



Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2023

Pearson Edexcel GCE Advanced Subsidiary
In English Language and Literature

Paper 1: Voices in Speech and Writing (8EL0/01)

Edexcel and BTEC Qualifications

Edexcel and BTEC qualifications are awarded by Pearson, the UK's largest awarding body. We provide a wide range of qualifications including academic, vocational, occupational and specific programmes for employers. For further information visit our qualifications websites at www.edexcel.com or www.btec.co.uk. Alternatively, you can get in touch with us using the details on our contact us page at www.edexcel.com/contactus.

Pearson: helping people progress, everywhere

Pearson aspires to be the world's leading learning company. Our aim is to help everyone progress in their lives through education. We believe in every kind of learning, for all kinds of people, wherever they are in the world. We've been involved in education for over 150 years, and by working across 70 countries, in 100 languages, we have built an international reputation for our commitment to high standards and raising achievement through innovation in education. Find out more about how we can help you and your students at: www.pearson.com/uk

Summer 2023

Publications Code 8EL0_01_2306_ER

All the material in this publication is copyright

© Pearson Education Ltd 2023

Introduction

This unit comprises the first of two examined components of AS Language and Literature and has an explicit focus on the concept of 'voice'. It assesses understanding of how spoken voices are formed and how written voices are created in non-literary and digital texts as well as how texts are formed for specific audiences, purposes and genres.

Section A required candidates to transform the extract from a memoir by a WW1 soldier from the anthology into an extract from the screenplay for an educational film aimed at secondary school pupils. Section B required a comparative analysis of an unseen feature article by Nigella Lawson, looking back at her childhood memories of food, and the extract from Maya Angelou's autobiography from the anthology.

For Section A, there were many centres that had prepared their candidates thoroughly for producing screenplays and they were clearly practised in creative and technical writing; such candidates, who had also reviewed the source text thoroughly, excelled in this task and produced highly convincing and engaging extracts suitable for use in educational filmmaking. Successful responses demonstrated understanding of the genre, with a confident grasp of crafting language in an appropriate register and style. At the lower levels, there was significant over-reliance on the source text, making those responses less convincing and original.

Less successful candidates interpreted the task more as a monologue or story, thus limiting their ability to produce a fully convincing response; by creating a text written entirely in prose, the writing tended to be very similar to the source text. While many of these monologue/story responses were fairly entertaining, achievement was often also restricted due to limited understanding of context and reception: the new text would not have been suitable for use in the production of an educational film. Wherever possible, candidates were rewarded positively for their originality and skill, but this type of misinterpretation can be self-limiting.

In Section B, the majority of candidates were familiar with the requirements of the task, demonstrating the care with which centres had prepared them. Some candidates approached the two texts as separate entities but most had clearly practised a comparative approach; the level of nuance and subtlety of the connections explored did vary greatly. There were some more effective responses for this question where candidates were confident in their discussions of the Angelou autobiography and understood the thematic links to the unseen text.

Successful responses resulted from careful selection of the most pertinent areas for comparison dependent on the nature of the unseen text and its links to the anthology text, such as the attitudes and values of the writers/speakers or the connected theme and genre. Many candidates had been well-prepared on the anthology text but found it more challenging to find meaningful links to the unseen. Across all levels, candidates were most confident and detailed in their discussion of issues of context, audience, purpose and tone. However, this was very often not backed up by terminology or analysis of specific literary and linguistic techniques.

Overall, candidates produced work which was often engaging and insightful, showing how well centres had prepared them for the exam and the ability of the candidates to write creatively and analytically. Where centres should continue to focus this preparation is in exploring a wider range of genres and text types, identifying the different methods and

techniques used by writers and speakers to shape meaning. Familiarity with a fuller range of forms and devices would better prepare candidates for the writing task as well as developing confidence with unseen texts, enabling them to make more subtle and perceptive points about meaning, rather than relying on a prescribed approach. Similarly, developing detailed knowledge of a wide range of both literary and linguistic techniques would significantly improve candidates' ability to compare the two texts in Section B with real insight. Many candidates rely on 'labelling' word classes (often inaccurately) for very little purpose. This can also hold them back from analysing the pragmatic meaning of the language or its specific effect and purpose.

