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Examiners' Report  
Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2019

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE  
In English Literature (4ET0)  
Paper 2: Unseen Texts and Poetry Anthology

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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**

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 was the final paper for this legacy specification. The responses have always been a pleasure to read and centres and candidates alike have fully engaged with the specification. 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. New resources are being introduced on our website and *Getting Ready to Teach* events are available.

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.

Feedback for this series has been very positive and a full range of marks has been awarded. Many responses gained marks in Level 3 or above and a number of candidates were awarded marks in Level 5.

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.

Most candidates chose to write about the unseen poem for Section A and for Section B, Question 3 was the most popular.

There were very few nil returns or 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).

The paper was attempted by candidates with both enthusiasm and engagement. Candidates responded to both the Unseen and Anthology sections with many insightful ideas and knowledge. Handwriting was, on the whole, very good and the quality of writing (grammar, syntax, spelling, paragraphing) was such that all scripts even from weaker candidates were easy to follow and read.

Whilst there was an absence of listing literary terminology there were some phrases which appeared to be part of what the candidates had been taught. These included the use of the word 'music', for example: 'music of suspense/sadness', 'musical tone/quality', 'alliteration adding sad music', 'proud song', where perhaps the use of 'rhythm' or 'tone' may have been more appropriate. Also, many referred to the title as being 'relevant' or 'irrelevant' without qualifying this with evidence or comment. A good number also

referred to the 'famous' or 'gigantic' poet or poems, some even suggesting they were 'masterpieces' deserving of awards and while praise for the said poets is not in itself wrong, it did add superfluous comment which did not advance the candidates' responses to the question.

Many adopted a stanza by stanza approach to their writing (Q1, Q3, Q4) and for some there was a tendency for this to become overly narrative at the expense of precise analysis. In some instances, responses were a little short and had the candidates offered more discussion, detail and close analysis their marks would have been higher.

Overall, it was a pleasure to read these scripts by candidates whose moral compass allowed them to fully engage in a sympathetic, empathetic and ethical way to the various aspects of the texts selected.

### **Section A Unseen Texts**

Q1, Unseen poetry was far more popular than the unseen prose extract.

#### **Question 1 Unseen Poem: *Money* by Edgar Albert Guest**

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

This poem was understood by most of the candidates. They were able to comment on the descriptive skills of the poet and the message that while money cannot buy happiness, it can be gained by using money to make others happy. A good number commented on the moral nature of having money and decided that it is what one does with money that is good or bad. A few commented on the futility of hoarding money and not using it and some suggested that the rich man was temporarily satisfied by greed and the accumulation of more gold.

There were many useful and insightful comments about the poet's choice of language, in particular the connotations of the words 'gold' and 'conscience'; however, some identified metaphors, alliteration and vocabulary with little comment. Many discussed the man's initial sadness and the potential happiness if he listened to his friend.

In terms of structure, many candidates directly referred to the moral or message of the poem and some commented on the rhyme and rhythm, but few were able to offer any comment on the effect of these and simply wrote this as a stand-alone paragraph.

#### **Question 2**

***Extract from: Millions* by Frank Cottrell Boyce**

**Question:** *Explain how the writer conveys the boys' reactions to the discovery of money in this extract.*

Only a very small number of candidates attempted this question. Most retold the story without analysis or offered overly forensic comments about word definitions. Sadly, few seemed to identify the humour in the extract.

### **Section B Poetry Anthology**

#### **Question 3**

***How do the poets convey a sense of sympathy for characters in 'Half-past Two' and 'A Mother in a Refugee Camp'?***

There was generally very good knowledge and understanding of the Anthology poems, *Mother in a Refugee Camp* and *Half-past Two*. Most responses focused on the question and made their points relevant to the idea of sympathy.

Weaker responses offered what seemed almost notes on the poems without development. Many responses were brief and, though valid, failed to expand their arguments and points. Many wrote two or three paragraphs giving a narrative overview of the poems, which meant even less discussion. Many candidates used 'sensuous' when describing the poets' use of engaging the readers senses where 'sensory imagery' may have been more apt. The practice of saying whether the title was 'relevant or irrelevant' without further comment was common.

Although not required, many attempted to compare and contrast the poems. This generally weakened rather than enhanced their responses as they jumped from one poem to the other.

There was also a common response to laud the poets – this example that expressed the most: 'The two excellent poets reached the reader's minds and thoughts in a professional way and in a mannered attitude'. Perhaps, candidates have been encouraged by their teacher to do this.

The sympathy most keenly felt was for the mother and her child in Achebe's poem. Candidates seemed genuinely outraged by her circumstances and the actions of people that created wars. Quotes were used to illustrate points and there were examples of excellent detailed analysis many referred to the phrase 'ghost smile' and offered valuable and insightful comment. Structure was noted but only some candidates were able to comment on the effect it has on our reading of the poem. There was close language analysis and reference to imagery (e.g. religious) and many noted the use of juxtaposition of her life and actions prior to the war and in the present. Responses were generally longer and more detailed for this poem and all candidates seemed genuinely moved by its theme.

Candidates expressed sympathy for the young child in *Half-past Two* but most felt that the situation was not as bad as in *Mother in a Refugee Camp*. Some candidates made a villain of the teacher and punishment of young children in general the focus of their discussion (and sympathy) while a few recognised that the sympathy we feel for the persona was the recognition in adulthood that what he lost was his childhood innocence and lack of restrictions by time and not so much being put into detention- often expressed as nostalgia. A good number saw the humour in the fact that even though he had done something 'Very Wrong' he could not remember what it was and how this lightened the tone of the poem. Candidates identified various examples of poetic techniques such as: the personification of the clock, the use of compound words and alliteration.

#### **Question 4**

**Show how the poets present thoughts about society in 'Prayer Before Birth' and one other poem from the Anthology.**

Most candidates demonstrated detailed knowledge of *Prayer Before Birth* and their chosen poem. *Once Upon A Time* and *War Photographer* were the most popular and were well chosen as they lent themselves to the question about society. There were a handful that chose *If-* and *Telephone Conversation*, which again were useful in light of the

question. One candidate chose *Hide and Seek* and unfortunately could not relate this to the question at all.

Unlike Q3, few attempted to compare and contrast the poems although a few candidates successfully commented on the use of religious imagery in *Prayer Before Birth* and *War Photographer*.

Candidates, on the whole, were able to link their analyses of the poems with society. Language and structure were discussed, and many relevant points were made. There was, again, the tendency to laud the poets with excessive praise ('famous' the most frequent qualifier).

Although not a requirement of the specification, some candidates were able to use their knowledge of the poets and the context of the poems to further their ideas, but many did not and also used the wrong pronoun when referring to the poets.

### **General**

The paper was attempted by candidates with both enthusiasm and engagement. Marks ranged from 5-20 (mostly in Levels 3 and 4). Candidates responded to both the Unseen (Section A) and Anthology (Section B) sections with many insightful ideas and knowledge. On the whole, candidates appeared to do better with the Anthology poems.

### **Conclusion**

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!

Please check our website for the most recent updates and for more information about our new and exciting specification 4ET1. We hope that you continue to use Pearson Edexcel as your International GCSE provider. The new specification 4ET1 is an exciting qualification and our first examination last summer proved to be very successful.

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Thank you.

Chief / Principal Examiner  
International GCSE English Literature

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