

Examiners' Report
June 2012

GCSE English Literature 5ET2H 01

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Introduction

This is the second year of the current specification in English Literature. The examination has two papers, Paper 1 on Prose (Literary Heritage and Different Cultures) (50%) and Paper 2 (this paper) on Poetry, consisting of an unseen poem and questions of the new Edexcel Anthology (25%). In addition, there is the Controlled Assessment on Shakespeare/Contemporary drama (25%).

On Paper 2, the first question, on an unseen poem, is compulsory; candidates must then answer Section B, on one of the four themed collections of poems from the Anthology, writing on a named poem and then comparing this with either a named poem or a poem of their choice. Of the four collections, the most commonly chosen were A: Relationships and B: Clashes and Collisions. The candidates are assessed on the quality of their response to poetry, including the capacity to make links between poems.

The Assessment Objectives for the paper are:

AO2: Explain how language, structure and form contribute to writers' presentation of ideas, themes and settings (assessed in Section A and in Section B, part (a));

AO3: Make comparisons and explain links between texts (assessed in section B, part (b)(i) or (b)(ii)).

Examiners are looking above all for signs that candidates are responding in a mature and reflective way to the language and ideas of the poems on which they are focusing. This year, there was evidence that greater familiarity and confidence with the materials and structure of the papers had led to much successful response from candidates.

The responses of candidates had many strong features, demonstrating their enjoyment of and engagement with the study of poetry. Examiners were impressed by:

- the many refreshing and independent personal responses to the unseen poem
- evidence that they had understood the ideas presented in the chosen poems
- the capacity to select apt examples of the way poets' language expressed feelings and attitudes, and to comment on how these related to themes
- some effective skills in linking the handling of a subject in two poems.

Less successful responses:

- did not demonstrate clearly a full grasp of the poems' meanings and ideas
- sometimes made unsubstantiated or over-general points, without supporting them by appropriate textual evidence
- when writing about two poems, treated them too separately, without making the required connections.

Question 1

The Unseen Poem ('The Apple Raid', by Vernon Scannell) was found to be accessible to almost all the candidates, with a suitable degree of challenge to permit full differentiation, and therefore with responses covering the expected range. One examiner commented that: 'It allowed the less able to find something which could be rewarded and the more able to expand their analysis and to be philosophical on themes such as lost childhood, coming to terms with ageing and speculation about why the poem was written.'

Examiners sometimes felt that candidates were determined to work through a list of features even when they had little of worth to say about these: for example, candidates wrote such comments as 'this poem does not contain any personification' and 'the poet uses a lot of metaphors in the poem', as though that were some kind of critical statement.

Conversely some students obtained full marks without directly labelling any 'features' but through exploring how the text presented its ideas through effective language choices and demonstrating real insight. An examiner noted that 'in a number of candidates' responses, the thoughts and feelings expressed in the poems became slightly lost in the emphasis given to the poetic devices employed'.

The best responses began from a genuinely personal engagement with the poem and a good understanding of what was expected of them, particularly in the use of evidence from the poem to support their answers. Candidates could see the memories as positive and happy or as gloomy and negative, although the stronger showed a good understanding of the subtle change of mood from the start to the final stanza. There were successful attempts to analyse the poem's structure and form, with stronger candidates writing intelligently about these matters, while giving full attention to imagery. The regular structure and the consistent rhyming were identified by most. One or two wrote quite poetically about the cyclical nature of the poem and John's demise being Nature's revenge, or of John's body feeding the next generation of apples as the apples had once fed him. However, sometimes candidates tried too hard to point up significance: the four-line stanzas were compared with a lullaby or a nursery rhyme or as representing repeated experience or even the divisions in society. Many spent too much time commenting on rhyme schemes and length of stanzas, but were unable to explain reasons behind this.

There were a few 'outside the box' responses. One saw the poem as an extended metaphor for war and came up with some credible arguments. A few candidates thought that John Peters had been shot for stealing apples. These at least attempted to explore the significance of the ending. Many candidates failed to comment on this at all, and a few linked this with the idea of his dying in the war – a perceptive observation. Candidates also often picked up the poem's themes of nostalgia, loss and change and worked ably with them, picking out technical features but also illustrating their use by well-chosen examples. One examiner 'saw it as a sign of the times that no-one picked up the seasonal reference to autumn in the apple crop's being ready to raid, paralleled of course by the poet's sense of his life advancing towards autumn. Children of the supermarket age know no seasons for fruit and vegetables.' Many made reference to Scannell's background and how the boys seemed poor and therefore might appear justified in stealing the apples.

