



Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2025

Pearson Edexcel International Advanced Level
in English Literature (WET03)
Unit 3: Poetry and Prose

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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 2025 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.

Firstly, centres should be recognised for how well candidates have been prepared for this section of the examination paper. The unseen poem for Question 1 was ***Origin Story*** by Eve L. Ewing. There were a wide variety of responses produced to this poem and it was a pleasure to read the interpretations offered by the candidates. The full range of levels were accessed across the mark scheme, with most candidates placed between Levels 2-4.

It was pleasing to see a range of comments linking the structure and form of the poem to theme and meaning. Responses that are able to securely link poetic form to function invariably score more highly than responses that can appear to run through a pre-prepared checklist of techniques. Candidates should take care that they are not looking for structural techniques or forms not present within the poem set and should instead concentrate on extracting meaning from what is present within the poem.

In the Prose section, as in previous series, the most popular theme that candidates answered on 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 the previous series, contextual comment was anchored more firmly to discussion of the texts. Whilst it is clear that candidates often have an impressive knowledge of their studied texts and are able to make apt and pertinent comparisons between them, the demands of Assessment Objective 1 (AO1) were not always evenly covered and some candidates had not sufficiently considered the craft and technique of the writers.

Section A: Post-1900 Unseen Poetry

Question 1

The unseen poem for Question 1 was *Origin Story* by Eve L. Ewing. 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.

The poem gives an account of the meeting and early relationship between the poet's parents. Interpretations of the poem were wide ranging and varied in the thematic scope they took in and it was a pleasure to read the responses produced by the candidates.

The majority of candidates were quick to explore the extended metaphor of comic books that runs throughout the poem, linking it to the ambiguity of the title and the initial relationship presented between the poet's mother and father. The most successful responses – those that are controlled or nuanced and, therefore were more likely to be placed in Level 4 or 5 – were able to select a range of evidence drawn from across the poem to support their points rather than working through it in a chronological manner which tended to produce slightly more mechanistic responses. At Assessment Objective 1 (AO1), candidates are more successful where they can consistently use evidence to support their ideas and argument. Some candidates were not discriminating enough in the evidence they selected or hadn't considered the patterns of language across the poem.

As with previous reports, it should be noted that responses are invariably more successful where time is spent reading and planning. There is a lot to do in the allotted time for this task: students must read, absorb and analyse an unseen poem. The most successful responses demonstrated clear evidence of planning and it was evident in the quality of the work produced.

All responses were aware of Assessment Objectives 1 and 2 (AO1 and AO2) and of the necessity to investigate the poetic methods used in order to craft the poem. It is crucial that candidates select a range of poetic and literary terminology in order to accomplish this. As previously mentioned, many candidates explored the extended metaphor used throughout the poem well but there was also a wide-ranging interpretation of the language used by the poet. Many candidates explored the way

in which language is often used ambiguously throughout the poem. One Level 4 response commented on how the image of the parents' love being '**worn thin**' highlighted to the *reader the long lasting love that they had* whereas another high scoring responses commented on the metaphor of '**lent to a friend**' and how it could symbolise a possible affair and the end of the relationship.

There were many pertinent comments made on the structure of the form of the poem that were linked securely to theme and idea. Some candidates were able to comment in a nuanced and subtle way on the way in which the poetic voice is constructed. Many candidates commented on the change in the stanza lengths of the poem and how this could possibly reflect the change in relationship. As with previous series, some candidates commented on what is not present structurally within the poem and this often led to superficial comment on the construction of the poem. These responses – often placed in Level 2 and bottom Level 3 – often ignore what *is* present in the poem in favour of exploring what isn't (often set metrical patterns or rhyme).

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. Candidates knew their texts well and many could make perceptive and insightful comparisons between them. A full range of marks was awarded.

As with the previous series, candidates continue to demonstrate understanding of the context of the texts in a more pertinent and focussed way. There was a wide variety of contextual comment made that ranged from the more obvious social and historical points to the literary and critical contexts of the novels. It is entirely appropriate to comment on the genre and literary context of the text and where this was integrated well into the response candidates were rewarded well.

