



Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2022

Pearson Edexcel International Advanced Level
in English Literature (WET01) Paper 1: Post-
2000 Poetry & Prose

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Introduction

Centres are thanked for choosing Pearson Edexcel for their International A-Level English Literature provider.

WET01 (Post-2000 Poetry & Prose) is a two-hour, open book examination. It comprises two sections:

- Section A, Post-2000 Poetry: candidates will employ the reading skills they have developed through the course. They answer one essay question from a choice of two comparing a named poem from the prescribed list of poems from *Poems of the Decade: An Anthology of the Forward Books of Poetry* with another poem of their own choice from the prescribed list.
- Section B, Post-2000 Prose: candidates answer one essay question from a choice of two on the prose text they have elected to study from the following options: *The Kite Runner* (Khaled Hosseini), *Life of Pi* (Yann Martel), *The White Tiger* (Aravind Adiga), *Brooklyn* (Colm Tóibín) or *Purple Hibiscus* (Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie). Students should study their chosen text in detail, and they will be expected to make specific reference to contexts both of production and of reception.

In studying for Post-2000 Poetry & Prose, students will learn about:

- the importance of making connections and comparisons between texts (Section A)
- the significance of cultural and contextual influences on literary texts (Section B)
- developing informed personal responses to literary texts, including the use of concepts and terminology appropriate to literary study at Advanced level
- developing coherent and accurate written responses.

25 marks are available for Section A and 25 for Section B. The total mark of 50 represents 50% of the total IAS and 25% of the total IA2.

Assessment Objectives

Section A, Post-2000 Poetry: AO1, AO2 and AO4.

Section B, Post-2000 Prose: AO1, AO2 and AO3.

Note that AO5 is *not* assessed in this paper.

Please refer to the full specification for details of the Assessment Objectives and their weightings.

General Overview of the WET01 June 2022 (2206) paper and performance

This has been a successful paper. There were no errors, no erratum notices and no changes made to the Mark Scheme.

It was pleasing to see an increased entry for the 2206 examination. We are hopeful that candidate numbers will continue to increase in coming series. It has been good to see that, in spite of the unpredictability of the last two years, candidates have nevertheless prepared themselves effectively for the demands of the examination. Most candidates were evidently aware of the rubric requirements of the examination and the ways in which the Assessment Objectives are covered in the paper. We have been pleased to see that candidates have by and large been effectively prepared.

In the 2206 series we have seen responses offered on all the available options, and the full range of marks was awarded.

In Section A, Post-2000 Poetry, most candidates were effectively prepared. However, some candidates did not take on board the need to ensure that AO4 (the connections between texts) was adequately considered. It is important to write about the two texts together, seeking out connections between them rather than writing about them separately. Some candidates had spent more time and space analysing one of the two poems. It is important to ensure that both the nominated and the selected poem receive approximately equal treatment. A very small number of candidates had selected poems that have now been removed from the list of poems available for study, so it is essential that centres inform themselves of the current list so as to avoid this happening in the future. The most effective responses tended to offer an initial brief overview of how the poems related to the theme of the question and what this might mean before engaging in analysis. Such responses tended to maintain a close focus on meaning and this gave stronger shape and focus to their analysis. It is important for candidates to remember that the identification of features of poetry (rhyme schemes, rhythmic features and poetic devices) without a careful analysis of how they might contribute to meaning does not tend to lead to effective responses. Writers' methods are always best attached to poems' potential meanings.

In Section B, the most popular prose text selection was *The Kite Runner* (Questions 3 and 4) and the second most popular *Purple Hibiscus* (Questions 11 and 12). Many responses effectively covered the range of Assessment Objectives addressed in this section of the paper. The most common omission was consideration of AO3 (context). This was most notable amongst candidates writing on *Life of Pi* (Questions 5 and 6) and – to a lesser extent – *Brooklyn* (Questions 9 and 10). Centres are reminded that marks are awarded on a 'best fit' basis, and the failure adequately to cover an area for assessment affects candidates' placement between and within levels. Another important issue for centres to consider is how candidates can most effectively be prepared to talk about the variety of ways in which meanings are shaped in literary texts (such as, but not limited to, writers' use of the language, structure and form of the texts).

