



Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2025

Pearson Edexcel International Advanced Level
In English Literature (WET01)
Unit 1: Post-2000 Poetry and Prose

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January 2025

Publications Code WET01_01_2501_ER

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Introduction

Centres are thanked for choosing Pearson Edexcel as their International A level English Literature provider.

WET01 is an open book examination lasting two hours. The examination is in two sections.

Section A: Post-2000 Poetry

Candidates answer one essay question from a choice of two comparing a named poem from the prescribed list of poems from *Poems of the Decade: An Anthology of the Forward Books of Poetry 2002-11* with one other poem of their own choice from the prescribed list. Section A assesses Assessment Objectives AO1, AO2 and AO4.

Section B: Post-2000 Prose

Candidates answer one essay question from a choice of two on their selected text from the following options: *The Kite Runner*, *Life of Pi*, *The White Tiger*, *Brooklyn* and *Purple Hibiscus*. Students are required to demonstrate an appreciation of the contexts in which texts are written and read. Section B assesses Assessment Objectives AO1, AO2 and AO3.

Note that AO5 is *not* assessed in this paper.

There are 25 marks available for Section A and 25 for Section B. The total mark of 50 represents 50% of the total IAS and 25% of the total IA2.

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

General Overview of the WET01 January 2025 (2501) paper and performance

- This has been a successful paper.
- Most candidates demonstrated familiarity with the contents of the specification.
- Responses in relation to the set texts and to the range of Assessment Objectives covered the full range of marks and levels.
- Responses were received addressing all the texts available for study.

Section A: Post-2000 Poetry

Many candidates demonstrated the ability to respond effectively to the tasks set on the selection of poems covered in this section of the paper. However, not all candidates approached the tasks that were set in relevant and detailed ways. It is essential that candidates take time to plan their responses, ensuring that they are offering a response that addresses the questions set. Where responses do not connect in explicit ways to the task, this inevitably has an impact on the marks that can be awarded. This section also assesses AO4. In addressing this objective, candidates need to consider connections between the poems. The selection of an appropriate second poem is therefore of paramount importance and requires careful thought. There was a tendency amongst some candidates to discuss the chosen poem in greater depth than the set poem and to allow it to dominate. This is not advisable. Some candidates, as in previous examination series, had selected as their second text poems that they evidently liked or felt they knew best, but that were not best suited to help them respond well to the task set.

Centres are reminded that AO2 focuses on the ways in which meanings are shaped in literary texts. This includes analysis of the writers' choices of language, but analysis at word level alone is not sufficient. Candidates should be prepared to explore the structures the poets have adopted as well as a range of poetic effects the poets employ. The simple identification of poetic techniques is not, however, sufficient on its own; candidates need to offer analysis of how these methods contribute to the potential meanings of the poems.

Many candidates demonstrated the ability to create appropriate structures within their writing, establishing clear and relevant arguments, illustrating these with good selections from the poems and developing arguments that led to effective conclusions. However, there are some general observations it is worth making:

- Sequencing of ideas was not always effective, making it difficult to follow the development of some candidates' arguments.
- It is helpful if texts and names of authors are included in the opening paragraph to assist with clarity.
- Some candidates tended to deal with the poems separately rather than drawing out the connections between them.
- Some candidates were able to identify the use of poetic devices but did not proceed to consider how and why the poets have selected to use these methods to shape potential meanings.
- There continue to be candidates writing about poems that are not on the prescribed lists. Centres need to ensure that candidates only make use of poems on the list provided in the Source Booklet for the paper.

Section B

As in previous series, the most popular prose text was *The Kite Runner* (Q03 and Q04) and the second most popular *Purple Hibiscus* (Q11 and Q12). Responses were, however, received on all the set prose texts. It is pleasing to note a continuing trend of improvement with candidates working on *Brooklyn* and *Life of Pi* in terms of their ability to apply the kinds of contextual material required in addressing AO3.

Centres are reminded that AO2 requires candidates to write about the ways in which meanings are shaped in texts. Given that the texts in this section are lengthy works of prose, it is not sufficient for candidates to rely solely on close analysis of writers' language use at word and sentence level. Candidates need to be prepared to discuss the writers' use of patterns of language and imagery across the text as well as their use of a range of the methods writers of prose fiction employ and the effects they achieve, including but not limited to use of structure, genre, settings, characterisation, narrative voice and tone. It is also important to consider

how textual examples can be selected from across the texts to support discussion.

Stronger responses were well planned and explicitly addressed the demands of the questions set, ensuring careful address of all relevant Assessment Objectives. There was some evidence, however, of candidates using pre-prepared responses on topics that were similar to but not the same as the tasks set. In such cases, clear and explicit connection to the questions was not achieved. Candidates are advised to plan carefully to ensure that their answers explicitly respond to the terms of the questions set.