Section A - Question 1

The "Creation of Voice" task presented candidates with the eye-witness account from a young radio operator in the First World War, and asked that it be transformed into an extract from the screenplay for an educational film aimed at secondary school students.

It was expected that candidates would exhibit the following skills:

- Understand contextual factors and genre conventions.
- Consider how the text is received, with confident crafting of the text.
- Control their own writing style by employing a clear structure and avoiding lapses in clarity.
- Produce a text that engages by using carefully chosen language features.

Many candidates were innovative and imaginative in how they approached this task. A variety of relevant screenplay-writing techniques were employed, including dialogue, stage directions, flashbacks, voice overs, visual effects or sound effects, all of which would help make the screenplay fit for use by cast and crew when making the film. Some of the best responses also showed a perceptive understanding of how these techniques could be combined to keep the final viewing audience engaged in the film, as well as conveying the educational information to the viewer.

At the lower levels, candidates struggled more with adopting a form, style and register appropriate for the film genre and educational purpose. Some candidates produced texts that had more in common with a monologue or diary, including extensive "lifting" of the source material or simply paraphrasing the source material with no clear sense of genre, providing little to interest or entertain. Others adopted an inappropriately informal register for the period, setting or purpose. There were some responses that seemed more like a stage play than a screenplay, although these often contained highly appropriate dialogue and stage directions. Others drew more on the students' knowledge of documentaries or interviews, setting the majority of their script in the present day, even though the question instructed them to 'dramatise the events in Neyland's account'. Centres should note that the task will always require the transformation of an Anthology text into a genre that can also be found within the Anthology. Therefore, for Section A, candidates should be familiar with all the different types of text and their contents. It was a concern this series that a significant minority of candidates did not seem at all familiar with the screenplay genre and were unable to write something in the style of the extract from "The King's Speech" from the Anthology, using the information in Neyland's memoir. Furthermore, there were candidates who seemed quite unfamiliar with the Anthology text used for this question, misinterpreting language and events from the memoir.

Responses at the higher levels demonstrated clear understanding of how to write for film and for a viewing audience, transforming the memoir into immersive, yet often amusing and thought-provoking, drama. These responses were well planned and included carefully chosen information from the source text; this kind of selective, organised approach produced the most convincing and relevant writing.

Question 1 tasks provide the opportunity for the creative use of a range of literary and linguistic devices, such as those candidates have explored when reading or listening to other writers' work. Candidates who attempt to imitate these interesting and imaginative writing techniques in their own work can be rewarded highly for AO5.

Section B - Question 2

The "Comparing Voices" section required a comparative response focussing on how writers shape language to create a sense of voice. The candidates were required to explore connections between two texts linked by the themes of food and family relationships; the first Maya Angelou's autobiography taken from the anthology, the second a previously unseen feature article by the food writer and TV cook Nigella Lawson.

It was expected that the candidates would exhibit the following skills:

- Organise the structure of their response and write in an appropriate register and style.
- Apply appropriate concepts, methods and terminology.
- Support the exploration with a range of relevant examples.
- Display knowledge and understanding of how meanings are shaped in texts and of the writer's craft.
- Show knowledge of contextual factors and the ability to link this knowledge to how texts are produced and received.
- Explore connections across texts.

There is some evidence that timing was an issue with this section of the paper. Candidates should ensure that they leave enough time for Section B, as it is worth 30 out of the 50 marks for the exam.

On the whole, this task was completed with some confidence by candidates and many had been prepared to adopt a comparative approach; centres appear to be developing the ways in which they teach students to explore two texts at once. Most responses considered a range of similarities within the two texts but candidates, on the whole, were reluctant to consider differences or contrasts, so this is an area on which most centres can continue to work.

