



Pearson
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Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2019

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE
In English Literature (4ET1)
Paper 01 & 01R: Poetry and Modern Prose

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Introduction

This has been a very successful but small series. There were no errors in the papers (4ET1 01 and 4ET1 01R) and no enquiries from centres following the examination(s). Centres should be congratulated for preparing their candidates so well. A full range of marks have been awarded for all questions and many candidates have gained a Grade 4 or above.

There are three sections in this examination paper. In Section A, candidates are presented with an unseen poem and answer a question based on it (20 marks). In Section B, Anthology Poetry, candidates can choose either Question 2, which has two named poems or Question 3, in which one poem is named and the candidate chooses a suitable poem to discuss with it (30 marks). For Section C, Modern Prose, candidates choose to respond to one of two questions based on the prose text that they have studied (40 marks). The total marks for this paper is 90.

This report will provide feedback on all questions (where there were responses) for the main 4ET1 01 paper. Due to the very small entry of regional candidates (4ET1 01R), this is a combined report. Key points are relevant to both papers.

Section A: Unseen Poetry

Question 1 Unseen Poem: *Mum Dad and Me* by James Berry.

Question: Explore how the writer presents the family in this poem.

Candidates appear to have enjoyed this poem and responded positively. There was something for all abilities to be able to write about. The majority of candidates explored the poem in some detail, but there were some very brief responses that did not progress beyond Level 2. The vast majority of candidates explored how the family had different experiences in their lives and responses considered how these compared. There were the basic comparisons of the family's lives and those where candidates considered how Berry was resentful for not having such a free and 'exciting' childhood as his parents had enjoyed. Others commented on how, despite the seemingly idyllic younger years that his parents spent in Jamaica, everything was not as perfect as it seemed as the father had still 'longed for a freedom'. Other interesting and thoughtful comments were made about how Berry's childhood seemed to be enclosed with the 'roofed pool', 'covered arcade', 'the underground' and time spent indoors whereas his parents enjoyed freedom of being outside.

Interesting points were made about the use of technology, including some almost confessional personal asides, by commenting on how Berry suggests that the family does not communicate very much. The family and people in general, are too busy 'talk[ing] on the phone' or watching television.

Comments about structure and form were often included naturally, as the poem is based on comparisons and so comments in relation to these and/or the use of tenses or narrative ensured that all marks in a level could be awarded. When a candidate does not address all Assessment Objectives, the mark is normally placed lower in the level. A range of language points were made and mostly supported with relevant examples, but often the commentary about these examples was not sustained.

One the whole, the most common problems were: the lack of examples from or not enough coverage of the poem; the lack of development of ideas; some overly long quotations where, perhaps, two or three points could have been made; a minority of candidates simply rephrasing or paraphrasing the poem without any close analysis of specific words or phrases. There were just one or two nil returns.

Last summer, the following advice was offered and is still relevant for future examinations:

Marks are always awarded positively, but candidates need to demonstrate an understanding of the poem and address all of the bullet points in the question. Ideally, candidates should address all areas of the Assessment Objective: 'Analyse the Language, form and structure used by a writer to create meanings and effects' (AO2). Centres are advised to look carefully at the mark grid for this question. Each of the bullet points should be met.

A useful acronym to use is PETER (Point, Evidence, [Technique,] Effect on Reader). The most important area for candidates to explore is the use of language and, preferably, they should explore individual words or short phrases and explain what effect these have on the reader. Less able candidates should not become anxious trying to remember a wide range of terminology. The importance is to demonstrate an understanding of the effect particular words have on the reader. Some candidates tend to use overly-long quotations, which is a pity as they could have used parts of the quotation to make separate points. More able candidates tend to use terminology with ease and incorporate these terms seamlessly into their response and support all of their ideas with selective quotations.

Candidates should avoid paraphrasing the given poem or simply responding with a summary of each stanza. These responses rarely progress beyond Level 2.

In summary, when responding to the Unseen Poetry, Section A, candidates should try to:

- *demonstrate an understanding of the overall meaning of the poem*
- *focus on the question*
- *refer to form and structure and try to suggest why this may have been used*
- *give examples of language and explain their effect on the reader*
- *comment on all areas of the poem, not just the first few lines*
- *use short quotations and avoid copying large areas of the poem.*

Section B: Anthology Poetry

Both Anthology questions assess Assessment Objective 2 (AO2: Analyse the Language, form and structure used by a writer to create meanings and effects) and Assessment Objective 3 (AO3: Explore links and connections between texts).

