Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2018

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE
In English Literature 4ET1
Paper 01: Poetry and Modern Prose

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Introduction

This has been a very exciting year with the first examination of our new 4ET1 specification. Centres should be congratulated in preparing their candidates so well and we hope that both our candidates and centres are pleased with their results.

There are three sections in this examination paper. In Section A, candidates are presented with an unseen poem and answer a question based on it (20 marks). In Section B, Anthology Poetry, candidates can choose either Question 2, which has two named poems or Question 3, in which one poem is named and the candidate chooses a suitable poem to discuss with it (30 marks). For Section C, Modern Prose, candidates choose to respond to one of two questions based on the prose text that they have studied (40 marks). The total marks for this paper is 90.

The feedback received from examiners has been very positive and the full range of marks has been awarded. Many responses gained marks in Level 3 or above and several candidates were awarded marks in Level 5.

Section A: Unseen Poetry

Question 1 Unseen Poem: *Purple Shoes* by Irene Rawnsley
Question: Explore how the writer presents strong feelings in this poem.

There were some interesting and personal responses to this question and candidates generally displayed a sound and in some cases sophisticated awareness of poetic conventions, form and structure. The bullet points in the question gave candidates a structure to their response and many answers were Level 3 and above.

The poem gave candidates the opportunity to discuss the strong feelings conveyed by the speaker of the poem and more able candidates balanced this with the strong views of the mother. Many candidates commented on the use of the neologism and most candidates discussed the use of vivid descriptions to describe the shoes and the metaphors: 'made footsteps in my mind' and 'kicking up dance dust'.

Marks are always awarded positively, but candidates need to demonstrate an understanding of the poem and address all of the bullet points in the question. Ideally, candidates should address all areas of the Assessment Objective: 'Analyse the Language, form and structure used by a writer to create meanings and effects' (AO2). Centres are advised to look carefully at the mark grid for this question. Each of the bullet points should be met.

A useful acronym to use is PETER (Point, Evidence, Technique, Effect on Reader). The most important area for candidates to explore is the use of language and, preferably, they should explore individual words or short phrases and explain what effect these have on the reader. Less able candidates should not become anxious trying to remember a wide range of terminology. The importance is to demonstrate an understanding of the effect particular words have on the reader. Some candidates tend to use overly-long quotations, which is a pity as they could have used parts of the quotation to make separate points. More able

candidates tend to use terminology with ease and incorporate these terms seamlessly into their response and support all of their ideas with selective quotations.

Candidates should avoid paraphrasing the given poem or simply responding with a summary of each stanza. These responses rarely progress beyond Level 2.

Examiner comments include:

"I thought *Purple Shoes* was a fantastic poem that the students could truly relate to and analyse in detail. The poem and question clearly engaged the students as I am sure that they have all asked for something that they could not have. In actual fact I thought that this poem provided stronger answers than those in their anthologies which they had studied such as *Hide & Seek*. Many students fully understood the effect of the repetition, personification, polysyndeton and neologisms."

"I felt that most students engaged well with this poem, it was easy to identify with as we can all remember arguments like this with parents. I saw a range of responses from candidates from Level 2 to full marks. Many candidates achieving Levels three and four with this task, I personally enjoyed this and plan to teach it as an unseen poem in my lessons next year."

"I thoroughly enjoyed marking this question. The poem was generally well understood and allowed the candidates to write some excellent essays. It was lovely to mark so many thanks essays that were of a Levels 4 and 5 standard."

"An easily accessible poem that allowed for a wide range of interpretations – an apt choice that made for a positive and encouraging start for all candidates. While some responses displayed insightful interpretations, judicious use of language and skilful crafting, they paled in comparison to the number of really mediocre to weak responses where candidates simply narrated the events in the poem and failed to identify examples of language. There were also the usual feature-spotting responses amid a large number of responses that identified language incorrectly or were restricted in their knowledge of language. A common weakness was also the effects achieved by writers in the choice of language identified. It was also evident that candidates are unsure or do not have a secure grasp of the requirements of AO2 in constructing a response in this section."

