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Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2022

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

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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 delighted with their results.

Introduction

The January 2022 series was very successful and performed well. The paper was very similar in performance to previous series. There were no errors in the paper, no erratum notices and there were no enquiries from centres following the examination.

Centres are once again congratulated on preparing their candidates so well, especially during another very challenging year.

For the January 2022 paper, it was decided to remove the Anthology Poetry section due to the unprecedented circumstances related to the pandemic. The removal of one section of the paper enabled candidates and centres to access the paper with more confidence, especially after lost teaching and learning hours.

For this series, there were just two sections. In Section A, candidates were presented with an unseen poem and answered a question based on it (20 marks). For Section B, Modern Prose, candidates responded to one of two questions based on the prose text that they had studied (40 marks). The total mark for this paper was 60.

The most popular prose text was, once again, *Of Mice and Men*. There were no responses for *The Joy Luck Club* and just a few responses for each question in relation to *Things Fall Apart*. There were less than 10 responses for *To Kill a Mockingbird* (some were *Of Mice and Men* and the candidate had checked the wrong box) and 7 for *The Whale Rider*.

As expected, the number of entries was much lower than in previous series, however, there were more than in the November 2021 series. The full range of marks was awarded with most candidates gaining marks in Level 3 or above. Again, there were some extremely good responses and a number of candidates gained full marks for their prose response. All responses were marked by the Principal Examiner and one Senior examiner.

Section A Unseen Poem

Q1. On *Turning Ten* by Billy Collins

Question: Explore how the writer presents reaching the age of ten in this poem.

This poem worked extremely well and candidates responded enthusiastically. The poem appeared to strike a chord with all the responses marked right across the ability range. One candidate giving their personal reaction to the poem noted that '(it) touched the core of my heart'. There were many very thoughtful and sensitive reactions to the poem, as if the candidates themselves remembered their turning ten. A few noted that, in contrast to the poet, they had felt excitement. Some suggested this was an invitation by the poet to adults to remember their childhood. There were many comments across the

ability range on nostalgia and memories, reminiscences. Many commented upon the line: 'It is time to say goodbye to imaginary friends'.

Irrespective of their ability nearly all candidates noted that the poem was a reflection on how childhood passes and the more confident noted that with maturity dreams get diminished. Many candidates noted the feelings of sadness and possibly resentment against the passage of time. More confident candidates suggested that readers were invited to reflect on their own childhood.

Most of the approaches were holistic in character and there was relatively little in the way of 'feature spotting'. Hyperboles were noted and often supported by relevant examples: most candidates commented on the fact that the age of 10 was compared to common childhood diseases. The idea of 'disfiguring' noted as an indication of permanent change. Juxtaposition, especially of the imagery of light and blood was noted and how that reflected on the realities and hardships encountered in adulthood. Some of the more confident candidates noted that the juxtaposition of sophisticated language with the image of a child created a very poignant effect. Some candidates noted the use of the pronoun 'You' as a direct address to the reader in what a few noted was a conversational tone.

Structure, especially the difference in the length of each stanza, was discussed. Many noted that the second stanza was the longest reflecting on the childhood memories. Changed in the shape of the stanzas denoted a change in mood. Caesuras and enjambments were noted – although not always quoted to make the point clearer. A few candidates noted that the use of enjambment indicated time moving on. A lack of rhythm or free verse was noted by a few candidates as being indicative of an overall lack of control over events. A lack of rhyme was noted by one candidate to show how the poet has moved from childhood to adulthood, because 'childhood we link to nursery rhymes and strong rhythms of these rhymes'.

Overall, candidates identified with the poet, suggesting that life became more literal and that with adulthood came responsibility. Several used the quotation of light beneath the skin and 'I skin my knees. I bleed' to illustrate their ideas.

The poem performed extremely well and was very successful.

When comparing with previous series, the level of demand was similar. Key areas to consider for future series remain the same.

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 poems, was removed for this series due to the current unprecedented circumstances. The Prose section was relabelled as Section B.

SECTION B Modern Prose

Q2 *To Kill a Mockingbird*: Atticus Finch

This was the most popular question for the text. Responses were mostly successful. Most candidates considered a range of points in relation to the character of Atticus. Points include: Atticus representing Tom, his employment of Calpurnia, how Atticus is a fair man and tries to help society, his moral decisions, how he is driven by his conscience and his role as a father. On the whole, a good range of contextual points supported the points made.

Q3 *To Kill a Mockingbird*: Isolation

There were very few responses to this question. Some considered how isolation in the novel was evident through racism, prejudice and childhood experiences. Most candidates explored the theme through the characters of Boo (Arthur) Radley and Mrs Dubose.

Q4 *Of Mice and Men*: Anger

The full range of marks was awarded for this question.

The theme of anger elicited many thoughtful responses. One candidate noted that 'Anger begets anger' when discussing the escalation of events. This was with reference to the confrontation between Curley and Lennie and how Curley's loss of face and physical injury led to his fury after his wife had been killed. Possibly the character to epitomise anger most was Curley. Some candidates noted how possibly his frustration at not becoming a professional boxer led to his bitterness and subsequent anger. The fact that he was 'a small guy' also created a feeling of anger and desire to prove himself. Candidates wrote about how Curley's wife's frustrations were taken out on Crooks and so displaying the cruel anger of 'the weak against the weak'. Crooks was discussed and his overall anger at his situation in life and the way he takes his frustration out on Lennie. George was discussed in terms of his overall frustration with Lennie. A few candidates noted, incorrectly that George kills Lennie in anger. Responses where the candidates chose deliberately to home in on a maximum of three characters were the more successful. Some candidates felt that they had to include the ranch boss, Carlson, and Candy and even Slim 'due to his lack of anger'. The 'most successful combinations' were of Curley, his wife and Crooks. These responses appeared to flow from one character to the other and not consist of a number of separate paragraphs on each character not linked to each other.

