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# Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2018

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE  
In English Literature (4ET0) Paper 2

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

### **Introduction**

Once again, this series has been very successful. There were no enquiries received following the examination and there were no errors on the question paper or mark scheme. This was a small series due to the 4ET0 specification drawing to a close, fewer re-sits and centres preparing students for the new 4ET1 specification with a first sitting in 1806.

There are two sections in the 4ET0 02 examination paper, equally weighted. In Section A candidates have a choice of responding to either the unseen poem or 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. A total of 40 marks are available.

A full range of marks was awarded, although there were very few in Level 1. Responses varied from the very brief and basic to the fully developed, assured and perceptive.

### **Section A Unseen Texts**

It was most unusual to find that the prose extract was a slightly more popular option than the unseen poem. For both, a full range of marks were awarded and some very detailed responses were provided.

#### **Question 1 Unseen Poem: *The Barn* by Seamus Heaney.**

#### **Question: How does the poet present a sense of fear?**

Candidates successfully explored this poem, identifying how fear is experienced by the speaker. Many commented on the description of the farmyard implements and the danger they posed and almost all candidates commented on the 'mouse-grey, smooth, chilly concrete'. A range of terminology was employed and most candidates identified the use of similes and personification.

More able candidates explored the use of sensory images and how the 'dark gulfed like a roof-space' conveyed how very dark the barn was. Able candidates explored the 'gilded motes' with confidence and explored how the imagery made the barn feel like a prison. There were some interesting comments about the corn being described as 'ivory' and how it could have been considered as a valuable commodity. A number of candidates considered how a sense of fear and panic is conveyed when the speaker describes how hard it is to breathe: 'cobwebs clogging up your lungs' and how the inanimate objects appear to come alive: 'The two-lugged sacks moved in'.

Less able candidates attempted an interpretation, although not always securely. One candidate considered the poem to be about the life story of the corn, with the corn being the speaker, and another thought that the

speaker died at the end of the poem after being shot, citing 'shot through the air slits' as evidence. However, even though there were some rare misreadings, the candidates were able to offer some sound interpretation of specific language features. Some questioned why the speaker went into the barn in the first place.

Almost all candidates were able to make some comment in relation to the structure of the poem. Many commented on the use of repetition (both a language and structural point) and the use of direct address. There were some responses that tended to feature spot and, although clearly able candidates, detailed comment and development of ideas were sometimes lacking.

## **Question 2**

**Extract from: *Faces* by Dennis Hamley.**

**Question: How does the writer create a sense of fear in this extract?**

The vast majority of candidates engaged enthusiastically with the extract and almost all commented on the opening first line: 'The road was straight. The night was cold. The sky was clear. The moon shone pale.' Candidates tended to comment on the effect of the simple short sentences and how the impersonal and stark opening immediately drew the reader in and suggested a frightening setting, with some referring to the gothic features of the moon coupled with the cold. Often, more able candidates went on to explore the contrasts of the cold night and the man sweating.

Some very interesting and thoughtful ideas were presented in relation to the tall trees that 'cast narrow shadows across' the road. Some candidates considered how the shadows of the trees looked like the rungs of a ladder and others developed this further by commenting on how this would be an uphill struggle for the running man who was already exhausted. Ideas were supported with examples and exploration of specific words or phrases, such as 'toiling', 'long flight of stairs'.

Many candidates commented on the use of rhetorical questions and the personification of the car with its 'two pale eyes'; however, some did not consider the very end of the extract and the significance of the 'magnificent black Daimler of pre-war vintage' or the speaker's urgent request demonstrating the man's fear and relief. On the other hand, a small number of candidates considered the brightness of the 'halogen bulbs' and others did comment on the fate of the man getting in to the almost supernatural and mysterious 'black Daimler' and considered whether or not this sealed the man's fate.

The extract gave candidates a range of opportunities to consider structure, which most did. A small number of candidates referred to the extract as a poem and had tried exploring the use of caesura, enjambement or blank verse.

The extract was successful, with a full range of marks awarded.

