

# Examiners' Report

Summer 2016

Pearson Edexcel GCE English  
Literature and Language (6EL04)

Paper 4 Presenting the World

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**General comments:** It is a pity that this is the last year for the current specification as there was so much to enjoy and commend in so many submissions. However, it is hoped that centres will take the best practice alluded to here and carry it forward to the new A-Level.

The best work seen was of an exceptionally high standard and much of it was publishable. On the whole, the best work was produced when centres had given candidates clear guidance on the nature of the work but had left them to follow their own interests and favourite subjects. Many candidates had used other A-level subjects such as History, Psychology and Music as a starting point and had presumably decided to use their English work as a way of widening their approach to other subjects. Some centres had adopted a more unifying approach, with every candidate offering identical genres and titles. Although this is a perfectly acceptable strategy, there was inevitably less diversity and less sense of personal engagement. By contrast, two candidates from different centres who were clearly studying A-level Music had chosen lives of composers as their starting point. One had used *Amadeus* as a stimulus play, while the other had researched the life of Paul Hindemith and used fiction on the rise of Nazism as a starting point. The quality of the research and wider reading was the key factor in determining success. Those centres which had spent sufficient time preparing candidates through wider reading produced the most satisfying work. This was mainly an issue with the non-fiction section. The weakest submissions were often "articles" but there was no sense of any understanding of genre, purpose or audience. AO4 was the main casualty here, although the commentaries also often suffered.

**Themes and core texts:**

Once again, *The Kite Runner* was the most popular text, with *A Thousand Splendid Suns* not far behind. These inspired a range of responses, with most candidates following a thematic inspiration rather than emulating the stylistic devices. The Dilemma of Duty was approached in a variety of ways, with candidates devising their own variations on a theme. *The Great Gatsby* increased in popularity and there were many submissions about materialism, identity, the American Dream and responsibility, to name just a few.

As in previous years, *The Motorcycle Diaries* was often used as a starting point for non-fiction stimulus and centres would be well advised to consider finding substantial non-fiction texts as stimulus material for the new specification.

Other popular texts included *Atonement*, *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest*, *The Road*, *The Handmaid's Tale*, *Brave New World*, *Regeneration*, *Half of a Yellow Sun*, *Things Fall Apart* and *The Collector*.

**Tasks:** The most common literary tasks were self-contained short stories or extracts from longer novels. There were a few "missing chapters" from stimulus texts and a few play scripts.

The range of non-fiction tasks was very impressive and centres are to be congratulated for finding new ways to encourage candidates to write in different styles. These included academic articles, student guides to a particular subject, "A Letter to..." inspired by the regular series in *The Guardian*, op-ed pieces, biographies based on members of their own family

and, in one particularly inspired example, a reflective piece prompted by the discovery of a grandfather's letters from the Second World War.

**EXEMPLAR A:**

**This is part of a TED talk on the effects of PTSD.**

Imagine it's 1915. You're on the Western Front fighting an approaching German army. A shell explodes around ten feet away from you. What would you do? Most ordinary people would say "Run for the hills!" but during the Great War of 1914 - 1918, soldiers who did this were shot.

Just over three hundred soldiers were shot on The Front for "cowardice" during the Great War but there were thousands more sufferers of what we know as Shellshock. After the war, the British Government had to help the 800,000 soldiers who had developed the condition.

So what is Shellshock? Well, the dictionary definition is a "psychological disturbance caused by prolonged exposure to active warfare, especially being under bombardment". In other words, thousands of soldiers were left in such a traumatic state of shock after the war that they returned to the society they had once known, not the same people.

As we all know, every animal is hardwired to either "Fight or Flee" from oncoming danger. Those dangers are then stored in the brain for future reference if the situation should happen again. Just imagine you are hunting around a mountainous wilderness. A boulder shakes and starts to fall. In that split second of time, your brain has either found an escape route or sent the impulses to your muscles to fight. This reflex has therefore allowed *Homo sapiens* and many other species to survive and evolve in to the creatures we are today. Although, many soldiers had never experienced such danger and terror before in their lives, so their nervous systems were unable to tap into their memories to find the relevant escape route.

