



Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2024

Pearson Edexcel Level 3 Advanced Subsidiary
In English Literature (8ET0)
Paper 2: Prose

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Publications Code 8ET0_02_2406_ER

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Introduction

For the 8ET0_02 component, candidates undertake the study of two prose texts from their chosen theme area. At least one of these texts must have been written pre-1900. The most popular theme areas on the paper this series were, in order, Science and Society, The Supernatural, and Women in Society. Far fewer responses were seen on Colonisation and its Aftermath, and none at all on either Childhood or Crime and Detection, so this report will report in less detail about these.

The majority of centres had prepared candidates effectively for the requirements of the examination. Examiners saw a wide range of responses, and many candidates produced answers that were relevant and appropriately addressed the Assessment Objectives covered in this component. The strongest candidates approached questions with individuality and creativity, considering their chosen texts from a wide variety of angles. Such candidates developed relevant and imaginative readings of the texts, rooted in the tasks set and supported by well-chosen textual evidence drawn from across the set texts covered. Weaker responses, however, were sometimes very brief and/or incomplete or did not fully address the Assessment Objectives.

It is important for centres to consider these factors, and to ensure that candidates have been provided with opportunities for timed writing practice throughout their course of study in order to ensure that: a) responses are relatively sustained and complete; b) all requirements of the assessment are met.

Addressing the Assessment Objectives

A01

Attention to the terms of the task set is a very important factor when determining the quality of a script. Where candidates are not explicit in addressing the question they have selected, it is more difficult for examiners to follow their lines of argument and to award marks for the quality of responses. For this reason, candidates are to be advised against simply reproducing learned responses or sections of pre-prepared material – learned introductions, for example, can appear to be quite general in nature and often fail to address the specifics of the question set. It was evident that some candidates had sought with varying degrees of success to adapt previously written responses to the topics on which they had elected to answer. In some cases, this meant that relevance and argument were questionable. This is not an advisable strategy. Stronger candidates are adaptable in the use of their knowledge of the texts they have studied, ensuring clear and explicit consideration of the task set.

Where candidates had planned effectively, answers were well organised, supported by appropriate use of both textual and contextual material, and drew effective connections between texts. The best responses provided a sustained insight into candidates' understanding of the question, and went on to develop structured, comparative arguments illustrated by frequent and efficient reference to the texts, often including short, embedded quotations. Weaker candidates tended to provide less relevant and effectively developed content, often characterised by a lack of

organisation. Textual references tended either to be absent or over-lengthy and there was often a lack of analysis. Typical lower-level responses were also often descriptive or narrative rather than analytical in nature.

With large jutting stones", becomes a symbol both the isolation of the Millennium and the resilience of those who reside within it. This is put in great opposition to Thrushcross Grange, "a splendid place carpeted with crimson and crimson-carpeted chairs... a pure white ceiling bordered with gold, [and] a shower of glass-drops". The description of such grandeur and the color imagery of "crimson", indicating power and wealth, and "crimson" a regal, statley color puts the home in contrast to great opposition to Wuthering Heights, "we should once change ourselves in heaven", denoting a hell lower, and implicitly a hell, great Blake goes on to explore throughout the novel. It is this great opposition between the heavenly and "glorious" Thrushcross Grange and the modest resilient Wuthering Heights that reflects the difference in class and status between the Earnshaws, at Wuthering Heights, and the Lintons, at Thrushcross Grange that dominates the novel. A class-conscious reading of this novel could suggest this contrast alludes

Comment: Note the use of textual evidence in this passage from a response to Question 12. Quotations are effectively embedded within the candidate's own writing and contribute to the development of argument. The response then goes on to offer some analysis of the effects Emily Brontë achieves in developing contrasts between Thrushcross Grange and Wuthering Heights.

A02

Examiners commented on how candidate responses could have been enhanced by paying closer attention to the ways in which meanings are shaped in prose texts. The best candidates were able to illustrate the use and significance of a variety of the methods their selected novelists had deployed. This included coverage of – amongst others – genre, textual structures, narrative methods, use of settings, style, and the appearance across the texts of patterns of language. Stronger responses ranged across the texts, whereas less effective responses tended to home in on isolated sections of texts – often from the beginnings and endings – without demonstrating knowledge of the texts in their entirety. Less successful responses also tended to work at word level rather than showing broader understanding of how meanings are shaped. This is significant, as candidates need to show awareness of writers' craft and that the characters and societies in the novels they have studied are fictional constructs.

