



Pearson  
Edexcel

Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

November 2021

Pearson Edexcel GCE

English Literature (9ET0)

Paper 2: Prose

## **Edexcel and BTEC Qualifications**

Edexcel and BTEC qualifications are awarded by Pearson, the UK's largest awarding body. We provide a wide range of qualifications including academic, vocational, occupational and specific programmes for employers. For further information visit our qualifications websites at [www.edexcel.com](http://www.edexcel.com) or [www.btec.co.uk](http://www.btec.co.uk). Alternatively, you can get in touch with us using the details on our contact us page at [www.edexcel.com/contactus](http://www.edexcel.com/contactus).

## **Pearson: helping people progress, everywhere**

Pearson aspires to be the world's leading learning company. Our aim is to help everyone progress in their lives through education. We believe in every kind of learning, for all kinds of people, wherever they are in the world. We've been involved in education for over 150 years, and by working across 70 countries, in 100 languages, we have built an international reputation for our commitment to high standards and raising achievement through innovation in education. Find out more about how we can help you and your students at: [www.pearson.com/uk](http://www.pearson.com/uk)

December 2021

Publications Code 9ET0\_02\_pef\_20211216

All the material in this publication is copyright

© Pearson Education Ltd 2021

## Introduction

This was an unusual exam series with very few entries, taken in the context of disrupted education during 2020-21, and the awarding of Teacher Assessed Grades in summer 2021.

In this context, candidates are to be commended on their hard work; most answers showed an excellent grasp of the texts studied and were able to put forward thoughtful and well-informed ideas.

This disruption, along with the timing of the exam series, goes some way to explaining the tendency of candidates taking this paper to write shorter answers than have been seen in previous series, suggesting that they may be out of practice when writing extended essays.

Most answers seen did address all four of the assessment objectives. However, there were some answers which were weaker in one or more of the requirements of the paper. AO2 and AO3 were often neglected, and candidates are reminded of the necessity of making close reference to their texts, and analysing ways in which writers create meanings through their narrative methods and literary techniques. For AO3, many candidates either omitted to write about the influence of contextual factors altogether, or struggled to connect contexts explicitly to the texts and questions they were writing about. This led to some rather general or disjointed contextual points being made.

When writing about historical contexts, candidates are reminded that it is useful to be as specific as possible about dates and time periods. For example, naming the century in which a novel was written when discussing societal norms (without stating what those norms were) is so general as to lose all meaning. For example, a number of candidates referred to twentieth century texts as 'written in the 1900s'- but there are major differences in the social and cultural expectations of a text from the 1920s and one from the 1990s. Equally, there is a gap of 85 years between the publication of *Frankenstein* and *The War of the Worlds*, so to categorise both novels as 'written in the nineteenth century', while factually correct, ignores a lot of nuance. Mary Shelley and HG Wells, had radically different world views and social/cultural experiences- phrases like 'early 19<sup>th</sup> century', 'late Victorian' or 'fin de siècle' could be useful in making more specific points about historical context, as could discussions of the writers' different educational backgrounds, experiences of gender, and the different scientific, political and industrial landscapes informing their writings.

Some candidates struggled to make direct connections between their two novels, instead leaving these implicit or writing about the two texts separately. Better responses took an integrated approach, frequently connecting and comparing their two writers' methods, contextual backgrounds and thematic concerns.

No responses were seen for the themes of Colonisation and its Aftermath, or Crime and Detection. Only one response was seen for the Childhood theme (on question 3), and for question 7 in the Science and Society theme. Question 10 in the Supernatural theme and question 12 in the Women and Society theme also received no responses.

## Question 8

This was the most frequently answered question, focusing on the writers' presentation of inequality. All of the responses seen wrote about *Frankenstein*, usually pairing it with *The Handmaid's Tale*, but a significant minority using *Never Let Me Go*.

Some very good essays were seen, often choosing to focus on inequality from a gendered perspective, or to consider the ways in which inequality can lead to outsider status.

