



Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback
June 2025

Pearson Edexcel International Advanced
Level In English Literature (WET03)

Paper 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 June 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.

It should be noted that centres continue to prepare candidates well for this section of the examination paper. The unseen poem for Question 1 was ***Translations*** by Adrienne Rich. It was a pleasure to read the many varied and subtle responses produced in response to this poem, with candidates producing interpretations that offered a range of routes into the subject matter of the text. Candidates were rewarded across the full range of the mark scheme, with the majority of candidates placed between Levels 2-4.

As will be addressed further on in this report, the introduction to a response is crucial in setting out the shape of the argument that the candidate will make. Candidates should be wary of using the introduction to reiterate the wording of the question or to discuss the techniques that they expect to encounter 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 ***Women and Society*** (Questions 8 and 9). There were fewer responses to ***Growing Up*** (Questions 2 and 3) and ***Colonisation and After***

(Questions 4 and 5). All texts had responses written on them in this exam series with many candidates were placed in Level 3-5.

Contextual evidence continues to be more firmly anchored to analytical comment, although the demands of Assessment Objectives 1 and 2 are not always as evenly covered as they might be. Responses that cover the breadth of authorial technique in the two chosen texts – narrative voice and structure, tone, motif and so forth – invariably find more profitable ground for comparison than responses that are limited to word class analysis.

Section A: Post-1900 Unseen Poetry

Question 1

The unseen poem for Question 1 was ***Translations*** by Adrienne Rich. This was a poem with many possible thematic and tonal interpretations to be made and candidates accessed the full range of the mark scheme. Most candidates were placed in Levels 2-4 with few at all placed in Level 1.

Many candidates were quick to explore the ambiguity of the title itself, noting not only that the poem may be thematically concerned with the act of reading itself, but that also it could depict the many roles and relationships that women have. As one examiner noted: ‘the title was addressed with some sensitivity; many noting the linguistic meaning but also the sense of fundamental change. Perceptive candidates cited the woman’s translations from sister to enemy, and, in future, from love to sorrow’.

Subtle and nuanced investigation of the voice of the speaker was also noted by the most sophisticated responses where ‘self-awakening in the speaker’ was noticed. Candidates who explored the voice of the speaker specifically often saw the poem as addressing a ‘global sisterhood of women’ and were able to make pertinent comment linking form to theme.

There is a tension in the poem between the use of simile and metaphor and the free verse and frequently enjambed structured employed by the poet. As with previous series, with Assessment Objectives 1 and 2, comment on the structure of the poem without linking it to the thematic meaning is often not as productive as making fewer, highly exemplified points on the specific structural techniques used by the poet. Many candidates commented on the capitalisation of ‘Love’ and the isolation of ‘obsessed’, with the best responses exploring how the enjambment within the poem highlighted significant words, images and ideas. The last phrase in the poem – ***and political*** – which is isolated on the last line, was

rarely discussed by candidates. Opening and closing images in poetry are often fruitful sources of exploration and, therefore, worthwhile examining in more detail. Examiners noted that where candidates did consider the poem's conclusion, they often selected 'helicopter', 'famine' and 'hostile' to compare it to: setting the imagery here against the backdrop 'of international conflict' as contrasted with 'the primarily domestic and private concerns of the poem'.

Organisation of the response is crucial for successful reward at Assessment Objective 1. Along with sufficient time spent reading, planning and locating the 'hooks' – or ways into the poem – the introduction to the response is incredibly important. It should pinpoint the most significant areas identified by the candidate and determine the shape of the argument to follow. The below is an example of an introduction from a high scoring response:

Translations is a poem that follows the ambiguous narrator's depiction of love, which at first appears all-encompassing and passionate, but instead shifts into a clear depiction of unloyalty and infidelity. While the poem expresses a clear bitter tone, the overarching theme of the poem is to highlight the misogynistic attitudes of men in relationships, and the poet appears to suggest that the involvement of the 'other woman' is not to be blamed as extensively as the man.

Here, the candidate has identified a central theme for discussion, identifying where and why this theme 'shifts' and the subsequent impact on tone. It is suggestive of a confident response that has identified exactly what it wants to discuss from the poem.

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

As with Section A, a full range of marks was awarded for Section B. Centres have prepared candidates well, and it is clear that candidates are knowledgeable on their chosen texts. There were few responses that treated the texts as separate entities, and as with previous series candidates continue to demonstrate an impressive, if not always focussed, understanding of the historical and literary contexts. As mentioned in previous reports, it is entirely appropriate to comment on the genre and literary context of the texts. Where this has been integrated into the response, with examples that are well chosen and connect to comment that meets Assessment Objective 2, candidates are invariably well rewarded.

