

Moderators' Report/
Principal Moderator Feedback

November 2013

Pearson Edexcel GCSE in
English (5EH03)
Creative Response

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General Overview:

This unit comprises of: 1A is Reading and Writing and 1B is Speaking and Listening.

For Reading and Writing, centres and students have a choice of four themes to answer set by Edexcel: Relationships, Clashes and Collisions, Somewhere, Anywhere and Taking a Stand.

For Poetry (Reading) students must complete one reading task individually and following their preparation they have up to two hours to complete the task. The response must be a written response of up to 1000 words or a digital media response which demonstrates that they have read and understood the poems or a multi-modal response combining the previous options. For the chosen theme students respond to two poems which they can select from the Edexcel Poetry Anthology and one poem which is set by Edexcel and changes every year. They prepare by making notes and planning their response to the task.

The reading response must show that students can:

- read the poems with insight and engagement
- interpret the writers' ideas and perspectives.

For Creative Writing students must complete one writing task on their chosen theme. For each theme, there is a choice of stimulus material which is designed to be used as a starting point. For three of the themes in this series, the stimulus material consists of a series of four photographs, and for one theme a digital video clip is provided. Following their preparation they have up to two hours to complete the task and their response must be an individual written response of up to 1000 words.

The writing response must show that students can:

- Write clearly, effectively and imaginatively in a chosen form to engage the reader
- Ensure spelling, punctuation and grammatical structures are accurate and appropriate for purpose and effect

This series saw a very small number of entries, with several centres altering entries late in the window following recent changes to the qualification structure and entry rules. Many students were re-sitting the unit, and had been well prepared by centres.

New set poems were used for the first time in this series. The most popular theme proved to be Clashes and Collisions, with a large number of centres using this cluster and the set poem 'Lamentations'. Some work was seen on Relationships, with very little on the remaining themes. Once again, there was limited evidence of differentiation in the choice of poems from the Anthology, and in many centres all students responded to the same three poems. As previous reports have stressed, choice of poems and even of clusters can be an excellent tool in allowing students of different abilities to produce their best work, and some centres used this to good effect, with different groups responding to different clusters. In some centres, students had studied the set poem and then made their own choice of poems to write about, which worked well.

For Clashes and Collisions, Hitcher, Parade's End, Exposure and Conscientious Objector were chosen frequently. Although the task does not require comparison, students seem to do better if they can see clear connections between the poems, and in some cases the centre choice of poems made this difficult. However, most students were able to demonstrate that they had engaged with the meaning and language of the poems, and supported their points with textual references.

There is still significant evidence that the use of literary terms can become a straitjacket rather than a supportive framework, leading to a tendency to 'feature spot'. While the use of 'Point, Evidence, Explanation' is helpful in allowing students to structure their writing, for students working towards

Band 5, there is a need to show perceptive and discriminating analysis, and for this purpose a fully conceptualised response is necessary, rather than a more mechanical process. Some centres had given their students a framework to structure their answer: in the worst cases, this led to very similar responses which did not allow students to demonstrate their own understanding. Irrelevant contextual detail was less common but still a concern as it is unnecessary and often takes up too much space in the response.

No Digital or Multi-Modal responses were seen.

The Creative Writing tasks elicited a wide range of responses which were often a pleasure to read. Clashes and Collisions and Relationships were the most popular stimuli, although Somewhere, Anywhere was also used effectively by some centres.

A range of different responses to the photographs for Relationships was seen. The paintings for Clashes and Collisions also led students to explore the complexities of war – here, monologues were often the most successful form, as some of the narrative responses relied too heavily on complicated plots and were not sufficiently focused on telling details. A number of students had clearly attempted to use a wide range of vocabulary, but sometimes without fully understanding the meanings of the words they had chosen.

There is evidence that centres are explicitly teaching narrative techniques such as flashback and sentence structure for effect. The main weakness in responses is accuracy – particularly in sentence punctuation, with frequent comma splicing, and in agreement of verb tenses. A greater focus on these elements would help students to achieve higher marks. Some centres seemed to find it difficult to identify the strengths and weaknesses in students' control of these structures, and at times comments did not seem to match the work produced. Paragraphing was mainly secure.

Most centres interpreted and applied the marking criteria accurately and consistently.

