



Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2022

Pearson Edexcel International Advanced Level
in English Literature (WET03) Paper 3: Poetry
and Prose

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Introduction

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

For this unit, WET03, the open book examination is 2 hours long and there are two sections.

All candidates must answer Section A, Question 1, Unseen Poetry. Candidates then respond to a question from Section B, Prose, on the two prose texts that they have studied.

For **Section A, Unseen Poetry**, candidates will use the reading and critical skills that they have learnt throughout the course. Candidates will answer one essay question on a post-1900 unseen poem that is printed on a separate Source Insert.

Context is not assessed in Section A of the paper.

For **Section B, Prose**, candidates answer one comparative essay question from a choice of two, on the two studied prose texts that they have studied. Candidates can select from the themes: ***Growing Up, Colonisation and After, Science and Society*** or ***Women and Society***. Candidate responses should be informed by an understanding and appreciation of the contexts in which their chosen texts are both written and read. Candidates should be encouraged to view the texts in comparison to each other.

In Section B, students will study two out of a choice of three thematically linked texts. They will learn about:

- the importance of the relationship between texts, making connections and comparison between texts
- the significance of the cultural and contextual influences under which literary texts are written and received
- how to respond creatively, relevantly and in an informed way to texts using appropriate terminology and concepts as well as coherent and accurate written expression
- how to analyse texts from a critical perspective.

There are 20 marks available for Section A and 30 for Section B.

The total number of 50 marks available for this paper represents 25% of IA2.

Section A, Unseen Poetry, assesses Assessment Objectives A01 and A02.

Section B, Prose, assesses Assessment Objectives A01, A02, A03 and A04.

A05 is not assessed in this paper.

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

General Overview of the WET03 June 2022 paper and performance

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

All candidates must answer Section A, Question 1, Unseen Poetry. Candidates then respond to a question from Section B, Prose. For this series, a full range of marks was awarded.

Firstly, centres should be recognised for how well candidates have been prepared for this section of the examination paper. The unseen poem for Question 1 was ***The Door*** by Kapka Kassabova. This was a discriminating poem, allowing for a range of possible interpretations and avenues of exploration and it was particularly pleasing to see the variety of responses produced with examiners noting that few candidates overall seemed to struggle with accessing the poem in a meaningful way. Responses covered the full range of the mark scheme with most placed between levels 2-4. Candidates were able to draw from an impressive array of literary terminology, but as noted in previous series this must be tied to a discussion of how it augments meaning within the poem rather than it being an analytical end in itself. Responses that are able to link theme and idea to language, form and structure are more successful and higher scoring than responses that take a 'listing' approach to poetic analysis.

In the Prose section, the most popular theme was ***Science and Society*** (Questions 6 and 7) with the second most popular theme ***Women and Society*** (Questions 8 and 9). There were fewer responses to ***Growing Up*** (Questions 2 and 3) and ***Colonisation and After*** (Questions 4 and 5). All texts had responses written on them in this exam series and many candidates were placed in Level 3-5.

As with previous exam series, written expression is mostly clear and many candidates are meeting the requirements of writing fluently and accurately, conveying their knowledge and understanding of their studied texts effectively. Responses, however, were not always structured rigorously enough in order to fully meet the demands of Assessment Objective 1 (AO1) and its emphasis on argument and the organisation of ideas. It is always a good idea to spend time planning before beginning to write - particularly given the comparative nature of the question in Section B – and candidates who had done this, and had thought about particular links and points of comparison between their studied texts, were more successful than candidates who had not. Few candidates treated the texts as separate entities and it was pleasing to see responses engaging more critically with context.

As with previous series, handwriting could sometimes be an issue and candidates should strive to make it as clear as possible.

Section A: Post-1900 Unseen Poetry

Question 1

The unseen poem for Question 1 was *The Door* by Kapka Kassabova. This was a discriminating poem that candidates were able to draw a variety of meaning from. The poem has an ambiguity to it and to their credit, candidates were able (in the words of one of the examiners) to see this 'as an opportunity to enrich interpretation'. It was pleasing to read so many varied responses although, of course, there are some common themes that emerged. The full range of marks was awarded for this question with many responses placed in Level 3-5. There were few responses at all in Level 1.

