



Pearson  
Edexcel

Examiners' Report  
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2024

Pearson Edexcel International Advanced  
Level in English Literature (WET03)

Unit 3: 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](http://www.edexcel.com) or [www.btec.co.uk](http://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](http://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](http://www.pearson.com/uk)

Summer 2024

Publications Code WET03\_01\_2406\_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 provider.

For this unit, WET03, the open book examination is 2 hours long and there are two sections.

All candidates must answer Section A, Question 1, Unseen Poetry. Candidates then respond to a question from Section B, Prose, on the two prose texts that they have studied.

For **Section A, Unseen Poetry**, candidates will use the reading and critical skills that they have learnt throughout the course. Candidates will answer one essay question on a post-1900 unseen poem that is printed on a separate Source Insert.

Context is not assessed in Section A of the paper.

For **Section B, Prose**, candidates answer one comparative essay question from a choice of two, on the two studied prose texts that they have studied. Candidates can select from the themes: *Growing Up, Colonisation and After, Science and Society* or *Women and Society*. Candidate responses should be informed by an understanding and appreciation of the contexts in which their chosen texts are both written and read. Candidates should be encouraged to view the texts in comparison to each other.

In Section B, students will study two out of a choice of three thematically linked texts. They will learn about:

- the importance of the relationship between texts, making connections and comparison 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 20 marks available for Section A and 30 for Section B.

The total number of 50 marks available for this paper represents 25% of IA2.

**Section A, Unseen Poetry, assesses Assessment Objectives A01 and A02.**

**Section B, Prose, assesses Assessment Objectives A01, A02, A03 and A04.**

A05 is not assessed in this paper.

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

## General Overview of the WET03 January 2023 paper and performance

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

All candidates must answer Section A, Question 1, Unseen Poetry. Candidates then respond to a question from Section B, Prose. For this series, a full range of marks was awarded.

Centres have prepared candidates well for this section of the examination paper. The unseen poem for Question 1 was *Monologue for an Onion* by Suji Kwock Kim. As with previous series, candidates are tackling the set poem with an impressive understanding of the technical language of poetry. Most candidates produced successful and interesting responses to the poem and few seemed to struggle with accessing the poem in a meaningful way. The poem allowed for a breadth of interpretation and it was a pleasure to read the varied and diverse meanings that candidates found in it.

The full range of levels were accessed across the mark scheme, with most candidates placed between Level 2-5. Assessment Objective 1 demands that candidates are able to apply literary concepts and terminology. In previous series, it has been noted that candidates should take care to explore the structure and form of the poem in a way that enhances their understanding of the text rather than making superficial comment on the poetic form. It was pleasing to see this series that more candidates are beginning to apt comments on the form of the poem (on the use of tercets, for instance, to symbolise the layers of the onion). Although, not all candidates explored the structural aspects of the poem in detail.

In the Prose section, the most popular theme was *Science and Society* (Questions 6 and 7) with the second most popular theme *Growing Up* (Questions 2 and 3). There were fewer responses to *Women and Society* (Questions 8 and 9) and *Colonisation and After* (Questions 4 and 5). All texts had responses written on them in this exam series and many candidates were placed in Level 3-5.

As with previous exam series, candidates know their texts well and many are demonstrating clear and fluent written expression, conveying their knowledge and understanding of their studied texts effectively. On the whole, contextual comment has been used more effectively than in previous series but candidates should ensure that they are handling Assessment Objectives 1 and 2 just as deftly. To secure placement in the higher levels of the mark scheme there needs to be a clear, discriminating or critical understanding of the crafting of the texts; a sense of the writer at work and the ways in which characters, setting and plot are authorial constructs.

Handwriting has been somewhat of an issue this series. It's incredibly important that it is as clear as possible.

## Section A: Post-1900 Unseen Poetry

### Question 1

The unseen poem for Question 1 was *Monologue for an Onion* by Suji Kwock Kim. This was a discriminating poem that allowed students to access the full range of the mark scheme. There were few responses at all in Level 1.

There was a wealth of potential areas of thematic investigation here for candidates. As one examiner notes, '**all candidates recognised the chilly and tauntingly critical tone of the monologue**'. There were many interpretations: '**a reluctant object of love, an abusive relationship, existentialism, global politics, self-examination and religious enquiry**'. Some candidates also explored how the poem might be a presentation of death and examined the liminal qualities of the language and voice.

All responses seemed to be aware of Assessment Objectives 1 and 2 and of the importance of exploring how meaning is created within a poem and of how literary and linguistic terminology as well as structure and form are used to do this. The vast majority of responses identified early on the personified quality of the voice. Those who were able to explore the way in which the poet constructed the voice of the 'onion', deftly linking it to tone and the address to the reader, were more successful at Assessment Objective 2. One particularly successful response explored the '**villainous persona**' of the onion, pinpointing the image of the 'poor deluded human' as an example of how the tone of the poem is accusatory and patronising.

