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Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback
Summer 2017

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

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Centres are thanked for choosing Pearson Edexcel for their International GCSE English Literature provider. We very much hope that both our candidates and centres are pleased with their results.

Introduction

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. All questions carry 20 marks; 40 in total.

This was a very successful paper that did not receive any complaints or queries from centres. The paper was error free and no changes were made to the mark scheme. The feedback received from examiners has been very positive and a full range of marks has been awarded. This series has, once again, been very successful.

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 very good, with some noticeably outstanding answers. Responses for both sections demonstrated strengths and some candidates continued on extra paper.

From series to series, strengths vary. This year, responses seem to be of a very high standard across the questions and very few Level 1 and 2 responses were seen.

The most popular question for Section A was the unseen poem (Question 1). For Section B, Question 3 was more popular than Question 4.

There were very few Sec A and Sec B responses (where candidates had not crossed the appropriate question number).

Section A Unseen Texts

Question 1 Unseen Poem: *Almost a Conversation* by Mary Oliver Question: *Explain how the poet presents her thoughts about the otter.*

By far, this was the most popular option for Section A. Possibly, due to more coverage of poetry in the classroom and candidates feeling a little more confident with analysing an unseen poem as they transfer their skills more easily.

The poem worked well. Some candidates provided a response that explored some areas of the poem or provided a surface reading, whilst others explored it in depth and considered the metaphorical meanings and wider perspectives.

All candidates responded positively to the poem. The less able responded on a fairly literal basis discussing how Oliver likes the otter and how beautiful 'he' is. Many noted the lack of the definite article and how the animal was called just 'otter'. Nearly all commented on the childlike qualities of the animal. The more able

looked at the wider issues of the poem being a critique of modern life and how the environment is in danger and the river 'will (not) last forever'. The last line lent itself to some interesting comments such as: 'she is tied by conventions of human life', 'can't let go', 'envious of the otter but cannot bring herself to change her life', 'in spite of everything she is a human who cannot change'.

Most candidates supported ideas with relevant quotations and employed a wide range of terms. The majority of candidates commented on the use of the simile, 'he swims like the sleekest fish', and some commented on the use of the superlative. Others commented on the use of the repetitive 'He' and most made comment on 'his dark fur' and the speaker's emotive 'would rather die than wear'. Most were able to make some explicit comment about structure. Most recognised the free verse structure, the use of first-person narrative and varying stanza lengths. More comment about why structure and form have been used in a certain way would have benefitted some responses.

Overall, the poem provided candidates of all abilities to make comment and was very successful.

Question 2

Extract from: Tarka the Otter by Henry Williamson

Question: Explain how the writer presents the otter's experiences in this extract.

Although this was a less popular, those who attempted it did well and the majority of responses to this question were a joy to read. There were insightful comments about the change in atmosphere in the third paragraph and some analysed the atmosphere in each paragraph and how it changed as the passage (and Tarka) progressed moving away from the river and safety.

The passage is full of different technical features (figures of speech, listing, etc) and many candidates wrote about language features with confidence. Fortunately, very few candidates simply 'feature spotted' and provided examiners with thoughtful and engaging responses. Some candidates struggled with structure and form when exploring an unseen extract, but most were able to consider the use of repetition and short sentences for effect.

The majority of candidates considered how the young otter took its first tentative steps to independence and identified his child-like behaviour. Most identified the tricolon of 'sneezing, spitting, coughing' and the use of sensory images throughout the extract. There were some sound comments on the episode with the moon and how the otter chases and plays with its reflection on the water. Many candidates compared the young animal to child who is learning.

Overall, this extract was very successful and candidates fully engaged with its content.

Section B Poetry Anthology

Of the two Anthology questions, Question 3 was more popular.

There was a reasonable balance of responses for Question 3 and Question 4 and on the whole, candidates clearly understood the named poems.

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 in the past and therefore this serves as a reminder for all centres who are still preparing students for this paper. For the current 4ET0 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 4ET1 (from 2018), comparisons will be required.**

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 appropriate 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 are recollections of childhood presented in *Half-past Two* and *Piano*?

Again, a full range of mark was awarded for this question.

This was a popular question option. All candidates responded well to Fanthorpe's poem, *Half-past Two*, and the majority of candidates noted the child's naivety and how his only escape was into a land of daydreams. There were comments on how his life is regulated by adults – family and teachers.

Comments on the language were made at all ability levels. Most candidates made a comment about the fairy tale opening 'Once upon a ...' and the use of capitalisation to emphasise words. The majority of candidates made reference to the use of the compound words or neologisms: 'Gettinguptime', 'timeyouwereofftime' and commented on how these contributed to the recollections of childhood.

Piano proved a little more problematic. Some misinterpreted 'his manhood being cast down' and there were some fanciful comments about lovers. One response even considered the poem to be obscene and shocking. The contrast between then

and now was noted by the more able candidates. There were some nice comments about the 'vista of years' and how memories of childhood were recalled. A number of candidates commented on the use of onomatopoeia ('boom') and the warmth of memories for the past and how these are contrasted with the 'clamor' of present day. Less able candidates simply wrote about nostalgia and sadness for a time gone by.

Question 4

Show how the poets convey thoughts about others in *Remember* and one other poem from the Anthology.

The set poem, *Remember*, proved to be a little problematic for some candidates, who got round this by writing about the companion poem first and then rushing through the named poem. Many noted its sonnet form and the more confident discussed the relevance of the form. The most popular companion poems were *Do not go gentle, Poem at 39* and *A Mother in a Refugee Camp*. The first two appeared to be quite successful in discussing thoughts about others. Some candidates attempted to discuss *Telephone Conversation* and *If-*, but these were not always as secure. The more successful responses were those which looked at the overarching theme of death of a loved one, be it child or parent.

There were much fewer 'unidentified' scripts, where candidates had not crossed the relevant question box. Just 40 for Section A and 91 for Section B.

General

This paper has been a pleasure to mark and the responses have been very enjoyable to read. 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.

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

In some rare cases, more time needs to be given to the teaching and revision 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 centres should be congratulated on the thorough preparation of their candidates.

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Again, thank you for choosing Pearson Edexcel as your International GCSE provider and we should like to wish everyone every success for the future. Thank you.

Chief / Principal Examiner

International GCSE English Literature