Responses explored the poet's use of metaphor to portray themes as diverse as hope and despair, the afterlife, time and ageing, romantic loss and loneliness. The most successful responses, those placed in Levels 4 or 5, were able to range across the poem and to use textual evidence deftly to support their points in a controlled or sophisticated way.

All responses seemed to be aware of Assessment Objectives 1 and 2 (AO1 and AO2) and of the importance of exploring how meaning is created within a poem and of how literary and linguistic terminology as well as structure and form are used to do this. Candidates referred to the way in which the title *The Door* acts as an extended metaphor throughout the poem and imagery of the ocean and the colour blue were also deftly handled. One particularly successful response noted the way in which the door is an abstract concept used to evoke a *liminal space*. This candidate had drawn on the breadth of their literary knowledge to good effect here and - crucially - had used it successfully to discuss the tone and effect on the reader. Candidates saw the simile of 'shatter瓷ceramically like a dream' as a comment on the fragile nature of human existence and other responses were able to comment on the use of repetition ('you, you, you' and 'quick, quick') and verb choice ('waiting, shivering, yelling') in creating a perceived sense of urgency. Other responses noted the warning presented in 'One day you'll see'.

Evidence needs to be used consistently to meet the demands of AO1. Candidates were most successful and were placed in Levels 4 and 5 where they could use precise and embedded quotation to support points. Long quotations are often an indication that the candidate has not selected the exact image or phrase that they want to analyse or that they lack textual evidence to support their ideas. One examiner noted: candidates who saw the poem as exclusively being about 'romantic loss or estrangement struggled at times to find full support for their reading, or overlooked some elements of the poem'. High achieving responses are able to find subtlety and nuance in their reading of a text and are able to match this to a controlled or sophisticated integration of evidence in supporting it.

However, as in previous series candidates approach comment on structure and form with varying degrees of success. Some very high achieving responses discussed the use of caesura and volta within the poem, and the candidates' knowledge of poetic and literary technique served them well here. Some of these responses were particularly good at linking what they saw as the cyclical structure of the poem to themes of ageing and growing up, and were able to fully explore the structural technique as a way of discussing voice or theme. Other responses, those placed at the bottom end of Level 3 or in Level 2, often made superficial

comment on the poet's use of punctuation or the number of stanzas. The use of enjambment and lack of formal rhyme or metrical scheme were noted but were not always linked to meaning. The candidate who wrote that the lack of a rhyme scheme moves the poem **towards the prosaic, which helps him to establish that tone of intimate conversation which he's seeking** was able to link structural technique to meaning effectively and was rewarded highly as a result.

One high scoring Level 5 response had this introduction:

The Door by Kassabova is about the fragility of life and the transient human experience. The poet creates a sinister atmosphere at the beginning of the poem in the first stanza when they surprise the reader with the absence of a house behind the door... The ambiguity of the poem's ending is perhaps intentional - conveying the uncertainty of humans moving through life without truly knowing what comes after death.

The candidate is confident in saying what they think the poem is about and uses the structure of the poem well in order to support their ideas.

Candidates need to know literary terminology in order to meet the requirements of AO1, but if this knowledge is not anchored to an understanding of the poem it does not help to address AO2 and the ways in which meaning is created. Some candidates are using more complex terminology rather than exploring theme or idea which hinders progress up the levels of the mark scheme.

Candidates should be encouraged to spend time at the beginning of the examination planning their answer and considering how they will structure their essay. Some responses were brief, indicating perhaps that candidates had not spent sufficient time on this, and also hadn't considered the shape of what they wanted to say or how points could be linked together.

For this section of the paper, candidates are required to show knowledge and understanding of the function of genre features, conventions in poetry, and demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of a range of ways to read texts, including reading for detail of how writers use and adapt language, form and structure in texts and by responding critically and creatively.

It is recommended that centres continue to make use of the **Sample Assessment Materials** and past papers in order to become even more familiar with the assessment requirements. The mark grids demonstrate how candidates can progress from one level to the next. In order to achieve Level 4 or above, responses need to be discriminating, critical and evaluative. Analysis of the poem should be controlled and well supported with evidence and close reference to the techniques used and should provide examples of the nuances and subtleties of the writer's craft.