Scannell presents his memories of his friends and stealing apples in a way where the reader can clearly imagine what is happening. It could also be seen as a story as he describes in detail what he done in his childhood. Each stanza explores a different part of the day that he is reminiscing.

The poem starts with, 'Darkness came early, though not yet cold;', this can suggest that it could be either early or late summer as it's not cold but the darkness has come early. It could also be seen as mysterious as they're going out as the night falls and as the street lamps begin to turn on. As the poem goes on, it says, '... Can still excite me... So long ago when we met in the park-...', this suggests to the reader that thinking about his childhood brings back vivid memories and that he can still remember doing these things

as if it only occurred yesterday as the memories are very strong in his mind. He also mentions his two friends John Peters and David Kidd, because he can remember the names it could suggest that he thinks about his childhood life quite regularly.



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Examiner Comments

Although this is not a fully-developed response, there are some interesting insights. The candidate is aware of the development of the poem and how each stanza 'moves into the next one'. There is very sound awareness of the fact that the boys are doing something exciting and mysterious. Thoughtful comments are supported by apt textual reference. The understanding of the content and ideas and how the writer uses his craft puts it into Band 3.



ResultsPlus
Examiner Tip

Think about how to develop the quality of your response to move it into the highest bands by the depth of analysis you offer.

These are the final two paragraphs of a candidate's response to Question 1, the unseen poem.

Scannell keeps on ~~repeating~~ ~~repeating~~ repeating the boys names. For example "I wonder if David remembers at all that little adventure, the apple's fresh scent. This shows that he remembers his mates that day and it only seems like yesterday he did the raid. It also shows that ~~it is~~ he is looking back on the good old times and childhood memories.

The poet feels sad for his mate that died. He says in the poem "Stranger to think that John Peters lies cold in ~~a~~ ^{an orchard} ~~orchard~~ in France beneath ~~apple~~ ^{apple} trees." This shows that he really did care for his mate. ~~Also~~ Also using the word 'cold' how he feels about the situation. Furthermore it says that he lies beneath apple trees. This shows he remembers when he did the ~~raid~~ ^{and} raid ~~and~~ wanted to be buried there as his final wish.



ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

This is a sound response with some comment on how the writer uses language for effect. Comments are supported by the text although not usually fully developed. There is some comment on the importance of John's resting-place at the end of the poem. The response was given 6 marks out of 20, a Band 2 mark.



ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

Make sure that your response is one which thinks about the poem as a whole and offers an interpretation based clearly on the actual text.

This is the opening section of a candidate's response to Question 1, the unseen poem.

Vernon Scannell presents his feelings about the memories of his friends by using sensory words and triggers, for example 'The breeze was spiced with garden fires' which helps to make the reader feel as though they are in the situation too, experiencing the same things. Also, the sensory terms links to words associated with apples, for example 'spiced', 'crunched' and 'fresh scent' which excited the feeling that the apples were a sought after and worth while prize for the boys to take, as I believe it was not something they needed, but something they desired.

* see page 4

I believe that Scannell would like the reader to feel that the children were having a good time, rather than doing something illegal, so by saying 'with apples to spare', 'tipses clustered' and 'the lower boughs of the tree were easy to reach' which I think suggests, along with the word 'wealthy' that the boys see it that they have too much, or enough to share, as it is very easy for them to get lots of apples. This gives them a 'bunch of little larks' appearance, rather than a group of troublemakers which helps the positive and nostalgic look upon the memories.



ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

The candidate immediately offers comments on the writer's feelings and about the language he uses. This is the start of a perceptive response, with discriminating explanation of language features and their use for particular effects. There are some pertinent references to support the comments and ideas, and there is a strong personal response. This extract comes from a response in Band 5 (overall mark 20 out of 20).



ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

Note how this candidate engages straightaway with particular features of the way the writer uses language. Note how well-stocked the answer is with examples from the text, embedded well into the surrounding comment.