Take a look at the following examples:

Similarly, Atwoods ~~the fragmented~~ layered narrative projects similar concerns about the phallic control of the female voice, linking to the equal rights act, which was rejected by congress as an example of patriarchal reluctance to relinquish their chokehold on gender in modern society. Moreover Atwood explores ~~the biological~~ ~~q~~ ~~ma~~ how women are boxed out of ~~the~~ fully expressing themselves as a result of ~~a~~ male-oriented ~~philosophy~~ ~~philosophy~~. The fragmented narrative in *The Handmaid's Tale* is evident of this as we see a deviance from a linear order of events with multiple uses of

^{anelypsois}
~~anelypsois~~, linking to Kristeva, a contemporary of
Atwood, who argued that women experienced time in
a cyclical manner in relation to the menstrual cycle
rather than chronologically. ~~Simultaneously~~ Homogeneous
to this, Atwood points a disconnect between the
arguably patriarchal nature of literature and ~~her~~
the female body. 'cloud' and 'ghost of a ghost'
are a use of figurative language and link to Helene
Cixous' 'Laugh of the Medusa' in which she
argued that literature is inherently masculine and
thus women are unable to fully express themselves
and therefore are excluded from literature - ~~as they~~
are outsiders.

Comment: In this extract, we can see the candidate providing information about the methods the writers employ and identifying how these connect to certain theoretical principles. They do not, however, develop these ideas in detail by applying them to examples from the texts and considering their potential effects upon the creation of meaning.

appearance. This is best shown in Frankenstein's ~~the~~ shocked reaction to the Creature as he sees it alive for the first time. Shelley utilises a semantic field of ugliness and disease, including 'yellow skin', 'hateful eyes' and 'horrid complexion', to describe the monster. Yet it is juxtaposed with imagery of beauty - 'lustrous black and flowing hair and tints of a 'pearly whiteness'. ~~This combination of 'hateful', evoking~~ ~~ugliness and beauty~~. This creates a distinct impression of the uncanny as both ~~beauties~~ beauty and ugliness are paradoxically present at once. Here Shelley applies Freud's theory: this key Gothic trait to be the key reason why we, like ~~the~~ Frankenstein are unsettled by ~~at~~ the creature's appearance. Indeed, Frankenstein's use of the exclamation 'Beautiful! - Great God!' perfectly exemplifies Frankenstein's 'breathless horror and disgust'. Furthermore, Frankenstein begins to ~~det~~ ~~other~~ the creature as soon as he sees him, calling him a 'wretch' and a 'being', refusing to comprehend that the creature may not ~~not~~ conform to Frankenstein's prejudices. This is in contrast to DeLacey's reaction to the Creature when he reveals himself for the first time. DeLacey's blindness means that he cannot ^{'judge'} ~~other~~ the creature based on his appearance, instead offering to help and shelter him. Here DeLacey is symbolic of an unprejudiced society. ~~that helps does~~

Comment: In this extract, by contrast, we see a more critically engaged consideration of the Shelley's craft. Her use of language is closely connected to broader Gothic tropes and to the ways in which our responses to both the Creature and his creator are framed in the novel.

A03

The best responses made thoughtful and effectively embedded use of contextual material. Strong candidates used this to extend and make nuanced contributions to their readings of texts. In such responses, there was a strong sense of how the texts and the ideas contained in them reflected a variety of contextualising factors, both of

production and of reception. In weaker answers, contexts often did not connect to candidates' arguments, appearing as additional information rather than contributing to understanding about the potential meanings of the texts. In such answers, contextual material typically took the form of general assertions rather than providing meaningful links. Examiners also noted the frequent appearance of inaccurate contextual assertions. Some candidates used no contextual material at all.

Within Mary Shelley's gothic novel of 'Frankenstein' and Margaret Atwood's dystopian fiction of 'The Handmaid's Tale' ^(THT) moral values are represented through ^{each} characters actions and submission of those above them. ~~Within~~ Atwood's THT - named in celebration of 'The Canterbury tales' the novel is influenced by Atwood's desire to shed light on patriarchy and can be seen as a reframing concluding essay to Orwell's 1984, reframed ~~as~~ ^{through} a feminist perspective. Shelley's 'Frankenstein' is also ~~written~~ ^{though no matter Mary Wollstonecraft was} influenced by feminism and remains how a lack of female figures can lead to make tragic stories through their unchecked ambitions. Both ~~texts~~ texts explore a lack of moral values through patriarchy, and absence of parental figures - guidance within society and control over ones autonomy.

