



Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

November 2024

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE
English Literature (4WET1)
Unit 1: Poetry and Modern Prose

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Centres are thanked for choosing Pearson Edexcel as their International GCSE English Literature provider. We very much hope that both our candidates and centres are delighted with their results.

Introduction

The first November series (2024) was very successful and the 4WET1 01 paper performed well. There was a small entry this series. The modular paper is still in its infancy and it is anticipated that numbers will increase year on year; however, the paper was very similar in performance to the summer series and the main 4ET1 01 November paper across all sections. There were no errors in the paper, no erratum notices and there were no enquiries from centres following the examination. Centres are congratulated on preparing their candidates so well.

For Section A, candidates are presented with an unseen poem and answer a question based on it (20 marks). Section B, Anthology Poetry, gives candidates to write in response to one of two poetry questions (30 marks). For Section C, Modern Prose, candidates respond to one of two questions based on the prose text that they have studied (40 marks). The total mark for this paper is 90.

As seen in the summer, the most popular prose text for the modular paper was *Of Mice and Men*. Indeed, there were no entries for the other texts (*To Kill a Mockingbird*, *The Whale Rider*, *The Joy Luck Club* and *Things Fall Apart*).

A full range of marks was awarded with most candidates gaining marks in Level 3 or above. Again, there were some extremely good responses and a number of candidates gained marks in Levels 4 and 5, particularly for their prose response. All responses were marked by the Principal Examiner.

Section A, Unseen Poem

Q1. *Gathering Leaves* by Robert Frost

Question: Explore how the writer presents the gathering of leaves in this poem.

The poem was accessible and there was a wide range of responses from straightforward ones commenting on the monotony of the task, through to those considering the overall futility and monotony of life. Some considered the poem as a metaphor for nature, the cycle of life, growing up, maturing and dying. Many noted how once gathered, the leaves lost colour and looked dead. Candidates noted how the task of gathering leaves was never-ending and monotonous and, hence, frustrating. More confident responses included the change in tone from joyful and 'fun-loving' to impatient and bad-tempered.

Many candidates commented on the comparison of spades being 'no better than spoons', with more successful candidates commenting on this immediately and

developing the point by considering the theme of pointlessness and then used that to track how that theme is developed as the poem progresses. The best responses linked this to how the poet has used language, form and structure.

Candidates noted the onomatopoeic 'rustle', the hyperbolic 'mountains', and the repetition of 'again and again' to emphasise the overall mood and tone of the poem. Rhetorical questions were also discussed. Candidates noted that the simile, 'light as a balloon', helped create a light-hearted and happy atmosphere. Not many appeared to understand the analogy of the rabbit and deer; some used this to comment on the cruelty of nature as these are prey animals and not raptors.

Comments on structure included the regular length of the stanzas, possibly reflecting monotony. Many also noted the first-person narrative. Who exactly the speaker of the poem is, was a matter of wide interpretation from a farmer with reference to the term 'crop' for the leaves, a child enjoying the rustle and elusiveness of the leaves, and those who just referred to the narrator. One candidate even noted that since the poem was written in the 1920s it could have been a soldier comparing his dead colleagues from the First World War to the never-ending piles of leaves that were being discarded.

Specifically noted from the marking of the modular paper, some candidates did not progress beyond Level 3 because close analysis was not sustained. Some responses were too brief and ideas required further development. Some candidates would have benefitted from including more evidence from the poem.

Summary:

The poem and question performed well and as intended. A full range of marks were awarded, therefore, the poem was a good differentiator. The quality of responses was similar to past series.

The poem and question were similar in complexity, style and performance as past unseen poetry questions. When comparing with previous series, the level of demand was similar.

Key areas to consider for future series remain the same.

When responding to the Unseen Poetry, Section A, candidates should try to:

- demonstrate an understanding of the overall meaning of the poem
- focus on the question
- refer to form and structure and try to suggest why this may have been used
- give examples of language and explain their effect on the reader
- comment on all areas of the poem, not just the first few lines
- make explicit references to the question
- use short quotations and avoid copying large areas of the poem.

As with anthology poetry questions, it is important to remember that simply paraphrasing a poem and supporting this with quotations is not deemed as close analysis of language, form or structure.

Candidates should select specific words and phrases and explore techniques and their effects on the reader.