This is the closing section of a candidate's response to Question 1, the unseen poem.

these apples. The way he talks about his friends at the end of the poem like 'I wonder if David remembers at all that little adventure' wondering about if his friend still thinks about the fun times they had as children. Also the way he ~~made~~ makes a nice happy poem of passed memory and all the apple stealing they used to do as friends into a sad story by saying 'stranger to think that John Peters lies cold in an orchard in France beneath apple trees'. The way he says all the memories then the fact that his one friend is no longer there to remember but will always be remembered. In the poem of remembering the past and the time he spent with his friends it was a four lined verse and seven verses long poem of memories and fun.



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Examiner Comments

The candidate shows a generally sound grasp of the poem, but comment is somewhat inconsistent and needs further development for a higher band. There is no clear structure to the language analysis and the ideas are not linked closely – too much work is left to the reader. However, some ideas are relevant and show awareness. (4 marks out of 20).



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Examiner Tip

Make sure that the references from the text are fully explained and commented on in a way which explains the effect the writer achieves.

Question 2

2(a) 'One Flesh' was the selected poem. The vast majority were able to comment on the relationship between the couple on some level. Many candidates engaged well with the poem's ideas, showing understanding of the language. Weaker responses tended to summarise the events without providing detail about the connotations of the language or the examples of the writer's craft. One examiner commented: 'There was much insight and understanding in the better answers, and average candidates were also able to make useful comments on different kinds and phases of love, often showing empathy with both the poet and her parents.'

Candidates mostly recognised clearly that this poem was written as a first-person narrative on the poet's own experience, with the writer observing her parents' relationship. Many candidates showed a concern about the loss of physical intimacy and how this affected the writer/daughter. 'They need to open up and tell each other how they feel' was one candidate's 'agony aunt'-style verdict. Some believed that the couple did not need to show their love physically as it was implicit. Most, however, saw the relationship as being dead as there was no physical element. One thoughtful response discussed whether we could be sure that the poet's perspective about her parents' relationship was necessarily true. Strong answers included sustained analysis of the writer's language and its effects. In weaker ones, answers were at times brief, with no textual reference, and the thoughts were sometimes undeveloped; for example, the statement by one candidate that 'she expresses something different in each stanza' was left frustratingly at that. Some candidates dismissed the poem as having no rhyme scheme, but most identified the rhyme scheme, though only rarely the half-rhymes. The use of 'thread' to represent the silence between the couple was often misunderstood. A number of candidates saw the three stanzas as being one for each of the characters.

There were some interesting interpretations of the religious connotations of "One Flesh", "chastity" and "confession" which enhanced responses. The imagery was also often very well dealt with, and there were some thoughtful comments on lost opportunities with "like a girl dreaming" and the "book unread", as well as some rather more speculative interpretations on why the parents were acting in such ways.

2(b)(i) With the named poem 'Kissing', which the clear majority went with, most found it easy to identify the strong contrast between the physical nature of the relationships described in each: some did so convincingly, with a clear sense of what writers were aiming to say about the situations they described. Weaker responses produced the superficial comparison that the two poems represented love at three stages, or failed to note that the poet was giving examples of passion's survival into middle age; stronger ones were sensitive to the positive aspects of all the relationships. Examiners noted wryly the negative attitudes some candidates showed toward the idea of middle-aged people kissing. The most perceptive were aware that the pressures of middle age life and decorum explained why the passion was not shown in public and that perhaps the passion of the young was more superficial.

2(b)(ii) Candidates' own choices of poem were varied and appropriate, including 'Sonnet 116' and 'Even Tho'', in which the physicality of relationships (or its absence) is explored in very different ways. The very different contexts of the second poems allowed candidates to consider relationships from a variety of perspectives. Most responses to the Shakespeare showed an awareness that he focused on the unchanging nature of true love, despite physical changes. 'Even Tho'' was a fairly popular choice and examiners noted that this provided a stark contrast in attitude and gave fertile opportunity for the comparison of imagery. 'Valentine' was not always a wise choice, as candidates could become bogged down in the effect of the unusual imagery. 'Nettles' and 'Rubbish at Adultery' were other choices which could provide a good basis for comparison. One examiner commented that weak responses 'stuck to narrative, average ones combined this with more or less developed

comment and comparison, and the best offered mature considerations of style and impact'. 'Song For Last Year's Wife' was also used by some, using the idea of both writers reflecting on the ghost of a past relationship, but not always making links successfully.