"The responses of weaker candidates were quite repetitive and did not develop much past the idea of anger. The strongest candidates were able to explore a wide range of points and their responses were balanced across language and structure. The best candidates also demonstrated a good understanding of the hyperbolic tone of the poem."

"This was a very engaging poem and students were able to access this at all levels. Student engagement was high and it was unusual to see any students who hadn't given this question a really good go. There were a great range of features to pick out and students appeared to enjoy looking at the tone and

mood of the poem as well as the language and structural elements. The question was very clear and I did not see any misunderstanding of this."

"Purple Shoes - a really great poem choice and I think it gave candidates of all abilities an opportunity to respond."

" Lots of candidates were able to relate to the scenario of the poem. There was plenty for higher level candidates to sink their teeth into although not many were able to appreciate the irony of the final line."

"There were a wide range of responses to this question. The vast majority were able to comment on the more obvious language features such as the neologism and the alliteration. Where candidates succeeded was in focusing on the emotions of the daughter and explaining them in relation to the mother. Candidates who did poorly here simply resorted to 'technique spotting' without any real tying together of their points into a coherent answer."

"A wide variety of responses was seen. In general, the majority of candidates were at the top of Level 3 or higher. The majority were able to identify techniques or appropriate phrases and, crucially, to explain the effect. Understandably, the poem prompted several quite empathic responses, but weaker candidates tended to interpret it literally, taking the 'characters as real people' approach rather than concentrating on AO2."

"Comments on form and structure – especially if treated separately – were often speculative and not really helpful. For those candidates who did elect to write separately about form/structure, it was very rare to see a paragraph that really engaged or analysed."

In summary, when responding to the Unseen Poetry, Section A, candidates should try to:

- demonstrate an understanding of the overall meaning of the poem
- focus on the question
- refer to form and structure and try to suggest *why* this may have been used
- give examples of language and explain their effect on the reader
- comment on all areas of the poem, not just the first few lines
- use short quotations and avoid copying large areas of the poem.

Section B: Anthology Poetry

Both Anthology questions assess Assessment Objective 2 (AO2: Analyse the Language, form and structure used by a writer to create meanings and effects) and Assessment Objective 3 (AO3: Explore links and connections between texts).

Question 2: Compare the ways the writers convey feelings about identity in *Search for My Tongue* and *Half-caste.*

This was the most popular Anthology question and was answered well by the majority of candidates.

When responding to *Search for My Tongue*, candidates discussed how the writer speaks and thinks in different languages and how she struggles with her identity. More able candidates fully explored the flower metaphor and the structure of the poem. When writing about *Half-caste*, candidates explored the writer's exasperation with other people's prejudiced ideas and nonsensical use of the phrase. Very few candidates considered the lack of punctuation in the poem but most commented on the use of repetition.

Almost all candidates compared the two poems and it was very rare to see a response where only one poem had been considered. The most common comparison was the use of Gujarati and patois in the poems and how both poems directly address the reader.

Candidates had been well prepared for the process of comparison and showed good understanding of the themes of identity being portrayed.

Examiner comments include:

"Again, some very nice responses and good appreciation was shown of both poems. It was felt that as these were popular poems, and, as such, candidates had been well-prepared to talk about identity and culture and different narratives. Clear distinctions were seen between both poems and there were positive responses given to each."

"There were many comments on British or English oppression – quote 'the feelings of English as an oppressive language to one's race.' Also disdain felt 'towards western influences and western culture' and in Search for my Tongue: 'she uses the personal pronoun to depict the 'you' as the arrogant less educated individuals - part of the dominant culture, white Christian males' and Half Caste – 'in a racist Britain'."

"Bhatt and Agard. A good question. Good, approachable theme. Two appropriate poems with plenty of opportunities for discussion in them. One superb answer seen challenged Bhatt's views with intelligence and wit."

"Responses often lingered on the very obvious comparisons between the poems and this was frequently combined with a lack of literary terminology and close reference to the text. There was a sense that candidates were remembering what had been taught about the poems but were not able to provide detailed references or to really compare the poems in a detailed manner."

