Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2018

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE
In English Literature (4ET1)
Paper 01R: Poetry and Modern Prose

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Introduction

This has been a very exciting year with the first examination of our new 4ET1 specification. Centres should be congratulated in preparing their candidates so well and we hope that both our candidates and centres are pleased with their results.

There are three sections in this examination paper. In Section A, candidates are presented with an unseen poem and answer a question based on it (20 marks). In Section B, Anthology Poetry, candidates can choose either Question 2, which has two named poems or Question 3, in which one poem is named and the candidate chooses a suitable poem to discuss with it (30 marks). For Section C, Modern Prose, candidates choose to respond to one of two questions based on the prose text that they have studied (40 marks). The total marks for this paper is 90.

The feedback received from examiners has been very positive and the full range of marks has been awarded. Many responses gained marks in Level 3 or above and several candidates were awarded marks in Level 5.

This report will provide feedback on all questions seen for the Summer 2018 4ET1 01R paper. Please also refer to the separate report produced for the main 4ET1 01 paper, as many points made are also relevant to this paper. Due to the small number of entries for this new regional 4ET1 01R paper, few examiner comments are available, but it is hoped that what is included here is useful.

Section A: Unseen Poetry

Question 1 Unseen Poem: *October's Party*, George Cooper
Question: Explore how the writer presents October in this poem.

Candidates responded very well to this question. Nearly all candidates referred to the personification of October and other elements within the poem and most commented on the use of colour imagery. Most candidates wrote at Level 4 and above and, unlike previous papers on the legacy specification, referred to various literary devices in contexts which enhanced their responses rather than just listing them or using them inaccurately. Less able candidates talked mainly about the 'joy' and 'celebratory' aspects of the poem (one even saw the Professor as a DJ!). But a good number were also able to see that despite its jolly, happy nature that there was some sadness as well, as it was the end of the season; even death was alluded to. There were also some very perceptive responses which referred to the transitory nature of rainbows and the cycle of the season.

Examiner comments include:

"Strangely enough I did not come across any that said it was the fallen leaves that 'stayed' after the party closed. Candidates were able to engage with the poem and the responses were detailed and demonstrated good preparation from centres."

"Candidates engaged well with the poem and the question. The poem was accessible to all levels, with enough scope for the more able candidates to score into the top level."

"It was clear devices had been taught and understood. Better responses though showed they could engage with the poem at more than 'word level'."

"An engaging unseen poem."

"Candidates across the ability range were able to engage with the poem on some level. There tended to be a degree of retelling the events in the poem with limited analysis. Some, however, provided insightful comments and analysis."

In summary, when responding to the Unseen Poetry, Section A, candidates should remember to:

- demonstrate an understanding of the overall meaning of the poem
- focus on the question
- refer to form and structure and try to suggest *why* this may have been used
- give examples of language and explain their effect on the reader
- comment on all areas of the poem, not just the first few lines
- use short quotations and avoid copying large areas of the poem.

Section B: Anthology Poetry

Question 2: Compare the ways the writers convey feelings about parents in *Piano* and *Poem at Thirty-Nine.*

Few candidates failed to note the similarities of the poems in terms of their affection and grief about their parents. Many commented on how Lawrence was almost a victim of his memories which although he found them wonderful he did not like the effect they had on his adult existence. He became too nostalgic and yearning for the past. Most contrasted this with Walker's view that although she missed her father she savoured the memories and was thankful to her father for the things he taught her and how she had become like him. Many picked up on the way her memories seem to follow the way she described them as "tossing this and that into the pot" and also how there was a change of mood in stanza 4 and commented on the exclamation mark.

Most candidates commented on the use strong imagery and some referred to the use of onomatopoeia in *Piano*. Almost all candidates recognised that these were two personal poems that portrayed the love felt towards the parents.

Examiner comments include:

"Candidates showed understanding of both poems and most were able to compare on some level."

"There were a number who did not seem to know much about the poets, many referred to Lawrence as 'she' and only a few were able to use contextual

knowledge. Those that did include relevant contextual comment tended to be those gaining marks in the top two levels."

"There were useful and accurate comparisons made. The most successful dealt with each poem at some length before comparing- others got themselves into a muddle by making comparisons every sentence."

"There was evidence of terminology being used without understanding or any comment on effect and some responses 'flattered to deceive'!"

"Many candidates made comments on rhyme, rhythm, and structure and suggested it had some effect on the meaning of the poem; however, these types of comments were rarely convincing or accurate. It seems that for some candidates it was something that they felt they need to 'tick off' rather than see structural devices as part of each poem's meaning."

Question 3: Compare how the writers present ideas about the future in *If-* and one other poem from the anthology.

A full range of marks was awarded for this question. Although a less popular option than Question 2, those who *knew* the poem *If-* produced some excellent responses.

Many candidates fell into the trap of summarising every piece of advice Kipling gives without making holistic comments about what the poem is saying about life. Many saw the poem as a positive view of life- though some perceptive responses said it had a negative view on life but offered advice in how to deal with all the trials one might face. A number saw the poem in the context of the time it was written and noted its paternalistic and historical theme. Because many listed each piece of advice the discussion of form, language and structure was not always strong, though most referred to anaphora, imperatives, personification end stops and caesura accurately.

