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# **Examiners' Report**

## Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2017

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

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Centres are thanked for choosing Edexcel for their IGCSE English Literature provider. We very much hope that both our candidates and centres are pleased with their results.

## **Introduction**

This series has been very successful, although there were fewer entries due to the 4ET0 specification drawing to a close, fewer re-sits and centres preparing students for the new 4ET1 and first examinations in 1806.

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. All questions carry 20 marks; 40 in total.

In both sections a full range of marks were awarded, although very few Level 1 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 very good, with some noticeably outstanding answers. Responses for Section A often seemed to be confident and successful.

## **Section A Unseen Texts**

For this series, there were more responses to the unseen poem than there were to the unseen extract. For both, the full range of marks was awarded. 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. It is essential that candidates comment on the language, structure and form in their responses, not only for Section A but also for Section B.

### **Question 1 Unseen Poem: *Tiger Shadows* by Brian Patten.**

**Question: *How does the writer convey his thoughts when imaging being a tiger in this poem?***

This was the most popular option for Section A, possibly as candidates feel more confident when writing about poetry and can more easily transfer skills learned in the classroom.

The poem proved to be really accessible for students of all abilities, proving to be a good discriminator; some students wrote exceptionally well. All candidates were able to grasp the meaning of the poem, with many gaining marks in Level 3 or above. Those candidates who gained marks in Levels 2 and 3 often did not include enough details or examples. Some did not develop ideas or provide enough close analysis.

The stronger responses included points about the speaker wishing to escape the constraints and responsibilities of society and to live in relative freedom, like the tiger. A good range of terms were used by several candidates and the majority commented on the structure of the poem and often identified the

use of repetition. Those gaining marks in the top level often included points about the 'abandoned cities' and how mystery and intrigue are created. Some candidates considered how the speaker could not escape entirely, as even the jungle has 'abandoned cities' and 'hunters'.

## **Question 2**

**Extract from: *The White Tiger* by Aravind Adiga.**

**Question: Explain how the writer conveys the experience of visiting a zoo in this extract.**

In response to this extract, most candidates commented on the uncle's initial boredom during the visit to the zoo and how his nephew, Dharam, managed to persuade him to stay a little longer. All commented on the appearance of the tiger, but some did not consider the end of the extract when the narrator faints. The quality of responses varied. Some candidates provided short PEE paragraphs, but the explanations were often literal translations of the cited quotations rather than close analysis and exploration of specific words or phrases. Others provided a wide range of examples but comment was too brief and underdeveloped. There were those who penetrated the extract in order to provide perceptive points and ideas, such as a candidate who detailed how the tiger was slowly revealed in the 'climax of the sentence'.

Candidates often struggle to comment on structure and form when writing about a prose extract, but this time most were able to make some comment even if simply noting that the extract began with the narrator's boredom and ended with him fainting. For this extract, relevant structure and form points that could have been included were, for example: the use of first-person narrative providing both the details of the visit and the speaker's inner-most thoughts and feelings; the use of reported speech and dialogue at the beginning of the extract which help to convey the close relationship between the nephew and uncle; short sentences and italics are used for emphasis: 'Not *any* kind of tiger'; longer complex sentences providing strong visual images and contrasts; the frequent use of parenthetical dashes providing additional information or comment; the varied length of various paragraphs; the use of short sentences in the final paragraph to build suspense and tension as the pace quickens to reflect the speed at which the speaker faints.

## **Section B**

Of the two Anthology questions, Question 3 was the most popular option. Some candidates struggled with the understanding of the poems other than at face value which, at times, was not always accurate. There were some rubric infringements, where candidates had only written about one poem. In these situations, the mark is reduced by a full level.

Although there is no requirement to compare and contrast the poems for the current specification, 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. For the current specification, 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'. However, this is also a timely reminder that **for the new specification 4ET1 (from 2018), comparisons will be required**.

Often candidates considered the meanings of the two poems and provided some examples, but did not remember to comment on structure and form, which prevents candidates gaining higher marks in a particular level. A response without comment on structure and form can gain a mark in the top level if it is assured or perceptive, but it would gain marks at the lower-end. Centres should continue to remind candidates that they must discuss the language, structure and form of both poems (they should structure their responses as they do for Section A, Unseen Poetry). It is recommended that centres remind themselves of the mark grids in the mark scheme 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.

It was refreshing to find very few 'nil returns' this series and almost all candidates attempted a response. Only two candidates forgot to cross the relevant boxes to indicate which questions they had answered. Centres are thanked for reminding their students to do so.

## **Section B Poetry Anthology**

Question 3 was a more popular option than Question 4. Several candidates demonstrated a maturity of expression and ideas.

### **Question 3**

#### **How are parents presented in *Once Upon a Time* and *A Mother in a Refugee Camp*?**

Candidates responded enthusiastically to the question and a full range of marks was awarded. Most candidates appeared to be very familiar with both poems and had clearly studied them in depth. There was just one rubric infringement (where only one poem had been considered).

Similar strengths and weaknesses were noted and these were often the same points as reported in previous series. There was evidence of some candidates comparing poems which, at times, limited ideas and they ran out of similarities to comment about. Some made interesting points about the significance of both poems being written by Nigerian writers; although context is not assessed in this paper, relevant points were made in relation to the difficulties both parents faced. There were some who wrote more about one poem and then did not have enough time to write about the second. Some candidates did not sustain their close analysis of language and some did not comment about structure and form.

Some candidates thought that the speaker in *Once Upon a Time* is a mother, but as this does remain ambiguous in the poem (and also the name of the poet), this did not hinder progression.

#### **Question 4**

**Show how the poets convey their wishes for the future in *Prayer Before Birth* and one other poem from the Anthology.**

The main poems chosen as the 'one other' were *If-* and *Remember*. Some candidates chose to write about *War Photographer* and linked ideas about 'wishes for the future' with hopes for peace and an end to all wars. Other poems were chosen, but less frequently.

Most responses gained marks in Level 3 or above. The majority of candidates included some poetic terminology and supported points with relevant examples; however, some candidates did not include enough evidence and this resulted in little close analysis of language.

#### **Conclusion**

Overall, this has been a very successful paper and a full range of marks has been awarded across all questions, with several 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. For Section A there was often a mention of stanza, rhyming schemes and repetition, but comment was often minimal as to how these contributed to the thoughts and feelings in the text. In some cases, particularly for Section B, candidates had not considered structure and form at all.

Centres are advised to make greater use of past papers and the *Sample Assessment Materials (SAMs)*, available on-line, in order to make candidates more aware of question format and structure. Centres will also find the indicative content in the mark schemes useful to see some suggested answers. As always, the mark scheme provides an indication of what candidates might consider; other relevant points can be made and are awarded appropriately if relevant and justified.

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 centres should be congratulated on the thorough preparation of their candidates.

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Thank you.

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