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Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2018

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE
In English Literature (4ET0)
Paper 02: Unseen Texts and Poetry Anthology

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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. All questions carry 20 marks; 40 in total.

It is with much regret that this specification is drawing to a close. The responses have always been a pleasure to read and centres and candidates alike have fully engaged with the specification. As this specification is nearing its final paper in 1901, the majority of centres are now preparing their students for the new specification (4ET1). We hope that this new specification proves to be as successful and popular.

Once again, this 4ET0 02 paper has been a very successful. There were no errors on the question paper, no enquiries from centres and no changes were made to the mark scheme.

The feedback received from examiners has been very positive and a full range of marks has been awarded. Many responses gained marks in Level 3 or above and several candidates were awarded marks in Level 5. The nature of the cohort was similar to previous series, but very few responses were seen for Levels 1 and 2.

For the first time ever, we did see some responses where candidates provided a summary and then bullet pointed their main points. Sometimes these bullet points were simply lists of terms, others were full sentences. Marks were awarded wherever possible, but this approach is not recommended as by simply providing a summary, candidates cannot progress beyond Level 2.

In both sections 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 both sections demonstrated strengths. Some candidates continued on extra paper but this is unnecessary, as more than enough space is provided in the answer booklet.

It was interesting to see that there was almost equal balance of Section A responses of the unseen poem and prose (Questions 1 and 2). For Section B, Question 4 was a little more popular than Question 3.

There were very few unidentified Sec A and Sec B responses (where candidates had not crossed the appropriate question number and were placed in a separate area for marking).

Section A Unseen Texts

It was good to see almost 50-50 balance between the unseen texts.

Question 1 Unseen Poem: *The Hero* by Siegfried Sassoon

Question: *How does the poet present feelings about Jack in this poem?*

This poem was very successful and proved to be a good differentiator. Candidates were able to select relevant examples of language and structure and most provided some personal comment. There were some very good sensitive readings seen and some drew on their knowledge of World War I. A couple of candidates made reference to and links with *If-* from the Anthology.

Many candidates identified that two different viewpoints of Jack had been portrayed; however, some candidates thought the mother felt her son was 'idle' and 'useless'. Some identified the use of alliteration and the euphemism 'Jack fell'. There were some responses where candidates had simply paraphrased the poem and others that explored it line-by-line looking for various features. Occasionally, comment on structure was limited, but more candidates than in previous years included something about structure.

Examiner comments include:

"Most candidates found this a moving text. A good number reflected on the two main feelings about Jack, some went on to reflect on how even if he was indeed a 'coward' he was treated badly by the army/country/government who saw him as cannon fodder or a poor young boy who didn't even want to fight in the first place. Not many were able to see beyond the mother's pride – in that all the mothers were also 'lied to' – not that their sons were cowards but that the War Office made sure they were kept in a positive state of mind."

"A number only responded to the first stanza- not even seeing the second view of the Brother Officer. A few misconceptions were that Jack wrote the letter to his mother; some interpreted Sassoon as being the voice of the Brother Officer (and were therefore quite judgemental of Jack). One response made the comparison of the mother's voice 'choke' to the use of poison gas in WW1 (which I thought was perceptive and intelligent). A couple referred to Sassoon as a poet of the Great War and were able to incorporate this knowledge into their response in a useful way."

"The Level 3 responses could have been higher if only the candidates had read the entire poem more carefully. Quite a few 20/20 responses were seen, which are great for a poem the candidates only encounter in the exam situation and showed good preparation by teachers."

"Responses successfully explored the possibility that the mother might not be simply 'proud of our dead soldiers' but that this might be hiding a deeper meaning. These showed a deeper understanding of the context of WW1 poetry. Some candidates perceptively analysed the inverted commas around 'Jack' to signify that this was not a specific soldier, but every soldier who was cannon fodder (a nicely phrased answer included: 'dead soldiers' instead of 'dead sons' shows that she believes that the military see people's children as nothing but potential cannon fodder.)"

“Overall, Question 1 worked well. More able candidates were able to discuss the irony of the title and the dual nature of Jack as presented from the viewpoints of the Mother and the Officer.”

Question 2

Extract from: *Private Peaceful* by Michael Morpurgo

Question: *Explain how the writer conveys the soldier's experience of war in this extract.*

The prose extract was mostly successful and candidates were able to explore Private Peaceful's experiences of a gas attack. A range of responses were seen from simple narrative through to the assured and perceptive. Many candidates commented on how the gas moved towards Private Peaceful and identified a range of language and structural features, such as the triplets 'on me, around me, in me', 'running, staggering, falling', and the use of first-person narrative. Others identified the use of imperative verbs and the use of sensory images.

Examiner comments include:

“This was universally felt to be a moving and even terrifying piece of writing. Many candidates referred to it as a poem and used literary terminology for poetry. The main weakness was when candidates offered simple paraphrase without comment or to say (repeatedly) this made it exciting or scary etc. The other disappointment was the responses of those who presented detailed and accurate reflections of part of the extract but did write about the entire extract (similar to Q1).”

