



Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2024

Pearson Edexcel International
Advanced Level in English Literature (WET01)
Paper 01: Post 2000 Poetry and Prose

Edexcel and BTEC Qualifications

Edexcel and BTEC qualifications are awarded by Pearson, the UK's largest awarding body. We provide a wide range of qualifications including academic, vocational, occupational and specific programmes for employers. For further information visit our qualifications websites at www.edexcel.com or www.btec.co.uk. Alternatively, you can get in touch with us using the details on our contact us page at www.edexcel.com/contactus.

Pearson: helping people progress, everywhere

Pearson aspires to be the world's leading learning company. Our aim is to help everyone progress in their lives through education. We believe in every kind of learning, for all kinds of people, wherever they are in the world. We've been involved in education for over 150 years, and by working across 70 countries, in 100 languages, we have built an international reputation for our commitment to high standards and raising achievement through innovation in education. Find out more about how we can help you and your students at: www.pearson.com/uk

January 2024

Publications Code WET01_01_2401_ER

All the material in this publication is copyright

© Pearson Education Ltd 2024

Introduction

Centres are thanked for choosing Pearson Edexcel for their International A-Level English Literature provider.

Standard Introduction

For this unit, WET01, the open book examination is 2 hours long and there are two sections.

All candidates must answer one question from a choice of two in Section A, Post-2000 Poetry. Candidates then respond to a question on their selected text from Section B, Post-2000 Prose.

For Section A, Post-2000 Poetry, students will use the reading skills they have developed through the course. Students will answer one essay question from a choice of two comparing a named poem from the prescribed list of poems from *Poems of the Decade: An Anthology of the Forward Books of Poetry 2002-11* with another poem of their own choice from the prescribed list.

For Section B, Post-2000 Prose, students answer one essay question from a choice of two on the prose text they have studied. Students can select from the following titles: *The Kite Runner*, *Life of Pi*, *The White Tiger*, *Brooklyn* and *Purple Hibiscus*. Students should study their chosen text in detail. Student responses will be informed by an appreciation of the contexts in which texts are written and read.

In studying for Post-2000 Poetry and Prose, students will learn about:

- the importance of the relationship between texts, making connections and comparisons between texts;
- the significance of the cultural and contextual influences under

which literary texts are written and received;

- how to respond creatively, relevantly and in an informed way to texts using appropriate terminology and concepts as well as coherent and accurate written expression;
- how to analyse texts from a critical perspective.

There are 25 marks available for Section A and 25 for Section B. The total mark of 50 represents 50% of the total IAS and 25% of the total IA2.

Section A, Post-2000 Poetry, assesses Assessment Objectives AO1, AO2 and AO4.

Section B, Post-2000 Prose, assesses Assessment Objectives AO1, AO2 and AO3.

AO5 is *not* assessed in this paper.

Please refer to the full specification for details of the Assessment Objectives and their weightings.

General Overview of the WET01 January 2024 (2401) paper and performance

This has been a successful paper. There were no errors, no erratum notices and no changes made to the mark scheme.

The number of entries was pleasing. It is to be hoped that the number of candidates sitting the paper will continue to increase in coming series. Many candidates demonstrated familiarity with the contents of the specification. Responses in relation to the set texts and to the range of Assessment Objectives were of varied quality.

In the 2401 series responses were received addressing all the texts available for study.

In Section A, Post-2000 Poetry, a variety of interesting potential interpretations of the set poems was seen, but some candidates did not engage in sufficient depth and detail with the tasks set. Connections between the nominated poem and the candidates' selected poems were not always effectively established. There was a tendency in some cases for candidates to allow their responses to become dominated by the discussion of their selected poem at the expense of dealing with the set poem. An important feature of Section A is the need to address AO4. Time, therefore, should be dedicated to ensuring that effective connections between the poems are developed and that these connections relate effectively to the topic set. Many candidates explored the methods the poets had employed. However, it is important to note that discussion of poetic features should always be explicitly connected to suggested meanings. The identification – not always correct – of poetic features without reference to meaning does not really make an effective contribution to responses. As has been suggested in previous reports, before attempting detailed analysis, it is helpful to offer a brief consideration of the poems as a whole and what they might mean. This creates an initial focus on meaning and encourages the discussion of the poems in connection.

In Section B, responses were seen on all the available texts. However, the most popular prose text was *The Kite Runner* (Questions 3 and 4) and the second most popular *Life of Pi* (Questions 5 and 6), with *Purple Hibiscus* (Questions 11 and 12) following close behind. In spite of comments on the issue in previous reports, it is still significant to note that in relation to some texts (primarily *Life of Pi* and *Brooklyn*), there were candidates who made insufficient or no reference to AO3. It is also important to note that some candidates did not in sustained ways engage with AO2 – the ways in which meanings are shaped in texts. The failure to address the Assessment Objectives inevitably has a significant impact on candidates' marks.