At Assessment Objective 2, the best responses pursued a theme '**but nodded to other, potential readings**'. Candidates who did not do this '**tended to ignore or under-analyse**' other parts of the poem. The change in the tone within the poem, from sympathy to condemnation and futility, was widely recognised. Candidates are able to discuss imagery well and are beginning to more accurately discuss structural techniques. Many candidates were quick to identify the structure of the poem as '**mirroring the layers of the onion**' and gained credit for this. Other structural techniques such as caesura, were also deftly handled although, as one examiner puts it, comments on the use of enjambment were not as effective as they might have been. One particularly effective response explored the juxtaposition between the use of connectives in creating a taut and tense tone and the frequently enjambed lines. This was highly successful and was rewarded.

Explorations of the imagery within the poem were varied and frequently detailed. Candidates noted the '**tactile**' quality of the images and were able to tie this effectively to the poet's use of sibilance and alliteration in evoking the sensory aspects of the onion.

At Assessment Objective 1, candidates are most successful where they can use evidence consistently to support their points. Some candidates were not discriminating enough in their selection of quotation or did not use evidence to underpin their exploration of theme, idea and meaning. At Levels 4 and 5 on the mark scheme for this Assessment Objective, the descriptors ask candidates to provide 'fluently embedded' or 'sustained textual' examples. Responses where the candidate had explored patterns across the poem and clustered evidence together to support their ideas were invariably more successful than responses that took a chronological approach.

It should be noted that responses are most successful where time is obviously spent on planning. There is a lot to do in the allotted time: candidates must read, absorb and analyse an unseen poem and a clear plan would help in marshalling together an argument that would help to give responses shape and clarity. Planning is time well-spent in the examination.

For this section of the paper, candidates are required to show knowledge and understanding of the function of genre features, conventions in poetry, and demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of a range of ways to read texts, including reading for detail of how writers use and adapt language, form and structure in texts and by responding critically and creatively.

It is recommended that centres continue to make use of the *Sample Assessment Materials* and past papers in order to become even more familiar with the assessment requirements. The mark grids demonstrate how candidates can progress from one level to the next. In order to achieve Level 4 or above, responses need to be discriminating, critical and evaluative. Analysis of the poem should be controlled and well supported with evidence and close reference to the techniques used and should provide examples of the nuances and subtleties of the writer's craft.

The Unseen Poetry question assesses Assessment Objectives 1 and 2:

A01: Articulate informed, personal and creative responses to literary texts, using associated concepts and terminology, and coherent, accurate written expression.

A02: Analyse ways in which meanings are shaped in literary texts.

Context is not assessed in Section A of the paper.

## **Section B: Prose**

Centres should be congratulated on having thoroughly prepared their candidates for the examination. It should be noted that the vast majority of candidates knew their texts well and could make a range of points on them, drawing from a range of evidence across the texts. A full range of marks was awarded.

Assessment Objective 1 asks candidates to write *informed, personal and creative responses to literary texts, using associated concepts and terminology, and coherent, accurate written expression*. Some responses were eloquent and thoughtful but lacked the articulation of how the writers used method and literary technique that would have placed them within a higher level. Candidates are encouraged to explore narrative perspective, voice and literary and linguistic technique in their investigation of their chosen texts. Responses that demonstrate an understanding of how the writers craft and construct their texts – that provide an exploration and understanding of the writer 'at work' – are more highly rewarded. Some responses refer to characters without mentioning the writer at all. This is not advised. Focusing on the ways in which characters are authorial constructs is more profitable.

In relation to Assessment Objective 4 there were very few responses that dealt with the texts as separate entities, but candidates are not always clearly identifying the points of connection

between them in depth or considering the ways in which the texts might cover similar or different ground and why. As has been mentioned in previous series, there are many comparisons that candidates can make between their chosen texts. These can include characters, theme, setting and context (both social and historical as well as literary) but it is worth remembering that points of comparison can also be made on the style, technique, form and voice used within the novels.

The question asks candidates to explicitly reference context in their responses and it is Candidates are becoming more secure and comfortable in discussing context (Assessment Objective 3) and are often including references to literary context as well as to the contemporary reception of a text. Several candidates who had responded to *Heart of Darkness* explored Chinua Achebe's perspective on the text very well.

As with Section A, candidates would benefit from spending time planning. Where this was apparent the response was frequently more controlled, discriminating and more tightly comparative.

Comments on each question are based on the evidence seen and only included for the most popular questions.

### **Questions 2 and 3** *Growing Up*

The set texts for the theme of **Growing Up** are: *What Maisie Knew*, *Great Expectations* and *The Color Purple*.

There were fewer responses for the **Growing Up** option although all of the texts were considered. Question 2 had the higher number of responses and is considered in more detail.

