



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

November 2023

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE  
In Language (Specification A) 4EA1  
Paper 02

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## Introduction

This report will provide exemplification of candidates' work, together with tips and comments, for Paper 2 of the Pearson Edexcel International GCSE Specification A in English Language. This was the first November series of the 'A' specification in IGCSE English Language 9-1 and it was a small entry.

The specification consists of three components: Unit 1: Non-fiction and Transactional Writing - 60% (examination); Unit 2: Poetry and Prose Texts and Imaginative Writing - 40% (this examination) OR Unit 3: Poetry and Prose Texts and Imaginative Writing - 40% (non-examination assessment). Candidates may also be entered for the optional Spoken Language Endorsement (non-examination assessment).

Unit 2 for Poetry and Prose Texts and Imaginative Writing is assessed through an examination lasting one hour and thirty minutes. The total number of marks available is 60. The reading and writing sections on this paper are loosely linked by the theme of the text from the Anthology which appears on the examination paper.

This focus of this component is:

**Section A - Poetry and Prose Texts:** study and analyse selections from a range of fictional poetry and prose texts.

Candidates should study the poetry and prose provided in Part 2 of the *Pearson Edexcel International GCSE English Anthology* in preparation for responding to a given prose extract or poem in the examination.

The specification identifies that candidates:

'should be able to read substantial pieces of writing (extended texts) that make significant demands on them in terms of content, structure and the quality of language. Throughout the qualification, candidates should develop the skills of inference and analysis.'

Candidates are advised to allocate 45 minutes to Section A, and there will be one essay question on a poetry or prose text from Part 2 of the *Pearson Edexcel International GCSE English Anthology*, which will be made available in a booklet in the examination if it is a longer extract or will be in the Question Paper in the case of a poem. Candidates will answer the question in this section and 30 marks are available. There are three bullet points to prompt the response and the third bullet always asks candidates to consider language and structure.

**Section B - Imaginative Writing:** explore and develop imaginative writing skills.

Candidates are advised to allocate 45 minutes to Section B. There are three writing tasks, to some extent linked by theme to the reading prose extract or poem. Candidates pick one question to respond to and the response is worth 30

marks. The format of the tasks remains the same for each series - Question 1 follows the format 'Write about a time when you, or someone you know...', Question 2 follows the format 'Write a story with the title...' and Question 3 offers two images as a prompt for a response which is always 'Write a story that begins...' or 'Write a story that ends...'.

The Assessment Objectives for this paper are:

### **Section A: Reading**

#### **AO1:**

- read and understand a variety of texts, selecting and interpreting information, ideas and perspectives

#### **AO2:**

- understand and analyse how writers use linguistic and structural devices to achieve their effects.

### **Section B: Writing**

#### **AO4:**

- communicate effectively and imaginatively, adapting form, tone and register of writing for specific purposes and audiences

#### **AO5:**

- write clearly, using a range of vocabulary and sentence structures, with appropriate paragraphing and accurate spelling, grammar and punctuation.

It was clear that candidates were all able to respond to the short story from the Anthology in the examination, and that most had studied it before.

Candidates had been prepared well and all had, at different levels, developed the skills required to answer the questions.

It was also clear that candidates used what they had studied in their reading to feed into their imaginative writing, which inspired them. As the specification identifies, the main aims for our candidates in this paper are:

- read critically and use knowledge gained from wide reading to inform and improve their own writing
- write effectively and coherently using Standard English appropriately
- use grammar correctly, punctuate and spell accurately
- acquire and apply a wide vocabulary alongside knowledge and understanding of grammatical terminology, and linguistic conventions for reading, writing and spoken language.

Candidates had, pleasingly, been given the opportunity to practise their writing techniques and planning and proofreading skills.

The responses of candidates had some positive features. Examiners were impressed by:

- evidence that many candidates had understood and engaged with the content of and ideas in the prose text from the Anthology
- the successful, integrated use of the bullet points within the question and balance of coverage
- coverage of the assessment objectives required for this paper
- the range of ideas and creativity for AO4
- the attempt to vary vocabulary, punctuation and sentence structure for AO5
- writing that showed at least appropriate tone, style and register for audience and purpose.