Some candidates had evidently spent significantly more time in responding to one section of the paper, and this had a deleterious effect on their work in the other. This is not to be recommended as both sections of the paper carry equal weight and should be given equal attention.

As in previous reports, it is worth continuing to note that accuracy of written expression is an important component. The clear and accurate formulation of ideas is key in conveying understanding. A plea also for candidates to recognise the importance of making their handwriting as clear and legible as possible. Work that cannot be read by examiners does candidates no favours.

Detailed Commentary on individual questions

Section A: Post-2000 Poetry

Question 1 (462 responses)

Most candidates chose to answer Question 1, comparing violence in 'The Gun' by Vicki Feaver to one other poem. By far the most popular choices of poems for comparison were 'Chainsaw Versus the Pampas Grass' (Simon Armitage), 'Eat Me' (Patience Agbabi) and 'Giuseppe' (Roderick Ford). These poems contained ample and relevant material for responding to the question and provided potentially interesting areas for connection and comparison. Other poems chosen for comparison were 'History' (John Burnside), 'The Deliverer' (Tishani Doshi), 'The Lammas Hireling' (Ian Duhig), 'On her Blindness' (Adam Thorpe) and 'To My Nine-Year-Old Self' (Helen Dunmore). These were not always successful when considering the theme of violence. A small minority of candidates selected poems from *Poems of the Decade* that are no longer available for study.

Candidates are to be advised against referring to poets by their forenames only (Vicki) and should refer to the poets either by their full names (Vicki Feaver) or their surname only (Feaver). It is useful if both poets and their poems are identified in the opening paragraph; this helps establish connection between the poems from the outset and tends to help candidates clarify what they wish to write about in relation to the two poems. Concise opening paragraphs that establish a clear sense of focus on

the topic of the question and on how this relates to the meanings of the poems is very useful. A few candidates, less effectively, used their openings to engage in displays of philosophical knowledge – Dostoevsky or Nietzsche come to mind – rather than providing an initial clear focus on the task and the poems.

Most candidates had clearly studied 'The Gun' and realised that it was written from a woman's perspective. They also commented on the escalation of violence as the poem progresses and noted its sexual overtones. Comments were made on the free verse structure as well as the alliterative phrases and visual descriptions. Some candidates spent too long analysing particular images or short sections of the poem at the expense of considering what happens across the poem as a whole. Many noted the change in person with the initial use of 'you' becoming 'I'. Although candidates commented on the last stanza, with the reference to the 'King of Death', relatively few focused on last two lines, noting that while crocuses are 'golden' in colour, they are also poisonous, thus linking back to theme of death. This relates to a more general observation about the importance, for AO2, of candidates explaining clearly the ways in which poetic devices help to shape meanings in the poems.

Care needed to be taken by some candidates who wrote at length about the poems individually and did not take the time to develop effectively their sense of how the poems could be connected. The offering of a few brief statements related to connections interspersed with lengthy analysis of single poems did not demonstrate an effective approach to AO4.

Question 2 (128 responses)

This question focused on the representation of the human body in 'The Map-Woman' (Carol Ann Duffy). Many fewer candidates chose to answer this question but the most popular comparisons poems selected were 'Eat Me' (Patience Agbabi), 'Genetics' (Sinead Morrissey) and 'An Easy Passage' (Julia Copus). Other poems used were 'Effects' (Alan Jenkins) and 'To My Nine-Year-Old Self' (Helen Dunmore). Perhaps due to its length, there were candidates who looked primarily at the first three stanzas of 'The Map-Woman' and other isolated extracts from elsewhere in the text. This meant that many candidates did not really offer an overview of the poem and the way it deals with the human body. Commentary tended to focus on Duffy's

use of imagery rather than the formal and structural properties of the poem. This said, there were some excellent responses from candidates who had clearly understood the mood of the poem and provided some insightful analysis of the effects Duffy achieves. The observations made with reference to the coverage of AO2 and AO4 in Question 1 can again be applied here.