Stronger responses were effectively planned and prepared in response to the demands of the questions set and there was effective coverage of the relevant Assessment Objectives. Some responses, however, were very brief and tended to be narrative in nature rather than exploring the topics set and the potential meanings of the texts. Such responses tended to rely on narrative or provided short, surface comments rather than exploring texts, literary methods and contexts more thoroughly. Where this was the case, examiners did not always have sufficient evidence of engagement with the topics set and with the methods employed in the texts. There was some evidence of the use of pre-prepared material – often in the form of learned material for introductions or conclusions. The use of such material always runs the risk of being irrelevant, and candidates are better advised to develop their own responses to the tasks set. Centres are reminded that candidates should be prepared to use appropriate literary concepts and terminology, especially if they wish to access marks in the higher levels.

Despite repeated reference in reports to the need for candidates to use only poems from the selected list, a very small minority of candidates still chose poems that are not available for study. Centres must ensure that candidates use poems only from the prescribed list.

There was also a trend in Section A for candidates to consider poetic methods, structure or language at the end of their responses rather than incorporating it into their argument. Where candidates did this, the identification of methods tended to be divorced from the potential meanings of the poems. This is, therefore, a less effective strategy than relating the poets' methods to the meanings they achieve. To demonstrate more effective approaches, here is an example of a Level 3 response where a candidate seeks to demonstrate the impact of the poet's choice of form:

In the poem 'Eat me', there are 10 stanzas which are structured as tercets. The concluding line of every stanza is disturbing to the reader, and the rigid structure confines the reader the same way the poet is confined by her the man ~~in~~ and the narrator in this rigid form succeeds at portraying the woman's discomfort towards his undesirable fetish but also how inescapable it first seemed.

It is also important to note that where candidates focus on one poem exclusively and then on the second poem, it is more difficult to demonstrate the kinds of connection required for the fulfilment of AO4.

Detailed Commentary on individual questions

Section A: Post-2000 Poetry

Question 1

This was by a small margin the less popular question in Section A. The question required candidates to compare the presentation of objects in 'Effects' by Alan Jenkins and another poem of their choice from the prescribed list. The most popular choice of second poem was 'Material' by Ros Barber. 'The Gun' by Vicki Feaver was also a popular choice. A smaller number of candidates opted for Sinéad Morrissey's poem 'Genetics', but this tended to be a less effective choice. A small number of well-conceived answers also used 'Ode on a Grayson Perry Urn' by Tim Turnbull. 'Material' and 'The Gun' provided relevant material for the question although connections and analysis of the poets' methods were not always successful.

Writing on 'Effects', many candidates offered details about the presentation of the speaker's mother and the ways in which the presentation of the objects in the poem could be linked to broader themes in the poem, such as the mother's

life, her marriage and her relationship with her child. The tendency of quite a significant number of candidates to treat body parts as if they were objects was less convincing in analysis, as these are not really objects.

An example of a discriminatingly targeted introduction demonstrating connections between the poems and a tight focus on the issues of the task set:

Alan Jenkins' "Effects" is a sorrowful ^{poem} tale of memory and loss, in which the speaker recalls his relationship with his mother and everything she represented through items she owned brought to him after her passing from illness. Ros Barber's "Material" similarly reminisces of the love and warm relationship between the speaker and her mother represented by the handkerchief. Both poets use objects to symbolise the complex relationships ^{between child and mother,} ~~they had with their~~ and ~~mothers~~ underscore how these objects, in a way, immortalise ^{by kept} the associated memories they carry ^{especially by} ~~these mothers through holding such fond memories,~~ involving feelings of gratefulness, appreciation and nostalgia.

Question 2

This was the more popular question in Section A. It required candidates to consider the idea of undesirable behaviour in relation to 'Giuseppe' by Roderick Ford and another poem of their choice from the selected list. The most popular choices of second poem were 'Eat Me' by Patience Agbabi, 'The Lammas Hireling' by Ian Duhig and 'Chainsaw Versus the Pampas Grass' by Simon Armitage. Most responses were able to address the ambiguity in 'Giuseppe' to some degree. Many, for example, engaged with the blurring of 'she'/'it' as well as offering a broader discussion of those in seemingly responsible roles committing atrocities. There was some successful evaluation of the shared ambiguity in

Ford and Duhig, and of the undesirable behaviour shown towards women in Ford and Agbabi.