"The majority of these responses were strong and well developed with candidates demonstrating an insightful understanding of ideas surrounding identity. Candidates were able to blend their comparison to facilitate a detailed response. Weaker candidates tended to respond to each poem separately with far less direct comparison."

"Candidates are able to compare both poems and the more successful candidates can interweave language and structure points throughout. References across all poems were used effectively but not all students commented on the form. Also, candidates that compared both poems as they were writing were more successful than talking about both poems individually or in interchanging paragraphs."

"Comparison of named poems - these two poems went really well together and I think because of this answers were surprisingly good."

"A wide range of responses were seen for this question. Some struggled with the aspect of tying the two poems together, instead opting to analyse both side by side and perhaps make some cursory linking statement at the end. Candidates who did well were able to draw perceptive links between the poems and engage both language and structure in this way."

"A highly popular question. Comparisons were often successful. Weaker candidates tended to focus upon more straightforward material – e.g., the poets' use of direct address; the stronger candidates made real attempts to engage with imagery (e.g., the final section of SFMT and the various images in HC). Comments on structure, dialect/use of own language, and direct address tended to be rather vague and general."

"Search for My Tongue and Half-caste are clearly excellent poems to compare with many obvious and subtle comparisons. I felt that both the poems and questions allowed for students of all abilities to provide some very strong answers."

"This was a popular choice for most candidates with an easily accessible question. There were some intriguing responses that identified a judicious range of language which were explored with precision and skill to further explore the effects achieved by writers. However, a large number of responses failed in the following ways: lack of knowledge in poems, writing about one poem more than the other, lack of knowledge of language, making weak comparisons, not developing comparisons. Considering, these are poems in their poetry anthology, some responses simply lapsed into the narrative without using any quotations."

Question 3: Compare how the writers present personal experiences in *Hide and Seek* and one other poem from the anthology.

The most popular choice for a second poem was *Half-past Two* or *Piano*. Candidates who chose one of these to compare with the named poem often commented on a range of comparisons. Other choices, such as Rudyard Kipling's *If-*, were less successful as candidates struggled to find links. On the whole, good engagement with the question was demonstrated and candidates had been prepared well.

Some candidates made some references to war, particularly when comparing *Hide and Seek* and *War Photographer*. Personal experiences were well referenced when making comparisons, such as the similarities or differences of these experiences and the different effects used by the poets were generally explored in some detail.

Some candidates chose Question 3 in order to write about a poem that they knew better than any of the named poems in the questions and therefore appropriate links to the question were sometimes tenuous. Occasionally, the lack of balance in the treatment of each poem limited the mark awarded.

Examiner comments include:

"It felt that this was the more challenging poem/question of the two but it still provided some strong answers. On occasion however this question did provide some rubric infringements where pupils select *Purple shoes* as the poem for comparison. Despite this I did notice that many candidates were utilising embedded quotations to excellent effect, which often saw them achieve a mark in Level 5."

"While the more able did very well with this comparison some less able seemed to struggle. I felt that candidates who answered Question 2 were more successful. Still a range of responses were seen and I felt that the question allowed students of all abilities to answer."

"Some of the best comparisons that were crafted skilfully came from comparisons with Duffy's *War Photographer* – these were indeed personal, heartfelt, critical and perceptive in their exploration of language, followed by comparisons with *Half-past Two* (mixed responses), *Piano*, *Blessing* (some strong responses). "

"Reponses to this question appeared, on the whole, to be weaker than Section B Q2 with fewer examples of blended comparison."

"Some very strong answers were seen; however, some students were hindered by their choice of their second poem. Some candidates attempted to force an unnatural interpretation of a pre-prepared poem, and so struggled to write a confident, fluent comparative essay. Also, some candidates provided a pre-prepared general analysis of the two poems, without engaging with the actual task – 'personal experiences'."

"Most candidates opted for *Half-past Two* as the most obvious one to link the poem *Hide and Seek* with. They both deal with child protagonists and their first experiences in 'growing up' which the most insightful candidates were able to identify. Where candidates had less success was by analysing both poems side by side, but not drawing convincing links between the two."

