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# **Examiners' Report**

## Principal Examiner Feedback

### Summer 2018

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

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

## **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.

This 4ET1 02R was a very successful paper that did not receive any complaints or queries from centres. The paper was error free and no changes were made to the mark scheme. We are very sad to see this specification end, as it has been most successful and a pleasure to mark.

The feedback received has been very positive and, once again, a full range of marks has been awarded.

This year, the responses seem to be of a very high standard across the questions and very few Level 1 and 2 responses were seen.

The most popular question for Section A was the unseen poem with more responses than for the unseen prose extract. For Section B, there was a good balance of responses with almost equal numbers opting for Question 3 or Question 4.

There were very few Sec A and Sec B responses (where candidates had not checked the question number). There were just two for Section A and 6 for Section B. We had a very small number scripts that were either word-processed or where extra paper was used for planning or for continuation of Section B responses.

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.

One examiner commented:

'The candidates do not disappoint in this paper and there were many full mark responses for each question. Candidates engaged with each question and I felt there was an even balance between Q1 & Q2. Some candidates saw the extract as a poem (!) but it did not affect their score. Similarly I thought that there was an even balance between the choices of Q3 & 4 in the Anthology poems.'

## **Section A Unseen Texts**

### **Question 1 Unseen Poem: *The Tom-cat* by Don Marquis**

**Question: *How does the poet convey his thoughts about the cat in this poem?***

This poem worked particularly well and candidates fully engaged with the poem. Comments from examiners include:

"There was a great deal for the candidates to work with in this poem and most saw the duplicity of the nature of the cat. Only a few saw the cat as innately evil – despite the many descriptions by the poet. Many were able to see that the poet was offering a view which though seemingly severe was in fact objective (it would be great to offer this poem as a comparison with Blake's *Tyger*). Candidates engaged with the poem and were able to identify many literary techniques. Some did just paraphrase or describe."

"There were notable issues around specific language, for example, one candidate misunderstood the term "Tom cat" and the response was centred on the author's familiarity with the individual cat because he knew his name. Similarly, one candidate misread the word 'hell', in Question 1, as 'hill' and responded with a confused explanation of the use of the metaphor, in which it was used, as portraying a 3D description of the Cat's eyes!"

"Some candidates offered an overview rather than analysed the language in the text itself. Terminology was used with varying degrees of success. Form and structure were tackled with varying degrees of success also with some candidates giving thorough and supported examples of how the writer presents the cat, whilst others either didn't attempt to refer to form or indeed threw in some references to techniques without evidence. There was some underdeveloped feature spotting. Most candidates showed an understanding of the texts and their context."

"The poem really seemed to capture candidate's imagination and it was evident when students were familiar with cats and their behaviours. There were many great responses that recognised the poet's presentation of cats as creatures of

the night. Candidates frequently picked up on how deceitful cats can be and how they hide their true nature according to Marquis. A few answers over thought the poem as a representation of racial supremacy, male supremacy and in one case a candidate suggested that cats were now taking revenge for the death of the dinosaurs! Weaker answers tended to explain 'what' the author says rather than 'how' the cats were presented."

## **Question 2**

**Extract from: *A Street Cat Named Bob* by James Bowen**

**Question: Explain how the writer presents the cat in this extract.**

Although a less popular option, the unseen prose extract was mostly successful for the candidates who opted to write about it.

"There were some excellent responses and candidates understood how the relationship between the narrator and Bob began. There were some candidates who got overly concerned with details (the colour of the cat) or took each piece of information without relating it to the next, such as the dark alleyway depicting possible danger which is offset by the 'plaintive' meow and the later rubbing against the narrator. I think this is because (as in Q1) candidates do not always read the entire extract or only read it once before responding. Some simply rewrote the extract in paraphrase."

"Both texts were, I thought, well selected and gave lots of scope for development. The extract was generally answered in a straightforward way with candidates explaining rather than analysing."