Let's take the situation again, but let's view it differently. This time you're walking along a river bank looking for fish. As you get closer to the water's edge, a crocodile leaps from the water. Your brain has fled from a boulder before, but not a crocodile and so you have no idea what to do. As a result, you freeze; unable to move. Your brain is so scared that it experiences some kind of trauma.

**MODERATOR'S COMMENTS:** This is a particularly effective example as the candidate has clearly researched the genre and has crafted the text in line with clear audience expectations. A good example of this is the use of present tense to create a sense of immediacy. The shifts in register are well handled and the overall impression is of a candidate who knows exactly what they are doing.

**EXEMPLAR B:**

**This is part of a television review for the series Miranda.**

Way back in 2009, a - what I call - *wonderful* thing happened. Miranda Hart graced us with something to laugh about. You, me and everyone else. She brought a familiarity with her that we recognised in ourselves - closeted weirdness. You know? The nuttier side that only our families witness once a

year at Christmas, in a much-anticipated game of charades. She knows what it's like to be in a dysfunctional family.

The 'Miranda' series is one to be admired from both an artistic and business perspective. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a woman is able to write and star in her own television series – *marvolissimussolini* - and it's shown on the BBC.

'Miranda' had an average of 9.5 million viewers in her last series, something most comedians can only dream of. Compared with *EastEnders'* 8.5 million on Christmas day, Miranda looms over the soap with her loyal fans.

She showed us that the stereotype of women - taking forever to do anything, because *we're too busy with how we look* - no longer exists. She absolutely hit it out of the park with winning the 'British Comedy Award for the Best TV Comedy Actress'. Twice! Miranda triumphed over Jo Brand and Dawn French (who were both nominated).

The hit series first aired in 2009 and was so successful that it was accused of having a laughing track. But despite Miranda Hart being well renowned, she portrayed quite the opposite in her programme. She presents a single thirty-something, hopelessly in love with Garry the chef, badly co-manages a joke shop with her best friend Stevie and has an overbearing mother who attempts miserably to be Miranda's matchmaker. Such fun!

What Britain loves most about the 'Miranda' series is that we're in her bubble. The look she'd give the camera during embarrassing or revealing moments - classic. It created a sense of importance for the audience and seemed as if she was sharing information with us that no one else knew.

**Moderator's comments:** There is a clear sense of genre and audience here. The style is informal but always controlled. The candidate has clearly researched similar styled reviews but has been able to achieve their own distinctive voice.

### **EXEMPLAR C:**

**This is part of an online article about anxiety.**

I'm going to take a bit of a leap, throw it out there, and set the ball rolling; so to speak.

At some point in your life you will have experienced anxiety. Even if it was that nervous feeling you got in your stomach before you made your theatrical debut in a year 3 Christmas production of the nativity, as a shepherd.

Feeling anxious is perfectly normal; however, when it begins to negatively affect your life on a regular basis, then it is definitely worth talking to someone.

### **What does an anxiety disorder look and feel like?**

To explain the feeling, I like to use the analogy of falling on a tipping chair and not knowing whether you're going to catch yourself... but on a daily basis.

The interesting thing about anxiety is that anyone can struggle with it and it manifests itself in many different forms. There are multiple types of anxiety disorders; social anxiety disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder and panic disorder. People who suffer from G.A.D, also known as Generalised Anxiety Disorder experience excessive amounts of anxiety for lots of reasons.

Anxiety manifests itself for many reasons, potentially stress, a negative relationship, loss of a loved one or even a negative outlook on life, which is often why anxiety and depression come hand in hand with each other. Everyone experiences anxiety in different ways, and every individual has different triggers and phobias. If I compiled a list of personal phobias, part of it would most certainly look like this:

- Phone calls  
The amount of times I have asked someone "Are you sure I can't just text?" To tell the truth I'd much rather have a conversation face to face than be forced to have a conversation over the phone. I'd say I'm a master of avoiding phone calls, and yes I know; I can't just email forever. I'll face my fear eventually, just not today. Okay?
- Having to triple check the fact that, yes I definitely did turn my straighteners off in the morning. But still finding myself worrying all day that'd I've burnt the house down
- Public transport.