Less successful responses:

- demonstrated a lack of knowledge of the full range of the story
- rigidly followed the bullet points in the question so that language and structure points were almost an 'add-on' at the end
- had an insecure grasp of language and structure with a lack of understanding of how language and structure were used, feature-spotting or confusion of terms
- had limited comment on language and structure and relied heavily on description of the story or paraphrasing of it for Question 1
- failed to support points using appropriate textual evidence or used over-long quotations
- lacked organisation in their writing
- lacked accurate spelling and secure control of punctuation and grammar.

It was clear that candidates had been able to find at information about how strong feelings were presented and could comment on language and structural features. Imaginative writing was often interesting, engaging and enthusiastic and had a clear sense of purpose and audience in the voice and ideas used.

Overall, examiners were very impressed with the performance of candidates and with the range of responses they saw. As Principal Examiner for this paper and Chief Examiner for the specification, it is a privilege to read such accomplished work and to see the engagement, interest and significant hard work in the responses candidates had completed.

## Question 1

The first two bullet points in the mark scheme relate to AO1 - read and understand a variety of texts, selecting and interpreting information, ideas and perspectives. The level of understanding of the text from the Anthology is assessed in the first bullet point, and the selection and interpretation of information, ideas and perspectives in the text in the second bullet point. Overall, candidates clearly engaged with the story. The bullet points were followed by the vast majority of candidates and helped them to focus on the question and manage their responses to cover the whole text.

At the very basic level candidates tended to comment very broadly on strong feelings. They were able to show some understanding, but the understanding and focus on the full range of the story (for example, the ending) was uneven. There was sometimes limited selection and interpretation of information and ideas and not much more than re-telling of the story.

The majority of responses marked in the middle level of the mark scheme often paraphrased the text rather than writing using an analytical style. Quotations/references were often valid to the question and relevant to the point being made, but the explanation was quite obvious. For example Mrs. Mallard saying 'free, free, free' shows that she wants to be free. Some candidates misunderstood the text, thinking that Mrs. Mallard was grieving and sad or not discussing her other emotions. Sometimes the quotations did not match the point being made. Some of the less successful responses had too much emphasis on the news of the death (possibly because it was a bullet point in the question) which was only the first bit of the story.

The most successful responses embedded many relevant quotations and referenced language techniques used. They often discussed the range of emotions felt by the main character. These best responses usually discussed the irony of the ending. They also covered symbolism associated with the pathetic fallacy and description of the surroundings and nature representing Mrs. Mallard's newfound freedom following the death of her husband. The higher-level responses also often discussed structure, such as the heart trouble at the start foreshadowing the end and the cyclical structure. So much of the interesting analysis lies within Mrs. Mallard's various reactions.

## **Examiner Comments:**

### **Writing**

For this part of the assessment, the vast majority of candidates focused their writing on the question, thus achieving the sense of purpose bullet point in the mark scheme (bullet point 2) in Level 2 and above. Likewise, the vast majority of candidates tried to show evidence of crafting either in lengths of sentences or varying sentence starters. It was pleasing to see evidence of crafting, editing and proofreading. Most candidates tried to at least introduce a question or exclamation to vary sentence structure and punctuation used, and ellipsis was also used in some. Most candidates demonstrated evidence they were trying to vary vocabulary, even if it meant a misspelling.

The least successful responses were fairly basic, with straightforward use of tone, style and register and audience and purpose not always clear. At this level candidates tended to express but not always connect ideas and information, with limited use of structural and grammatical features and paragraphing.

The best responses had subtle use of tone, style and register, managing ideas and stylistic or rhetorical devices to suit audience and purpose. At the higher levels candidates tended to manage, but not always manipulate, ideas and information, with a range of structural and grammatical features and paragraphing. Responses at the highest levels had some creative ideas and conscious, successful crafting. At the top end of the mark scheme careful choice of vocabulary was evident and was more subtle.

The assessment objectives for these tasks effectively discriminated the quality of responses. Advice to centres would be to encourage candidates to avoid thinking they need to write a whole novel or even a short story in the time available - they need to have a clear organisation and direction in mind, and to perhaps not 'over-season' the pieces with vocabulary and syntax.

