

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2016

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE
in English Literature (4ET0)
Paper 02R

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Introduction

Once again, this series has been very successful with a full range of marks awarded. Both centres and candidates should be congratulated and we hope that all of our candidates are delighted with their results.

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.

In both sections a full range of marks were awarded. Responses varied from the very brief and basic to the fully developed assured and perceptive. Overall, the quality of responses across the paper was good, with some noticeably outstanding answers. Responses for Section A often seemed to be stronger than the taught poems in Section B, with some candidates using all of the answer space.

Examiners' feedback has been very positive and a full range of marks has been awarded with many candidates receiving marks in the top three levels.

Overall, the responses seen have been very impressive and a joy to read. The quality of some responses was above and beyond expectations at this level. Indeed, feedback from examiners has been excellent.

Section A Unseen Texts

Question 1

Unseen Poem: *My Father, With His Arthritic Hands* by Rani Turton

Question: How does the writer convey her feelings about her father in this poem?

There was almost double the number of responses to Question 1 than for the unseen extract. In many cases, this is possibly due to students being more prepared for the unseen poetry question and has more confidence with poetry analysis.

One examiner commented: "I thought this was an interesting and engaging poem with enough complexity to differentiate candidates' responses."

Another said: "Candidates generally responded very positively, sympathetically and competently. Very few misread the poem and most were able to write detailed and informed responses. There is a tendency for some to labour the point, or to use literary terms incorrectly. I was

impressed that despite it being obvious that in many cases English was not the first language; the candidate's never-the-less conveyed their ideas in a sophisticated and discerning way. Even the briefest or weakest responses had worthy points."

And another said, "Some candidates have been taught or advised to write an overview or almost philosophical introduction which usually enhanced the response (very occasionally seemed a bit 'forced'). These candidates also usually offered a conclusion and a personal response at the end. The weakest area is writing about structure - while many can identify the terms used to describe it some struggle to discuss the effects or importance on the meaning."

Two candidates decided there was an 'Electra Complex' at foot, a number adopted a style of writing as if they were giving a lecture (e.g. 'notice how...') one thought that the bow and violin could be considered to be a weapon ('beat the best bands'). One thought the father was not good at playing the violin. One thought that the daughter was jealous of the violin. These were the exceptions.

The responses indicate that the candidates have been well taught and prepared to write about an unseen poem, many responses were as good (if not better) as those from the Anthology.

Question 2

Extract from: *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak

Question: Explain how the writer conveys the effect of music in this extract.

There were fewer responses to the unseen prose question, but in many cases the answers were outstanding.

One examiner commented: "I thought that this extract was interesting and engaging again with enough complexity to differentiate candidates' responses. It was a very fair and equal alternative to Question 1 although not as popular."

Another said that "Candidates offered sensitive and competent responses. There were some who referred to the novel and obviously had a wider knowledge, but this did not give them any advantage as others were able to offer very well evidenced ideas based on the extract itself. There were many examples of beautiful writing from the candidates talking about the relationship between Liesel and Papa and descriptions of the accordion. One discussing the 'tooth coloured keys' offered the following, 'the accordion...had a mouth of its own. Papa was like a puppeteer making that mouth speak for Liesel' (wow!) The mother's reaction to the 'noise' was seen a bit more seriously than intended, but all noticed and commented on

the use of capitalisation. Again evidence of English as a second language was shown by some confusion with some words, e.g. 'incense' (even though this was given) but rarely did it detract from the candidate's understanding of the extract.

Candidates were clearly engaged and sympathetic to the content.

Section B Poetry Anthology

It was interesting to see a fair balance of responses with similar numbers of students selecting either Question 3 or 4.

Although there is no requirement to compare and contrast the poems for the current specification, a considerable majority of candidates did so. Some centres have sought clarification during the year and therefore this serves as a reminder for all centres. For the current specification, the two poems **do not** have to be compared, but there should be some balance in the treatment of the two. It seems that in some cases, candidates were constrained by trying to find comparatives when they did not need to do this. I should like to draw all centres' attention to the third bullet in each of the marking levels. The bullet states that either *Limited, Some, Sound, Sustained* or *Perceptive* 'connections are made between particular techniques used by the writer and presentation of ideas, themes and settings'. It is important to note that this refers to each individual 'writer' and the 'connections' means that the candidate understands how the writer uses techniques to convey his or her ideas for each separate poem. 'Connections' is not an alternative for 'compare'. However, this is also a timely reminder that for the **new specification** (from 2018), **comparisons will be required**.

It was certainly not unusual to find candidates had coped in a more accomplished manner with the unseen poem or extract than they did with the taught Poetry Anthology. As these were poems that candidates should have previously studied, it became evident that in some instances not enough time had been spent studying or revising them in preparation for the examination. Some candidates made a genuine attempt to answer a Section B question, but responses suggested that some poems had not been studied and were being attempted as unseen texts; however, it was refreshing to find very few 'nil returns' this series and almost all candidates attempted a response.