## **Section B Poetry Anthology**

There was almost equal balance of responses to Questions 3 and 4. Candidates fully engaged with the questions and most responses gained marks in Level 3 or above. Candidates tended to compare their two poems, which is not a requirement in this legacy 4ET0 specification (but *is* a requirement in the new 4ET1).

### **Question 3**

**How are lessons in life conveyed in *Once Upon a Time* and *Poem at Thirty-nine*?**

The responses to these two popular poems were generally very good. Most candidates demonstrated at least a clear understanding of the two poems, but most tended to compare, such as one response where the candidate compared the poems and considered how Walker shows what she has learnt from her father and how Okara wants to re-learn or 'learn more' from his son. There was comment about Walker wishing to learn more and how she was taught life lessons and Okara identifies times where he has learnt different things. Some commented on how there is identification of a change of tone in Okara's poem and the use of compound words.

Some candidates considered how Okara talks about the 'past, almost like a fairy tale' and Walker wishes to show her father what she has learnt and how the 'lessons he taught her' have had influence. Other candidates commented on how 'proud' the poets feel about their own or others' life lessons, such as Okara being proud that his son has learnt his 'old behaviours' and wishes to re-learn them from him, whereas Walker is hopeful that her father would be proud of the life-lessons she has learned.

There were some responses where the candidates referred to a particular area of a poem but had not explored the word or phrase in detail nor included it as evidence.

One examiner commented: "The poems are both very thought provoking and most candidates seemed to grasp the life lessons that each poem conveyed. Again there was a wide range of responses. Some tended to list what the lessons are rather than consider the subtleties of how they are conveyed. Some answers tended to latch onto an idea and then labour or repeat the point with some references to technique."

#### **Question 4**

**Show how the poets present a feeling of sadness in *Piano* and one other poem from the Anthology.**

A wide range of poems were selected when choosing 'one other'. The most popular options were: *Once Upon a Time*, *La Belle Dame sans Merci*, *Hide and Seek*, *Remember* and *Mother in a Refugee Camp*.

Most candidates demonstrated at least a sound understanding of the two poems. Candidates tended to maintain a focus on the question and explored some of the language and structural points of both poems. There was some comment on the use of verbs and the metaphor of the 'flood of remembrance'. When exploring structure, candidates considered the use of first person narrative and, for example, the ballad form when writing about *La Belle Dame sans Merci*.

Some responses required a little more development of ideas and supporting evidence.

One examiner commented: "Lots of candidates were able to identify the sense of loss over Lawrence's mother and indeed childhood. There was quite a lot of feature spotting that was not always fully explained. Sometimes analysis was almost too close at word level without demonstrating general understanding of the actual themes of the poem. There were lots of comparisons with *Remember* or *Mother in a Refugee Camp*, which successfully addressed the themes of how love and loss cause the sadness in the poems."

#### **General**

This paper has been a pleasure to mark and the responses have been very enjoyable to read. Due to the decline in entries, as one would expect with many centres now entering candidates for the new specification, there were fewer 'unidentified' scripts (where candidates had not crossed the relevant question box).

## **Grade descriptions (from the Specification)**

### **Grade A**

Candidates respond enthusiastically and critically to texts, showing imagination and originality in developing alternative approaches and interpretations. They confidently explore and evaluate how language, structure and form contribute to writers' varied ways of presenting ideas, themes and settings, and how they achieve specific effects on readers. They identify and comment on the impact of contexts of texts on different readers at different times. They convey ideas persuasively and cogently, supporting them with apt textual references.

### **Grade C**

Candidates understand and demonstrate how writers use ideas, themes and settings in texts to affect the reader. They respond personally to the effects of language, structure and form, referring to textual detail to support their views and reactions. They show awareness of some contexts of texts and of how this influences their meanings for contemporary and modern readers. They convey ideas clearly and appropriately.

### **Grade F**

Candidates make an involved, personal response to the effects of language, structure and form in texts, showing some awareness of key ideas, themes or arguments. They support their views by reference to significant features or details. They are aware that some aspects of texts relate to their specific contexts, and suggest successfully why this may be significant with reference to some texts.

## **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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Thank you.

Chief / Principal Examiner

International GCSE English Literature



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