The poems chosen for comparison ranged across the anthology. The most successful were those who chose *Prayer Before Birth* and were able to analyse this poem and make many useful comparisons in terms of the voice of the poem, who is being addressed and what it is saying about the future. Some very perceptive responses were able to see that the views of both poets were actually not so dissimilar- but while Kipling felt that 'if' certain rules were followed they could be overcome, while McNiece took a far more pessimistic view.

The best responses had contextual awareness of *Prayer Before Birth*, the weakest responses thought the persona was speaking to its mother or indeed a few thought it was the mother speaking. Many said it had no rhyme ignoring internal rhyme, half rhyme and repetition, few commented on alliteration. Most thought it was a negative and frightening view of life.

Generally useful comparisons were made though at times a simple conclusion was drawn, such as: '*If-* was positive and *Prayer Before Birth* was negative'.

One examiner commented: "Some candidates struggled to choose an appropriate poem for comparative purposes. Terminology was often used incorrectly (it seems all poems are written in iambic pentameter!) or without development. There was evidence of generalisation rather than close analysis. Some candidates commented on the poems generally and did not address the focus of the question – 'future'."

In summary, when responding to Section B, candidates should try to:

- focus on the question
- refer to form and structure
- give examples of language and explain their effect on the reader
- provide a balanced response – giving each poem equal treatment
- compare meanings and examples of language and structure.

Remember, context is not assessed in this part of the paper.

Section C: Modern Prose

This has been a particularly successful section of the paper, particularly with the introduction of some new, exciting and inspirational texts. Again, candidates had been prepared extremely well and it is always a joy to discover something new about a text when we thought we knew it already! Some comments and observations were individual, enlightening and perceptive.

Some examiners thought that this section saw candidates producing much better responses in comparison to Section B. There were thoughtful, insightful and perceptive responses produced for all of the questions and once again, the full range of marks was awarded.

All questions afforded candidates of all abilities a fair chance to produce very fine responses indeed, although there were some weaker responses in *Of Mice and Men* and *To Kill a Mockingbird*, where candidates failed to show a reasonable understanding of the text or the contexts in which they were written. Weaker responses struggled to understand the requirements of AO4 and a number of responses lapsed into narratives instead of answering the question.

Candidates who responded to Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* were mostly very successful when applying both AO3 (knowledge and understanding of the text) and AO4 (context), which resulted in some very perceptive and skilful responses with a range of quotations.

One examiner reporting on the 4ET1 01 paper commented: "For the Modern Prose section, I was very pleasantly surprised. Responses seemed to be of a higher calibre than previous papers - with very few low-end scripts across the range of texts. I felt the *Of Mice and Men* answers were the least perceptive generally (although still good)."

Another examiner commented: "Candidates are remembering key quotations remarkably well – it was very rare to find a response which used very little textual evidence."

As this is a 'closed book' examination, we do not expect candidates to recall

quotations accurately, indeed, candidates can still achieve of full marks without using quotations. When we make reference to 'examples' in the mark scheme, we are referring to the specific episodes or events from the chosen novel.

By far, for this 4ET1 01R paper, *Of Mice and Men* was the most popular choice of prose text. The second most popular was *To Kill a Mockingbird.* There were no responses to *The Joy Luck Club* and just one for *The Whale Rider*. Although there were only a few responses to *Things fall Apart*, the quality of responses was, on the whole, very high.

Text: *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Harper Lee
Question 4: 'Boo Radley is misunderstood by the people of Maycomb.'
How far do you agree with this statement?

There were some very perceptive and interesting responses that demonstrated good knowledge of the text. With very few exceptions, context was integrated well into the responses.

It was pleasing to see how outraged and indignant candidates are to the bad treatment Boo gets from the ignorant inhabitants of Maycomb (similarly outraged in Q5 about Tom Robinson). Many saw it as a historical occurrence that 'did not happen now'. Again, the higher level responses went beyond listing examples of Boo's mistreatment but saw it in the themes and ideology of the text and the characterisation of the children and their development.

One examiner commented: "There were some impressive responses from able candidates. However, the comprehensive comments on context detracted from analysis of the text itself. At times it seemed that knowledge of the text was a lesser consideration than context."

Question 5: How significant is the trial of Tom Robinson in the novel?

The trial was well understood to be the pivotal point in the realisation of the children of the inequality and racist attitudes of the town. Candidates showed very good knowledge of the text and there were many specific references and quotes which enhanced and added depth to their responses.

The context of racial inequality, prejudice, the Great Depression and (retrospectively from the author's point of view when it was written) the Civil Rights movement were noted successfully by many candidates.

Few candidates got below Level 3. Many candidates received marks in Levels 4 and 5 for both questions based on this novel.

Text: *Of Mice and Men*, John Steinbeck

This was the most popular text option for centres. Question 6 had more responses and a full range of marks was awarded for both questions.

Question 6: In what ways is George's and Lennie's dream important in the novel?