The Unseen Poetry question assesses Assessment Objectives 1 and 2:

A01: Articulate informed, personal and creative responses to literary texts, using associated concepts and terminology, and coherent, accurate written expression.

A02: Analyse ways in which meanings are shaped in literary texts.

Context is not assessed in Section A of the paper.

Section B: Prose

As with the January 2022 series, centres should be congratulated on having thoroughly prepared their candidates for the examination. Candidates knew their texts well and many could make perceptive and insightful comparisons between them. A full range of marks was awarded.

Assessment Objective 3 (AO3) asks candidates to make connections between a text and its context. As mentioned in previous reports, relevant contextual comment can include reference to the social and historical background of a text as well as its literary context or the life of the writer. Higher achieving responses – at Level 4 and 5 – were able to make critical comparisons between their texts, analysing and evaluating links based on the literary as well as the social context to good effect. These responses were able to make apt and perceptive contextual links between the two texts and their literary context. This was evident in ***Science and Society*** where links between Atwood’s portrayal of surveillance and the symbolism of ‘eyes’ and its literary origin in George Orwell’s work were made to good effect. Other candidates considered contemporary readings of their studied novels and the context of reception. This was evident in ***Women and Society*** where many candidates integrated a feminist reading of their chosen texts to comment on the motivations of the characters. One candidate responding to Question 9 successfully examined how romantic relationships affect women through examining the choices that Isabella makes in ***Wuthering Heights***.

Whilst few candidates did not consider context at all, some candidates discussed the context of their novels without considering how it supports their understanding of the text or their argument.

In order to meet the demands of Assessment Objective 1 (AO1), candidates must reference ‘associated concepts and terminology’. Candidates who were selective in the terminology and concepts they discussed – narrative voice and literary technique – and used them to support their ideas were rewarded more highly on the mark scheme than candidates who did not explore the ways in which technique can illuminate the writer’s craft.

There were very few responses awarded in Level 1 or that considered the texts separately. It should be noted, though, that some candidates implied rather than stated what they thought the comparative point between their studied texts was. The stem word for each question in Section B is ‘compare’ and candidates sometimes lose sight of this in order to make as wide a range of points on each text as possible. ***Candidates should be guided to spend time during the planning of their response on considering what the precise links between the texts are.***

Comments on each question are based on the evidence seen and only included for the most popular questions.

Questions 2 and 3

Growing Up

The set texts for the theme of **Growing Up** are: *What Maisie Knew*, *Great Expectations* and *The Color Purple*.

There were fewer responses for the **Growing Up** option although all of the texts were considered. Question 3 had the higher number of responses and is considered in more detail.

Question 2: Compare the ways in which the writers of your two chosen texts use titles that are significant.

There were very few responses to this question, but there was some thoughtful and insightful comment made on how the titles of the texts (particularly *Great Expectations* and *The Color Purple*) reveal thematic concerns. Points made included: Pip's self-awakening and growing desire for respect; suffering and abusive relationships; turning points for the protagonists and the contextual link to the bildungsroman; the symbolism of bruising in *The Color Purple*.

Candidates tended to write about the protagonists and did not consider secondary characters.

Question 3: Compare the ways in which the writers of your two chosen texts explore loneliness.

Candidates explored the various ways in which the theme of loneliness is explored in their studied texts. *Great Expectations* and *The Color Purple* were the most popular text choices. Points made included: how characters intentionally isolate or make themselves lonely, for instance Miss Havisham; how Pip suffers from loneliness because he is an orphan; how characters can be emotionally or romantically lonely and long for connection.

Below is an example from a high Level 3 response that considered how, whilst for Miss Havisham, loneliness is the instrumental factor behind her plan for revenge, in Celie's case it gives her space:

Miss Havisham is an example of vengeance pursued destructively. Her quest for revenge is what causes her and other characters to suffer... However, the loneliness that Celie experiences is what gives her the time and inner strength to remain patient and hopeful.

