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Moderators' Report/
Principal Moderator Feedback

Summer 2019

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE
In English Language (4EA1) Paper 03

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The moderating team felt that the unit had been completed successfully by the majority of centres. It was clear some advice had been adopted by many since the first main series last summer. However, there are still some areas where centres can improve and develop their practice.

Administration:

Most centres submitted their folders in a very timely way with the requisite cover sheets and information in place and with folders neatly treasury tagged. Loose sheets and plastic wallets can cause problems, as they leave candidates' work vulnerable to becoming lost or separated.

We did receive submissions from a number of centres who were using the cover sheets from the legacy specification. These are no longer in use, as they do not allow for the submission of the two separate marks for Assignment A (Reading assignment and Commentary) and B (AO4 and AO5). They also make it difficult for the moderator to see the initial breakdown of marks – especially if these are not clearly delineated on the pieces of work themselves. New specification cover sheets were, in the main, completed appropriately with summative comments, which matched the final mark awarded. Centres are encouraged not to put generalised comments, such as 'see essay', but rather provide a summative comment, which enables the moderator to see the final decision making at a glance.

It is also important to remind centres that as well as the sample requested on the EDI printout, they should also submit the folders with the highest and lowest marks for the centre in addition. Requesting these from the centres retrospectively slows down the process overall and causes delays and problems.

Task setting:

We would like to thank those centres who ensure that the tasks set are clearly visible to the moderators at the tops of each assignment. Unclear or general task settings, e.g. 'Poetry Essay' or 'Poetry comparison', can make it difficult to appreciate exactly what the candidate has been asked to do.

Assignment A:

Many centres set varied reading tasks for candidates, which covered a range of texts from the anthology. In larger centres, it was noted that this has differentiated effectively, and proved to be more successful than a 'one size fits all' approach. Another effective strategy for the more able candidate was the self-selection of texts and the creation of individual tasks. However, this does come with a warning, as centres should check that the task set leads candidates to address the Assessment Objectives appropriately and with the correct weighting.

It might be worth reminding the Assessment Objectives:

AO1:

Read and understand a variety of texts, selecting and interpreting information, ideas and perspectives

AO2:

Understand and analyse how writers use linguistic and structural devices to achieve their effects.

Essentially here, **AO1** is looking for a demonstration of the 'what' – the comprehension skill demonstrated by the candidate, and **AO2** is looking for a demonstration of the 'how' – the analytical skill of the candidate and their ability to comment on the effect of writers' choices. Though assignments are marked holistically, centres should note the weighting of those marks in the essay as 6 and 18, respectively.

Whilst many candidates were able to write confidently and at length with possible interpretations of texts, it was very noticeable that the focus on linguistic and structural analysis in the right balance was missing from some pieces of work that had been awarded marks in Level 4 and 5. It should be noted that Level 4 asks for a 'thorough understanding of language and structure and how these are used to create effects'. As mentioned after the first series, it can be useful to include phrasing which includes reference to both AOs in the task such as:

How do (writer's names) use language and structure to present ideas about (topic or theme)?

Whilst the most able candidate can take more abstract ideas and work with them in a highly perceptive way, at times we saw rather difficult tasks set for middle range and less able candidates. It was very rare to see centres offering bullet points within their task setting to scaffold weaker candidate responses. '*Explore any two texts that deal with identity.*' can be freeing for an able candidate, but for others an approach such as:

Both 'An Unknown Girl' and 'Still I Rise' deal with ideas about identity. Explore:

- *the different ideas about identity in each poem*
- *the kinds of words, phrases and language features used to present identity*
- *the way each poem is structured or shaped to reveal the ideas*
- *how you are affected by the writers' ideas and choices.*

could be more helpful in developing responses.

Seeing how some candidates had had the opportunity to really explore and appreciate the different styles and features of some of the new anthology texts was really pleasing, as there is now very little opportunity for candidates to write on some of the texts, such as 'Out, Out' and 'Disabled', with a fresh voice – though these are undoubtedly very rich texts. Indeed, some responses were noted by the moderating team to have been rather formulaic in their approach. It was extremely pleasing therefore to see candidates approaching some of the newer texts and engaging perceptively with them in very

many cases. Tasks focusing on gender were popular and candidates used Angelou and Chopin to good effect; other effective pairings matched the loss of identity in 'Disabled' with the search for identity in 'An Unknown Girl', consequences of war in 'Disabled' and 'The Bright Lights of Sarajevo' and the concept of the unknown in the Hill and Tremain prose pieces.