As a general observation, it is worth candidates and centres thinking carefully about how to structure the openings of answers. Many effective responses in this series commenced with candidates providing a brief overview of the meanings of the poems they had opted to work with and relating these meanings to the terms of the question. In Example 1, the candidate's opening sentences provide a clear and concise indication of the kinds of connection they are looking to draw between the poems, offering a brief overview of the 'readings' of the poems that will help shape the candidate's arguments:

The Map Woman by Carol Ann Duffy is a poem in which a metaphorical map is etched onto the body of a woman. Her past is engraved into her body and although she tries to escape it, she is unable to do so. Genetics by Sinéad Morrissey is a explores how genes play a role in a persons life - it helps the give confidence that they belong to the family. The speaker wishes for acknowledgement and confirmation that her parents were once in love. Both poems explore how the human body cannot be changed, and the memories etched into the body cannot be erased.

Example 1

In Example 2, we see a good example of a candidate using connection as the starting point for a section of their response. This can help to ensure that candidates clearly and explicitly identify the connections they wish to discuss between the poems:

In these poems there is a similarity in how the human body plays a role in identity. This is seen in *Genetics*: "I know my parents made me by my hands". The use of "know" suggests certainty in her identity and a feeling of safety in this knowledge. The narrator knows their background and where they come from and feels comforted by it. This is emphasized by the certainty of genetics, they cannot be changed or altered (so there is no confusion or doubt) and is and will always be a part of our identity, our culture.

Example 2

Section B: Post-2000 Prose

Questions 3 (157 responses) and Question 4 (195 responses): *The Kite Runner*

Many candidates had a sound knowledge of the text. Question 4 on the presentation of power was the more popular question. Candidates suggested and explored a wide variety of examples of power in the novel. Candidates who produced more developed answers had clearly planned thoroughly and thought about developing a progression of ideas about power in the novel rather than simply providing a sequence of examples from the text. Candidates answering on *The Kite Runner* proved well prepared to engage with issues of context (AO3) and were able to relate

this explicitly to the issue of power in the novel. There were also answers that considered effectively the ways in which power appears and functions differently in the sections of the novel set in the United States as compared to those set in Afghanistan. Some candidates presented an overly political rather than literary answers, and this affected the balance of some responses, taking candidates away from the discussion of AO2 features.

For Question 3, candidates identified a variety of ways in which the novel explores conflict in society. Many answers, however, tended to focus on a few central relationships, such as those between Amir and Hassan, Assef and Hassan or Amir, Hassan and Baba. A significant number of candidates also considered the role of women (as did a significant number of candidates answering on Question 4) and the idea of conflict between the sexes. There was a danger with such responses, however, that this led some candidates into diverting to an essay about gender. As with Question 4, candidates sometimes wrote about contexts at the expense of considering the ways in which meanings are shaped in the novel (AO2).

Question 5 (51 responses) and Question 6 (26 responses): *Life of Pi*

Question 5 on Pi's sense of self-belief was more popular than Question 6, which asked candidates to explore Martel's use of narrative. Question 6 is worth noting as an example of question type that foregrounds AO2. Candidates need to be effectively prepared to discuss such features of their selected texts in detail. In the light of previous Examiners' Reports, it was pleasing to note that centres teaching *Life of Pi* had prepared candidates more thoroughly this series on the contexts for Martel's novel. However, this still evidently remains a difficulty for many candidates in relation to this novel and so it is worth observing again that AO3 is an assessed component in this section of the paper and candidates must be prepared to write about the contexts for the novel. As examples of fruitful areas of context, some candidates offered comments on Indira's Gandhi secularisation of Indian society and its influence on the world of the novel; others included and applied interesting contexts surrounding religious background and its significance. For Question 6, candidates referred to contexts of postmodernism and magical realism, thus adding

relevant contextual detail to their answers whilst at the same time engaging in discussion of AO2 factors that shape meanings in the text. Some really interesting answers looked at the use of multiple narratives and the overlaying of narratives in the novel. Question 5 produced more basic answers where a narrative approach was taken without the awareness of a multi strand narrative.

Here, for example is a candidate working at Level 2 on *Life of Pi*:

B. From the very beginning of the story, he was already born a Hindu with a pretty simple family and was raised in India, Pondicherry. He was a pretty naive child that had a curious nature and a connection of animals due to his family owning a zoo. Although his perspective changed when his father made him and his brother witness a pretty traumatising experience of the brutality of animals and no matter the species could be a threat. This trauma was engrained in his childhood through his life as he realises how brutal nature can be. This was one of the important points as it guided Pi in his survival luck and skills.