Question 2: Compare the ways the writers present a story in *La Belle Dame sans Merci* and *My Last Duchess*.

This was the most popular Anthology question and was answered successfully by the majority of candidates. Most candidates explored both poems in some detail and were able to compare them with ease, but often responses lacked explicit reference to the question. In many cases, candidates would have had more success if they had included more examples from both poems.

There were some candidates who considered and compared the use of ballad form in *La Belle Dame sans Merci* and dramatic monologue in *My Last Duchess*. A number compared how both poems featured beautiful women.

Candidates explored the use of language and structure and often included points about the use of: rhyming couplets, caesura, euphemisms, archaic language, repetition and the descriptions of the women. More able candidates considered the use of tone.

Overall, the responses were mainly successful and it is clear that the students had been well-prepared for the examination.

Question 3: Compare how the writers present power in *The Tyger* and one other poem from the anthology.

The most popular choice for a second poem was *My Last Duchess*; however, a range of choices for a second poem were seen, including: *Prayer Before Birth*, *Blessing*, *War Photographer* and *Do not go gentle into that good night*. Some choices were more suitable than others and those where 'power' was more obvious often resulted in more successful comparisons.

The majority of candidates gained marks in Level 3 or above, but could have had even more success if a wider range of examples and greater close analysis of language had been included. Sometimes, ideas were not fully developed following an example. There was just one rubric infringement (where the rule for the question is not followed) where a candidate wrote about just one poem, which was not named in either question 2 or 3, and did not link this back to the question.

Understanding of *The Tyger* has improved since it was used on the legacy specification (4ET0). Candidates demonstrated a greater understanding of the poem and often made comment about the Industrial Revolution when referring to the power of the blacksmith's 'hammer' and 'anvil'. Although not assessed for context in this part of the paper, these

comments often supported the ideas of power in the poem and were relevant to the points being made. The majority of candidates considered the use of colour imagery and alliteration to evoke and emphasise the power of the tiger.

Comparison can be an issue for some students. Ideally, comparisons are integrated throughout the response; however, some candidates feel more comfortable dealing with each poem separately. The problem with this method is that it often leads to a lack of comparison at the end of the response, which will inevitably result in a lower mark. If dealing with poems separately, it is best to advise candidates to deal with each focus point separately. For example, begin with explaining what the poems are about and comparing the ideas in the two poems. Then move on to the next area, such as the use of language. Candidates could write about the use of language in the first poem, the use of language in the second poem and then compare these before moving on to structure or another area. By doing this, if they do run out of time, some comparative points will have been made earlier in the response.

In summary, when responding to Section B, candidates should try to:

- focus on the question
- refer to form and structure
- give examples of language and explain their effect on the reader
- provide a balanced response – giving each poem equal treatment
- compare meanings and examples of language and structure.

Remember, context is *not* assessed in this part of the paper, but may be included if it is relevant and supports the point being made.

Section C: Modern Prose

Candidates responded well to their chosen question. The most popular text was *Of Mice and Men*. The second most popular was *To Kill a Mockingbird*. There were very few responses to the other three texts. There were some thoughtful, insightful and perceptive responses produced for most questions and, once again, a full range of marks was awarded.

All questions have been successful and have provided candidates of all abilities an opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge of their chosen text. There were some weaker responses to *Of Mice and Men* and *To Kill a Mockingbird*, often due to the brevity of the response or candidates basing their knowledge on film adaptations rather than the novel. For example, a small handful of candidates commented on how Curley's wife speaks with George about Curley. This scene does not appear in the novel. One candidate even claimed not to have studied the novel at all. A small number of responses lapsed into narrative instead of answering the question and there were some responses where candidates muddled characters and thought, for example, Curley was George.

The very small number of candidates who responded to Ihimaera's *The Whale Rider*, Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* and Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* were mostly very successful when applying both AO3 (knowledge and understanding of the text) and AO4 (context). The

answers produced for these novels often resulted in some very perceptive and skilful responses supported with a range of quotations.

Further comments for *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Of Mice and Men* follow:

Text: *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Harper Lee

Question 4: Explore the importance of the Ewell family in this novel.