"Many candidates approached this by comparing by technique – 'both poets use assonance/imagery/irregular structure", as if they were trying to hit AO2 and AO3 at once. Only the strongest candidates, however, compared at a more thematic/conceptual level: for example, an introductory sentence about a

particular topic, and then comparing how the poets explored this topic through language (AO2) – for example, how the speaker is presented as vulnerable or naïve in both *Hide and Seek* and *Half-past Two*."

In summary, when responding to Section B, candidates should try to:

- focus on the question
- refer to form and structure
- give examples of language and explain their effect on the reader
- provide a balanced response – giving each poem equal treatment
- compare meanings and examples of language and structure.

Remember, context is not assessed in this part of the paper.

Section C: Modern Prose

This has been a particularly successful section of the paper, particularly with the introduction of some new, exciting and inspirational texts. Again, candidates had been prepared extremely well and it is always a joy to discover something new about a text when we thought we knew it already! Some comments and observations were individual, enlightening and perceptive.

Some examiners thought that this section saw candidates producing much better responses in comparison to Section B. There were thoughtful, insightful and perceptive responses produced for all of the questions and once again, the full range of marks was awarded.

All questions afforded candidates of all abilities a fair chance to produce very fine responses indeed, although there were some weaker responses in *Of Mice and Men* and *To Kill a Mockingbird* where candidates failed to show a reasonable understanding of the text or the contexts in which they were written. Weaker responses struggled to understand the requirements of AO4. A number of responses lapsed into narratives instead of answering the question.

Candidates who responded to Ihimaera's *The Whale Rider* and Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* were mostly very successful when applying both AO3 (knowledge and understanding of the text) and AO4 (context), which resulted in some very perceptive and skilful responses with a range of quotations.

One examiner commented: "For the Modern Prose section, I was very pleasantly surprised. Responses seemed to be of a higher calibre than previous papers - with very few low-end scripts across the range of texts.
I felt the *Of Mice and Men* answers were the least perceptive generally (although still good)."

Another examiner commented: "Candidates are remembering key quotations remarkably well – it was very rare to find a response which used very little textual evidence." As this is a 'closed book' examination, we do not expect candidates to recall quotations accurately, indeed, candidates can still achieve of full marks without using quotations. When we make reference to 'examples' in the mark scheme, we are referring to the specific episodes or events from the chosen novel.

Text: *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Harper Lee

Question 4: Explore the character of Scout in *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

Candidates appeared to have little difficulty when discussing the character of Scout. Some impressive answers were seen, linking Scout to the exploration of racism, her growth through the novel, her relationships with Atticus and other characters and the use of retrospective narrative. The innocence of Scout and her growing maturity throughout the text was generally handled extremely well and relevant supporting comments were made by even the weaker candidates.

Responses were mostly of a good quality with very few marked in the lower bands. Most candidates were able to write about Scout's relationship with her father and her non-conformance to the idea of a typical 'Southern Belle'. The best responses were able to explore Scout's character both as 'young' Scout and as her reflective older self.

Examiner comments include:

"The question was well understood by most students, there was a little tendency with the weaker students to describe the events that Scout goes through then focus on her character. The more able answers focussed on how Scout matures through the novel and the impact her father had on her. Context was generally well known but sometimes tagged on at the end of paragraphs rather than seamlessly being interwoven in answers."

"The prose questions in general, I thought, could have been done a lot better. Far too many slipped into narrating the story rather than getting any sort of deep level analysis to push them further up the bands. The temptation for a number of candidates on this question was to slip away from Scout and make analytical points on Jem, or Atticus, or Boo Radley, or Tom Robinson. This was done to allow them to tie in pieces of context they had memorised, rather than it serving a visible purpose in the answer."

"Some strong responses were seen - nearly all at the top of Level 3 or above. Contextual knowledge was strong, and the vast majority of candidates, for example, considered the literary context of TKAM as a bildungsroman. There was a tendency for the majority, however, to see Scout as a real person and not as a construct. Stronger candidates made explicit reference to themes, concepts, and ideas. Prejudice and Scout's response to it was a popular topic."

"Obviously, this is a fantastic text with a question that provided some very powerful responses. Candidates understood Scout's central role within the novel and commented on how we saw the narrative from her point of view and that it was her own coming of age story."