However, as also noted in previous series, candidates were often less secure in applying the skills needed to meet Assessment Objective 1. 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***. Candidates were able to make a range of points that met the demand to compare the two studied texts, but not all candidates were confident in drawing upon a range of literary and linguistic techniques in order to do this.

Narrative voice and style, tone and structure as well as a range of imagery and other literary techniques are aspects of the authorial craft that candidates are encouraged to explore. Many responses selected apt examples from the two texts to explore but limited their exploration of technique to word level analysis. This impeded candidates from reward in the highest levels of the mark scheme.

Candidates who were selective in their analysis of literary technique – in identifying and exploring patterns of motif and imagery across the texts – were often highly rewarded. Successful answers on ***Mrs Dalloway*** explored the pervasive motif of Big Ben within the novel, with one successful response for

Question 8 using the image as a way to discuss the transformation of British society post World War One. Similarly, other successful responses for ***Women and Society*** that responded to ***Wuthering Heights*** analysed the characterisation of Heathcliff or the anthropomorphism of the moors as a way in to exploring the theme of freedom.

As also already mentioned, the introduction is a crucial part of a response rewarded at the higher levels of the mark scheme for this section of the paper. Where candidates have considered this at the planning stage the response is frequently more controlled and 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***.

Question 2: Compare the ways in which the writers of your two chosen texts present love.

The majority of responses for this question compared ***Great Expectations*** and ***The Color Purple***. Candidates covered a range of material with regards to this question, exploring various forms of romantic, familial or platonic love. One response, placed in Level 4, compared the presentation of parental love in ***Great Expectations*** and ***The Color Purple*** noting that Dickens, in particular, depicts the absence of parental love, ***instead opting to show guardians, mentors and adoptive parents***. Many candidates were quick to note that absence or presence of love in the protagonists' childhoods was a key feature of the Bildungsroman.

Question 3: Compare the ways in which the writers of your two chosen texts explore the idea of home.

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 violence.

There were few responses to this question.

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

Contextual comment – both historical and literary – was particularly well covered in responses to this question. Candidates covered a range of material here, exploring the myriad ways in which prejudice is experienced and enacted through the processes of colonisation and migration. Assessment Objective 4 was also handled on this question, and was particularly apparent in responses that had strong or clear introductions. For example:

Conrad in Heart of Darkness portrays the experience of prejudice through the perspective of the coloniser, rather than the oppressed, uniquely conveying the discovery of the realities of prejudice. Contrastingly, Selvon displays the brutal experience of prejudice from the view of the marginalised, in post-war London.

There is a clear point of comparison immediately identified in the introduction that the candidate went on to explore in some detail.

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 gender.

Examiners noted that the focus taken by candidates was, in the main, on women although some responses did explore ideas of masculinity. In comparisons between ***Frankenstein*** and ***The Handmaid's Tale***, examiners noted that the historical gap between the two texts made for 'interesting and knowledgeable AO3 comments' and candidates covered a range of ground from the Enlightenment and Romanticism to the Moral Majority in Reagan era United States of America. One examiner noted that telling 'comparisons were made between treatments of the female voice' with many candidates noting the depiction of the male narrators in ***Frankenstein*** and comparing that with the 'handmaids' acquired skill in talking almost below a whisper in Gilead'. Comment on the linguistic and literary techniques used frequently focussed on the way in which language is used to dehumanise women – for instance, in description of Elizabeth as a 'pet' and Offred's self-description as a 'two-legged womb'.

Question 7: Compare the ways in which the writers of your two chosen texts explore the role of fate.

Assessment Objective 2 was particularly well covered in this question. Examiners noted that there were interesting discussions of how far fate is avoidable in all three novels. 'Candidates noted that the clones' future' in ***Never Let Me Go*** has already been decided for them and discussed 'how their resignation is reflected in' the character of the prose style of the novel. Other candidates noted that in ***Frankenstein*** Victor fails to 'morally interrogate his ambition, so that his fate is self-inflicted'.

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 changing societies.

There were few responses to this question.

Question 9: Compare the ways in which the writers of your two chosen texts explore characters' desire for freedom.

Wuthering Heights and ***Beloved*** were the most popular pairing for this question. Candidates explored the pairing of Cathy and Sethe and how Cathy seeks freedom from Heathcliff whereas Sethe seeks freedom from slavery. Where candidates compared ***Wuthering Heights*** and ***Mrs Dalloway***, examiners noted that there were some interesting comparisons made between Cathy, Heathcliff and Septimus with an emphasis on how each character saw death as the only escape from their 'craving for freedom'.

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 attention is given to the introduction
- 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.
- 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
- ensure that the introduction to the response is well thought through
- enjoy sharing your knowledge and enthusiasm for the novels studied with the examiner.