This is the first part of a candidate's response to part (a) of Question 2.

a) One Flesh is a poem ~~written by the son/daughter~~ of about love changes with age. It describes a couple who supposedly are no longer in love. It is written by the child of the couple and it reflects their feelings ~~are~~ on their parents relationship.

The first two stanzas have very negative connotations, whether this is the child's initial thought or their true feelings about their parents is unclear. 'Lying apart now, each in a separate bed' ~~is a~~ has very negative connotations as usually married couples sleep in the same bed and they like to be close to one another. Relationships are very heated and passionate which is why when it says 'how cool they lie. They hardly ever touch,' it suggests that they are no longer passionate about each other. On the other hand this can suggest that because they have been together for so long

they no longer have to physically show their love for each other because they already know and therefore respect each other.



ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

The candidate just qualified for Band 4 with this answer, which showed an assured grasp of how the writer conveys her attitudes to her parents' ageing. Ideas and comments, often sensitive, are well supported from the text. The overall mark for Question 2 (a) was 10/15.



ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

Try to ensure that the opening to your answer has a clear focus and makes an impact, writing specifically rather than in a generalised way.

This is the second part of a candidate's response to Question 2 (a).

The lack of physical love is described negatively in the first two stanzas, as if it has had a lasting negative impact on the couple, but the last paragraph suggests otherwise. "Strangely apart, yet strangely close together" implies that the couple do not need physical love to feel close to one another. "And time itself's a feather touching them gently" suggests that the ageing of the couple has not affected them as they wait patiently for

each day to pass. The poem originally seems to be from the point of view of the couple, but "these two who are my father and my mother" tells the reader that the point of view comes from the child. "Do they know they're old" implies that the couple are in a bubble, unaffected by time or the lack of passion and physical love they once shared, and it is in fact the child looking in who is affected by what they see.



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Examiner Comments

This is taken from an excellent response. The candidate explores specific language features and their effect in a perceptive way. The understanding is very good and the interpretations well supported. There is sustained focus and the conclusion is effective. This answer was awarded 15 marks out of 15, the top mark in Band 5.



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Examiner Tip

Look at the way that the candidate analyses the couple's feelings in detail and with close reference to the text.

This is the start of a candidate's response to part (b) (i), comparing 'One Flesh' with the named poem 'Kissing'.

'Kissing' - written by Fleur Adcock is about the young lovers whose 'flame' is roaring a light. It talks about how they don't have busy lives at all, because they can spend all day together in each others arms.

(Section B continued)
'Pretending to look at waterlilies'. This suggests that they are pretending to look away, but they give in to their needs for each other. 'One flesh' explains that the man is pretending to read a book in order to avoid verbal contact with his wife, which show that they have no time for each other.



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Examiner Comments

This is taken from a very sound response, which reveals a clear understanding of the two poems, but is not fully developed. It does offer an interpretation, with evidence. The candidate was awarded 6 marks out of 15, placing the response at the top end of Band 2.



ResultsPlus
Examiner Tip

Note the way the candidate finds a specific point of comparison, the 'pretence' which is commented on in each poem.

This is the closing section of a candidate's response to Question 2 (b) (ii), comparing the given poem 'One Flesh' with the candidate's chosen poem 'Sonnet 116'.

no longer visible. The absence of love in the poem 'One Flesh' is presented as something that has not affected the couple, shown in "strangely apart, ~~but still~~ ^{strangely} close together". This implies that the couple do not need to show or feel physical love in order to feel close to one another. However, in ~~Sonnet~~ ^{Sonnet} 116, the absence of love is said to be not a true portrayal of true love. This is shown in "Love is not love which alters when it alteration finds" this suggests that love was never true love if it changed with time. The end to the poem 'One Flesh' creates a very blunt and definite end to the love the couple shared. "has now grown cold" sounds like a fact rather than an opinion as if it is too late to feel love again. In Sonnet 116, love is said to "bear it out even to the edge of doom" which suggests love is never a feeling that is lost and is felt eternally even in old age, and after death. Although these two poems have the same theme of relationships, love is presented in two very different ways. In 'One Flesh', love is presented as a feeling that

Love is presented as a feeling that
is lost in old age whereas in Sonnet
116 love is said to be eternal.



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Examiner Comments

'Sonnet 116' here proves an appropriate choice which is handled with much skill to make strong linkages. The writing moves with an easy confidence between the two poems and the comment shows discrimination. This answer was awarded 15 out of 15, the top of Band 5.



