



Examiners' Report Principal Moderator Feedback

November 2020

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE
In English Language A (4EA1)
Component 3: Poetry and Prose Texts and
Imaginative Writing

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This was an extremely small series in comparison to usual summer, and even January, entries with the vast majority of centres submitting resit candidates with entries comprising of only one or two candidates. The majority of entries received this time were from home rather than overseas centres.

Administration

On the whole, administrative procedures were followed very carefully by most centres. All centres utilised the correct cover sheets and the careful and thorough completion of those was appreciated. It is always very helpful to the moderating team to see summative comments transposed to the cover sheet and the breakdown of marks by Assessment Objective completed to give an overall picture of the final decision making undergone in the centre. Likewise, it is always appreciated when submissions within the folders are collated in an order to match the cover sheet and securely treasury tagged or stapled.

It is worth remembering that even in a small series the EDI printout should be enclosed along with the sample, though I appreciate one or two centres noted they had difficulty downloading this in this series. Additionally, one or two centres were under the impression that hard copies of folders did not need to be sent to the moderator this time.

Task Setting

Task setting was, on the whole, extremely pleasing this series. Centres have, in the main, adapted to the requirements of the new specification very successfully. There was a very pleasing range of tasks set for the reading assignment. The vast majority of centres have acted on the advice in previous reports and constructed tasks which lead candidates confidently towards the assessment objectives in the correct balance. In this series, only one or two submissions appeared to still be taking a generalised 'comparative' approach or setting tasks which lead candidates to focus on AO1 to the detriment of the more heavily weighted AO2. There are some supporting training materials available on the website to assist centres who may need more guidance in this area. Task setting for writing included a wide range of narrative options in the main which were generally extremely successful. Some centres had used the study of the poetry and prose texts to stimulate narrative responses and again, this approach led to some very engaging, empathetic narrative responses.

Assignment A

It was very pleasing in this series to see more centres moving away from the 'comfort zone' pairings of texts which have crossed over from the legacy specification. 'The Bright Lights of Sarajevo' is becoming an increasingly popular text to be studied alongside 'Disabled' as a fresher way of approaching the realities and tragedies of war as an overarching theme. In this series 'Still I Rise' was also a favoured text and paired successfully with a whole range of texts, for example, 'An Unknown Girl' in terms of culture and identity; 'The Story of an Hour' in terms of gender; 'Significant Cigarettes'

and hopefulness. Fewer responses in this series explored the possibilities of the Susan Hill text and none at all for the Munro.

As a result of the improved task setting mentioned above, we also saw more focused responses, though at times references to language and structure can be rather generic and reliant on one or two mentions of imagery or structure. Given the very rich nature of the texts on offer, it can benefit candidates to explore these aspects in more depth and have a wider toolkit at their disposal than 'imagery' and 'repetition'. Whilst feature spotting is not to be encouraged, secure identification of precise choices and aspects of language and structure with clear exemplification can encourage candidates to write in more depth about their effects and what we might imagine, feel or be led to think of through those choices. In turn this can lead candidates more securely into the higher reaches of the mark scheme if we note that some of the key words for Level 4 are 'thorough', 'detailed' and 'sustained'.

Commentaries

The vast majority of candidates produced commentaries addressing the correct assessment objective in a sensible, explanatory fashion. I saw very few commentaries this time which focused on AO2 rather than AO1, which is where marks are to be awarded. However, in some cases, there was still no mention of other texts studied other than the ones in the essay. Centres are reminded that this is part of the purpose of the commentary: to show that the remaining texts in the anthology have been read and understood and that the candidate has made a selection from that reading.

Assignment B

In general, Assignment B is very often a surprise and a delight. Centres are to be congratulated on the range of options and the variety of stimulus used to develop creative writing in their students. As mentioned in task setting, often the creative writing springs from the study of the anthology texts and once again some beautiful and sensitive examples emerged of candidates reflecting on the experiences of the soldier in the trenches. This was a small series, with the vast majority of candidates being those who were perhaps aiming to improve their grade and, as a result, we saw far fewer stereotypical storylines and narrative plots stemming from outings in woods, haunted houses and the emergence of the ubiquitous zombie. Indeed, at times the quality of writing was very impressive with well-crafted mysteries, consistently engaging first person work and evocative descriptions. Work using a picture stimulus continues to be popular and this time descriptive pieces linked to landscape were refreshingly different and allowed for the creation of interesting extended metaphors linked to the environment. We are living in challenging times and a number of candidates had clearly reflected thoughtfully on this through the summer, producing mature and effective dystopian accounts linked to the pandemic, creating very compelling and perceptive pieces at times.

Assessment, annotation and internal moderation

It was fantastic to see a number of centres showing best practice in this series in terms of annotating candidate work formatively pointing out skills, which then led to an overall judgement. This judgement had then, where possible, clearly been thoroughly checked by a second pair of eyes, with evidence on the work. Thank you to those centres who worked so hard on this.

In terms of assessment, as is often the case, where leniency occurs, it is more often pronounced in the Reading assignments. I think it is still worth reminding centres to really think about the key words in each level of the mark scheme. Is the work really thorough, detailed and exploratory – clearly higher order skills – or are the points made sensible, sound, clear and relevant? As mentioned earlier there is now a useful set of training materials available to support this, downloadable from the Pearson Edexcel website. Please note particularly past training content under 'Teaching and Learning Materials' accessible via the following link:

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-international-gcses/international-gcse-english-language-a-2016.coursematerials.html#filterQuery=Pearson-UK:Category%2FTeaching-and-learning-materials>

As mentioned in previous reports, severity is more often found in the writing section and particularly in terms of AO5 descriptors. This is an area where some candidates can be under rewarded, albeit marginally.

However, it must be said that assessment in this series was, on the whole, carried out extremely successfully and fairly and I would like to thank centres for their careful work on this in what was an extremely unusual and challenging term.