## **Section B Poetry Anthology**

Of the two Anthology questions, Question 4 was the most popular option. For both questions there was less evidence of comparison (some did compare) and more candidates considered the structure and form of the two poems, which has often been overlooked in the past. There were only one or two rubric infringements.

Centres are reminded that for the current specification (4ET0), the two poems do not have to be compared, but there should be some balance in the treatment of the two. For the new specification **4ET1 (from Summer 2018), comparisons between the two poems will be required.**

It was refreshing to find only one or two '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.

### **Question 3**

#### **How is power presented in *The Tyger* and *My Last Duchess*?**

A full range of marks was awarded for this question. It was unusual to find that some candidates tended to understand *The Tyger* more than *My Last Duchess*. There were some candidates who only considered the duchess's power and totally overlooked the duke. Some did not consider how the duke 'gave orders' and thought that the duchess had died of natural causes and that the duke was mourning the loss of his late wife. Those candidates who did consider the duke in more detail explored how he abused his power and became paranoid about his last duchess, particularly as 'he could not control her'.

Responses to *The Tyger* often considered the awe of God's power in creating both the tiger and the lamb. Most commented on the use of questions, alliteration and the structure of the poem. There were candidates who considered how humans are powerless over God and how Man has tried to harness power (the blacksmith). Many considered the regular rhythm and structure of the poem and how this is used to reflect the strong beating heart of the tiger.

There were some very successful responses that explored both poems in great detail and depth.

### **Question 4**

#### **Show how the poets convey childhood in *Hide and Seek* and one other poem from the Anthology.**

The main poems chosen as the 'one other' were: *Half-past Two*, *Piano*, *Prayer Before Birth* and *Once Upon a Time*, although the latter appeared to be a difficult option and gave candidates less scope to explore childhood than the other popular choices. Some candidates struggled with the named poem, writing briefly about the surface meaning, and wrote more about the poem of their choice.

When exploring *Hide and Seek*, most commented on the imperatives and exclamations used to convey the child's excitement and enthusiasm for the game. Many considered the use of personification and how the speaker is abandoned by his friends at the end of the poem. Most candidates considered how the poem explored the loss of innocence, but more often, and quite unusually, they considered how time is used and wasted in childhood and how time is used more productively in adulthood.

Some candidates considered the use of sensory images, such as the 'salty dark' and 'smell like the seaside', but did not fully explore the significance of these images for the child. Many commented on the use of orders, but did not identify the use of imperative verbs.

There was a small number of candidates who considered how Scannell's wartime experiences influenced the poem. Some sympathetic responses were seen, where candidates pitied the abandoned child and used this to draw links to their second poem, *Half-past Two*.

A number of candidates considered the relevance and success of the titles of the poems. Some commented that the title of *Hide and Seek* was not relevant, but reasons for this suggestion were not explored in any detail. There was evidence of some misreading, where it was suggested that the child was playing hide and seek with his/her parents and how the child had been abandoned by them.

The majority of responses gained marks in Level 3 or above.

## **Conclusion**

Overall, this has been a very successful paper and a full range of marks has been awarded across all questions, with some candidates gaining full marks. Where candidates were less successful, it was often due to either feature spotting and/or lack of development. For Section A, candidates should try to explore the poem or extract in its entirety. Some candidates may only consider the first half of the unseen text. In Section B, when exploring the poems, there should be a balance of coverage. Candidates should explore the language, structure and form of both poems and support ideas with relevant examples. Selective quotations are often far more successful than copying longer quotations that include two or more lines.

The handling of form and structure has noticeably improved this series. Occasionally, candidates did not comment on *why* a particular structure or form had been used and this should be encouraged. For example, some candidates may consider the number of stanzas and lines used, but do not suggest a possible reason why. Most candidates are successful when exploring the use of repetition, which can be considered as a structural or language point.

As noted on previous reports, centres are advised to make use of past papers and the Sample Assessment Materials (SAMs) available online, 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. Candidates should study all poems in the collection.

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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