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Examiner Tip

Note the importance of finding a number of good examples of similarities and differences between the two poems.

Question 3

3(a) 'Conscientious Objector'. This poem discriminated sharply between deeply-considered and articulate responses and others which, while comfortable with the central ideas, struggled more with the imagery. One examiner commented that 'when it was done well, it was done exceptionally well and in appropriate detail'. More skilled candidates found much to respond to in the poem's theme and imagery, but the quality of candidates' writing on this poem was very varied. For many candidates this poem allowed sound engagement with the situation described, but interpretations did not always show full assurance or appreciation of the writer's language and its effect. The most successful responses considered form, structure and voice, but other answers did not treat these aspects in any depth.

Most recognised the personification of Death, seeing that this made 'him' a cruel figure, and made valid, though varied, points about the effect of this: many said that this made death more terrifying but a perceptive few suggested that it might actually have the effect of causing death to seem less formidable, being placed on the same level as humans. A fairly large percentage saw death as synonymous with war and killing. Many were unsure of the meaning of the phrase conscientious objector: this did not necessarily detract from the response if they focused on the theme of death; however, only a disappointingly small number made a good connection between the title and the preoccupation with death in war. Almost everyone recognised the speaker's acceptance of her own death and that she refused to help Death in his busy work of killing.

Some of the imagery produced many uncertain responses: although most made some sense of the hunting and business references, there was a tendency to over-interpret the reference to the 'black boy in the swamp' as suggesting that this was meant as an 'anti-racist' poem. Interpretations that went adrift included the occasional reference to a talking horse. Better responses showed awareness of the idea of death as a horseman, and some referred to the four horsemen of the apocalypse. Effective comments were offered about the whip representing army recruitment and conscription, which linked well to "I am not on his payroll".

3(b)(i) asked candidates to compare 'Conscientious Objector' with 'Your Dad Did What?'. Most candidates chose this option, but to answer well they needed to be able to write about significant differences in approach, rather than focusing on similarities, since in one poem the writer refers to death mainly in very general terms (although there is also her attitude to her own death) and the other deals with one very specific death: although there were some very effective responses, not all candidates probed beneath the surface of 'Your Dad Did What?'. For some candidates, structural differences gave them an entry-point: 'four short stanzas suggest the poet is in control of her writing'; 'Millay's poem has been written so it just goes together whereas *Your Dad* has a very precise structure'. The orderly structure was identified by many as being in keeping with the primary school setting.

Perhaps the key contrast was that for Millay death is a constant presence, whereas in the other poem it is mostly quite invisible, at least on the surface. This was a point dealt with well by the strongest candidates. Most responses sympathised with the suffering of the boy that had made him unable to write about the holidays. Many saw the teacher as being unfeeling, though some realised the guilt and regret that she would be feeling.

3(b)(ii) With the candidates' own choice of poem, there was a variety of appropriate examples available. For example, 'August 6, 1945' was selected evidently because it showed a very different perspective on war, but similarly showed how innocent civilians could be swept up into the military action. This was a popular choice, as was 'Hitcher', with the casual violence of killing providing an obvious link. Other candidates chose 'The Drum' or 'Exposure', both of which were appropriate and potentially satisfying comparisons, although an examiner commented that 'those writing about the Owen poem tended, perhaps because of its length, to write general rather than specific comments'.

This is the opening section of the response of a candidate to Question 3 (a), on the poem 'Conscientious Objector'.

(a) Conscientious Objector is about a woman who has a very negative viewpoint towards war. She feels by going to war she is helping ~~o~~ Death. She does not want in anyway to help death.

Millay uses personification of Death throughout the poem to emphasise her strong opinion towards war. 'I shall die, but that is all I ~~with~~ shall do for Death'. Millay has said this to portray Death as a very evil character, who is just here to take people. The effect this has on the audience is that it shows the futile ~~the~~ nature of war and that if anyone ~~e~~ in war is likely to die. Millay also uses the word 'haste' when describing Death this makes Death to be rushing and ~~the~~ it gives the audience an impression of carelessness, he is in a hurry to finish the job. This reflects back to the initial ideas of the poem in which she does not want to help Death in anyway. * ~~Death appears to~~



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Examiner Comments

There is a clear understanding of the poem from the outset. Overall, this is a sound response and it offers an interpretation, with evidence. It received a high Band 2 mark.