Many responses were not specific about contextual factors, either failing to write about it for one or both texts, or making rather general references to 'the times the novels were written' without further explanation. Some candidates had a tendency to conflate characters with writers, and lacked a sense of the texts as crafted, fictional works.

The following section from a level 5 essay on *Frankenstein* and *Never Let Me Go* is a good example of a candidate who integrates all of the assessment objectives, managing to put forward a fluent argument, make connections between texts, analyse the writers' methods, and discuss contextual influences:

Another way in which both texts present inequality is as ~~an~~ an inevitable force. In *Frankenstein*, the cyclical structure of the novel demonstrates that despite any ~~and~~ crescendos and hopes of equality and justice, the ~~essence~~ nature of existence is always unequal; reflected through Walton's ship and the mysterious figure of the monster featured in the start and end of the novel. Shelley masterfully presents inequality as inevitable through the uncontrolled and unchecked potential of human ambition. ~~She~~ She presents the pursuit of knowledge as something always bound to fail which means that it will always result in inequality. In Chapter 3, Dr Victor calls science "the labor of men of ~~genius~~" but later towards the end ~~he~~ says to avoid it "even if it appears to be innocent" showing ambition as ~~the~~ something that inevitably leads to destruction and inequality. More interestingly, the Monster refers to himself as

Satan, being the "fitter emblem." While this may have been a ridiculous, ~~perhaps~~ successful

statement in the 1800s, it ~~truly~~ offers us an intriguing proposition. That ~~perhaps~~ similar to how ~~the~~ Satan's fall from grace and plunge into inequality ~~is~~ compared to the angels, ~~the~~ ~~most~~ was predetermined by God, the ~~unequal~~ standards of society and disparaging discrimination of ~~the~~ the monster was always meant to be. It presents Inequality as a blind force that indiscriminately chooses its prey, if not the monster, then another ~~innocent~~ innocent character, such as Justice or Elizabeth, both of whom fell ~~as~~ victims to the <sup>inevitable</sup> ~~same~~ force that is Inequality.

In Never Let Me Go, the clones all seem to accept their fate, echoing ~~the~~ the same idea that unfair treatment and inequality are inevitable and predisposed forces of life. This is emphasized through the very bleak euphemisms used by Kathy throughout the novel, such as "donations" and "completion." These very ~~stark~~ ~~and~~ passive colloquialisms of ~~death~~ not just deaths, but the unfair ripping apart of the clones' bodies illustrate the ~~same~~ fact that nothing can be done to stop ~~the~~ the routine <sup>decay</sup> ~~of~~ of the ~~down~~ clones. ~~Verily~~, Ruth contends that "I think ~~in~~ I am ready to become a donor" and that ~~I~~

it is what ~~they~~ they are "supposed to do - right?" The methodical indoctrination of clones to accept the ~~inevitable~~ inequality of their ~~future~~ fate and not rebel against it, may make the reader also inhabit their ignorance and present ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> horrible ~~state~~ and to their lives as normal and absent of any inequality at all. Unlike Ishiguro however, Shelley would've most certainly sided with the interpretation as her 3 kids died shortly after giving birth to her; reasoning and ~~the~~ perhaps explaining the presence of inequality ~~as~~ as inevitable since she ~~could~~ could not do anything to stop her children succumbing to the <sup>brutal</sup> unequal realities of life.

## Question 9

Question 9 received only a few responses, exploring writers' presentation of corruption. All responses seen compared *Dracula* with *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Some excellent work was seen here, with sophisticated arguments put forward, and which ranged confidently around the texts.

This candidate's arguments about the corruption of religion were particularly interesting. The script received a level 4 mark overall:

The corruption of men towards women leads on to another concept with Stoker. It's adamant in exploring the idea of religion being corrupted. It begins in "Dracula", as the main Christian symbolism that is heavily used to represent the attack from heretic creatures like Dracula who seeks to remove religion and its purity. On the other hand, in "The Picture of Dorian Gray", the religious imagery is not as vivid in itself. There are subtle <sup>reference</sup> references to Christianity with great frequency throughout the novel.