Question 5: How significant is the theme of the mockingbird in this novel?

In this question, candidates mostly displayed a sound and, in many cases, assured knowledge of the novel. Most responses contained strong references to context.

A range of mockingbirds were identified and the question allowed candidates their own personal response and take on the question. Many discussions of innocence and people who brought joy to their community were offered and most candidates were aware of, and able to discuss, the significance of this symbol of innocence and relate it to events in the novel.

Most candidates approached this task methodically, moving through each of the 'mockingbirds' in the text, such as: Jem, Tom Robinson, Dill, Boo Radley in turn. Some considered other less obvious characters, such as Atticus. The best responses demonstrated an insightful understanding of how the treatment of these mockingbirds helped to shape Scout's developing outlook on Maycomb society and the wider world.

Examiner comments include:

"Candidates made responses that referred to characters as mockingbirds in the novel and quoted the famous quote about not harming them. The responses generally were more able and I think that was perhaps because less able students would not have understood the different interpretations of the question. As Question 4, context was generally well understood and applied."

"Narration was a problem. Where candidates did well was in taking the response beyond the most obvious characters (Tom, Mayella, Boo) and applying the characteristics of the mockingbird to less obvious ones like Calpurnia, Scout or Atticus himself. This showed a depth of insight and willingness to push past what was obvious and really engaged with the topic of the question."

"This seemed to attract the stronger candidates who had really studied this novel in detail, and a variety of interesting ideas were offered."

"Question 5 was another question that allowed candidates the freedom to really think on a deeper level. Some understood the allegory and wrote passionately about characters that were the metaphoric 'mockingbirds'. This question however appeared to be slightly more suited to the higher achievers, as several candidates gained marks in the top level."

Text: *Of Mice and Men*, John Steinbeck

This was the most popular text option for centres. Question 6 had more responses and a full range of marks was awarded.

Question 6: In what ways is loneliness an important theme in *Of Mice and Men*?

Candidates engaged well with this question. Many candidates provided a personal response and appreciated the tragic lives of the characters in this book including, in some cases, Slim and Carlson and the less obvious lonely people on the ranch. Some candidates made links to mistrust and the breakdown of social order, citing 'The best laid schemes…' to support their ideas. Even the less able were able to respond well to the question and tended to comment on Crooks, Candy and Curley's Wife.

One examiner reported, "I have such an enhanced appreciation of the novel after reading student responses."

Examiner comments include:

"This question was an absolute gift in my opinion and allowed students of all levels to provide some very thorough answers. The question allowed candidates the freedom to potentially select any character or even talk about the theme of loneliness metaphorically, contextually and or geographically."

"A fantastic question that I felt was very inclusive allowing students of all abilities to fully explore and engage with the text. Many candidates seen were thorough or assured demonstrating perceptive understanding of the text and characters within it."

"Again, most candidates approached this task methodically – working their way through individual characters and how they linked to the idea of loneliness. Most candidates were able to reference social and historic context and link to loneliness. This was quite often 'bolt on' context rather than integrated."

"This was a very popular question that allowed candidates to write about several main characters from the novel (although many referred to the 'play' throughout their response). Most candidates were able to supply the usual quotations and there was a sense with a few that they were going to incorporate their memorised quotations even when they weren't strictly relevant. On the whole, context was well integrated with examination of the theme, probably because in this case there were obvious and solid links to be forged between the two. The question worked for candidates of all abilities."

"Lovely open question which had real engagement from students across all abilities. Most students tended to hop from character to character explaining why they were lonely, but more able candidates perceptibly explored this in relation to context which was well established throughout most essays - although there was some standalone comment about the Dust Bowl and Great Depression with no real link to the question."

"A range of responses to this question. Where candidates succeeded, they were able to show knowledge of some of the more obscure facets of the text in order to draw out points on not just the presence of loneliness, but the effects of it on the ranch as well. Particularly memorable were comments made on Carlson, and the fact that he had been so lonely for so long that he had grown callous and unfeeling. Where candidates did poorly, was that it became an answer about listing what characters are lonely and why they are lonely. They failed to comment on loneliness itself as a concept presented in the text."