Responses explored how narrative technique and imagery are used to convey loneliness, for instance the isolated and imposing setting of Satis House in *Great Expectations* and how first person narrative voice and epistolary form in *The Color Purple* express how the characters feel. Successful contextual comment was made on the Victorian preoccupation with wealth and its isolating effects as well as the literary context of the bildungsroman.

Questions 4 and 5

Colonisation and After

The set texts for the theme of **Colonisation and After** are: *Heart of Darkness*, *The Lonely Londoners* and *A Passage to India*.

This section had the fewest number of responses across both questions although all three texts were considered.

Question 4: Compare the ways in which the writers of your two chosen texts present time.

Points that candidates could have made for this question included: the use of historical time; how time is used as a motif and symbol (journeys and travelling in *Heart of Darkness* and *A Passage to India*; clocks in *Lonely Londoners*); how setting and narrative methods convey time. Candidates made many relevant comments about how each writer shows the passage of time and how this affects characters, for instance Moses Aloetta having little to show for the time he's spent in London and the affect of time on the friendship of Aziz and Fielding.

Contextual comment was particularly well developed in responses to this question. Each response that had studied *The Lonely Londoners* was able to effectively comment on the Wind Rush generation. At AO1 and AO2, one Level 4 response made an effective comment on the use of memories and vignettes as being integral to the structure of *Heart of Darkness* and *The Lonely Londoners*.

Question 5: Compare the ways in which the writers of your two chosen texts create a sense of doubt.

Points that candidates could have been made in response to this question included: events and settings in each novel that create a sense of doubt – i.e. new and unfamiliar landscapes in each novel; the depiction of mysterious characters who create doubt in the mind of the protagonist; narrative methods such as titles and imagery that help to create atmospheres of doubt in each novel.

As with Question 4, candidates were particularly strong on AO3 and context with this question with most responses being placed in either Level 3 or 4. Many candidates discussed how doubt reflected the political climate of each novel and criticisms of colonialism that the writers were making. Some responses developed this further by exploring how atmospheres of doubt and mystery were created by the writers to challenge social beliefs and systems.

Questions 6 and 7

Science and Society

The set texts for the theme of **Science and Society** are: *Never Let Me Go*, *The Handmaid's Tale* and *Frankenstein*.

This theme was by far the most popular with the majority of candidates responding to Question 7. There was an even distribution between the text choices.

Question 6: Compare the ways in which the writers of your two chosen texts present memories.

This was a question that was open to a range of interpretations and avenues of exploration in terms of the narrative voice and technique of each novel. Each novel is structured around recollections and memories. Points made included: Offred and Kathy's reliance on memories as a source of comfort; the use of narrative voice in relaying memories to the reader; the reliability of the narrator and the impact this has.

Terminology and related concepts were explored well. At AO2, examiners noted that candidates understood narrative structure and perspective well. This was most effective when candidates were writing about the Gothic style of *Frankenstein* or the unreliable quality of Offred's narrative voice and use of blending of past and present in *The Handmaid's Tale*.

One mid- Level 3 astutely response noted:

Memory becomes a time machine for Offred to keep her occupied in an existence where she has no control over her own time.

Some candidates did make pertinent points about how Ishiguro's stylistic choices deliberately reflect the clones' passivity and how this is presented through the memories of Kathy.

Contextual comment was integrated well for this question, particularly in *The Handmaid's Tale* where understanding of Reagan's America and the Moral Majority were linked effectively to Offred's memories of a pre-Gileadean state and its change to a totalitarian regime.

Question 7: Compare the ways in which the writers of your two chosen texts explore the experience of suffering.

This question was the most popular and as with Question 6 there was an even distribution of responses between the three texts. Candidates were asked to explore the experience of suffering in their studied novels. Points made included: how suffering can be mental, physical or emotional; suffering as a necessary process for characters to endure; how suffering isolates and excludes and how suffering is often the result of lack of bodily autonomy.

In particular, there were some perceptive and insightful comments made on the use of concepts and terminology in each text. One high Level 4 response compared the symbolism

of noun choice in *The Handmaid's Tale* and *Frankenstein* in 'Offred' and 'fiend' respectively and how these choices are used to depict the dehumanisation and suffering of characters. Other responses observed how the motif of the red clothing and white wings of the handmaids' headdresses are used to trap and isolate them.