**Question 2:** Compare the ways in which the writers of your two chosen texts explore the idea of self-discovery.

All texts for this theme were answered on. Candidates explored the generic conventions of the Bildungsroman well and applied it their discussion of the question in a '**considered and often creative way**'. Responses explored Pip's journey to maturity in *Great Expectations* and the way in which Celie gains autonomy through sexual discovery. Examiners note that Assessment Objective 3 was strong in particular for *The Color Purple* and *Great Expectation*, with deft discussions of the historical shifts in race, gender and class.

**Question 3:** Compare the ways in which the writers of your two chosen texts present the influence of positive relationships.

There were few responses to this question.

### **Questions 4 and 5** *Colonisation and After*

The set texts for the theme of **Colonisation and After** are: *Heart of Darkness*, *The Lonely Londoners* and *A Passage to India*.

This section had the fewest number of responses across both questions although all three texts were considered.

**Question 4:** Compare the ways in which the writers of your two chosen texts explore the use of power.

As is common across all of the questions on Section B, for Assessment Objectives 1 and 2, responses were least successful where they described or re-told the story of the novels. Assessment Objective 3 was covered well with candidates integrating contextual comment nicely into their responses. Candidates were able to explore power dynamics well, integrating successful discussions of how the ‘other’ is an important concept.

**Question 5:** Compare the ways in which the writers of your two chosen texts present the need for human connection.

There were few responses to this question.

### **Questions 6 and 7** *Science and Society*

The set texts for the theme of **Science and Society** are: *Never Let Me Go*, *The Handmaid’s Tale* and *Frankenstein*.

This theme was by far the most popular on the paper with the vast majority of candidates in this section responding to Question 7. As in previous series, there was an even distribution between the text choices for this theme.

**Question 6:** Compare the ways in which the writers of your two chosen texts make use of setting.

Some candidates didn’t focus sufficiently on what the question was asking them to look at and struggled, therefore, to access the full range of the mark scheme for Assessment Objective 1. There was a wealth of material to explore here: the symbolism of the wall and Harvard University in *The Handmaid’s Tale*, Hailsham and its surroundings in *Never Let Me Go* and the Sublime landscapes of *Frankenstein*.

Contextual comment for Assessment Objective 3 was well integrated. Candidates were able, as in previous series, to discuss the literary contexts of the Gothic or dystopian genres as well as the wide-ranging set of influences that Atwood draws upon.

**Question 7:** Compare the ways in which the writers of your two chosen texts present violence.

This question was the most popular on the examination paper. Many candidates focussed on the examples of physical violence to be found within the texts, but candidates also explored the psychological and emotional forms of violence presented, examining how many of the characters are driven by revenge. Discussions of violence presented within *Never Let Me Go* examined how violence is understated. There were many effective points of comparison for Assessment Objective 4 drawn between *Never Let Me Go* and *The Handmaid’s Tale* that

looked at how language is used within the worlds of the novels to obfuscate rather than define violence (*'donation'*; *'completion'*; *'Aunts'*).

## **Questions 8 and 9**

### ***Women and Society***

The set texts for the theme of **Women and Society** are: *Wuthering Heights*, *Mrs Dalloway* and *Beloved*.

The most popular texts were *Wuthering Heights* and *Beloved*. There were fewer responses on *Mrs Dalloway* and comment is limited to the most popular novels.

**Question 8:** Compare the ways in which the writers of your two chosen texts present social convention.

A range of responses and interpretations were provided for this question and candidates were able to integrate contextual comment well. Many candidates drew on social expectations of love and romance in *Mrs Dalloway* and *Wuthering Heights*. Responses on *Beloved* were also able to explore the impact of slavery. As with Question 9, candidates were quick to examine the narrative structures of the novels and how they symbolically reflect the themes of the novels.

**Question 9:** Compare the ways in which the writers of your two chosen texts present unhappiness.

It was pleasing to see characters other than the protagonists addressed for this question. Candidates explored the presentation of Rezia and Septimus in *Mrs Dalloway*, with shell shock and the aftermath of the First World War providing rich, contextual comment. Many candidates were quick to explore the ways in which the novels might provide hope at their conclusion which provided interesting material for Assessment Objectives 1 and 2.

## **Paper Summary**

Performance of this paper has been very pleasing and there have been many marks awarded in the top two levels. Centres should be congratulated on preparing their candidates so well.

Based on performance on this paper, centres are offered the following advice for their future success:

- address the assessment objectives and use mark schemes and past papers to guide teaching
- incorporation of linguistic and literary technique into an exploration of texts is important. Candidates should be encouraged to use a range of terminology to support their points on how writers create meaning and the effect that this has on the reader

- for Section A, encourage candidates to discuss a broad understanding of the poem and its overarching ideas before moving into a close analysis of poetic technique. Candidates should spend some time carefully reading, annotating and planning before they start to write their response. **Ensure that enough time is given to this section of paper**

- for Section B, candidates must consider the writer's techniques in order to meet the demands of Assessment Objective 1 and should explore the range of ways in which writers construct and craft their novels

- read the wording of the question carefully and spend some time planning the response

- enjoy sharing your knowledge and enthusiasm for the novels studied with the examiner