Detailed Commentary

Section A: Post-2000 Poetry

Question 1

This was the more popular question in Section A. Many candidates who selected to answer on 'The Lammas Hireling' by Ian Duhig responded well to the idea of unwanted memories and the role these play in the poem. A significant number of candidates, however, tried to make this an essay about guilt, which was not the same thing. Weaker candidates tended to rely on recounting the details of the farmer's memories without engaging in detailed ways with the poet's methods and without offering a literary analysis of the effects thus achieved. Stronger answers drew on a range of poetic methods and their role in shaping readers' understanding of how the memories the poet presents are unwanted and damaging. Some candidates demonstrated a good sense of the supernatural elements of the poem (eg Duhig's use of words such as 'warlock' and 'elf-shot') and the ways in which these feed into the idea of unwanted memories. Some candidates were able to comment in detail on the role of the unreliable narrator. Others focused on the relationship between the characters and the act of murder leading to unwanted memories. Many also noted the confessional tone in the last lines of the poem. Stronger responses demonstrated deep analysis, linking devices effectively. Diverse techniques were explored, including mental landscape and magic realism. Sometimes candidates did not make explicit comparison of the poems, analysing them in isolation rather than drawing out direct connections.

The most popular choice of second poem was Roderick Ford's 'Giuseppe'. Carol Ann Duffy's 'The Map-Woman' was another poem that offered some strong comparisons. Other poems used included 'On her Blindness', 'History', 'The Deliverer', 'Material' and 'Eat Me'. Some of these were not the best choices and candidates should try to focus on the task set rather than write about poems that they feel comfortable with.

Here we see an example of developed and discriminating analysis in response to Q01:

In the Lammas Hireling the authors attitude shows a stark contrast at the beginning from the end, showcasing how something unexpected caused these unwanted memories which caused such a drastic change in the authors behaviour. From the very first line the author states how "I'd still a light heart", showing that there was no cause for fear or regret at the beginning. The first stanza suggests that all is good and that the hireling was good for the author, as seen when he states how he "grew fond of company" in reference to the lammas hireling. The use of ceasura in the first stanza when the author mentions how the "cattle doted on him : in his time mine only dropped heifers", emphasises the idea that the lammas hireling only brought good news and benefits to the author. However just as suddenly the poet shows how everything changed instantly with the hireling bringing him terror and trouble. this can be seen by the use of alliteration of "stock-still" and "stark-naked", embellishing the horror that he saw before him that would cause such unwanted memories. At the end of the poem we see how much has changed since the happy first stanza, with the author stating how they "have sinned". furthermore, by stating how "it has been an hour since my last confession" it suggests that they cannot forgive themselves for their actions and cannot move past what has happened.

Comment: Notice the way the candidate blends discussion of the poem and incorporates well-exemplified consideration of the poet's methods with the consideration of the meanings that develop in the course of the poem in relation to the central idea of unwanted memories.

Question 2

This was the less popular Section A question. Many candidates were able to offer analysis of the set poem in relation to the idea of boundaries and the ways in which these are represented in the poem, considering, for example, the poet's use of the house and the street as representations of the boundary between childhood and adulthood. Another popular issue for analysis was the boundary between parents and their children. As for Q01, some of the poems selected for comparison were less effective, suggesting the use of learned material. Many of the best responses used 'To My Nine-Year-Old Self' as the second poem as both poems focus on the boundaries between youth and maturity. Many candidates comfortably engaged with the poem's metaphorical meaning. There was some effective consideration of poets' use of poetic methods and structures and how these relate to the idea of boundaries.

A range of comparison poems was seen: 'To My Nine-Year-Old Self' and 'Eat Me' were the most common selections. Other poems included 'The Gun', 'Material', 'History', 'Genetics', 'Ode on a Grayson Perry Urn', 'The Map-Woman', 'Giuseppe', 'On her Blindness', 'A Minor Role' and 'Chainsaw versus the Pampas Grass'.

The following extract shows a candidate offering sophisticated analysis in response to Q02:

evolve to negative emotions in adulthood. The joy of the child is further demonstrated through the pattern and semantic field of bright colours. The description of being "lit from within", "gold stud earrings", "silver anklet" and "shimmering oyster" is indicative of the happiness the child feels and the freedom she feels. There is a deviation from the bright colours when it refers to the "long grey eye of the street" and "drab factory" and this is referring to the adult world which suggests the way growing up creates a clear boundary between the happiness of childhood and monotony of adulthood. The metaphor of a "grey eye" may convey the anxiety and worries of adults as they often worry about problems and consequences of actions which is devoid during childhood. Similarly there is a contrast between joy and misery in To My

Comment: Notice the effective use of embedded short quotations as part of the candidate's own argument and the ways in which a tight focus is maintained on the idea of boundaries.