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Examiner Tip

More development of the points made would have taken this response into Band 3.

This is the closing part of a candidate's response to question 3 (a), on the poem 'Conscientious Objector'.

The writer gives a rather 'petty' statement 'And he may mount by himself' this shows the ~~hostility~~ writer's hostility towards 'Death' and belittles 'Death' as he is unable to 'mount' his horse on his own.

The writer sees death as a torturer 'Though he flick my ~~set~~ shoulders with his whip' however the writer conveys irony in the verb 'flick' as

it shows the reader that 'Death' cannot penetrate through her morality. This also shows bravery and confidence as the image 'hoof on my breast' ~~is~~ creates shows pain.

The writer shows the reader that she is not his employee 'I am not on his payroll' and even 'though he promises' the writer 'much', which gives the image of honour and glory of war. She does not 'map' the route to any man's door' showing how she does not give in to the temptation of 'Death's bribery, this can also be link with the 'devil'.

The poem 'conscientious objector' shows the reader

how 'Death' is not only the collector but the killer
as well 'he has bussiness' the writer uses personification
to portray death as intimidating and violent 'his
Whip':



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Examiner Comments

This is a very strong response showing perceptive interpretation and supporting points very well from the text. The personification of Death is analysed thoughtfully, and there is a strong sense of personal engagement with the poem's ideas. This answer was given 15 marks out of 15, the top mark of Band 5.



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Examiner Tip

Note how the candidate looks closely at the way the writer expresses her personal attitudes, with apt quotation from the poem.

This is the first part of a candidate's response to Question 3 (b) (i), comparing the two given poems, 'Conscientious Objector' and 'Your Dad Did What?'

b) i)

The writer of 'conscientious objector' and the writer of ^{'your dad did what?'} ~~the poem~~ portrays their views on death in a very different way. Conscientious objector shows the hatred of death by violence, whereas ^{'your dad did what?'} ~~the poem~~ shows the confusion ~~and~~ and innocence of death.

The structures of the two poems are very different, with conscientious having a scruffy set out poem with no rhyming scheme, showing the rough conflict. Your dad did what? has a neat structure of four lines per stanza and a simple rhyme pattern. This can represent the innocence shown in the poem by the writer.

In Your dad did what?, we can see increasing anger from the teacher shown in the repetition of 'what? your dad did what?' which shows the frustration of the teacher. However, in conscientious objector, the anger and determination stays the same the whole way through, or if anything, the writer is more angry at the start than the end.



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The candidate comments thoughtfully on both poems. The writing shows good control and understanding, but the answer is not a very full one. The answer was awarded 8 marks out of 15, mid-Band 3.



ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

The comparative points made could have been presented with more depth of analysis, to merit a mark in Band 4.

This is the final section of a response to the question 3 (b) (ii), in which the given poem, 'Conscientious Objector', is compared with 'The Drum'.

John Scott has used the rule of 3rd:

"To march, and fight, and fall, in foreign lands
The repetition of the 'i' delivers the direct truth about war. It expresses that war is a complete waste of life. John is afraid of dying whereas Edna is not. In addition to this, the repeated pattern of the 'i' gives the poem a more heartfelt beat. This therefore, symbolises the constant occurrence of the 'Drum' beating.

John has also used repetition - "I hate that drums discordant sound". This occurrence symbolises how John has an urge to portray a strong, moreover, signifying message. The "drums discordant sound" may be a metaphor used to exaggerate the sound of death. This element differs, as in "conscientious objector", we merely see, the image of death.

In a way, it is possible that 'Conscientious Objector' can relate to "The Drum" in the poet's personal way. It could be possible that 'Death' is going to hurt John Scott down, as he is failing to fight in war. This line from 'Conscientious Objector' concludes 'death's' desire to kill harmless people: "I will not map him the route to any man's door." However, another meaning could be that Edna alongside John, both went to die due from war...



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Examiner Comments

This answer analyses the two poems clearly, offering sound comment on comparisons between the two poets (referred to by their first names) and their attitudes to the subject of war. It was at the top end of what might reasonably be expected at this level and hence was awarded 15 out of 15, the highest available mark in Band 5.



