



Moderators' Report Principal Moderator Feedback

June 2023

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE

In English Language (4EA1)

Paper 03: Poetry and Prose Texts and Imaginative
Writing

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Administration

This was a much larger series than January and many centres opted for the coursework component. Many centres were able to navigate the digital submission successfully and on time. As ever, many thanks to those centres who work hard to ensure all their administration is helpfully in place. This is always very much appreciated by the moderating team.

However, it is important for all centres to meet the submission deadline to allow for the selection of standardising materials ahead of the marking period and so that moderators can complete their pre moderation checks. In this series the whole moderating team had missing centres post standardising and had to chase late submissions. This is made significantly more difficult when the contact details for centres are not up to date on the Gateway system. Please do take some time at the beginning of term to check that there is an up-to-date contact name, email, and telephone number for your examinations officer available on Gateway.

Another major issue this time was the fact that almost a quarter of centres had not uploaded the folders with the highest mark for the centre and the lowest mark for the centre in addition to the randomly generated sample. This is not a new requirement and has been in place since the legacy specification. There is also a reminder notice of this on the LWA system. However, moderators were finding that part way through the moderating period they were delayed in being able to complete some centres because these folders were missing.

Assessment, annotation, and internal moderation

Many centres complete internal moderation extremely diligently and we see evidence of a discussion through the annotation and double (sometimes triple) marking of candidate work. This is always appreciated by the moderator and reveals the thought process as to how a final mark has been awarded. This level of formative annotation is always the best practice in arriving at fair judgements overall.

As I have mentioned in a previous report, some centres have adopted a formula of simply using the AOs as formative annotation – for example listing AO1 or AO2 in the margins of the response. Whilst this flags the assessment objective, it does not indicate to the moderator at which level of the mark scheme the assessor considers the candidate to be working at and whether the candidate is identifying an aspect of language or structure or commenting on its effect for example.

Moderators have also fed back that coursework where comments are addressed to the candidate are unhelpful. The pieces submitted should be final drafts of work and should not show corrections to spelling and punctuation as this can impede the clarity of the candidate's own achievements and skills. Likewise, when coursework is covered in numerous ticks (sometimes in two colours of ink) this also serves to detract from the actual work of the candidate and slows down the moderating process. Please ensure final submissions are clean copies with formative and summative annotations applied to the margins and in summation on the cover sheets.

Year on year we see a pattern where reading work is most often subject to leniency overall and writing can be subject to severity in assessment. This is particularly noticeable where marks from Level 4 are applied to work which is not as developed and exploratory as demanded by the mark scheme. It is also worth considering whether ideas and comments are truly perceptive if they are ones which have been used many times before. It can be useful to bear in mind that the reading element of the course is a taught element and that often candidates are expressing themselves much more individually when completing their own writing. We often see much less annotation on candidates' imaginative pieces than we do on the reading work, and this can lead to more reticent assessment - especially in terms of the AO5 marks. By contrast, we do often see some rather over enthusiastic annotation of the reading work. Moderators are still often surprised to find comments such as 'sustained understanding' applied to the opening introductory paragraphs of essays, for example.

I would always advise centres that, prior to uploading the sample, the lead assessor reads through the sample folders in rank order from the lowest marked folder to the highest. This can really help centres to ensure that their rank order is secure. If discrepancies are found at that stage it allows you to revisit particular areas of the cohort's entry and fine tune. At times, moderators find that one assessor has been a little more lenient or severe than others and this has not been picked up in the centre's internal moderation. This final cross check can prevent adjustments being made following the external moderation, can identify where candidates have used the same or very similar paragraphs in their reading response and identify rubric infringements. This summer we identified one highest marked folder (58/60) where the candidate had written about the MR James story rather than the Susan Hill extract, with completely fabricated quotations which went unnoticed by the centre itself. That final rank order read by one designated lead assessor can prevent all of these possible issues and save disappointment later in the summer.

Task setting:

Overall, there is always much more freedom of choice and variety in the creative writing section than in the reading and this leads to some fantastic success overall. There are always some very accomplished writers within the cohort, and we often sense real enjoyment and ownership in the imaginative writing that candidates produce. As Principal Moderator, I would like to see as much freedom of choice given to the reading section. It is always really refreshing when we find a centre who has allowed their candidates to actually choose from a selection of reading titles and made their own choices of texts to apply to them. These pieces then allow for exploration, they allow for individual insights and are much more likely to enable candidates to demonstrate their own skills. Often, we see very large centres where everyone has completed the same task with the same pairing of texts, and this is not really in the spirit of the component. Though this is the last year that we will see the commentary in place, they have often been unwittingly useful in informing the moderating the extent to which a candidate has made a choice.

Assignment A

For Reading assignments, we have tended to see a prevalence of poetry texts in responses rather than prose texts this time. This is now something for centres to bear in mind in terms of changes to the requirements for next summer and centres are advised to familiarise themselves with the revised specification and mark scheme if this has not been noted already within departments.

Disabled and Out, Out, the carry forward texts from the legacy anthology are still used by some centres and tend to lead to very similar pieces of coursework, which lack originality and the capacity for candidates to achieve highly. That said, there have been occasional responses at the very top of the mark scheme which deal with these two texts in depth and with new insight which is always refreshing to see.

The Bright Lights of Sarajevo and Still I Rise are very popular text choices and create the opportunity for different pairings and numerous different approaches by topic. As mentioned, the prose texts have been less commonly used, though The Story of an Hour is often paired with Angelou and occasionally we have seen responses pairing the Chopin text with The Necklace. Whistle and I'll Come to You was occasionally used in conjunction with poetry texts where the theme of horror or fear was being explored.

Titles focused on such themes as the impact of war, betrayal, women and oppression, loneliness, death and destruction, the isolation, futility, and the hopelessness of war. There were also some interesting responses about hope amidst adversity. Other candidates focused on prejudice and cultural identity. Some centres looked specifically at atmosphere and tension. Having a specific focus like this in the title is beneficial to the candidates and helps them target key ideas.

Having been reinforced in examiner reports and E9 centre feedback, we are seeing more centres referencing 'language and structure' within their question setting, thereby encouraging candidates to address the assessment objectives more precisely. Often it is candidates operating in the lower reaches of the mark scheme who have been somewhat disadvantaged by being set a more generic task or a very difficult theme. Very occasionally we have a centre who is still clinging to legacy specifications and insisting on setting a comparative task. These were much less common in this series, however.

Assignment B

The imaginative writing seemed more focused on narrative than in previous years. There were some narratives inspired by images. This is becoming popular and links well to the examined component and allows for the creation of quite powerful, vivid images and so the descriptive element was more prevalent in these assignments. It was very pleasing to see some centres where candidates had chosen from a selection of images which gave even more individuality to responses.

We have seen work from a variety of genres such as Gothic, dystopias, supernatural, thrillers and science fiction. If a centre had focused on war in Section A, then it was sometimes the

case that they produced war narratives themselves for the imaginative writing section. Descriptive pieces were rare this time, but they were sometimes linked to personal experience, or they conveyed key scenes such as events at a sporting fixture or a gig; a memorable event or an anniversary.