PETER: Point, Evidence, Technique, Effect on Readers is a useful acronym to use as it covers the Assessment Objectives detailed in the mark grid bullet points.

Explicit comment should be made in relation to structure. If a candidate does not include structural comment, the mark will often be placed lower in the level. Similarly, if there are structural points and little close analysis of language, this too will hinder progress.

SECTION B, Anthology poems

This is the only section that is different from the main sister paper, 4ET1 01.

There was almost equal numbers of entries for the two questions, with Question 2 being only slightly more popular.

For the modular responses, it was noted that candidates would have benefitted from including more coverage of the two poems and more close analysis of specific words and phrases. Some techniques were identified; however, the effect on the reader was not always considered.

Q2 Compare the ways the writers express their feelings in *The Tyger* and *Do not go gentle into that goodnight*.

Candidates were mostly successful when responding to this question and some responses were maturely expressed. Candidates often commented on Blake's feelings of awe about the tiger and explored the use of repetition and contrasts. Most considered how *The Tyger* is structured and commented on how the poem begins and ends with the same verse, apart from the change of one word. When writing about *Do not go gentle ...* candidates were confident when considering the son's strong feelings when imploring his father to fight death; however, many students did not consider the various characteristics of the 'wise men', 'Good men' or 'Grave men' in sufficient detail.

Some candidates referred to the villanelle structure of *Do not go gentle ...* and the repetition that features in both poems.

Most responses gained marks in Level 3 and above.

Q3 Compare the ways each writer presents a challenge in *Search For My Tongue* and one other poem from the anthology.

The candidates who responded to this question were most often successful and a good range of poems were chosen for comparison. *Hide and Seek* or *Half-caste* were popular choices. *War Photographer* also proved to be a good poem to compare with. At times, the choice of the second poem made comparison more difficult and focus on the question was lost.

Candidates often took the opportunity to write about a poem they were more familiar with, and coverage of *Search For My Tongue* was not as thorough. However, candidates were able to write about the challenges faced by the speaker when trying to remember her 'mother tongue' and how the speaker directly addresses the reader. At times, more consideration of the floral metaphor could have been included.

**Anthology poetry Summary:
Students that did well in the Poetry section:**

- thought about the deeper meaning of the poems
- explored language, form and structure skillfully
- analysed and integrated language, form and structure points together, rather than in separate paragraphs
- provided a balanced exploration of both poems when comparing
- considered the effects on the reader
- made explicit references to the question and
- succinctly answered the question in the conclusion.

SECTION C Modern Prose

The responses to the prose questions were mostly very successful. For this small entry, the only responses received were for *Of Mice and Men*. Please see the centre report for 4ET1 01 for comments on other texts.

Some candidates included some inaccurate references to their chosen texts and others did not include a sufficient range of examples from the novel. As this is a closed book examination, exact quotations are not expected; however, candidates should make reference to specific events or episodes throughout the novel in order to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the text.

Some did not qualify for a mark in the higher levels because of the lack of details or precision. Some examples were not discussed in sufficient detail. For example, when discussing the importance of money in *Of Mice and Men*, if the candidate included points about Candy, they often did not include details about how much money Candy offers towards making the dream a reality or where the money was from.

A number of candidates attempted to analyse language and structure, which are not assessed in the prose section, and some lost focus on the question.

Candidates should also be reminded about the need to include details from the novel and not a film adaptation, as even in the 1992 (Gary Sinise) version of *Of Mice and Men*, there are additional scenes and lines that do not appear in the novel. Such as the train journey, the name of the ranch, Curley's wife's conversations with George or when she refers to Curley breaking her records. Although film versions are very useful teaching aids, candidates should be aware of what is different or not included in the novel.

At times, for both questions, there was lack of contextual comment to support the points made.

Q6 *Of Mice and Men*: In what ways is George important in the novel?

This question on George was by far the more popular. Most candidates had a lot to write about George. Quite a large number of responses were narratives based on George's relationship with Lennie, whereas others discussed the symbiotic and unusual relationship between the two men, how George's relationship changed from bullying to looking after Lennie.

Many candidates commented on how the relationship is revealed through the opening of the novel – the ketchup, the mouse, the dream, etc. They also commented on what is revealed about George's relationship with Lennie when he discusses Lennie's child-like nature with Slim. George's profound influence on Lennie's behaviour was often noted, especially in the episode with Curley and the fight. George's volatile nature and his less positive characteristics were occasionally discussed – his misogyny is one example. Many candidates commented with great sympathy on George's final act of 'caring for Lennie' and the reasons for shooting his friend.