At the higher levels, candidates approached the unseen text with confidence and were able to discuss both sources as whole texts, understanding what the writers and speakers were trying to achieve for their respective audiences, purposes and contexts and linking this explicitly to the linguistic and literary techniques employed in each text. Some students had an effective academic register and knowledge of terminology and were able to use this to evaluate meaning across both texts with contexts of production and reception in mind.

Some centres had prepared candidates well for the Angelou autobiography, including a thorough understanding of the methods used by the writer to reminisce about her earlier

life and her complex relationship with her mother. This enabled many candidates to comprehend the thematic link to the unseen text and make sound comparisons in terms of when and where they were produced and the potential impact on their respective audiences. It was encouraging to see that many candidates, for example, noted the similar themes of how love is expressed through food and how memory is triggered by food or that relationships with parents can be both loving and difficult. However, some candidates were not so well prepared and struggled to find meaningful links between the two texts. Perhaps unsurprisingly, even at the higher levels, candidates were sometimes far more confident on the anthology text than on the unseen, leading to imbalanced responses. Centres should continue to explore a wide range of unseen texts with candidates to increase their confidence in approaching new material in the exam. Many candidates would benefit from more careful planning of their comparative response, and this approach could be reinforced by centres through regular practice of annotating unseen texts and creating plans for a comparative analysis.

However, as with Section A, there were also candidates who were clearly not at all familiar with the Anthology text either, effectively writing a comparison of two unseen texts with a good deal of reading to do under exam conditions. This led to misunderstanding of the Angelou text and some inevitably brief responses.

As in previous series for this exam, the range and relevance of concepts, methods and terminology explored were often a discriminator between the lower and higher levels. Higher level responses linked features to meaning and context, exploring the writer's choices and their effect in detail with relevant exemplification. "Feature spotting" occurred more frequently in lower level responses, particularly where linguistic understanding was limited to the labelling of word classes with little further explanation of how these words created meaning. Responses in the higher levels showed more careful selection of evidence and tended to explore these quotations in more depth, even where the comparisons made were perhaps a little obvious.

Most candidates were able to comment on contextual factors with varying levels of sophistication and detail. This was not always matched by equal analysis of the writers' methods or techniques, or by equal knowledge of technical terminology, even at the higher levels. Across all levels of the mark scheme, candidates are demonstrating fairly limited technical literary and linguistic knowledge. Often their understanding and comparison of the two texts is sensitive and subtle, but they are unable to support their ideas with sufficient specific subject knowledge. For example, many candidates wrote interesting and insightful comparative commentaries on the relationships between the two writers of the source texts and their mothers and on the way they wrote about their experiences with family and food. However, these were rarely backed up by secure understanding of how this meaning had been shaped by the specific language or techniques used in the text.

Paper Summary

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates are offered the following advice:

- Read the question carefully and follow its specific demands. This is particularly important for Question 1 but also for Question 2 where the description of the task can vary.

- Plan responses for Question 1 with a clear understanding of genre, audience, purpose and context. Focus on creating an appropriate voice, register and tone based on the task.
- Use a range of information from the source material for Question 1. Remember that this can be combined with additional points or anecdotes as appropriate and it is not necessary to follow the same structure as the original text.
- Try to make your writing as interesting and creative as you can for Question 1; you could try using some of the methods and techniques you have analysed in other people's work in your own creative writing.
- Develop a flexible "toolkit" of frameworks that can be applied to a variety of texts for Question 2, along with a range of terminology, rather than relying on prescriptive mnemonics or lists of features, as this can lead to "feature spotting". Remember that techniques and terminology can be both linguistic and literary, even for non-fiction texts.
- Consider contrasts or differences as well as similarities in the approaches of the writers of the texts for Question 2.
- Always plan your comparative response and choose your evidence from the texts with care, making sure you have picked the most relevant example for every point.
- For Question 2, explore a range of other "unseen" texts to increase confidence when analysing and making perceptive connections with the anthology texts, particularly for audience and purpose.