in terms of

commentary and interpretation of language, structure and form came from *My Last Duchess*. Still, I like that candidates can choose a poem themselves as an alternative, and to show extended knowledge from a poem that they have a strong understanding of.'

'In relation to commentary on *Telephone Conversation* what came across strongly was the overwhelming inclusion of 'ARE YOU DARK? OR VERY LIGHT' and especially 'like plain or milk chocolate?' Candidates commented on the capital letters as a feature. However, candidates did not tend to move on from this example and really got stuck on it. Instead, many candidates could have commented on the repetition or how the poem is interspersed with commentary full of suggested and inferred behaviours. Too few candidates commented on the behaviour of the speaker and both his humiliation at having to explain various ways of depicting himself as well as his attitude towards the women, which is equally prejudiced.'

'What works well for this question is the choice for candidates to demonstrate their expertise in their studies. Yet, one of the typical downfalls present was the lack of explicit structure and form commentary. Candidates are very good at language skills but are not commenting meaningfully (or in many scripts at all) on structure and form, which is so important to demonstrate in the exam.'

'A number of candidates engaged enthusiastically with *Telephone Conversation* and were very clear what its central theme was. The question allowed them to write about the landlady and prospective tenant confidently and nearly all were able to select appropriate supporting references and comment, at the very least reasonably soundly, on use of language. The most popular choice for second poem was *Once Upon a Time* which worked extremely well, especially for those candidates who wanted to draw links about societal mores but, as with Question 1, candidates must be careful not to digress in to a diatribe against racism or hypocrisy etc. but keep the answer rooted firmly in the poems.'

'General thoughts - I really like this paper and thoroughly enjoyed working on it. The texts chosen for the unseen option were ideal as candidates of all levels were able to access them on some level and most responded well and with interest and engagement. The poetry questions again allowed candidates to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding and, whilst *The Tyger* defeated some, it did allow the very able to shine.'

Conclusion

Overall, this has been a very successful paper and a full range of marks has been awarded across all questions, with many candidates gaining full marks. 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.

Candidates should be reminded that they must write about two poems in Section B and, for each poem, they should consider the language, structure and form when answering the question. 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.

Grade Boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

<http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>

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