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Examiner Tip

Note the way in which the candidate looks closely at the actual language used by the two poets, and uses this to make appropriate comparisons.

Question 4

4(a) The set poem was 'City Jungle'. This is a poem which repaid the careful study that a small number of candidates had clearly given it, since the language provides many opportunities to explore striking effects. The best responses seized these opportunities effectively, with some really discerning comments about the way the writer exploited metaphor for his effects. Most used appropriate examples from the poem to illustrate their points and found the imagery very striking. 'City Jungle' really allowed top candidates to shine. They made the most of all the dangerous scenes, metaphors and similes. These were a real pleasure to read. However, in weaker responses candidates at times gave straightforward, narrative accounts of the poem, but with no awareness of the overarching themes. Some answers were very short, but most candidates succeeded in picking out suitable examples of metaphorical language on which to comment, such as 'snarls', 'hunched houses' and 'flinch', although some tended to spot the features and summarise the images, with little development of how they contribute to the representation of the city.

4(b)(i) The stated poem for comparison was 'City Blues'. This produced some excellent comparisons with 'City Jungle', together with supporting material. The candidates often responded positively to the idea of choosing which of the alternatives to read in 'City Blues'.

4(b)(ii) There were several poems about particular places which were chosen to compare the poets' treatment with that in 'City Jungle'. However, comparative points were not always clearly made. Those who chose 'Westminster Bridge' were able to find fruitful comparisons. Another poem chosen by some was William Blake's 'London': this had mixed success.

This is the opening part of the response of a candidate to Question 4 (a), dealing with the poem 'City Jungle'.

4a) The title, 'City Jungle', makes a direct comparison between the city and the jungle. This gives ~~the~~ ~~us~~ ~~to~~ suggest implies the city is crowded with different sized ~~the~~ living things and is a dangerous place. It's almost daring the reader to read on as the word 'jungle' suggests danger.

~~Throughout~~ The stanzas are made up of varied ~~to~~ number of lines, reflecting the varied sizes of things in jungles.

Throughout the poem the city is ~~personalised~~ personified. Words like "grin", "cough" and "gargles" gives ^{life to} non-living things like ~~houses~~ ^{radiators} ^{and} houses, gutters. "Hunched houses cough" suggest ~~these~~ highlights the pollution that covers the city. The pollution ~~is~~ is somewhat similar to the humid air that covers the jungle. ~~and is~~ ~~an~~ Both pollution

and humid air ~~is~~ are extreme conditions ~~it~~ that ~~cover~~ are associated with these two places. The reader can image a thick, grey blanket of ~~strong~~ pollution that covers the city, which ~~makes~~ enables the reader to imagine, making personification more effective as everything can be imagined vividly.



ResultsPlus

Examiner Comments

The candidate has responded in a very discriminating way to the poem and its language, with particularly strong ability to focus on the effect of particular images and language choices. This is highly effective writing: well above what would be expected for the top end of the range at this level: hence it received the maximum mark of 15 out of 15.



ResultsPlus

Examiner Tip

Make sure that when looking at any imagery used by the poet, there is a close focus on the choice of language and how this relates to the poet's ideas - here, the comparison of a city and a jungle.

This is the closing section of the response by a candidate to Question 4 (b) (ii) comparing the given poem 'City Jungle' with the candidate's own choice, 'London'.

The thoughts of the poet who wrote London ~~to~~ compared to the thoughts of the poet who wrote City Jungle are very different. In the ~~city~~ ^{jungle} the poet describes the looks of the city with a slight tone of aggression in his style where as the poet in London describes the city to be ~~chaotic~~, he describes the city to be full

of pain and anguish without describing
he looks. This shows the contrast in
style that the two writers have, they
have a very different approach to
imaginative and descriptive writing blending
in personal opinions and facts into their
poems, both ~~poets~~ have the ability to
create imagery in your mind by
painting a picture with words, both

For me the poet in 'City Sledge' explores
his ideas slightly better than William Blake
because he doesn't use no emotion in
his writing, his plan is to create
a image of the city in your head
and he does this by using symbolism
and imagery where as William Blake
uses personal emotion to get his
ideas across.



ResultsPlus

Examiner Comments

The candidate has chosen to write about 'London' as the second poem, an appropriate choice which invites relevant comparisons - which the candidate begins to make in a clear and focused way. The points made are sound and the response received a mid-Band 2 mark.