"This was the most popular of all the prose questions and attracted some solid responses as a whole. The majority of candidates explored the topic in a fairly literal way, dividing their essay up into sections based on characters (Curley's Wife, Crooks, Old Candy, George and Lennie). Some did lose sight of the question, and rather than the theme of loneliness wrote more generally about each character's negative experiences. There was a variety of approaches to context – many

supported each character section with a fairly simple contextual point about, e.g. women or black people in the Great Depression, but others demonstrated an impressively detailed understanding."

Question 7: Explore the character of Crooks in this novel.

Again, this was a successful question and many candidates gained marks in Level 3 or above. The comment to introduce the question 'Crooks is a cruel and aloof character' helped focus candidates on the character and they generally displayed sound knowledge of both the character and his role in the novel. Contextual points were sometimes generalised, but all candidates recognised how Crooks was subjected to prejudice. Many candidates challenged the statement of his cruelty and justified why Crooks had been forced to become 'cruel and aloof' due to treatment he had received from others.

Examiner comments include:

"This was another very straight forward question that saw candidates go into great detail. Obviously the depth of a character like Crooks provides students with ample scope to analyse him as a character whilst referencing context, relating themes and symbolism."

"Less able candidates agreed fully with the statement and presented an argument that Crook's was an unsympathetic character. Stronger candidates were able to make detailed links to Crook's actions as a reaction to his own ill treatment. The best candidates were able to explore the sad irony of so many characters existing together in loneliness whilst also constructing barriers between themselves and those around them."

"The majority of candidates were easily able to access contextual references in regards to the character and the more able student discussed the impact of this on his characterisation. Quotations were well used in the majority of answers I saw and there was no character confusion at all. Some responses did tend to fall a little into narrative retelling of Crook's encounter with Lenny and Curley's Wife and the fact he was only allowed in the bunkhouse at Christmas but these were limited and most responses fully engaged with the question."

"Narration was a problem for some candidates. Crooks gave opportunity to explore some deep, thought-provoking contextual elements which strong candidates shone in providing. Stronger candidates were also able to show two sides to the character, the harsh, cruel tormentor and the tormentee, and were able to explain the apparent contradiction."

"In many cases, this attracted weaker candidates who reproduced a character study, very often focused simply on Chapter 4 of the novel. However, the wording of the question – which invited candidates to take a particular stance on the statement – did actually help them to assume the personal voice required for a good L3 or above."

Text: *The Whale Rider*, Witi Ihimaera

There were few responses for this text, but those that were seen were often a joy to read.

Question 8: Explore the character of Kahu in this novel.

Some very good answers were seen and it is hoped that this text grows in popularity. There was evidence of relevant contextual information and well used references to support the points made about the character. Comments for this question are fewer, but feedback has been very positive.

Most candidates considered Kahu's relationship with Koro and Nanny Flowers and how she wanted to embrace her culture and traditions despite Koro's rejection. It was surprising that some candidates did not consider Kahu's relationship with the whales or the events at the end of the novel in much detail.

Examiner comments include:

"*The Whale Rider* is another excellent choice of text and candidates clearly engaged well with this. Some excellent answers were provided within my small allocation."

"I only marked a very small number of these so cannot really comment on the responses but the question was easily understood and context was integrated effectively.

"Some high level responses were seen but there were some narrative responses, which struggled to get beyond quite a basic level of context. Clear understanding of plot and characters was in evidence at all levels."

"There were few responses to this question but the vast majority were awarded in the higher levels. Responses showed a good understanding of contextual factors and were able to integrate their exploration of context in support of their analysis."

Question 9: How important is the theme of survival in *The Whale Rider*?

There were just a few responses to this question and examiner comment is rather limited as a result; however, those candidates answering this question well and explored how Koro was determined for the tribe and Maori culture to survive and the lengths he went to in order to secure this. Some considered how Rawiri overcame feelings of prejudice and appreciated the importance of the survival of his heritage. Other candidates considered the survival of nature against all odds. Those exploring 'nature' were able to comment on contextual points in relation to nuclear testing and the destruction of the sea bed. Most candidates considered how Koro taught the boys and how Kahu secretly listened to him.

