



Pearson

Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback
Summer 2017

Pearson Edexcel IGCSE
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 Edexcel Anthology supported by least three further poems which may be drawn from outside the Anthology

Assignment topics are chosen by the centres/candidates but must enable students to respond critically and sensitively to a large range of poems and to show understanding of how meanings and ideas are conveyed and expressed through language, structure and form. Assignments should allow the students to make comparisons, although 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 and children relationships, to name some, and these were 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 a detailed study of three Anthology poems and three wider reading companions.

Where the responses were particularly focused was when the question and task in hand 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:

Explore how poets depict childhood as a time of belonging or isolation in the following Anthology and wider reading poems.

How do the poets present childhood and memories in the following Anthology poems...and in the wider reading selection?

Several poems in the anthology explore the importance of good emotional relationships between adults and children. With close reference to three poems in depth and three other poems consider how the poets present these ideas.

Less successful responses were often as a result of an unfocussed question. One centre just gave the title '*The Theme of Love*' as a base for discussion whereas another had candidates trying to focus on wide ranging topics: *Lessons taught and learnt across the generations*. This proved to be an overly ambitious and wide ranging topic which all but the most able struggled with to produce a focussed response.

Conversely there were questions which appeared to limit the range of ideas and interpretations: *How does narrative verse involve the reader?* One candidate struggled with a response to the title *Dramatic Monologues*. Such a question does not lend itself to precision.

There were a few candidates who did not choose poems relevant or suitable to their topic and either struggled to make links or abandoned the topic at some point moving away from the requirements of the question. One candidate chose Wole Soyinka's 'Telephone Conversation' and John Agard's 'Half-caste' as companion poems to the theme of tragedy. Both poems deal with serious issues, but in this case they are unsuitable in both tone and content. 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 it 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 always chosen with suitable care and the choice and quality was poor. One moderator noted that some centres had made dubious choices: some poems by peers, others from online teenage magazine competitions. These are not of a suitable calibre to be considered alongside the texts suggested by the specification's selection.

A number of centres chose companion 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. Many moderators noted this as a positive move by centres.

Problems were sometimes caused by the balance between the attention paid to the chosen Anthology poetry and the wider reading. The specifications requires **in-depth** exploration of the Anthology poems, which are after all the set texts for this unit. An enthusiastic response to the wider reading poems is to be welcomed, provided it is not at the expense of the set Anthology texts. Candidates who foregrounded the three main poems and used the other three in support achieved better results than those who tried to cover all six poems equally or those who barely mentioned the support texts.

Similarly, although it is not a requirement, a comparative approach is admirable; it can be a useful way for some candidates to cover six poems as it gives them a scaffold. However, this approach must ensure that important ideas chosen from the Anthology poems are not missed, because they do not fit neatly in with the comparison. This can mean that the full picture of the main poems is not given. There were many candidates, particularly the more confident ones who were successful in this approach, but there was also a fair number who were not.

Some candidates spent a long time describing the structure and rhyme scheme of the poems, but unfortunately for far too many this appeared to be an end to itself with little 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. There must be a balance.

Other candidates would use comments such as 'paints a picture', 'makes it flow' or 'grabs the reader's attention'. For example a candidate in the lower mark range of 7 – 9 states when writing about 'Hide and Seek' : "...*through all the use of these senses it helps create a big image in the reader's head about what type of objects will be around the child and also what he sees and feels.*" There is little focus and analysis even at basic word level.

The following top level candidate's response displayed a close and sensitive engagement with the text. When referring to the imagery of the song in 'The Piano' the candidate continues: *"Furthermore, the imagery of a song evokes a sense of childlike magic and hidden meaning, a story within a story; the first story being the poem and the second story being the music within it. This concept is continued in the sentence 'The glamour of childish days', the noun 'glamour' conveying a sense of wonder and magic."*

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

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

A candidate whose work was awarded a mark of 17 discussed 'My Last Duchess': *"But the writer also uses enjambment, covering up the rhyme. Enjambment are lines that stop in the middle of a thought without using punctuation, so you read on, not noticing the rhyme used throughout. This shows how the duke felt about his duchess."*

This response offers no insight or understanding whatsoever into why this particular technique was employed.

The next example is an analysis of the same technique by a top level candidate's interpretation of 'The Piano': *"The singing is reminiscent of a lullaby, the action of a loving mother. The idea of a song is enforced by the use of caesure and enjambment, giving the poem a unique cadence...This consistent image of a lullaby conveys how great and never-ending the love of the mother was for the child."*

The candidate of this response was awarded a mark of 30. Where the technical term is used by a confident candidate, the comment is succinct and does not labour the point.

Where the necessity for a more detailed discussion of a technical term arose a highly confident candidate will approach it adroitly. The candidate in this response was analysing Lewis Carroll's 'Jabberwocky' as a poem which shows the idea of children creating their own world of belonging: *"The poem is in strict iambic tetrameter and alternate rhyme-rhyme scheme, representing the strict adult world children live in. However, despite these strict structures, this poem is nonsense poetry, with many made-up words, reflecting a childlike alternative reality."*

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

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 to award the highest mark when the work merited it, as if centres were assuming that a highest level must represent a 'perfect' response – whereas the mark scheme does not require that. Some responses easily achieved the highest level and theoretically could have scored much higher than the maximum mark.

Administration

With regard to administration, it is important to remember that moderators do have to check the candidates' names, numbers and marks against the mark sheets, so it is helpful that the folder cover sheet is fastened on the very top of the folder. Many moderators expressed their frustration at having to chase up centres about submitting folders with the highest and lowest marks, even if these are not specified in the sample required by the exam board. Chasing up CAS forms was another cause for frustration.

Many centres provided either a list or a 'mini anthology' of the wider reading poems not from the Edexcel Anthology. This was really appreciated by the moderators. Attaching the exam board's mark scheme, relevantly highlighted to indicate where marks were awarded was also appreciated.

All moderators without exception commented on how rewarding it was to see the strong personal engagement of the candidates with the poems and how they enjoyed reading some of the interesting, and sometimes unusual and alternative interpretations of the Anthology poetry.

A brief summary

It is important that 6 poems are covered in order to meet the specification requirements. If not, this must be reflected in the marks awarded.

The Anthology poems are the set text and must be explored in detail. Any detailed examination of the wider reading poetry is welcome, but must not be at the expense of the set texts.

While comparison between the poems helps form a unified platform, the danger that only parts of the Anthology poems are covered to fit in with the comparison must be avoided.

Tight analysis versus appreciation; some candidates will consider detailed technical analysis as an end in itself and fail to associate the techniques with the wider message of the poems. On the other hand a purely empathic approach with no reference to techniques leads to shallow or little analysis. A balance must be maintained.

A growing number of centres opted to use other poems from the Anthology. Moderators found this a pleasing trend and felt that it often reflected in a more confident response from the candidates.

Grade Boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

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