ResultsPlus

Examiner Tip

The points would have needed a fuller and more sustained treatment to qualify for a higher band.

Question 5

5(a) This section attracted fewer responses than Questions 2 and 3 (though more than Question 4). 'The World is a Beautiful Place' elicited some strong responses. An appreciation of the tone and attitudes expressed in this 'report' on life was the key to the success of candidates' responses. Weaker candidates sometimes struggled to understand the irony; some thought either that the poet's persona did not care about the world or that the attitude was wholly positive. However, most appreciated the edge to the poem and supported their comments. Several said that the poet made no use of rhyme. In some instances the structure came to represent the different countries of the world or inequality in the world.

5(b)(i) In making links between this poem and 'Those Bastards in their Mansions', candidates offered some very engaged responses. Central to successful responses was an appreciation that both poems offer grim irony. In Armitage's poem a number recognised the reference to Prometheus.

5(b)(ii) Where candidates offered their own choice of poem, this was generally appropriate and permitted comparisons. 'Solitude', 'Living Space' (which gave some very effective comparisons) and 'One World Down The Drain' were the most popular.

This is the first part of the response by a candidate to Question 5 (a), on 'The World is a Beautiful Place'.

2) 'The World is a beautiful place' explores how foolish and selfish it is to believe that the title is correct. Ferlinghetti installs this title with implicative of heavy irony, as the reader discovers after reading the poem that, in fact, the world is not a beautiful place to live in; it is full of treachery, misery and suffering, though the audience of the poem are being mocked and confronted about how their attitudes to modern society. Ferlinghetti launches his torrent of mockery straight away, conveying his irony through the keyword 'is': he states at the beginning of ~~the~~ each stanza that "the world is a beautiful place to be born into" and then follows this with ~~the~~ to highlight how actually the reader does

mind the terrible aspects of life: "some people dying",
"a few dead minds in the higher places", "or a bomb
or two". Ferlinghetti



ResultsPlus

Examiner Comments

This is a perceptive response, aware of the irony in the poet's voice and the way his ideas are expressed in 'The World is a Beautiful Place'. There is strong personal comment evident, and the ideas are supported by relevant references.



ResultsPlus

Examiner Tip

Note how the candidate does not just comment on the poet's use of irony, but supports this point with a full and perceptive interpretation.

This is the closing part of a candidate's response to the Question 5 (b) (ii), comparing the poems 'The World is a Beautiful Place' and 'Living Space'.

Unlike 'the world is a beautiful place', 'living space' has a rhyme scheme to make it sound more up-beat and have an optimistic tone and mood. Both poems have no strict stanza structures which could reflect the fragility of human life.

Although both poems are on human life, 'the world is a beautiful place' takes a more pessimistic stand and Ferlinghetti also tells us that death is never far away whether we are having fun or not.

Dharker in 'living space' is taking a stand on ~~human life~~ conditions of human life and concentrates on having an optimistic approach on life through allusion to a building. "Nails clutch at open seams" rather than then pessimistic pessimism. "the smiling mortician".



ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

The candidate has chosen, unusually, the poem 'Living Space' to comment on the differing stances of two poems. The ideas in the two poems are in places juxtaposed rather than compared directly, but that is an acceptable approach, and there is an assured interpretation.



ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

Think carefully about what comparative points you are going to focus on, and then make these points by referring closely to the text.

Paper Summary

The response of candidates to the poems was one which often delighted examiners, who noted how well candidates were able to analyse and comment on the language.

Overall:

in Section A, candidates:

- understood the ideas and imagery of the unseen poem
- were able to identify and comment on the poem's language features

in Section B, candidates:

- wrote thoughtfully about the relationships in the Collection A poems
- in many cases, responded well to the way the writers treated the subject of death in Collection B
- showed the capacity to write with understanding and relevance about attitudes to places and contemporary life in Collections C and D, which were still minority choices.

To improve their performance, candidates should:

- ensure that they read the question carefully and focus on key words
- try to embed quotations in their writing, so that they can integrate their comments on language
- when commenting on language features, be accurate and also focus on the effect, rather than just naming a feature and quoting an example
- when choosing which poem to write about in part b), be sure that they can make good links - differences as well as similarities
- be sure to write at reasonable length on each of the two poems in part b) (although equal weighting is not required).

Grade Boundaries

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

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