General Observations on Section A

1. Overall, responses suggest that students have been well prepared in relation to the list of prescribed poems.
2. A range of poems was offered in response to the tasks set, but candidates needed on occasions to think more carefully about their

choice of second poems in order to develop effective and meaningful thematic connections.

3. A small number of candidates infringed the examination rubric by writing on poems not on the list of prescribed poems.
4. In the Post-2000 Poetry section, candidates are required to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the function of poetic methods. They need to consider carefully the range of ways in which poets use language, form and structure, connecting these methods closely to potential meanings.

Section B: Post-2000 Prose

Questions 3 & 4: *The Kite Runner* (Khaled Hosseini)

Q03 considered the presentation of new beginnings in the novel. Responses were seen across the full range. Many candidates focused on Baba and Amir's new start in the United States – a new beginning that is denied to many characters in the novel, including Hassan and his family. There was also reference to Sohrab's new beginning at the end of the text. Many students also effectively focused on Amir's return to Afghanistan as a new beginning. More sophisticated responses linked new beginnings to Amir's redemption and his quest to 'be good again'. A number of candidates explored the fact that the novel is a bildungsroman and considered how Hosseini structures the novel and employs flashbacks to explore new beginnings. Other interesting methods considered include the contrast between settings (e.g. the vibrant Kabul versus the trying, unfamiliar landscape of Fremont, California) and exploration of how new beginnings can signify loss or sacrifice, as seen in Baba's struggles with arthritis and cancer. In some cases, candidates did not include relevant context and assumed that this was understood. This meant that there was a lack of balance between context and analysis.

Here we see a candidate writing on *The Kite Runner*:

chapter 11 enforces the beginning of Amir & Baba's life in America away from the political upheaval in Afghanistan. The aspects of society/culture are highlighted by the clash of culture and the global experience of refugees given the unfamiliarity associated with a foreign world 'Does he think I'm a thief', 'What kind of country is this?' 'No~~one~~^{one} trusts anybody!', the instructive voice of Baba within the novel reflects the frustration through the exclamatory statements and showcases the ~~di~~ sense of displacement refugees bear provided the book is a diasporic novel, Hosseini utilizes Baba and Amir's experiences to illustrate the difficulty in coping with new beginnings.

Comment: Note how the candidate integrates contextual material and their efficient references to the writer's methods – the intrusive voice of Baba.

Q04 was the less popular of the two options on *The Kite Runner*. Many responses explored challenges to convention through characters and relationships. Common areas for discussion were Soraya's decision to run away and later marry Amir despite not being a virgin, Amir and Hassan's friendship breaking social conventions, and Amir's later adoption of Hassan's son as an unconventional resolution. There was also some discussion of interesting ideas related to Hosseini's use of contradictions in the character of Baba who to some extent upholds images of traditional Afghan masculinity while at the same time breaking religious conventions by drinking, smoking, and critiquing Islamic norms. Many candidates drew on relevant contexts related to the traditional division between Pashtuns and Hazaras. This led to consideration of the differences between Amir and Hassan and how their lives evolved. Other candidates examined the conventional upbringing of Afghan women and examined the back stories of Soraya and Sanaubar. Some students discussed the rigid expectations for Afghan women and the consequences of defying tradition. However, while relevant, context was often surface level rather than deeply integrated into arguments. Some students engaged effectively with structure and language to examine how conventions are challenged, but this tended to be a less effective aspect of candidates' work.

Here we see an extract from a response to Q04:

Amir also challenges convention though fascination and pursual of the arts, such as literature and poetry. His Mother enjoyed these subjects however as a man Amir was never encouraged to by Baba as it was seen as feminine. When he moves to America, and the social conventions shift, Amir is able to pursue his dreams of becoming a writer. Earning him the respect of his father which he always desired. This is leaves a cathartic sense as Amir challenges convention and is reward, which may be Hosseini's greater idea on challenging convention.

Comment: Contextual material and ideas related to the structural movement between Afghanistan and America in the novel are both integrated in the development of the candidate's argument.

Questions 5 & 6: *Life of Pi* (Yann Martel)

Q05 responses often noted isolation in Pi's childhood as well as his experiences on the Pacific Ocean. Context proved to be a problem for some candidates with either too much being offered at the expense of analysis or too little. Some candidates noted Martel's setting of Pondicherry as being isolated as it was a former French territory in India. However, others focused on the journey and events after the ship had sunk, thus tending to offer simplistic accounts. A few candidates focused on Martel's structure and style, but others merely took a narrative approach.