Responses to this question were mostly very successful. Almost all candidates detailed George's and Lennie's dream and some went on to explain how this affected Candy and Crooks. More able candidates developed ideas, such as how Lennie was thinking about the dream when Curley picked a fight with him. Some candidates noted that Lennie is the only one who realises the dream because he dies thinking about it.

Candidates tended to successfully integrate contextual points to support the comments they had made.

Examiner comments include:

"Some of the responses I read were the best I have ever come across. Even the weakest candidates knew the text, the context and were able to go beyond the 'fatta the land' quote and offered detailed comments on how important the dream was. Many were able to incorporate other aspects (loneliness, disability and violence) intelligently and appropriately into their discussion. It was good to see the compassion and empathy which candidates employed in their responses. There were only a few simplistic 'American Dream' offerings (where everyone had one) most saw how the concept had been part of a nation's being somewhat hoodwinked by their government or alternatively the desperation of the people suffering from The Great Depression."

"Many commented on the cyclical nature of the novella, so ending up at the same waterhole meant the dream was doomed, and also that Lennie's coloured rabbits indicated how unlikely the dream would be fulfilled. One noted, 'Lennie gets his hands on everything from mice, dogs, even a woman... but never a rabbit...'"

"The detailed quoting made me forget that this was a closed book exam such was the frequency and accuracy of well- placed quotations throughout the essays. I gave many full marks."

"Generally, candidates seemed well prepared for this question, although there was a tendency to fixate exclusively on George and Lennie's dream. Context was, on the whole, aptly integrated in the responses."

Question 7: Explore the character of Slim in *Of Mice and Men*.

Many of the comments above are applicable to this question. The majority of candidates provided an in-depth study of the character and commented on how Slim is considered the 'prince of the ranch' and how he is respected by the other ranch hands. Some considered how he held more authority than Curley and how he supported George at the end of the novel.
Candidates were able to go far beyond a set of well-known quotations and offered a perceptive character analysis. Some drew on Steinbeck's own experiences as well as his ideological stance. Most examiners commented that the responses were a pleasure to mark.

One examiner commented: "There was good understanding of Slim's character with some apt textual support but often limited on context. I found it hard to believe that this is a closed book examination."

Text: *The Whale Rider*, Witi Ihimaera

There were very few responses for this text, but the very limited number seen were often a joy to read.

Question 8: 'This novel is all about identity.'
How far do you agree with this view?

Candidates tended to focus on the importance of identity to the Maori people and how Kahu is instrumental in securing this identity of her people for the next generation. The nature of the novel lends itself readily to contextual points and often this was successfully embedded into responses.

Question 9: Explore that character of Rawiri in *The Whale Rider.*

There were no responses to this question. Please refer to the report for the main 4ET1 01 paper for more comments in relation to this novel.

Text: *The Joy Luck Club*, Amy Tan

There were no responses to either question. Please refer to the report for the main 4ET1 01 paper for more comments in relation to this novel.

Question 10: 'The character of Suyuan Woo is central to our understanding of the novel.' How far do you agree with this view?

There were no responses to either question. Please refer to the report for the main 4ET1 01 paper for more comments in relation to this novel.

Question 11: Discuss the importance of memories in *The Joy Luck club*.
Text: *Things Fall Apart*, Chinua Achebe

There were very few responses to this text, but those seen were often awarded marks in the top two levels. Candidates responded extremely well to both questions and responses were a pleasure to read.

Question 12: Explore the character of Nwoye in the novel.

Most candidates were able to explore the character of Nwoye with confidence. The majority of candidates considered Nwoye's relationship with his father, Okonkwo, and Ikemefuna. Candidates understood Nwoye's distress over Ikemefuna's death and how this further impacted on his relationship with his father and was instrumental in his acceptance of the Christian faith. A range of points were made and supported with relevant examples from the novel.

Question 13: Discuss the importance of reputation in *Things Fall Apart.*

This was slightly more popular than Question 12. Most candidates discussed Okonkwo's obsession with reputation and made reference to his fear of becoming like his father. Most candidates provided a range of examples, including Okonkwo's wrestling reputation and how he was a successful and respected farmer and tribesman. Few candidates considered the reputation of the Oracle but most considered the reputation of the Christians and their justice system.

In summary, when responding to Section C, candidates should:

- focus on the question
- avoid narrative retelling of the events in the novel
- provide a range of examples from their chosen text – remember that as this is a closed book examination, examples need not be quotations but examples of events or episodes within the novel
- prove to the examiner their knowledge of the text – do not assume the examiner knows everything
- comment on contextual points and try to relate these to the points being made
- avoid dealing with context separately. Do not write a page of historical background, but link all contextual points with an example from the novel and in relation to the question being answered.

Conclusion

This paper has been a pleasure to mark and the responses have been very enjoyable to read. Centres should be congratulated on preparing their candidates so well. We very much hope that you will continue to deliver this specification and you are delighted with results.

More exemplar materials for the new specification are continually being added to our website and more sample responses are being uploaded in the Autumn.

For those candidates looking to continue their English Literature studies, the Pearson Edexcel International AS and A Level (Specification references: YET01 and XET01) is an ideal option. This qualification is becoming very popular and successful and has received positive feedback from centres. Full details are available on our website.

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