Varying sentence structure and punctuation were evident, for example, varying the way sentences begin; more use of subordinate clauses to begin complex sentences; effective use of one-word sentences and one-sentence paragraphs to demonstrate conscious crafting. Some candidates attempted to use ambitious vocabulary while some seemed to steer away from ambitious vocabulary in order to maintain accuracy. The less successful responses were formulaic, showing a lack of organisation and often demonstrated a lack of planning and direction. There was some excellent description and evidence of crafting at all levels.

Centres are advised to encourage candidates to structure their writing into coherent paragraphs - particularly the use of one-line paragraphs in the higher-level responses. Some candidates struggled with verb tenses.

In terms of register it was clear that the majority of the candidates knew how to write an imaginative piece. Examiners noted that lack of control could let candidates down for AO5 and that control of language and handwriting was also a problem at times.

**Question 2: Write about a time when you, or someone you know, had to wait for something important.**

This was the least popular of the writing questions. The narratives waiting anxiously for exam results worked well. A simple narrative but really well-described, using a variety of sentence structures and vocabulary. Candidates often tried to overly complicate their stories, leading to running out of time or a less-successful executed piece of writing.

**Question 3: Write a story with the title ‘A Choice’.**

Examiners noted that this question had the greatest range in terms of written quality, with responses seen in Levels 2-5 for both Assessment Objectives. It was also felt that the best responses were to this question.

Many candidates took the opportunity to build up suspense in the choice being made. The consequences of the choice played out in their narratives, and they often scored higher marks. The most successful responses used ‘show, not tell’ to produce their stories. It seemed that some candidates ran out of time so time management could possibly be something to work on since there are a lot of marks associated with this section.

A few had written in a more transactional style like giving advice about choices, rather than a narrative. A few ironic responses about making good choices to work hard and pass their IGCSEs.

The most successful responses were those that used a character, rather than being autobiographical.

**Question 4: Look at the images provided. Write a story that ends ‘I turned and ran.’**

One examiner commented that there were ‘A complete mix of interpretations to this question.’

Those that took a less obvious approach (than, for example, turning and running from a monster) were often more successful. Examiners felt that centres should advise candidates to avoid starting a narrative with ‘one day me and my friend...’ or ‘once upon a time’ as starting, for example, with a hook to intrigue the reader is usually more successful. Some candidates tried to stick to the images too rigidly when it clearly did not fit with what they wanted to write.

Overall, often a well-executed simple narrative scored more highly than an overly complex narrative. Candidates must consider accuracy as well as effect for punctuation as it detracts from meaning, so therefore negatively affects AO4 and AO5.

## Summary

Based on their performance on the paper, candidates are offered the following advice:

- Ensure you have studied the poetry and prose texts in the Anthology fully and use the examination time to remind yourself of the text, not re-read it.
- Read the question carefully and make sure you are answering **this** question, not telling the examiner what you know about the text you have studied. The selection needs to be relevant to the question you are being asked, in this case how the writer tries to present strong feelings.
- For AO2 (language and structure), make sure you are offering ideas about how language and structure are used. Many of you were able to give examples, but sometimes you did not offer points about how the examples were used.
- For AO2 try to cover points on both language and structure, commenting on the different techniques that have been used by the writer and how they link to the overall topic of the question, in this case how the writer tries to present strong feelings.
- When you are writing, always think about your reader, what information and ideas you want to develop and how you want the reader to react at different parts of your writing; then choose the best words, phrases or techniques available to you to achieve those effects.
- Think carefully about how you will begin to write so that it is engaging for your reader from the very start.
- As you begin to write, know where you will end. This will help you to write in a manner that is cohesive and coherent for your reader.
- Take care throughout with accuracy: spelling, punctuation and grammar
- In writing, focus on crafting and organisation, whatever the nature of the task.
- Be ambitious in your structure, vocabulary and range of ideas and try to be creative and original. We are often incredibly impressed with your creativity and ability to write in such an imaginative way in the time given.
- Always respond to the questions set, not a question you have prepared - this does not often lead to effective responses and is not in the spirit of the qualification.