Comment: Here, for example, we see a passage from a Question 8 response. The candidate understands the importance of introducing contextual material. References to Chaucer, George Orwell and Mary Wollstonecraft, feminism and the patriarchy, however, are present as information only and do not really contribute at this stage to understanding of how these contexts relate in any significant way to the idea of moral values in the novels.

The creature in 'Frankenstein' is a direct representation of the outsiders created by the French revolution in the late 1700s. The lower-classes rose up and demanded equality. The creature represents this as all he desires is to be seen as a person but instead he is labelled as "the creature" or "the monster" reducing him to anything less than human. Despite the creature being constructed with human body parts, his supernatural ~~reanimation~~ reanimation as a result of Galvanism makes him out to be 'inhuman'. The creature is immediately rejected by his creator Victor who describes him as a "miserable monster", this is the creature's first impression of humanity and it is to be hated for the way he looks. Also the way of his birth. Here Victor has gone against the natural order of life and death, Victor has taken something dead and brought

Comment: In this example, we can see a stronger attempt at using context. While it is not fully developed and nuanced, the candidate has made a clear attempt to explain how the contexts of revolutionary France and Galvanism might connect to ideas of moral values in relation to the Shelley's exploration of the value of human life in *Frankenstein*.

A04

Candidates achieving the higher levels, explored interesting, pertinent and well-integrated connections between texts. These covered many kinds of connection, including but not limited to themes, characters' motivations, narrative methods, and contexts. Weaker responses did not provide a clear and developed consideration of connections. Sometimes this reflected a lack balance in the treatment of the two texts studied. It is also worth observing that the use of language of connection, such as 'likewise' or 'contrastingly' is not in itself sufficient; explorations of connections need to be developed and relevant to argument.

Both writers present how societies treat outsiders in their exploration of how society reacts to the clones in Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* and the creature in Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Societies socially outcast the outsiders in the novels despite them being products of human scientific advancements; in the hope of creating life back from the dead and clones to assist in organ donation. Both authors were inspired by the reactions to advancements to science in their time - with Shelley using Galvanism (method of electrocution to contract muscles in a dead body to simulate movement) to bring the creature to life. Ishiguro's inspiration behind Hailsham's dystopian world was inspired by the successful cloning of Dolly the sheep in 1997 and the cloning of embryonic stem cells in 2004 - which received much societal and bioethical criticism for challenging nature.

Comment: In this example, the candidate provides a clear insight into connections between *Frankenstein* and *Never Let Me Go*, developing both thematic and contextual links between the novels. This is all clearly and relevantly connected to the candidate's argument related to the treatment of outsiders.

Childhood

Question 1 & Question 2

There were no responses to questions set on the Childhood theme this series.

Colonisation and its Aftermath

Question 3 & Question 4

Similar but small numbers of candidates responded to Question 3 on the presentation of fear and Question 4 on the presentation of the dangers of misunderstanding. The most popular text combination on these questions was Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Sam Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners*.

Crime and Detection

Question 5 & Question 6

There were no responses to questions set on the Crime and Detection theme this series.

Science and Society

Question 7

This was the most popular question on the June 2024 paper by some distance. The concept of the outsider facilitated a full range of responses and saw the inclusion of an array of contextual material, including literary contexts. The majority of responses were on *Frankenstein* and *The Handmaid's Tale*. Some candidates, often weaker ones, demonstrated the tendency to favour one text over the other, allowing it to predominate the discussion. This inevitably has an impact on the marks for AO4 and also has an effect on the development of candidates' arguments. On *Frankenstein*, many responses focused on the Creature as an outsider, but there was also much exploration of the female characters in the novel, and also both Frankenstein and Captain Walton. For answers addressing *Never Let Me Go*, discussion focused almost exclusively on the clones. On *The Handmaid's Tale*, there was much focus on Atwood's exploration of female characters as outsiders, including the Japanese tourists, but there was really no sense that most of the male characters in the novel are also outsiders. *The War of the Worlds* gained minimal attention.