It is once again worth reminding centres that there are **no** marks for comparison in this assignment. Many candidates had been set comparative tasks, and this really does seem to impede them from developing any sustained ideas. The most able candidate will draw parallels and make interesting and perceptive connections between texts as a matter of course in a well-balanced essay. However, the less able candidate tends to produce paragraphs filled with irrelevant references and/or overgeneralised ideas that need further developing.

Commentaries

The purpose of the commentary is to address the remaining 6 marks of AO1, and therefore, to show that the remaining texts in the anthology have been read and understood, and that the candidate has made a selection from that reading. The mark scheme then asks for an explanation of that selection. Centres who submitted pieces of approximately 300 words, clearly labelled as the commentary, and including interesting explanations of choice against the backdrop of the rest of the texts were the most successful. Centres should avoid allowing candidates to 'tag on' the commentary as an introduction or conclusion to the main essay, as this is unclear. It is also crucial to bear in mind that AO2 marks are not awarded here, so repeating points about language and structure were not valid. There were some candidates who had barely addressed AO2 at all in their main essay, and then, provided lengthy analysis of key images in their commentary, which should not be done.

Assignment B:

The Imaginative Writing task was attempted with real enjoyment by most candidates. Work was much more varied here in terms of the range of tasks seen. There were many extremely impressive pieces, and these have often been commented on individually as part of the moderator's feedback to centres. At times, writing work was highly accurate, very engaging, and very moving. The vast majority of candidates had submitted narrative work, some of which was linked thematically to texts in the anthology. Wartime experiences and stories were often sensitive and thoughtful. Some candidates attempted the gothic genre, perhaps after studying Hill, whilst others took journeys as their theme.

For some, however, there was a reliance on very stereotypical plots – we saw many unsubtle thriller type narratives, lost in woods, spooky houses, zombies and blood-dripping knives. Centres should encourage candidates to be aware of their register and

audience. At times, some elements of a candidate's work could be inappropriate and the use of bad language could be edited out at drafting stage to make it more appropriate for the form or genre.

Personal and descriptive writing could be very successful when controlled well. Candidates did write sensitively about moving countries, moving schools, leaving friends – perhaps inspired by some of the themes of the anthology. The holiday trip that includes a lengthy account of going to the airport should perhaps be discouraged. However, there were some extremely imaginative and engaging descriptions of holiday or travel destinations or exciting experiences or personal achievements.

One concern raised by the moderating team, however, was the submission of speeches. We did see some submissions of this genre on topics, such as Euthanasia. This type of work is not accepted as 'Imaginative Writing' and is more suited to the Spoken Language Endorsement.

Assessment, annotation and internal moderation

As ever, we appreciate how time consuming it can be to mark and assess all folders thoroughly. Centres who have taken the time to formatively annotate their folders, carefully double-marking them in their departments and applying the mark scheme diligently and fairly are to be thanked for their approach. Your efforts are always appreciated and noticeable. You help to reinforce the standard we set and maintain fairness.

However, as we noted in detail last year, there are a number of centres that could still improve their practice by following a few simple guidelines and procedures.

First of all, work submitted should be a final draft of the candidate's work and all annotations on that work should be flagging up the skills demonstrated for the moderator. Pages with ticks covering the body of the work can be distracting. Likewise, comments to the candidate indicate that the piece is not a final draft, but a work in progress. Corrections made by the assessor – especially on the writing – can also be unhelpful, as they often cover up what the candidate has actually done.

Marginal annotations flagging up the skills shown by the candidate and leading to a direct justification for the mark awarded are what is required and what the centres with the best practice are doing. Those departments with more than one member of staff should double mark and the second marker's annotations should also be visible in the margin. Any mark changes should be justified by a brief comment. The final summative comment should appear on the current cover sheet with the separate marks and the totals clearly visible.