The need to comment on 'significant differences' between Speaking and Listening/Reading and Writing marks was not interpreted in the same way by all centres. Moderators reported a greater number of centres with a pattern of unequal scoring between the two components.

For Poetry, there were a number of students who produced detailed and original pieces of analysis which scored marks in Band 5. The main inconsistency remains the boundary between Band 3 and Band 4. As noted in previous reports, Band 3 responses are 'sound' – they explain how the writer has used techniques to create effect, and support these points with specific examples. Band 4 responses are 'thorough' – understanding is more developed and the response is sustained and consistent. For Band 5, students need to demonstrate 'perceptive' understanding across all three poems with well selected and discriminating use of evidence. The rigid frameworks referred to above sometimes prevented students from moving into the top of Band 4 and into Band 5: students need the freedom to move beyond PEE and PEEL in order to develop their own conceptualised response. Material from this series will be used to provide further exemplars for centres at the borderline between Bands 3 and 4.

Unlike Unit 1, there is no requirement for comparison in this unit. The key skills are engaging with the meaning of the poems and showing an understanding of the poets' choices of language and technique. As in the previous series, there is some evidence of 'over-preparation' which limits students, and of the addition of contextual and biographical detail which does little to enhance responses to the poem and sometimes led to meaningless speculation about the connections between the poets' lives and works.

The application of the marking criteria for the writing task was mainly accurate, particularly for AO3i/ii. Where there were inconsistencies, they tended to be around the issue of control. Band 3 specifies 'some evidence of crafting in the construction of sentences' and 'controlled paragraphing', whereas Band 4 specifies 'variety in the construction of sentences' and

'secure organisation'. At times, responses with little control of sentence structure or paragraphing were placed in Band 4 because some of the vocabulary choices were apt and effective. In such cases, centres need to consider the balance between all of the bullet points in the mark scheme. Band 5 responses are typically 'convincing', 'sophisticated' and 'compelling'. Most responses were of the appropriate length, although some very long pieces were noted.

Assessment criteria for AO3 (iii) were applied consistently in most cases, although with some leniency at the top of the range and harshness towards the bottom of the range. For 6 or 7 marks there should be clear evidence of using punctuation devices with precision and sophistication for deliberate effect. Whilst assessment of spelling was mainly consistent, assessment of punctuation was not. Again, a useful reference point for punctuation is the accurate use of commas – some centres seemed to struggle with this and commented on effective sentence structure when a response was heavily comma spliced. All three bullet points in the AO3iii need to be considered together to arrive at a mark. One moderator also noted the number of basic errors which had appeared in otherwise sophisticated pieces, such as the misuse or absence of capital letters.

For Reading, students do best when they actively engage with the poems rather than trying to work through checklists of literary techniques and contextual background. For Writing, control of expression and sentence structure is crucial. The best tasks allow students to clearly identify audience, purpose and narrative voice.

There were difficulties with administration despite reminders and checklists being shared extensively. Cover sheets were the main issue, with some centres using the old sheets and some even using a combination of both old and new.

5EH03/5EN03 1B: Speaking and Listening

Three tasks are completed: Communicating and Adapting; Interacting and Responding; Creating and Sustaining a Role.

These are at the lowest level of control: the centre sets and marks each piece. Their standards are reviewed triennially by a centre visit of moderator.

In general, reports from moderators indicate that centres provide tasks accessible to the full range of student ability.

The area which presents the greatest challenge to centres is ensuring that the level of complexity built into the task is sufficiently rigorous to meet the Band 5 criteria. It is still sometimes the case that for Communicating and Adapting, students are asked to give a talk about a hobby or present their interest in a certain topic. Unless the topic itself holds a sophistication or complexity, accessing the highest Band can prove difficult.

Many centres use the monologue as the Task used for Creating and Sustaining role. This is partly driven by the exemplification of this approach on Edexcel Standardising DVDs. There has been some exceptionally good produced at the highest level. There is also a sense that, even for students in the lower mark bands, it offers a chance to perform to their full potential. Where there are a number of students involved in a role play scenario, an issue has been ensuring that each student has enough time to show a *sustained* role.

Interacting and responding is most commonly completed in group of three or four – an appropriate size for this task. Very occasionally, moderators have seen groups of 7 or 8 students and almost always this has meant that some are disadvantaged by not being able to participate.

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