Question 8

As with Question 7, the majority of responses were on *Frankenstein* and *The Handmaid's Tale*. Candidates working at the lower end of the range had a tendency to treat moral values generally; they often wrote, for example, of how it was 'morally wrong' to create the Creature then treat it poorly in Shelley's novel, and similarly that the treatment of females in *The Handmaid's Tale* is 'immoral'. More able candidates were able to explore in deeper and more nuanced fashion the notion and the bases of moral values, and how these are questioned by the authors. This facilitated some interesting and detailed responses, embedding detailed comparisons between the novels. Some answers, for instance, considered how Victor came from a background

of strong family values and examined his moral decline. Several responses commented on science, the moral tensions related to it and how the writers created a dichotomy between societal progress and moral conservatism.

Both texts suggest the expectations and rights of women in both societies, is decidedly ~~immoral~~^{wrong} and restraining the female voice to roles of docile passivity is immoral. In 'Frankenstein', Shelley introduces the character 'Elizabeth' to be a warning to women of the consequences of being self-sacrificing and living only for the satisfaction of men. Victor describes 'Elizabeth' as 'mine', a 'possession of my own' ignorantly objectifying her, and forcing her into a subservient role. Even his mother 'Caroline' calls her a 'pretty present', the alliteration suggesting the internalisation of societal roles, and further condemning Elizabeth and her 'celestial eyes' to a life of passivity. The celestial imagery further reinforcing the young 'lovely girl' as a gift, bestowed on Victor by God 'to bless and animate'. The treatment of Elizabeth by Victor is reflective of ~~even~~^{even wider} society's treatment of women, and Shelley's deliberate construction of Elizabeth as 'soft' and 'sweet' to criticise the roles of women, and condemn it as immoral and ridiculous. Victor claims that 'till death [Elizabeth] is mine only, this foreshadows the later death of Elizabeth as Shelley takes away the possession of the girl, freeing her from the patriarchy through death. The creature warns Victor 'I shall be with you on your wedding night' and despite the warning Victor ultimately fails to save Elizabeth. He describes her as 'pale and distorted', with 'bloodless

Comment: In this extract, observe the candidate's consistent focus on ideas of societal values in relation to the character of Elizabeth (including by other females) and the extent to which these can be considered either moral or immoral.

Here, however, we see a much more general level response:

In *The Handmaid's Tale* moral values are questioned with the use of the commander, how he uses Offred for more than just her role ^{in procreation}, reiterates his patriarchal hierarchy over her, how he can twist the values of Gilead to suit himself. This is apparent in highlighting that if morals and values can be changed to suit one person, how morally right are these values. The treatment of the monster in *Frankenstein* can be deemed as morally wrong and how he is shunned from society reinforces societal superficialities and lack of morals for others. Both novels use morals and values as subjective and indefinite as they can be changed to better oneself.

The Supernatural

Question 9

The concept of 'fear' proved accessible to candidates across the full range of levels. Responses were seen on all four of the set texts, and the combination of both pre-1900 texts (*Dracula* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*) proved popular. Some responses were rather general in nature, tending to set out a series of examples of how characters within the texts experience fear. More able candidates, however, took the chance to explore a range of sources and manifestations of fear in their chosen novels. They were also able to consider a variety of the methods the writers used in order to present fear.

eponymous villain 'began to crawl down the castle halls... ~~with his~~ just as a lizard moves along the wall'. The verb 'crawl' ~~connotes a~~ creates an ominous environment, as it connotes a predator ~~stalking~~ sneaking upon their prey. Furthermore, the simile used to refer to Dracula as a 'lizard' is demonstrative of his ~~dangerous~~ predatory manner as lizards are dangerous reptiles. Ultimately, this creates a sense of unease in the reader, as they feel disturbed by Dracula's ability to disregard gravity. ~~as my human~~ The feelings of 'repulsion' and 'terror' felt by Jonathan are then similarly reflected in the reader as they are horrified by the mysterious and abnormal power Dracula holds. Contextually, this sense of fear instilled in Jonathan and the reader may've been done by ~~the~~ Stoker to reflect the contemporary fear of reverse imperialism. By presenting Dracula, an eastern man, as a predatory figure, Stoker may aim to validate the idea that the East is a dangerous, vengeful area, of which Britain should fear. Whilst a modern reader would disregard this xenophobic attitude, a contemporary may internalise it, thus highlighting how Stoker has created a sense of fear in the character in the novel, ~~as is the~~ as possible in the readers.

Comment: In this example, the candidate demonstrates some discrimination in their effective combination of discussion of Bram Stoker's methods in creating fear in *Dracula* with embedded context.

