Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2022

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE
In English Language A (4EA1 03)
Paper 03: Poetry and Prose Texts and Imaginative
Writing (NEA)

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4EA1_03 Principal Moderator's Report June 2022

This was a large series for this component with an increased entry pattern and marked the first time for many centres to use the LWA system of uploading coursework. For many centres this worked very smoothly and ensured safe and secure transmission of their files to the system. However, there are several issues arising from this that could have noted from the January report when this system was trialled, which may have saved some time for colleagues in centres.

Administration

1. As we have moved to a system of digital submission, centres do still need to upload their overall candidate list/EDI sheet into the Admin section of the LWA system. This is so that moderators can check at a glance that the full required sample is in place **including** the highest and lowest marked folders. In many cases, this useful overview of the cohort was missing.
2. Centres should also note that, as with the postal system of submissions, **the highest and lowest marked folders** should be included with the sample as a matter of course, whether or not they are part of the randomly generated sample. In many cases either one or both were missing from submissions. As these folders are a requirement, it then takes time to request them, and the entire sample must be returned so they may be added. There is a reminder about this on the system itself, so this is a key area to note in future series. Where centres have to be contacted for these additional folders, the team have sometimes discovered that contact details are out of date and centres are asked to check and correct these if needs be.
3. The folder for each candidate should be uploaded as **one pdf** – not as separate pdfs for the CAS, the reading, the writing, and any related sheets showing how marks have been awarded. This will save time both for centres and moderators. Please organise your folders with the Centre Authentication Sheet on top – properly completed with totals – followed by the reading assignment, the commentary and then the writing assignment. This is the order that appears on the CAS and the order in which we moderate and record marks.

Assessment, annotation and internal moderation

It is always helpful for the moderator to see summative comments transposed to the cover sheet rather than a request to see the comments on the pieces themselves. In this way, the moderator can see that the language and descriptors used in the summative comment match with the totals applied on the cover sheet. This can then be evaluated against the formative annotation and comments within.

As always, those centres who provide careful formative annotation to candidates' work, highlighting skills as they see them, with clear evidence of a second marker

are almost always fair in their application of the mark scheme. This really highlights that good practice and careful internal moderation is the key to fair assessment.

We have recommended that centres make use of the useful online training course and support materials by visiting [this Pearson Edexcel webpage](#) for International GCSE English Language A →Teaching and Learning Materials →Past Training Content → Coursework Marking Training online event. This has been recommended in several cases in the individual E9 feedback reports to centres. However, it is also a useful refresher if you have had new colleagues join your team or staffing changes in the past few years.

> **ZIP** Pearson Edexcel International GCSE English Language A: Coursework Marking Training - Online Event
> | ZIP 13.2 MB | 05 June 2020

Overuse of ticking, correcting and comments to the candidates' themselves continues to be an issue. Centres are reminded that annotations on final submissions of coursework are for the moderator and serve to justify the final marks awarded.

Some centres have reverted to a system of flagging AOs in the margin. Whilst this may seem to be a good use of shorthand in theory, it does not help in practice. Many assignments appeared with AO1 or AO2 beside each paragraph. In some cases, this highlighted straight away that the balance of AO1 material far outweighed the requirements of the mark scheme criteria. It also does not help to pinpoint whether those skills have been achieved in a clear way, a detailed way, or a perceptive way.

Task setting

It must be said that task setting was more varied in quality this time. Centres tended to set tasks which were either incredibly interesting, individualised and therefore enabling for candidates or tasks which really did not help candidates at all. Again, centres should access the training materials cited above for more help with this.

Assignment A

In Section A we see real success when candidates have clearly studied a wide range of texts and are completing assignments that they have either individually chosen or perhaps selected from a choice set by their teacher. We are now five years into this specification and some centres have still not realised that comparing two texts is not a requirement and can actively prevent their candidates from developing work in enough depth and detail to reach the higher areas of the mark scheme.

Once again, please do be aware that comparison is **not** an assessment objective for this component.

Similarly, reading assignments are not assessed for contextual knowledge and Wikipedia style introductions are to be avoided please. Rather, it can be more useful for students to begin with a brief overview or thesis outlining the shape their discussion or exploration will take in relation to their chosen title.

The ubiquitous essay on the theme of loss using 'Disabled' and 'Out, Out' has been seen in vast numbers this time. Where entire centres have completed this, it can become very difficult to delineate the different skills of the candidates. Indeed, where there is almost a checklist of points to be covered in the essay, (the imagery of the sunset, the zoomorphism, the past/present, the rhetorical questions ....) the mark becomes more an assessment of candidate expression than reading skills.

Rather more successful and thoughtful were assignments which dealt with futility, isolation, identity, tenacity, women, violence, prejudice and disappointment. There were also some interesting responses about hope in adversity and a few pieces which explored the effect of the weather and tension.

Commentaries

Centres are reminded that commentaries are marked for AO1 only and that points regarding language and structure belong in the main essay which is where they are much more heavily weighted. The commentary is designed so that candidates may explain their choice of texts for their assignment against the backdrop of their study of the rest of the anthology. In some cases, commentaries reveal rather more about what hasn't been studied than what has – particularly where an entire sample shows candidates doing one assignment based on the same two poems. This can lead candidates to make rather odd claims in their commentary or, revert to including AO2 points repeated from the essay.

Some of the more successful examples weaved in points about other texts and then justified their choice and thinking with carefully made observations. They revealed much about how candidates had become engaged with their studies, and it was interesting to read these personal examples of reflection.

Assignment B

The imaginative writing again was varied. Most of the pieces are still narrative and covered most of the genres you might imagine – action/ thrillers and supernatural were very popular. There was experimentation such as dual narrators being employed and the use of the first person. Time changes and varied time sequences were more common which can produce challenges in terms of change of tense. Plots were generally tightly controlled with candidates being more

conscious this year of tone and atmosphere. Narratives which are purely plot led and seem to be inspired by films invariably do not satisfy this reader. Similarly, the abandoned house narratives remain as clichéd as ever.

There were some successful reflective pieces; more descriptive pieces and some enjoyable travel writing responses which provided an opportunity for personal observations and anecdotes and humour. A number of centres provided evocative or unusual images to trigger either descriptive or narrative writing.

We still see creative responses to drama and prose texts. At times we saw assignments inviting candidates to write 'in character'. These were only sometimes successful and then by candidates of the very highest ability. Such tasks are much harder than they look because it is difficult to imitate the nuances and language scope of a literary character and to imitate a particular style of writing even if content knowledge of events is sound. A narrative based on the candidate's own imagination is a much safer alternative and can still be inspired by the study of a text.

For candidates working in the lower levels of the mark scheme, spelling was generally accurate. The vocabulary used centered on dramatic and violent verbs and sometimes lacked variety. Ideas were plot driven and direct speech was not necessarily paragraphed or punctuated. Indirect speech was mixed with direct speech. Sometimes tenses suffered and the narratives lapsed between past and present. Punctuation was sound but again lacked more varied forms. Paragraphs in general could be a problem. These could all be areas to help candidates improve their marks.

More successful work showed sophisticated vocabulary and description and original use of structure and paragraphs, for example: one-word sentences; one sentence paragraphs; deliberate repetition; unusual use of metaphor or personification; use of rhetorical questions to convey the thought process of a character; an ending which was left 'hanging' and leaves the reader feeling almost cheated but at the same time feeling that they have been enthralled and entertained.

At the highest levels, we see some superb narrative writing, tightly controlled and utterly compelling. In many cases these are the most succinct and cogent pieces we read, revealing perhaps that an editing and drafting process would benefit many candidates who are taking the coursework route.