For example, the character of Basil who is a man of faith supposedly, strongly advises Dorian to repent for his sin but Dorian kills Basil. The loss of Basil reflects the loss of morality and virtue as religion ~~is~~ and morality both decline as the novel goes on.

The corruption of Christianity in "The Picture of Dorian Gray" is symbolic of the attitude towards religion in the late Victorian era when fashionable scientific theories were slowly eroding religious beliefs. Charles Darwin's ~~radical~~ radical ideas ~~was~~ were changing how people started to think and ~~that~~ also created social anxieties such as the fear of outsiders and the repressed side of man both of which are evident in the two novels and are products of the corruption of religion.



## Question 11

This question asked about writer's exploration of how women are affected by societal expectations. The question was generally well answered, with all 4 texts seen in responses. Most candidates focused well on the question, and the task naturally led to discussion of the contexts affecting societal expectations of women, so AO3 was well covered in the main, although as with other questions was sometimes lacking in specific details.

This extract from a level 4 essay made interesting comparisons of the murders in *Tess of The D'Urbervilles* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns*:

Number  
302  
Despite the successive adherence to societal expectations of the denouncement of both novels, the female protagonists become empowered, as they chose to use violence to get rid of their tormentors, and this is evident in the murder of the antagonists Alec in Hardy's novel, and <sup>in</sup> ~~Tess~~ in Hossain's novel by Mariam. This is evident in the isolated 'Tess of the D'Urbervilles' after the ~~an~~ implicit murder of Tess Alec by Tess, "the silence was overcome by a regular bit. DRIP DRIP DRIP." Here the isolated triplet sentence is evocative - creates an evocative ominous imagery of the bloody act of murder, and the rhythmic repeated monosyllabic 'd' sound suggests an act of cruelty. Tess is aware that murder

Question  
Number

11

To free from this cycle of ~~embrace~~  
oppression she had to murder  
her oppressor ~~involuntarily~~  
~~without thinking of the consequences~~  
The Road that Hardy did not  
make the murder scene  
explicit, is reflective of Victorian  
society's frown on female  
violence as not part of  
society's expectations of women,  
as they are often portrayed as  
the weaker sex. Thus it can  
be argued that Tess's murder  
of Alec is an intentional  
stab on her society's degradation  
of women as killing strength,  
hence why she was  
punished unjustly as  
indicated by the Hardy's  
ironic and satirical 'justice'  
was done phrase. ~~Similar~~

Question  
Number

11

When Mariam murdered  
Rashed, Hosseini demonstrates  
an element of control, as  
she "took the shovel... she  
was deciding the course  
of her own life" Here the  
possessive "her own life",  
is indicative of the enormity  
of the choice she is about  
to make and the immense  
feeling of power she strikes  
her to dig herself out of  
the class and gender  
victimization that she has  
been subjected to throughout  
her life. However, just like  
Tess, by murdering her husband  
Mariam is contravening the  
Afghanistan's Islamic  
expectation of women to be  
always submissive and so

Question  
Number

her power is short-lived, and  
she is condemned to death by  
the patriarchy - the Taliban.

## **Paper summary**

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

- Make sure you are aware of the assessment objectives; these are all referred to in the question and are equally important.
- Try to make contextual points as specific as possible to the text and writer you are discussing. This might include adding dates, or specifying exactly what social or cultural norms were, rather than making a general reference to these.
- Make sure that you are referring to specific details and quotations from your texts to support your ideas.
- As part of your preparation for the exam, practise planning and writing in timed conditions so that you know how much you can do in the time
- Make sure that all of your points are directly answering the question

Pearson Education Limited. Registered company number 872828  
with its registered office at 80 Strand, London, WC2R 0RL, United Kingdom