However, candidates were often less secure in applying the skills needed to meet Assessment Objective 1. Assessment Objective 1 (AO1) asks candidates to write ***informed, personal and creative responses to literary texts, using associated concepts and terminology, and coherent, accurate written expression***. Many responses were eloquent and thoughtful but lacked an exploration of how the writers used technique and method. Candidates are encouraged to explore narrative perspective, voice and literary and linguistic technique in their investigation of their chosen texts.

Some candidates made appropriate comment on the narrative style and voice used by their chosen writers but did not necessarily always explore the technique as fully as they might or link it firmly to the question set. For instance, some responses on ***Never Let Me Go*** and ***The Handmaid's Tale*** for Questions 6 and 7 were often quick to pick out the ambiguous nature of the narrative voice but did not always securely demonstrate how it contributed to or illuminated an understanding of the themes of death (Question 6) or the impact of science on society (Question 7).

Candidates who were more successful could select literary and linguistic technique to support their points and explored their relation to the question fully. One Question 2 response discussed the relevance of the motif of wood within ***The Color Purple***, linking Walker's use of symbolism firmly to the characters and the generational trauma inflicted on them. This response was placed towards the middle of Level 4.

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 than **Science and Society** although all of the texts were considered. Question 3 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 make use of symbolism.

There were few responses to this question.

Question 3: Compare the ways in which the writers of your two chosen texts present negative emotions.

Candidates explored the various ways in which negative emotions are presented within their studied texts. ***Great Expectations*** and ***The Color Purple*** were the most popular text choices although some candidates had studied ***What Maisie Knew***. Points made included an investigation of jealousy, hatred and abuse within the novels. Many candidates explored how negative emotions are often a central part of the bildungsroman itself and how they arise from the complex web of relationships and circumstances that surround the key protagonists as they develop and mature. More successful responses were able to explore the crafting of the novels.

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 differences in characters' backgrounds.

There were few responses to this question.

Question 5: Compare the ways in which the writers of your two chosen texts present loneliness.

Again, there were few responses to this question.

As with previous series, contextual comment was often particularly strong in responses to this theme where candidates were able to explore in detail the impact of colonisation on their studied texts and often linked to the life of the author or literary context. Each text provided opportunity for apt and pertinent contextual discussion.

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 with an even distribution between the two questions and across all three texts.

Question 6: Compare the ways in which the writers of your two chosen texts present death.

This was a question that was open to a range of interpretations and avenues of exploration. Points made included: ways in which death is used as a form of control by dystopian or totalitarian societies; the shocking ways in which death is presented (especially in ***The Handmaid's Tale*** and ***Frankenstein***) and the impact of the violence; conversely, the apathy that characters have towards death; the various motifs and imagery used to present death.

Contextual comment for Assessment Objective 3 was handled well for this question with candidates confidently discussing the literary and social and historical contexts of the texts. There was also confident discussion of the dystopian and Gothic genres.

Question 7: Compare the ways in which the writers of your two chosen texts explore the impact of science on society.

This question was as popular as Question 6. Assessment Objectives 1 and 2 were considered particularly well for this question with comments on narrative voice and the construction of the novels integrated well into responses.

Candidates made a range of points that discussed the boundaries between religion, philosophy and science, the impact of the development of scientific technology and the role of ethics in science advancement.

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*** although all three were answered on.

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

There were few responses to this question.

Question 9: Compare the ways in which the writers of your two chosen texts explore the use of power.

A variety of approaches to this question were possible. Candidates explored the dynamics of power between men and women but also considered social, economic and class dynamics.

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 equally and use mark schemes and past papers to guide teaching
- ensure that sufficient time is given to planning for both Sections

- 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. Successful candidates will draw on a wide variety of apt poetic technique relevant to the poem set and will incorporate many examples from the poem to support their points. **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 (A01) 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