“Many candidates were able to point out a large variety of language techniques and structure successfully as well as fully understanding the extract at a deeper level than the literal experience of the soldier. The very best offered philosophical views on war in general as a result. A couple of candidates were aware of the writer and his work – and used this knowledge to enhance their understanding and responses.”

“I encountered two responses that seemed to be following a formula of writing a plan, then a heading 'summary' followed by a brief overview, then a heading 'Language Use' followed by a number of bullet points.”

“Many successfully analysed the description of the gas 'snaking', and some also very perceptively highlighted the dialogue and analysed how the effects of war destroyed the humanity in people, or his curled up position and the connotations of this. Most candidates successfully analysed the long first paragraph with its complex and short sentences, broken phrases, repetition, and the change in pace of the second paragraph.”

“Responses seen were good, and actually offered more structural content than many Q2s have in previous years, as the soldier's experience moves through distinct phases, from trying to deal with the gas without the mask, to being helped and running, to the final encounter with the Hun. There was plenty for candidates of all abilities to engage with. As ever, some weaker candidates don't

seem to understand that this isn't a poem and waste time counting 'stanzas' and trying to comment on rhyme schemes.”

Section B Poetry Anthology

Question 3

How are strong feelings conveyed in *Telephone conversation* and *Do not go gentle into that good night*?

The majority of candidates responded well to this question; however, some were able to identify the strong feelings in *Telephone conversation* often far more successfully than *Do not go gentle into that goodnight*.

When exploring the strong feelings expressed in *Telephone conversation*, candidates often commented on the landlady's strong, prejudiced feelings and how unacceptable her views are. There was some reference to the use of humour in the poem and most candidates commented on the use of capitalisation and colour imagery.

Coverage of *Do not go gentle into that goodnight* was not always thorough. Some candidates provided brief coverage of the poem and did not comment on the characteristics of the 'wise men', 'Good men', 'Wild men' or 'Grave men'. Most candidates commented on the use of repetition and some identified the use of the villanelle structure.

Examiner comments include:

“Almost for all candidates the injustice of the racism in *Telephone Conversation* was deplored. The poem was both comprehensively understood and generally responses were confident, accurate and comment was made in conjunction with quotes. Again the better responses (above Level 3) offered some overview.”

“Most responses for *Do not go gentle into that goodnight* showed understanding and many provided close textual analysis, but often there was some imbalance of coverage with more written about *Telephone Conversation*.”

“There were the personal responses where candidates demonstrated some enthusiasm for the named poems: ‘My grandfather died and this poem helped me to face it – it is now my favourite poem.’; ‘This is the most moving poem I have ever heard.’ ”

“Candidates did much better with *Telephone Conversation*. Most got the general idea of the Dylan poem, but seemed to struggle to give a lot of detail, and responses were often uneven.”

Question 4

Show how the poets present views about life in *If-* and one other poem from the Anthology.

On the whole, candidates responded well to this question. For some, it gave opportunity for candidates to write about a poem that they felt most comfortable with. The question gave opportunity for a wide number of poems to be chosen. As mentioned in comments below, comparison is not a requirement of this specification and, despite reporting back every year to centres, candidates have continued to compare the poems and often this limited them. Some candidates appeared to struggle with *If-* and a few responses provided a stronger answer on the second poem.

When exploring *If-*, most candidates identified that the father was giving the son advice. More able candidates made reference to the user of the conditional clauses in the poem. Most commented on the personified 'Triumph' and 'Disaster' and the use of capitalisation.

Examiner comments include:

"Where candidates had revised *If-*, their knowledge of the poem was very well demonstrated and, although quite a number could not help but go through every piece of advice and paraphrase it, many offered overviews and useful summative comments. The poem was compared successfully with *Prayer Before Birth*, *Once Upon A Time*, *Do not go gentle into that good night*, and less so with *Sonnet*, *Piano* and *Half-past Two*. One really successful response used *Hide and Seek*. The main concern I found was when candidates compared line by line- (not that they even had to compare at all) and they got hopelessly muddled."

"Both Questions 3 and 4 showed good knowledge of the poems chosen. The best responses showed some contextual awareness, which was used to support the points made."

General

This paper has been a pleasure to mark and the responses have been very enjoyable to read. Due to the decline in entries, there were fewer 'unidentified' scripts (where candidates had not crossed the relevant question box). There were just 13 for Section A and 23 for Section B.

Conclusion

As seen in previous series, often candidates performed better when responding to Section A, Unseen Poetry or Prose. 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 has mostly improved. Some candidates began their responses with structural points, perhaps so that it was not overlooked later in their essays. It was noticeable how candidates had become more confident when exploring the structure of the prose extract.

Most students wrote about two poems in Section B and there were very few rubric infringements. When candidates fully explored the language, structure and form of both poems when answering the question, this resulted in the more successful responses.

There was evidence of accomplished work produced during the examination and centres should be congratulated on the thorough preparation of their candidates. Some responses were remarkable!

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