The more confident candidates noted that George represents friendship and stability to a vulnerable character in a hostile environment. His ambivalent attitude to the American dream was also noted. Many candidates were able to embed their contextual comments into their argument, particularly in terms of the nature of itinerant workers, ranch life and loneliness.

Most candidates displayed at least some knowledge about the text and the character. Examples were given in varying details. Unfortunately, a small number of candidates appear to have concentrated on the historical context of the novel at the cost of demonstrating their knowledge of the text itself.

When considering context, most commented on the lives of migrant workers, their living conditions, the American Dream and the treatment of disabilities. Some candidates noted that the dream would never come true and that George always knew that – they commented on the fact that George joining the other ranch hands in visiting the cat house was evidence of that.

Q7 *Of Mice and Men*: 'Money is very important in *Of Mice and Men*.' How far do you agree with this view?

The question on the importance of money was the less popular option. Many noted how central it was to the hierarchy of the ranch and how, to many characters, it would have been an escape route to a better life.

Some candidates mentioned that money does not buy happiness and Curley's wife was used as a prime example, suggesting that although she lacks for nothing, she is still unhappy. Some suggested that Slim does not appear to have much money, but he still appears to be content with his life. Money was explored as a symbol of power, with the Boss and Curley being discussed. Some considered the loss of money and the loss of status, such as Crooks whose family once owned a chicken ranch.

Several considered how, In spite of there being an incentive for saving, George would often spend his and Lennie's hard-earned money in the 'Cat house'. Thus raising the question of how realistic George's plans were for saving towards a small farm. Another area considered was that money meant independence – hence the dream. A few candidates conflated the two questions and discussed George and the dream of owning a little place and Lennie getting to 'tend the rabbits' in great detail rather than focusing on the wider theme.

Contextual comments included the Wall Street Crash and the American Dream and its relevance to George and Lennie. The possibility that Candy 'bought' his way into a friendship with George, by offering to share his compensation and savings to help get a small-holding was often considered, but ideas could have been developed further. More successful candidates developed some points, such as considering how Candy was an unusual situation that cast the Boss in a slightly more favourable light, as compensation for an accident was rare.

Overall, context for this question was embedded quite well and there were few responses that used context as 'bolt-on'; however, there were some instances where contextual comments outweighed examples from the novel. Some wrote more about the Wall Street Crash or the Dust Bowl than the novel. We do not expect to see a balance in the knowledge and understanding of the text with comments on historical context. Historical context should simply support the points made that have been drawn from evidence in the text.

The responses for both questions displayed a range of knowledge and understanding of the text. Relevant examples from the novella were used to support comments and ideas although, at times, more specific details from the novel could have been included.

Summary

In comparison with previous series, the prose (novels) questions performed in a similar way and a full range of marks was awarded. The questions followed a similar style and there were no new phrases or alternative wordings to the question stems.

Feedback has been positive throughout and we were impressed with the majority of the responses seen.

As in previous series, a summary follows:

For the Prose section,

Candidates that did well:

- used evidence, such as short memorised quotations, paraphrasing, and referred to a range of specific examples or episodes within the chosen novel
- had a good knowledge of the context and how it impacted the text
- weaved context into the essay, rather than bulking it on at the end
- answered the question clearly.

Candidates that did less well:

- had less knowledge of the text
- had not provided enough examples
- provided narrative responses
- bulked on too much context at the beginning or at the end of paragraphs, or did not explicitly refer to context.

Interestingly, the points above are similar to those mentioned in previous centre reports, which supports the belief that overall, the performance of the paper was very similar to past series.

The paper performed as intended and provided equal opportunities for all candidates.

Conclusion

As always, the responses are a pleasure to mark and have, once again, been very enjoyable to read.

Centres should be congratulated on preparing their candidates for the examination. As always, we very much hope that you will continue to deliver this specification and that you and your students are delighted with results.

Do look at our website for more details about the Summer 2025 examinations and for the latest updates.

We are looking forward to the introduction of our two new prose texts to the paper, which will be first examined in Summer 2026:

Klara and the Sun by Kazuo Ishiguro

Western Lane by Chetna Maroo

Please see our website for further details.

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Thank you.

Principal Examiner / Chair

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