Centres are reminded that candidates should discuss the language, structure and form in both of the poems (they should structure their responses as they do for Section A, Unseen Poetry). Often, candidates will consider how the ideas are conveyed through language, but do not consider

the structure and form. If candidates do not consider the structure and form, a mark lower in the level is applied. It is advised that centres look carefully at the mark grids and the wording in each bullet. The second bullet in each mark band is assessing the candidate's knowledge of the language, structure and form.

Question 3

How do the poets convey strong feelings in *If –* and *Do not go gentle into that good night*?

The question concerning 'strong feelings' allowed for a range of responses and differentiation between them.

Generally, candidates demonstrated good knowledge of the Anthology Poems *If– and Do not go gentle into that good night*. The very best (often above and beyond the mark scheme) were informed, fully engaged and thoughtfully and intelligently discussed the impact of the literary devices used by the poets. Some reached 16 by diligently fulfilling the requirements of literary criticism. There was a tendency to "translate" line by line (especially in *If –*) which became somewhat tedious and did not allow the candidate to reflect on the poem as a whole, as was excessive comparison which meant that the candidate did not offer anything substantial about either poem and often confused themselves in the process.

The better candidates always offered an overview of the poems and in general terms what they were about before offering a more detailed analysis.

There were some outstanding responses that showed contextual knowledge of the poems and the poets, which as these are Anthology poems one would expect to be studied. Many wrote erroneously about Kipling's poem (e.g. when it was written and for whom) and few commented on Thomas' relationship with his father.

Some candidates, while secure in Level 4, tended to be somewhat 'clinical' in their responses rather than truly engaging with the subject matter. These, for example, identified the villanelle form, as opposed to the many 'dramatic monologues' - but failed to go beyond identification and offering a possible reason why Thomas chose to write in this form.

Even the weakest responses offered valid points.

Question 4

Show how the poets present their thoughts about grief in *Remember* and one other poem from the Anthology.

Examiners thought that this question was a very fair alternative to Question 3. Many candidates also chose Thomas' poem, though *Mother in a Refugee Camp* was the favourite.

Candidates showed good knowledge and understanding of the Anthology poems. (Comments above for Question 3 also apply in relation to literary devices and structure being noted but not discussed.)

The best responses knew the background to both *Remember* and their chosen poem which should be the case for poems which are studied, only a few seemed to be writing as if they were 'unseen'. *Mother in a Refugee Camp* and *War Photographer* clearly affected many of the candidates and they offered personal as well as informed responses relating to feelings of grief.

The best responses for *Remember* tackled the ambiguities of Rossetti's stance; nearly all candidates noted the 'change of heart'. Again some offered both an overview of the poems as well as some kind of philosophical statement which generally enhanced the response.

General

There were just four Sec A responses where the candidates had not identified which question they had responded to with just 9 for Sec B. Centres are thanked for reminding their candidates to cross the appropriate box on the answer paper.

Conclusion

Where candidates were less successful, literary devices had either been identified without explanation or were simply listed. Greater success would be achieved if candidates analysed specific areas of the text and developed their ideas, supporting them with relevant examples. 'Feature-spotting' is no substitute for detailed analysis. The ability to examine the writer's methods and to connect these with the ideas and feelings in the poems were often the most successful responses. More comment relating to the effect on the reader would have benefited some candidates' responses.

The handling of form and structure was often disappointing, particularly in Section B, in that there may have been a mention of stanza, rhyming schemes, caesura and enjambment, but comment was often minimal as to how these contributed to the thoughts and feelings in the text(s).

Candidates should be reminded that they must write about two poems in Section B and, for each poem, they should consider the language, structure and form when answering the question.

Centres are advised to make greater use of past papers and Sample Assessment Materials (SAMs), available on-line, in order to make candidates more aware of question format and structure.

In some cases, more time needs to be given to the teaching of the *Anthology* poems in order to allow candidates the opportunity to access the full range of marks available.

There was evidence of accomplished work produced during the examination and many centres should be congratulated on the thorough preparation of their candidates.

Overall, this has been a very successful paper and a full range of marks has been awarded across all questions, with many candidates gaining full marks.

Where candidates were less successful, literary devices had either been identified without explanation or were simply listed. Greater success would be achieved if candidates analysed specific areas of the text and developed their ideas, supporting them with relevant examples. 'Feature-spotting' is no substitute for detailed analysis. The ability to examine the writer's methods and to connect these with the ideas and feelings in the poems were often the most successful responses. More comment relating to the effect on the reader would have benefited some candidates' responses.

The handling of form and structure was often disappointing. For Section A there was often a mention of stanza, rhyming schemes and repetition, but comment was often minimal as to how these contributed to the thoughts and feelings in the text. In some cases, particularly for Section B, candidates had not considered structure and form at all.

Students should be reminded that they must write about two poems in Section B and, for each poem, they should consider the language, structure and form when answering the question.

Centres are advised to make greater use of past papers and Sample Assessment Materials (SAMs), available on-line, in order to make candidates more aware of question format and structure.

In some cases, more time needs to be given to the teaching of the *Anthology* poems in order to allow candidates the opportunity to access the full range of marks available. There was evidence of accomplished work produced during the examination and many centres should be congratulated on the thorough preparation of their candidates.

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