The following extract provides an extended example of a high-performing candidate connecting the poems and exploring how the formal properties of poems can be used to relate to the meanings created (AO2):

In both poems these undesirable behaviours cause conflict. In "Giuseppe" there is conflict of morality and guilt as the men ~~try~~ grapple and try to justify their undesirable actions whereas in "Eat me" this conflict is within the speaker as she struggles to figure out her identity and internal conflicts of being "too hot to leave, too hot to buy... too fast to use... too hot to be called chubby, chubby, big-built". ~~The repetition and asyndetic listing~~
~~The repetition of the anaphora~~ The repetition of "too" with the asyndetic listing creates this overwhelming tone ~~of~~ that mirrors her overwhelming emotions and thoughts but also her overwhelming weight. It creates a sense of unwholeness and an underlying tone of self-hatred that came from a result of the man's undesirable actions. She feels undesirable. The euphemisms "chubby, big-built"

General Observations on Section A

1. It is recommended that candidates consider carefully whether their chosen second poem effectively allows them to develop connections with the nominated poem in relation to the topic of the question set. In stronger responses, it was clear how the poems were related consistently to the question. This will assist with the meeting of AO4.
2. AO2 requires candidates to consider the ways in which meanings are shaped in literary texts. To do so effectively, they need to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the function of genre features and conventions in poetry. These, however, need always to be closely connected to the creation and shaping of potential meanings.

Section B: Post-2000 Prose

***The Kite Runner* (Khaled Hosseini)**

Questions 3 & 4

Question 3 was much the more popular of the two. It focused on the presentation of cruelty in the novel. Candidates in the higher range were able to discuss cruelties at various levels – personal, social and national. There was some useful discussion of Assef's function both as an antagonist and as an allegory for the abuse of power in Afghanistan. Candidates also discussed Baba's cruelties and how these influenced both Amir's behaviour and others around him. There was also regular consideration given to the cruel treatment of women, with a focus on General Taheri. Less successful responses tended to provide a narrative summary, with some approaching the task as a book review.

Question 4 focused on the presentation of struggle. There were fewer responses to this question. Some candidates wrote with a good understanding of structure and how certain events echoed or had parallels that highlighted the difficulties characters face in the novel. Most candidates aimed to chart Amir's struggles and his attempt to be 'good', or maintained a focus on Hassan and the ways in which he was victimised throughout his life. A few responses

considered the struggles of Baba to adapt and accept his reduced position in American society. There was also some useful consideration of how the personal struggles the characters face represent larger societal struggles and contextual factors in the novel.

***Life of Pi* (Yann Martel)**

Questions 5 & 6

Question 5 was the more popular option on this novel. It addressed the idea of truth in the novel. There were some engaging and nuanced responses to this question. Some candidates solely addressed the question of faith, conflating truth with the idea of religious truth, and maintaining a narrow focus on Pi's unorthodox approach to belief. Most candidates also evaluated the framing of the story and its relationship to the main tale, as well as considering Pi's use of fantasy to process trauma. The candidates who answered this question were engaged with the task across all levels of performance.

Question 6 focused on the presentation of family. Most candidates made some reference to Pi's childhood experiences, with others presenting the argument that the creatures of the lifeboat become a new family for him. Not all responses recognised the magic realism and fantastical aspects of the animals as literary substitutes for the survivors.

Many candidate responses to Martel's novel, as has been observed in previous reports, contained limited (or no) relevant contextual information. Centres are reminded that AO3 is assessed in Section B of this paper and that candidates must be prepared to write about appropriate contexts. A significant number of candidates tended to provide largely narrative responses.

***The White Tiger* (Aravind Adiga)**

Questions 7 & 8

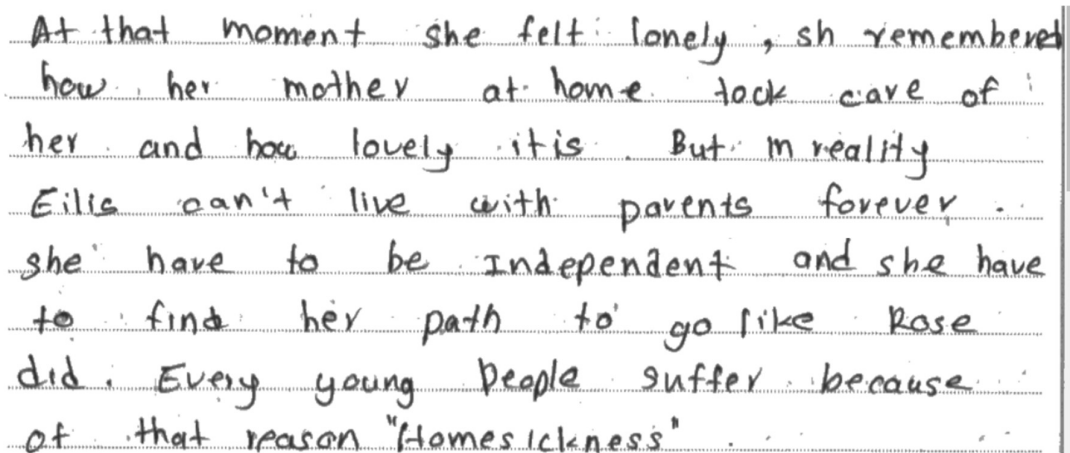
Few candidates answered on *The White Tiger*. Question 7, on Adiga's presentation of corruption, and Question 8, on the presentation of loss in the novel, attracted approximately equal numbers of responses. Some candidates