Q5 *Of Mice and Men*: one important character

There appeared quite an even spread between the characters of George, Lennie, Crooks and Curley's wife. There were a few on Slim and on Candy. But the ones that stood out were those on Crooks and Curley's wife.

Possibly the most thoughtful and sensitive responses were those on Curley's wife. Here candidates noted the cruelty of the 'weak towards the weaker, those of lower status'. The incident in Crooks' room being used as a prime example. Some noted the multi-faceted aspect of the girl and how she represented different themes (loneliness, the American Dream, sexism), especially when she 'unloads' to Lennie. There were some comments that were not entirely accurate, such as Curley's wife being married off by the mother to secure the girl's financial future and that Curley's wife did not choose to be with Curley. One candidate noted that that would make sense of the comment that 'I don't like Curley'. Another noted that the reasons for her marrying Curley were not very clear. Many noted that she was a catalyst in the destruction of the American Dream, particularly for Candy. Hence his viciousness towards her after her death. One of the more confident candidates used the minor characters of Suzy and Aunt Clara as a springboard to discuss stereotyping and how each woman, Curley's wife included, represented a certain type.

The responses on Crooks were very strong on context. Many noted his reaction to Lennie and his dream, his cruel 'teasing' of Lennie; the exchange between Curley's wife and Crooks and how he retreated into himself after being threatened. His cynicism regarding the American Dream was noted.

Lennie's character also elicited some thoughtful and sensitive responses. These, possibly because of the character were more varied in ability. Many candidates noted his disability, with a lot of sensitivity. Some commented on how he epitomised the dream and linked him directly to Robert Burns' poem 'To a Fieldmouse'. His relationship with George was noted, as well as his tendency towards violence coupled with his childlike innocence. One of the more confident responses included this comment: 'Lennie helps create dreams, yet ironically he is a destroyer of dreams'. The candidate then proceeded to explain that it was Lennie's tendency towards violence that destroyed everyone's dream, rather than Curley's wife being the destructive element.

George was discussed in terms of his relationship with Lennie mainly as a father figure and their symbiotic relationship was discussed. His anger and frustration, but also his sense of responsibility, were noted.

Those who considered Slim or Candy referred to their roles and statuses on the range. Slim being described as 'The prince of the ranch', his detachment and overall wisdom. Candy's loss of his dog, his firm belief in the dream and the subsequent loss of his. A few candidates noted his reaction to the loss.

Unfortunately, there was a small number (three) of candidates who listed at least three characters they considered important. This a) did not look at the task in hand. b) did not analyse any one of the characters in sufficient detail and so marks were forfeited. However, nearly all candidate referred to context, both social and historical, when answering the question.

Overall the responses to all the questions were varied and interesting to read.

Q6 *The Whale Rider*: 'Koro Apirana is a successful tribal leader.' How far do you agree?

The responses to this novel were mostly very successful with some gaining full marks. Candidates tended to agree that Koro is a successful leader, but with faults. On the whole, the character of Koro was fully evaluated when exploring the positive and negative aspects of his leadership. Candidates included various examples and included some finer details from the novel, demonstrating assured understanding.

Q7 *The Whale Rider*: The importance of family

Most responses to this question gained marks in Level 3 or above. Candidates considered the influence of family on Kahu and her close relationship with them. Some explored her relationship with Koro and Nani and others considered Rawiri, Porourangi, and Rehua's family. There was recognition that Kahu risked her life at the end of the novel to save not only the family of whales, but her family and tribe too.

Q8 and Q9 *The Joy Luck Club*

There were no responses to either of the questions: misunderstandings or Rose Hsu Jordan.

Q10 *Things Fall Apart*: Conflict

Various examples of conflict within the novel were considered, such as: Okonkwo's wrestling and use of violence; Ikemefuna and how tribal negotiations took place and not everything was settled by violent means; the mistreatment of women leading to conflict and the arising conflict with British authority. A thorough understanding of the novel was demonstrated, although some points could have been explored further and more details from the novel could have been included.

Q11 *Things Fall Apart*: Most sympathy for

There was just one response to this question, with the candidate gaining a mark towards the top of Level 4. The candidate felt sympathy for Okonkwo because of how he was ashamed of his father, his relationship with Nwoye and how he dedicated his life to the clan yet was deprived of a 'burial honour'.

In comparison with previous series, the Prose (Novels) questions performed in a similar way. The full range of marks was awarded, particularly for the most popular texts. The questions followed a similar style and there were no new phrases or alternative wording to the questions.

In summary, and as mentioned in previous series, when responding to Modern Prose, candidates should remember to:

- 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

As always, the responses are always a pleasure to mark and have, once again, been very enjoyable to read.

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

Do look at our website for more details about the Summer 2022 examinations and for the latest COVID-19 updates.

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Again, thank you for choosing Pearson Edexcel as your International GCSE provider. We should like to wish you all every success for the future.

Thank you.

Chief / Principal Examiner
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