

Moderators' Report/
Principal Moderator Feedback

Summer 2016

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE
in English Literature (4ET0)
Paper 03

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Introduction

For the coursework one assignment is required based on an in-depth study of three poems from the Anthology to at least three further poems which may be drawn from outside the Anthology.

Assignment topics are chosen by the centre/candidates but must enable students to respond critically and sensitively to a range of poems and to show understanding of how meanings and ideas are conveyed through language, structure and form. Assignments should allow the students to make comparisons but this is not compulsory.

There is no prescribed length.

General Comments

Assignment topics concentrated on the main themes of the Anthology poems: love, death, memories, childhood, adult children relationships, to name some, and these were all dealt with successfully by candidates at various levels. Candidates who tried to tackle multiple themes, such as *Love and Death* struggled with the amount of material required for more than one theme across detailed study on three Anthology poems and three wider reading poems.

Where responses were particularly focused was when the question itself had a clear focus. Some good examples from this year's cohort of this type of task setting which elicited sound and well-focused results are:

Several poems in the anthology present victims. Explore their presentation, referring to three poems in detail and to at least three other poems from your wider reading.

Compare how different poets have expressed their experience of retaining humanity in an unforgiving and cruel world.

Discuss the presentation of innocence and experience in 'The Tyger', 'Prayer before Birth' and 'La Belle Dame sans Merci'.

Less successful responses were often as a result of an unfocused question. One centre just gave the title 'Manners' as a base for discussion whereas another had candidates trying to focus on two wide ranging topics: those of love and death. A question such as: *A Study of Love in Six poems. Does not lend itself to precision. As a result candidates struggled to produce focused responses.*

There were a few candidates who did not choose poems relevant to their topic and either strained to make links or abandoned the topic at some point moving away from the requirements of the question. It is important that topics and selected poems are carefully matched.

The majority of candidates met the specification requirement of exploring three Anthology poems and three wider reading but a few did not and this was not always evident that the marks awarded took this omission into account.

There was also some evidence that the wider reading poems were not chosen with suitable care and the choice and quality was poor. One centre included poems written by classmates and there was also evidence of poems randomly found on the internet. Some centres chose other poems from the Anthology and were on the whole successful as there are sufficient examples in the Anthology to provide for both the set poems and wider reading.

Problems were caused by the balance between the attention paid to the Anthology poems and the wider reading. The specification requires **in-depth** exploration of the Anthology poems which are after all the set texts for this unit. An enthusiastic response to the chosen wider reading poems is to be welcomed, but not at the expense of the Anthology poems.

Similarly a comparative approach is admirable, but it must ensure that important ideas from the chosen Anthology poems are not missed, because they do not fit neatly in with the comparison. This can mean that the full picture of each poem is not given. There were many candidates who were successful in this approach, but there were also a fair number who were not.

Some candidates spent a long time describing the structure and rhyme scheme of their poems, but unfortunately for too many this appeared to be an end in itself with little or no attempt, to associate it with the message of the poem. A holistic approach would ensure a deeper understanding of the themes. However, a totally empathic approach does not lend itself to deeper analysis either. There must be a balance.

A strength of the coursework was the use of quotation in writing about the poems and many candidates used this to lead into some precise analysis. There was however, a tendency to let quotations speak for themselves or simply label them with the relevant technical term without any analysis. For example the following candidate noted when writing about *Havisham* that in the poem '*Beloved sweetheart bastard*' *emphasises the anger she has for her lovers but also the fact she did love him. It also has much emotive language which illustrates the fact that she is angry.* This is quite a typical response in the 11-14 mark range.

Other candidates will use comments such as 'paints a picture' or the 'makes it flow'. For example a candidate in the lower mark range of 7-9 states when writing about 'The Piano' : *Intimate language, such as 'softy', makes the memory feel like it is flowing and unstoppable.* There is very little focus and analysis even at basic word level.

A top level candidate has taken the title of 'My Last Duchess' and just by using it has displayed a close engagement with the poem: *The title 'My Last Duchess' is powerful in itself, the use of the word 'My' makes the poem more personal to the writer and shows the sense of ownership the Duke has over his late Duchess, she belonged to him. The use of the word 'Last' indicates that she was the latest Duchess of a continuous line and will be replaced...the Duke still feels he has to have control over her existing memory.*

This last analysis fulfils the criteria for the top mark and there is obviously a range of responses in between.

Quite common was also the naming of a technique used in the structure and form of the poem with little or no reference to support the comments.

The candidate whose work was awarded a mark of 19 discussed *Mother in a Refugee Camp*: *"It is written in free verse, with no particular rhyme scheme. The stanza lengths vary. The first stanza is short compared to the other stanzas. There is enjambment used such as in the first stanza to produce the opening line of Madonna and child , emphasises the purity and love that the mother and child have and this makes the knowledge that the child is dying more poignant."*

The same theme is presented by a candidate, whose work was awarded top marks, who does not resort to technical detail. *The love of the mother becomes apparent from the first line of the poem: 'No Madonna and Chile could touch/ her tenderness for a son' immediately sets apart this particular mother as something special and the reader is provided with a view of a relationship that continues right to the end. Added to this, the religious imagery that resonates throughout the poem is introduced in this line also as 'Madonna and child' links the suffering mother and child in this refugee camp to the relationship of the Virgin Mary and Jesus Christ'.*

Where a technical term is used by a highly confident candidate it is succinct and does not labour the point: *The distinct tone of the poem is that of a loss of innocence when a child enters adulthood. The metaphor 'now they shake hands without their hearts' conveys images of distrust.*

The analyses of the two latter responses fulfil the criteria for the top band and there is obviously a range of responses between the two bands.

However, there was a tendency to over-reward, and sometimes quite substantially at the 18/19 and 22/23 borderlines. There was also some reluctance on the part of some centres to award the highest grade when the work merited it, as if these centres were assuming that a highest grade must represent a 'perfect' answer – whereas the mark scheme does not require that.

With regard to administration, moderators do have to check the candidates' names, numbers and marks against the mark sheets, so it is essential that the folder cover sheet is fastened on the very top of the folder and not underneath the CAS. It is also helpful if the moderators received copies of the no-Anthology poems, however well-known.

All the moderators without exception commented how rewarding it was to see the strong personal involvement of the candidates with the poems and how they enjoyed reading some of the interesting interpretation of the Anthology poetry.

Grade Boundaries

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<http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>