Another Level 4 response explores the removal of education and intellectual pursuits from women in Gilead, successfully demonstrating how to integrate contextual and linguistic comment:

Atwood uses the symbolism of an illegal game of 'Scrabble' between Offred and the Commander to show how extensive the oppression of language is particularly for women. Written contextually at a time of regression in female emancipation, such as the ban on abortion in Romania and fall in female employment due to Reagan's US presidency, Atwood draws on real-life events highlighting women's loss of societal position.

Candidates considered a range of characters – both secondary and primary – for this question. Responses considered how Serena Joy, the Commander, Miss Lucy and Madame all suffer under regimes they appear to support. In responses on *Frankenstein*, candidates made insightful comments about Justine's stoicism, contrasting it with Victor's refusal to accept responsibility for his own suffering.

Some excellent contextual comparison was made in response to this question. Candidates explored how 'suffering' is a trope of Gothic fiction and with *Frankenstein* the link to Shelley's own difficulties and suffering as well as the scientific context and background of experimentation and lack of bodily autonomy presented in all three novels.

Questions 8 and 9

Women and Society

The set texts for the theme of **Women and Society** are: *Wuthering Heights*, *Mrs Dalloway* and *Beloved*.

This was the second most popular theme on the paper. The most popular texts were *Wuthering Heights* and *Beloved*. Question 8 was the least popular of the two choices with few responses and is considered in less detail than Question 9.

Question 8: Compare the ways in which the writers of your two chosen texts build narrative suspense.

Candidates could have considered a range of points here: how each novel builds towards a moment of climax or suspense; the use of personification in *Beloved*; how setting and narrative voice are used to create suspense and tension. Several successful responses discussed how the depiction of generational suffering creates suspense, particularly in *Beloved*, and contextual comment was integrated well.

A wide range of characters was considered for this question.

Question 9: Compare the ways in which the writers of your two chosen texts explore how romantic relationships affect women.

This was the most popular of the two choices with most responses comparing *Wuthering Heights* and *Beloved* although some candidates had studied *Mrs Dalloway*. Candidates considered how romantic relationships could affect women positively as well as negatively, discussing how romance can free as imprison them. A range of secondary characters such as Hareton, Sally Seaton and Paul D as well as the protagonists or central characters were drawn on from each novel to illustrate points effectively.

Candidates made a range of considered points at AO1 and 2, exploring how Woolf's use of stream of consciousness, use of multiple perspectives and voices by *Brontë* and Morrison's manipulation of time give the reader insight into the romantic relationships of the female characters and the ways in which they are affected by them.

Examiners noted that discussion of the patriarchy was a common contextual feature of responses to this question but that this was handled with varying degrees of success. One successful response which explored two dramatic moments – the mammary rape in *Beloved* and Heathcliff throwing the knife – demonstrated how these events were covert and overt symbols of the sexuality of make power and thus exemplified well how social and literary criticism can interlink. In *Wuthering Heights*, candidates were able to discuss the implications of class and money in the 'social politics' of how women chose or entered romantic relationships very successfully.

Paper Summary

Performance of this paper has been very pleasing with a full range of marks awarded across both sections, including many awarded in the top two levels of the mark scheme. Centres should be congratulated on having prepared their candidates so well for this examination.

Based on performance on this paper, centres are offered the following advice for their future success:

- Address the assessment objectives and use mark schemes and past papers to guide teaching
- Incorporation of linguistic and literary technique into an exploration of texts is important and candidates should be encouraged to use a range of terminology to support their points but this needs to be linked to meaning and the effect created for the reader
- For Section A, candidates should be encouraged to spend time carefully reading, annotating and thoroughly planning their response before they start to write
- For Section B, consider the specific points of comparison (AO4) that are going to be made and spend time planning before beginning to write. Use well chosen, short and embedded quotations to support points
- In order to meet the demands of Assessment Objective 3 (A03), students must consider the contextual factors surrounding the production and reception of the novels. Examples should fit the points being made
- Enjoy sharing your knowledge and enthusiasm for the novels studied with the examiner.