Text: *The Joy Luck Club*, Amy Tan

This was the least popular choice of text with just a small number of responses seen. All responses were marked by the senior team.

Question 10: In what ways is telling stories important in *The Joy Luck Club*?

Candidates responding to this question recognised that telling stories was part of Chinese cultural heritage and was a way for mothers to tell their stories to their daughters. Some considered just one or two of the mothers' stories, whilst some candidates briefly considered a wider range. More able candidates considered how each section of the novel begins with a Chinese moral such as the story of the swan and *The Twenty-six Malignant Gates*. The novel lends itself to contextual details and this was often included and embedded in candidates' essays.

Candidates had been prepared well for the questions and there was clear evidence that students had studied the novel thoroughly in preparation for the examination.

Question 11: Discuss the relationship between Lindo and Waverly Jong in the novel.

This was a slightly more popular question and candidates were able to demonstrate their knowledge of both the mother and daughter. Most commented on Waverley's chess playing skills and how her mother encouraged and controlled her. Some commented on how both mother and daughter struggled with their identities and how misinterpretations of language created tension between the two. The majority of candidates focussed on how Waverley felt ashamed of her mother and how she incorrectly believed that her mother does not like her fiancé, Richard (Rich).

Text: *Things Fall Apart*, Chinua Achebe

Question 12: How significant is the theme of fear in *Things Fall Apart*?

For this question, examiners saw some excellent responses, many of which gained marks in Level 5. Most candidates focused on Okonkwo's fears and how he was afraid of becoming like his father and is determined not to appear weak. Some candidates considered others' fears, such as Ekwefi fearing for Ezinma's life when she becomes ill and the fear felt by some of the tribe with the arrival of the Christian missionaries.

Examiner comments include:

"Some amazing answers here but, again, a small sample. Culture and identity are clearly well-taught in schools."

"The theme of fear as a question was highly engaging and allowed for some excellent responses within my allocation."

"Again, context was used well to support rather than lead analysis in these responses. Most candidates were able to explore a wider range of points which they could evidence well with reference to the text."

"The theme of fear was understood by all candidates. I only marked a small number of responses but clearly the centres that picked this were very able. Very detailed responses were seen and perceptive interpretations were frequently appearing."

"Some extremely able candidates were able to tackle this text with authority. A good choice to stretch those potential A Level Literature students!"

Question 13: Explore the relationship between Okonkwo and his wives.

Again, responses to this question were very impressive. Many candidates received marks in the top two levels. Most candidates considered how Okonkwo ruled his household 'with a heavy hand' and how his wives dared not challenge him or complain. Many considered the relationship between Okonkwo and Ekwefi and how he supports her when Ezinma becomes ill. Contextual points were more often embedded within the examples provided, such as how Okonkwo's first wife is never named but is only referred to as 'Nwoye's mother', as was the custom.

One examiner commented: "I only had a very small allocation; however, I feel that the candidates found such a unique culture fascinating and really engaged with the text. Candidates were very interested in the highly patriarchal society that may be very different from their own. I also felt that the question encouraged this contextual aspect within the candidate responses."

In summary, when responding to Section C, candidates should:

- focus on the question
- avoid narrative retelling of the events in the novel
- provide a range of examples from their chosen text – remember that as this is a closed book examination, examples need not be quotations but examples of events or episodes within the novel
- prove to the examiner their knowledge of the text – do not assume the examiner knows everything
- comment on contextual points and try to relate these to the points being made
- avoid dealing with context separately. Do not write a page of historical background, but link all contextual points with an example from the novel and in relation to the question being answered.

Conclusion

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

Centres should be congratulated on preparing their candidates so well. We very much hope that you will continue to deliver this specification and you are delighted with results.

More exemplar materials for the new specification are continually being added to our website and more sample responses are being uploaded in the Autumn.

For those candidates looking to continue their English Literature studies, the Pearson Edexcel International AS and A Level (Specification references: YET01 and XET01) is an ideal option. This qualification is becoming very popular and successful and has received positive feedback from centres. Full details are available on our website.

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