The following extract provides an excellent example of a candidate writing about the presentation of fear in the Level 5 range. At this point, they are writing about Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved*:

Similarly, Morrison creates fear in *Beloved* through her presentation of Beloved's tragic death. Whilst Beloved's death is unsettling and instills terror and sadness within the reader, arguably the more horrifying part of her murder is the mention made by the return of schoolteacher. Morrison deliberately draws comparisons between Sethe's Schoolteacher's return and the apocalypse through her use of biblical references, "when the four horsemen came". This apocalyptic imagery creates a sense of dread and terror within the reader as it carries connotations of death and suffering. Morrison further allegorises the horrifying nature of this traumatic experience through her depiction of Sethe desperately attempting to murder Beloved in order to save her from a life of slavery. Fear is created when it is described that she, "simply bring[ing] the baby towards the wall". The adjective 'simply' is shown the inevitability of Sethe's actions, conveying Morrison's intention of "making the slave experience intimate" by showing how choiceless Sethe was in her actions, making such a harrowing decision. The Morrison's style of

Comment: Note how the discussion of examples of Morrison's choices of language are closely related not only to Sethe but also to the impact they are likely to have on the reader, thus demonstrating a sophisticated sense of the literary construct of the text. Note also how the author's choices of language at this point in the text are connected to broader uses of language in the text as a whole and beyond in relation to contextualising ideas of apocalypse and slavery.

Question 10

Fewer responses were seen, but again the topic – the writers' presentations of contrasting environments within their stories – proved accessible across the range. AS with Question 9, candidates had written responses addressing all four texts. Sarah Waters' *The Little Stranger* was the least used of the four available texts.

Women in Society

Question 11

This question, requiring candidates to compare the ways writers make use of contrasts, attracted responses from candidates working on all four of the available texts. Of the pre-1900 options, *Wuthering Heights* was the more popular, whilst both Virginia Woolf and Khaled Hosseini were used as the post-1900 option. Candidates were able to use the idea of contrasts to explore a wide variety of issues in relation to the various texts, including but not limited to contrasts related to settings, gender, characters, themes and language.

Question 12

The concept of characters being 'constrained' was treated in rather a general fashion by some candidates. Weaker candidates tended to focus on examples of the ways in which characters in their selected novels find themselves literally constrained. Stronger responses engaged in more developed ways with what such constraints might be taken to represent and how different forms of constraint are effected, experienced and presented in the texts. Such responses were able to develop a much more nuanced sense of 'constraint' in the novel and the ways in which this relates to both those who constrain and those who are constrained. Candidates were able to develop this idea in relation to range of different contexts.

The writers of both of the texts portray characters who the theme of ^{feeling constrained} ~~constraint~~ through their characters, however they portray the reason ^{for this feeling} ~~through this constraint~~ with slight differences. ~~Virginia Woolf~~ ~~conveys~~ ~~constraint~~ Virginia Woolf's use of the stream of consciousness narrative form conveys that each one of her main characters feels constrained within the new post-war society, whereas Emily Bronte uses Cathy and Heathcliff to portray this feeling, as the two ~~are~~ ~~characters~~ torture each other throughout their whole lives, but are soulmates who are constrained to each other even after death.

Comment: Here we see an introduction to Question 12. Note the general tone and surface level ideas that the candidate is employing in establishing constraint in the novels. However, we should note that the candidate creates some initial connections and draws on some generally relevant contextual material.

More effectively developed is the following passage from a response addressing *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*:

Both Mariam and Tess are forced to grow up prematurely, unprepared for the adult world. Hardy juxtaposes Tess' physical maturity with her emotional maturity, in order to craft her into a character vulnerable to the sexualisation of society. This is a key element of the relationship between Tess and Alec, as evidenced in his initially referring to her as "my big beauty", which shows his reaction to her mature body. The use of the possessive pronoun "my" here should act as a warning to Tess that her relationship with Alec was not going to be Alec was to become controlling and centre on her sexuality, however Tess' immaturely emotional immaturity prevented her from recognising that, therefore meaning her contradictory nature puts her in a vulnerable position. Both novels move into an exploration of

Comment: Observe how this discussion of Tess's character emerges from a comparison to Mariam from *A Thousand Splendid Suns* and draws on the idea of how both women find their views of adult life constrained by their childhood experiences. Note also how the candidate goes on to develop thinking surrounding other factors that constrain Tess – her relationship with Alec D'Urberville, late Victorian gender expectations and her own body.