Note the largely general nature of the candidate's observations, although there are glimmers of greater clarity in the observations about Pi's experiences of trauma and the ways in which experience has guided Pi. There is, however, little in the way of supporting detail from the text, nor are opportunities to engage with contextual material taken.

Here is a stronger example. Notice the clear and concise ways in which the candidate illustrates understanding of the ways in which meanings are shaped in texts (AO2), here reflecting on the significance of Pi's name and how it relates to ideas of narrative and storytelling:

Pi's ^{name} name derives from the mathematical symbol 'pi' (π) which he proudly tells his classmates in his first year at middle school. ~~the~~ Throughout the story Pi tells a lot of stories as well. Pi's name, the mathematical symbol that represents an endless number that doesn't repeat itself perfectly symbolises Pi who tells stories, simple stories that have a lot of meaning and weight ~~is~~ behind them.

Question 7 (14 responses) and Question 8 (17 responses): *The White Tiger*

Question 8 was slightly more popular than Question 7, although candidates responding to Question 8 tended to take a more narrative approach, looking at the story of how Balram was raised. Candidates answering on Question 7 offered a broad picture of how Adiga sets about presenting India (AO2). As with those working on *The Kite Runner*, candidates writing on *The White Tiger* often displayed good levels of contextual knowledge and were able to relate this knowledge effectively to their discussion of Adiga's novel. Particularly good knowledge emerged in relation to the novel's representation of the 'Rooster Coop' and the caste system. Some candidates offered straightforward narrative accounts but there were some who showed an awareness of Adiga's use of satire and irony and the impact of Balram's letters to Wen Jiabao. There were some candidates, who whilst writing accurately and well, did not include detailed discussion of examples from the text. Centres are reminded that it is very important that candidates support their arguments by reference (including but not limited to quotation) to the texts they are studying.

Question 9 (22 responses) and Question 10 (22 responses): *Brooklyn*

Both questions were equally popular. In responding to Question 9, many candidates focused rather narrowly on Eilis and her memories. This could have been broadened out to include other characters and to reflect the opportunity to consider the bigger idea of 'memory', such as ideas of cultural memory and its relation to migration.

Where candidates opted for the 'narrower' approach to Eilis' memories, there was a tendency to narrate the story of her life rather than to focus explicitly on the on the key idea of 'memory'. This meant that answers sometimes lost focus. Candidates responding to Question 10, in which they were asked to consider the idea of 'emotional tension', sometimes displayed a similar tendency to narrow their answers and only really to consider Eilis, thus missing the opportunity to range more widely across the emotional tensions the text deals with. Some answers became straightforward accounts of a series events where Eilis was upset. If nothing else, this overlooks the idea that tension is not always negative. The idea of tension also relates to AO2 features of the novel, but this was not often considered. Relatively few candidates proved able to address the ways in which meanings are shaped in the novel and the role of the writer's (and the characters') language. As with *Life of Pi*, *Brooklyn* proved a text on which candidates did not, by and large, engage effectively with contextual factors and their impact (AO3).

Question 11 (51 responses) and Question 12 (54 responses): *Purple Hibiscus*

Question 12 was slightly more popular than Question 11. Both questions offered a chance for candidates of all abilities to write on the text. In contextual terms (AO3), candidates displayed a good knowledge of African history. A handful of candidates answering on Question 11, which focused on the idea of learning from experience, explored the idea of learning from the past – a good idea in and of itself – but slipped into anti-colonialist rhetoric at the expense of the task. Many candidates, however, offered interesting insights into the novel's treatment of education in its formal (Aunty Ifeoma at the university and Kambili and Jaja's schooling) and informal (cultural, religious, home) contexts. Question 12, on the novel's exploration of anger, naturally tended to focus on Eugene, but candidates were able to bring in a range of other examples from the text and some developed genuinely nuanced responses to the idea of anger and its effects, seeing that the outcomes of anger need not always be negative. Many candidates were able to engage in relevant analysis of the text, including some discussion of Adichie's use of structure and a variety of appropriate contexts.