dealt with the tasks clearly, relating ideas of corruption or loss and appropriately to a body of relevant contextual material. There was some good sense of the ways in which Adiga shapes meanings.

Brooklyn (Colm Toibin)

Questions 9 & 10

Question 9 required candidates to write about the novel's use of contrast. Most responses identified the contrasts between life in Ireland and life in Brooklyn. Less successful responses took a descriptive approach, rarely moving beyond a chronological narrative of events in the story. The following passage illustrates a narrative/descriptive approach:



At that moment she felt lonely, sh remembered how her mother at home took care of her and how lovely it is. But in reality Ellis can't live with parents forever. she have to be independent and she have to find her path to go like Rose did. Every young people suffer because of that reason "Homesickness".

Better responses evaluated differing perspectives on work, relationships and society, with some effective consideration of how Ellis experienced inner conflict as a result of these differences.

Question 10 considered the novel's presentation of the relationship between generations. Responses here seemed to focus on the generation gap presented through the older characters in America with little discussion of generational differences in Ireland.

Although this novel provides plenty of opportunity for the exploration of context, this was a notably weaker area of performance. Contextual issues were often dealt with at a surface level, with responses often treating characters and events as if they were real.

***Purple Hibiscus* (Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie)**

Questions 11 & 12

Question 11, much the more popular option for this novel, considered Adichie's presentation of the challenges faced by the female characters in the novel. Some students struggled to control and shape responses to this question, identifying different episodes and events in the narrative that demonstrate complex or difficult situations women face, but not finding a way to link analysis or present a cohesive interpretation. A number of responses were reliant on descriptive summary. Better responses considered the ways in which wider contexts influence the behaviour and treatment of women. There was some evidence of engagement with Ifeoma's difficulties as a widow and an educated woman.

Question 12 addressed the novel's presentation of tradition. This was a less popular option, but the responses seen had a relatively clear understanding of the competing traditions presented in the narrative. There was evidence of controlled engagement with characters adhering to or challenging traditional gender roles, and effective discussion of how Eugene's version of Catholicism fails to recognise the traditional belief systems it replaced. In this option there were also some examples of candidates exploring the character of Auntie Ifeoma as one who could navigate between faiths and reject traditional gender expectations.

General Observations on Section B

1. Marks at all levels were awarded in this section, though with comparatively few candidates obtaining the top level criteria. Responses

ranged from very brief answers providing surface readings of texts or a narrative overview through to fuller critical and more evaluative work.

2. AO3 continues to prove a significant issue, especially for candidates answering on *Life of Pi* and *Brooklyn*. It is essential that candidates are prepared to consider the contextual factors affecting their readings of the texts in this section of the paper. Contexts, whether of production or of reception should be used consistently and formatively in answers and should not appear simply as 'bolted on' information.
3. AO2 requires candidates to consider the ways in which meanings are shaped. It is, therefore, important that candidates are able to write about the genre features of prose fiction in its various forms and that they are able to consider writers' use of language across large texts. It is important to demonstrate how specific examples relate more broadly to what is happening in the text as a whole – i.e. that they demonstrate that these are not isolated examples.
4. Less effective responses, as observed in previous reports, tended to resort to narrative rather than engaging in more detailed and critical analysis of the ideas set out in the questions.

Paper Summary

Based on performance on this paper, centres and candidates are offered the following advice:

- ensure that all the relevant AOs are addressed in each section of the paper;

- encourage candidates not solely to identify literary techniques and features, but to go on to discuss their effects and the ways in which such effects connect to the shaping of meaning;
- consider the factors affecting how readers in different places and at different times might perceive texts in a variety of ways;
- ensure that candidates explicitly address the tasks set and that they do not rely on pre-prepared responses;
- avoid the narrative re-telling of texts.

Thank you.

Principal Examiner
(IAL English Literature WET01)
February 2024

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>