My worst nightmare. Having other passengers on the bus staring at me, as I fumble around in my rucksack trying to find the correct change. Don't get me started on trains; they are by far the worst, especially if someone is in my seat and I have to awkwardly ask them to move.

### **Anxiety and Panic Attacks**

Basically, people who suffer from an anxiety disorder have a heightened 'fight or flight' response. It's the body's warning system over-reacting. When people are faced with certain stresses, their body cannot cope, resulting in either a panic, or an anxiety attack; but what's the difference? Anxiety attacks are short-lived and the attack stops when the person or stress is removed from the situation. For example, if someone leaves a large group of people the anxiety will subside, but the individual will still be left feeling anxious. Anxiety attacks involve waves of nausea, the sensation of being trapped, heart palpitations and feelings of extreme dread. Unlike an anxiety attack, a panic attack has no trigger and can happen at any time. Panic attacks can often be short, lasting between 2-3 minutes. However; despite their length they can leave the person feeling exhausted and unable to function properly. Symptoms of panic attacks include chest pains, hot or cold flashes, hyperventilation and shaking. After experiencing a panic attack people should take a break from what they were doing previously, or lie down to allow themselves to recharge.

**MODERATOR'S COMMENTS:** The candidate has attempted an informal style here and there is a clear sense of audience although this is not always fully successful. There is some attempt at using appropriate graphological features and the candidate has clearly researched the topic. Whether there is enough scope here to achieve a top band mark is doubtful and candidates are advised to consider this when choosing non-fiction topics.

## **EXEMPLAR D:**

### **The opening of a short story which uses the conventions of hard-boiled crime fiction to explore the theme of cloning**

The flickering lights of a busy road flash into the alley, temporarily illuminating all there is to see. Admittedly there's not much: rats, sewage, bursting black bags of garbage piled high against cans of trash. A typical New York alleyway. It wouldn't surprise you in the least to know that it had been the sight of a triple homicide less than forty eight hours earlier. It was, for all intents and purposes a regular gang fight. Not at all remarkable. All that was left now were tatters of police tape, a dash of chalk on the ground, and a splash of red on the wall that had either been forgotten or left to the rain. Even the shadowed silhouette of a person in a long dark coat didn't draw much notice. The city thrived on situations such as this.

Normally Elizabeth Roberts would avoid these kinds of places, decline these sorts of cases. There was much easier money out there. But this was different. Nobody had asked her to be here. She wasn't under any legal or financial obligations. No: she was here for herself and herself alone.

Of the three casualties, only two had been identified. It was the Jane Doe she had come to investigate. The 5'7 female approx. 25 years old with no known friends, family or associates. The Jane Doe whose face had appeared in nearly every national newspaper in the hopes of a name.

One such picture was on the slim sheet of paper wedged between the pages of the black notebook Elizabeth carried with her at all times. It was cropped just below the neck, leaving only the face. A face Elizabeth knew only too well: nine years younger, it was the face of her sister. Two years older, she may as well have been looking in the mirror.

It had never really bothered Elizabeth that she and Abigail had the same face. People had joked and called them clones, but it had never been more than that: a joke they had both dismissed as coincidence. Siblings were supposed to look similar, right? It wasn't that strange. Now though, looking at the smudged photograph, she wasn't sure if it was.

Jared gives an amused snort.

#### **Here is the conclusion:**

"Of course not, I'm going to help you."

"You're *what*?"

"Going to help you, of course. You're not the only one who wants to know what happened."

"You mean you don't?"

"The facility doesn't tell us *anything*, like at all. If they know who killed Sam, Trish, and Liv then believe me we're the last people they'd tell."

Elizabeth narrowed her eyes.

"So you want to help?"