Question 5: Show how the setting of Maycomb is significant in *To Kill a Mockingbird*

The most popular option for this novel was Question 4. Most candidates explored the Ewell's part in the trial and how Mayella and her father falsely accused Tom Robinson for abusing her. There was little about Burris Ewell or events at the end of the novel when Boo rescues the children from Bob. In some instances, more examples could have been provided from throughout the novel. Most candidates were able to include some contextual points in relation to the Ewells, such as their position in society and being 'white trash', whilst others used the example of the Scottsboro' trial to illustrate the injustices of Tom's trial as a result of the Ewells' accusations.

Some candidates made use of the given quotation and used this to their advantage by quoting it when concluding their responses.

There were very few responses to Question 5. Those who did respond to this question often included contextual points about Lee's fictitious town being based on her own experiences when she lived in Monroeville. Most candidates considered the hierarchy of Macomb society, but few considered the layout of the town and the significance of some its buildings, such as the church Calpurnia attends or the jailhouse. Some candidates considered the various characters of the town, but not how each family had stereotypical traits inherited from ancestors who had lived in the same place.

Text: *Of Mice and Men*, John Steinbeck

Question 6: Discuss the relationship between Curley and his wife in the novel.

Question 7: Examine the significance of animals in *Of Mice and Men*.

By far, Question 6 was the most popular prose question. This proved to be a very good discriminator, as a range of marks were awarded. Many candidates chose to write about the troubled relationship between Curley and his wife and some detailed responses were received. Most considered how the couple were 'always looking for each other' and how their relationship was not strong, but hardly any candidates considered how the couple met and that they had only been married two weeks.

There were a number of candidates who wrote about how they believed that Curley physically abuses his wife, which is why she wears so much make-up. This is a possibility and an interesting interpretation; however, it is not entirely supported in the novel apart

from a reference to Curley being 'handy'. This could have been introduced with a 'perhaps' or 'some may consider that...' to signpost that it is an interpretation.

Most candidates commented on Curley's wife being one of Curley's possessions and how she was not even given a name. Some candidates concentrated on Curley's reaction to seeing his dead wife in the barn and how he was more interested in getting revenge on Lennie, but some areas were overlooked, such as Curley's wife's discussion with Lennie just before her death, when she tells Lennie about how she met her husband and what she thinks of him. Some candidates did comment on how Curley's wife said that she did not like her husband, but some continued by suggesting that he 'broke her records', which does not feature in the novel and is only mentioned in the film adaptation. Similarly, several candidates referred to Curley's wife speaking with George, which is an additional scene added to develop characterisation in the film. There were some inaccuracies and some characters that had been muddled, such as one candidate believing that Curley was George. A full range of responses were seen.

There were only a small number of responses to Question 7, 'animals'. These were largely successful in gaining marks in Level 3 or above and considered how Lennie is described as a bear and other animals throughout the novel. Some considered how the petting of mice and the breaking of their necks foreshadowed events later in the novel. More able candidates mentioned the water snake and heron that feature in both the opening and closing chapters. There was often some comment on Candy's dog and Lennie's puppy. There were a range of ideas, but very few mentioned the title of the novel and its significance.

In summary, when responding to Section C, candidates should:

- focus on the question
- avoid narrative retelling of the events in the novel
- provide a range of examples from their chosen text – remember that as this is a closed book examination, examples need not be quotations but examples of events or episodes within the novel
- prove to the examiner their knowledge of the text – do not assume the examiner knows everything
- comment on contextual points and try to relate these to the points being made
- avoid dealing with context separately. Do not write a page of historical background, but link all contextual points with an example from the novel and in relation to the question being answered
- when using film versions, which are most valuable teaching aids, remind candidates that not all scenes in a film appear in the novel that they are studying and that their responses must be based on the novel and not the film version.

Conclusion

Centres should be congratulated on preparing their candidates for the examination. We very much hope that you will continue to deliver this specification and that you and your students are delighted with results.

More exemplar materials for the new specification are continually being added to our website and more sample responses are available.

For those candidates looking to continue their English Literature studies, the Pearson Edexcel International AS and A Level (Specification references: YET01 and XET01) is an ideal option. This qualification is becoming very popular and successful and has received positive feedback from centres. Full details are available on our website.

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Thank you.

Chief / Principal Examiner

International GCSE English Literature