He nods. "And I'm not the only one."

Jared turns to look at her expectantly. When she says nothing, he sighs before standing up.

"Look, I'll leave and give you time to think it over. If you decide you want help, call the number on the post-it."

The sun had almost finished casting gloomy shadows against the brickwork view of the office before Elizabeth started to move. She walked slowly over to the pin board, taking the post-it and folding it between the pages of her notebook before going to her computer and looking up flights to Georgia. It was time to pay the Singers a visit.

**MODERATOR'S COMMENTS:** This cleverly wrong-foots the reader by using the style of a detective novel to introduce the theme of cloning. The candidate has absorbed many of the genre's conventions and maintained a consistent third person over-the-shoulder narrative. The conclusion relies on dialogue, which is a risky strategy which is successful here. The piece is well shaped for dramatic effect.

### **EXEMPLAR E:**

**This is the first section of a fictional piece about the life of the aviator Amy Johnson. The candidate has used the non-fiction forms of obituary and biography to present multiple perspectives about her life, exploring the role of the individual in society.**

Cruel as Imagination

*Obituary, the Times, January 1942*

*Amy Johnson died a year ago to this day, on the 5<sup>st</sup> of January 1941, whilst on an Air Transport Auxiliary flight in an Oxford Airspeed. She was the lone girl flyer, Britain's heroine, whose solo flight to Australia in May 1930 thrust her into fame. Her innocence and beauty stunned the world; she was undoubtedly the most loved daughter of Britain.*

*A storm was her undoing. Not having looked at the weather report, she was oblivious to the weather that she faced. Unable to cope, it appears that she decided to abandon the Oxford Airspeed she was flying in the Thames Estuary; but the waves and the temperature of the sea meant that she died before help arrived. A Royal Navy officer that saw her parachute turned his ship to help. He later reported that he was ready to jump in and rescue Amy, but she slipped beneath the waves before the ship was close enough.*

*In the last year there have been many theories and conflicting reports about the death of Amy Johnson. However, it can be agreed by all that she was a true patriot, a brilliant and daring woman. An ATA spokeswoman said they were devastated by the loss of the country's foremost aviatrix, but said the women's division would 'certainly continue' to risk their lives flying aircraft around the country for maintenance, despite the dangers.*

*May she live on forever, through the actions of us all, as we strive towards the image of her courage and resilience.*

### **Excerpts from *The Flying Life: A Biography of Amy Johnson***

I knew Amy Johnson for the last three years of her life, and in that time we grew close; I discovered the naive, innocent girl beneath the headline beauty, the courageous aviatrix- and her well-hidden lack of natural talent for aviation. But even less known, although widely exaggerated and



mythologized, is the full history of her marriage to Jim Mollison. I intend to banish the myth and reveal the true story of their doomed relationship.

She had known Jim Mollison for less than twenty four hours when he asked her to marry him. A whirlwind romance, love at first sight, the press said. She told me she thought she needed him; someone to share the fame which crushed her after every flight. He was a flying hero, the nation's favourite playboy and alcoholic; but he enjoyed that image too much to change.

She attributed the breakdown of her marriage to one specific incident. She got a call, a tip off from a friendly journalist. Her husband was in a hotel room with another woman. She remembered, as she was shouting through the locked door, that a man strolled past in the corridor and smiled; she glared back.

She wondered how much money he would get for the story- the Mollisons arguing yet again. She berated herself for being vicious but the press was already there when she left the hotel. Naivety was her Achilles heel; the world was crueller than she never could have imagined.

Jim wouldn't allow her to divorce him initially. He denied all of the accusations of lechery, he promised that he loved her, that no other woman could compare with her innocent, girlish beauty. People often talked about her girlishness, her innocence. To Amy that meant naivety, weakness, an inability to fend for herself. It was tiresome to her.

Finally, though, he agreed to supply the evidence. She became Amy Johnson again; and in some ways she had never been happier.

Amy was furious when she heard that Jim had joined the Air Transport Auxiliary. It had become her pride, and her stage, on which she was still at the forefront of aviation and the fight for women's rights. He was paid nearly twice as much as her, and she knew she was better. It was a deep wound.

It was a wound deep enough that she would rarely speak to him. She said she found herself disgusted by his charm, his jokes and anecdotes, even his mannerisms; she knew them so well and despised them all the more for it.

He tried to speak to her on many occasions. Once she simply ignored him; causing him to become so angry that he started shouting, swearing at her. She continued to study the ailerons of a Hurricane until he uttered a final curse and left. He slammed the door. She thought that he never forgave her; he cared too much about his image.

The last conversation Amy Johnson ever had was with Jim Mollison. In an exclusive interview he recited their last conversation thus (beginning after she has watched his landing):

'Greaser, huh?'

Amy nodded in acknowledgement.

'She's a beautiful plane. Great condition. Much better than the scrap metal they usually make us fly. Just a weak undercarriage, the engine runs smooth as silk. Remember to round out. Don't smash it down like you usually do.'

She nodded again.

'The weather looks gorgeous for tomorrow morning. If I were you I'd just get up and go tomorrow while it's still. Can't get reports of weather up here, can you?'

'I can't.'

'I took the liberty of checking in the station up North. Just for you.'

'Thanks.'

'Take it from me, tomorrow's going to be a stunner. I've left you half a tank of fuel too.'

'Well, thanks Jim.'

'Have a good flight.'

**Moderator's comments:** What is effective about this extract is that the candidate has used different genres and presented an excellent piece of fiction which shows a high level of research and engagement.

**Commentaries:** On the whole, candidates followed the rubric regarding commentaries and were able to reflect on the influence of stimulus texts as well as analysing specific linguistic shaping. Some candidates spent too much time analysing passages from their stimulus texts without relating them to their own writing. The best were able to weave in some well-chosen points about stimulus texts and then show in detail the specific influence on their own writing. Candidates were less successful when they did not have a clear sense of audience and purpose, especially for the non-fiction work, and seemed to think that an article was an essay with a headline.

"Broadsheet" was sometimes a catch-all phrase to mean "longer article" and there was, occasionally, little evidence that the candidate had ever read a broadsheet newspaper and seemed to think they were the sole province of upper class intellectuals. However, many candidates were able to offer subtle discussions of the needs of specific audiences and were able to reflect on precise linguistic choices. The best candidates integrated linguistic terminology and avoided generalisations about making their writing "relatable" or "easy to read".

## **EXEMPLAR F:**

**This is the first part of a commentary about a short story and a film review which explore the issue of gender identity.**

'Thirteenth Night' and the film review of 'The Danish Girl' have the same subject- gender identity. Shakespeare's 'Twelfth Night' inspired the short story; its purpose is to create an awareness of gender dysphoria. The location of the non-fiction piece is the Guardian website. 'Thirteenth Night' is aimed at a younger audience, possibly struggling with gender identity themselves, whereas the film review is aimed at an adult audience interested in film, or readers generally of the Guardian website.

'Thirteenth Night' begins in the third person, introducing the family dynamic from an omniscient perspective. It changes in the second paragraph and is then told through first person narrative in the present tense - highlighted through a change of font. Readers 'hear' a character struggling with gender identity, allowing readers to form a connection with him.

On the other hand, first person is only used in the film review in the final two paragraphs, ending it with the critic's personal opinion. The rest of the film review is written in third person, which conforms to the conventions of a review. "Even a hardened film critic like me" changes the tone. The comment is self-deprecating which adds humour, enhancing the authenticity. Peter Bradshaw, a Guardian journalist, influences this style.

Discourse markers in the fiction piece act as 'scene' changes. Phrases from 'Twelfth Night', surrounding the secrecy of gender identity, have been included to act as these discourse markers. For example, *'it is too hard a knot for me to untie!'* precedes the scene where Seth kills himself. The foreshadowing allows readers to predict what may happen.

**MODERATOR'S COMMENTS:** The candidate has given a precise indication of genre, purpose and audience. Terminology is used appropriately but there is no sense of feature spotting. The effect of the techniques is also shown and the candidate has indicated how the text has been shaped.

### **EXEMPLAR G:**

#### **This is the last part of a commentary**

Another feature of both the texts is the uses of imagery and motif. For example, throughout "NYDN" Thomas 'sees' his girlfriend as a hallucination. This is similar to John Forbes Nash in "A Beautiful Mind" and Sassoon in "Regeneration". Both have hallucinations due to mental illness. Through Thomas's hallucinations (such as "I could see her. Cathy!") The audience are taken between the two worlds of Thomas's life in the present and past and highlights the pathos further.

Imagery is also used in the lecture. The analogy begins with the phrases "Imagine it's 1915" and "Let's take the situation again". Rhetoric devices are essential for a listening audience because pictures are created for the audience to help them understand. By using these metaphors, (similar to the ones used in the YouTube TedEd videos such as "What is Depression?" and "What Causes Sleep Deprivation?") the audience is able to understand the situations that the soldiers were faced with during the war to sympathise with them.

Another device used in the two texts is the narrative voices and perspective. In "NYDN" the story starts and ends in the third person, whilst the main focus of the text is in the first. By using third person at the start, the information is not directly connected to Thomas, but at the end the third person is used as Thomas is unable to make his entries any longer. However, by using the first person for the bulk of his entries, it creates a subjective view of Thomas allowing the audience to sympathise with him and to understand how he experienced the war.

However, in "Reimagining the First World War" the main point of view that is given is in the third person. The implicit evidence is not attributed: it is factual and allows for an objective point of view to be heard. However, this type of evidence shows that the information can be trusted as it has been researched extensively in order to make the speech.

Tone also expresses the theme. "NYDN" is informal, as Thomas is writing diary entries. This allows the audience to sympathise with Thomas as he seems more human. This is similar to Christopher Boone in "The Curious Incident" who has a unique tone to express himself.

However, in "Reimagining the First World War" the tone is formal but conversational. For example, throughout the piece the adverb "well" is used a number of times. This formal tone therefore keeps the audience interested and entertained during the lecture but is also used to treat the subject with

respect. Through this spoken mode, the text is given credibility as the information is clear to understand.

Both texts enable the audience to understand more about the theme of shellshock through the use of contextual stories, and evidence tracing its history from World War One to today.

**MODERATOR'S COMMENTS:** The candidate has chosen a comparative approach here. This is not necessary but does have the advantage of focusing on theme and language and helps to avoid an observational, descriptive approach. The references to stimulus texts are well handled and integrated into the whole.

**Difficulties relating to assessment:** there is far less confusion about the nature of non-literary writing than in previous series and thankfully few examples of fiction masquerading as non-fiction e.g. Eye-witness accounts of the war in Syria or the bombing of Pearl Harbour. There were also far fewer newspaper pieces set out in columns with elaborate graphics and extensive images. Clearly, candidates who offered play scripts were obliged to use generic conventions and some candidates had used fonts to distinguish different narrative perspectives.

Most of the folders adhered to the word counts and many of those that did not became self-penalising as candidates had not edited their work rigorously enough. Some candidates had clearly not bothered to proof read their own work. The best folders had been checked scrupulously and benefitted from the editing process.

**Assessment:** Most of the folders sampled had been rewarded appropriately, although there were a number of folders which had been over-rewarded for very descriptive, observational commentaries and, in some cases, been awarded high marks for AO1 despite the careless writing and clumsy, unsophisticated expression. Most centres provided ample evidence of internal moderation, often including their own mark sheets with a precise breakdown of the AOs.

**Conclusion:** The overwhelming impression for this series was that candidates had been encouraged to follow their own interests and enthusiasms, often with great success and there was a large amount of impressive work.

Centres had, on the whole, marked the work appropriately and had used effective internal moderation to ensure consistency of marking.

Administration problems were few and far between and the vast majority of submissions were a pleasure to read.

## **Grade Boundaries**

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

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