Q06 responses did not always focus tightly on the idea of uncertainty in the novel. This tended to mean that more narrative approaches were taken with listing of where uncertainty is found in the novel. Many candidates lacked coverage of AO3 when they could have made useful reference to Indian politics or religious contexts.

Questions 7 & 8: *The White Tiger* (Aravind Adiga)

The White Tiger attracted several responses, which was pleasing to see. Both Q07 on the presentation of change in the novel and Q08 on the presentation of motivation led to some interesting responses. Candidates drew on a range of appropriate contextual ideas related to Adiga's presentation of changes in social practices in modern day India and how these are experienced and represented in characters and situations in the novel (Q07) and on the varying factors shaping characters decisions and motivations (Q08). Naturally, all candidates wrote on Balram, but it was also good to see candidates widening their frame of reference to consider in more depth the roles and functions of the other characters, ideas and situations Adiga presents.

Here we see a candidate writing on Q07:

Furthermore, change is presented on a societal level through the differences of Colonial and Post-Colonial India. This can be seen in the quotation, "India, in it's days of greatness... was like a zoo. A well-kept, orderly zoo. The day the British left, jungle law replaced zoo law." This quotation highlights the effects of British Colonial rule in India, as well as the corrupt nature of individuals in India and the lack of control people of authority have over their country. While "zoo" connotes order and good management, "jungle" connotes ~~chaos~~ that people became unobtainable and reckless, even suggesting they began to have primal instincts. This drastic change in ~~the~~ Indian society is what brought the Rooster Coop to life. The Rooster Coop is a symbol of the oppressive nature of Indian individuals and is a vicious, never-ending cycle that affects those of the lowest strata of society. In 'The Fifth

Comment: Notice the discriminating use the candidate makes here of context and in the discussion of the writer's methods in *The White Tiger*.

Questions 9 & 10: *Brooklyn* (Colm Tóibín)

Few candidates wrote on Q09, on the novel's presentation of conflicting values. Those who did generally looked at the contrast between the traditional Irish family of Eilis and Tony's more outgoing Brooklyn family. There was also some consideration of Eilis' conflicted response to Tony and Jim and the life she wanted. Relevant contextual material was offered. Q10 was the more popular question of the two. In a few cases, candidates took a narrow approach and focused purely on Eilis' hopes and dreams, but others considered the idea in relation to a broader range of characters and situations, allowing for more development and analysis in relation to Rose and her family as well as the Fiorellos in Brooklyn. On the whole, candidates offered relevant contextual knowledge about 1950s Ireland and USA. The coverage of the writer's methods tended to be less effective here.

Questions 11 & 12: *Purple Hibiscus* (Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie)

In responding to Q11, on the presentation of escape in the novel, candidates displayed a good grasp of the political situation of the time. Several considered Adichie's use of Kambili's household and family as a microcosm of Nigerian society of the time and how this related to the idea of escape. Many candidates explored the idea of the novel as a bildungsroman and how this relates to the idea of a central character moving on from or escaping the past. In Q12, ideas of punishment were clearly understood, although some weaker responses were prone to listing out Papa's punishment towards his family. Other candidates effectively developed out the theme to explore a range of different ways in which punishment is found in the novel. Contexts were often effectively explored in relation to the idea of punishment.

Here we see an example from a response to Q12 on *Purple Hibiscus*:

further into self mental punishment. The idea of "actions have consequences" is ridiculous for having a picture that Papa doesn't like and these overreactions is what leads to mindless punishment that has no real end in the novel. The first line of the novel is "things started to fall apart" which is based on the Nigerian novel going on about the corruption in Nigeria at the time which links to the punishment of the people in Nigeria by the government which was eventually overthrown in a civil war. This shows that in the time between these two books there has already been a new dictatorship that has abused its power to punish the people more showing how based in punishment these books are. This all shows the punishment that is unjustified in the novel.

Comment: The candidate deals with issues of punishment and identifies some relevant contextual factors, but the response remains general in nature:

Much more effective is this extract from a response to Q11:

uses her as a force of strength for the women in Nigeria as her mother Grace Ifeoma was the first woman to teach at the University of Nigeria. However, in the freedom she actively pursues and the forces against her gender and role in society she is forced to make an escape to America at the end of the novel in 'Piece of Gods' just as her friend Philipa did, at the beginning of the novel, in search for a better life. This parallels the Disapora in Nigeria, where Nigerians fled to the Western World in search for better opportunities as the corruption in Nigeria did not benefit them or allow them to thrive unless they adhered to colonialist ideals like Papa. Adichie criticises this method of escape as she sheds light on the damages left by the lingering effects of colonialism in Africa and how these corrupt ideals brought about by these beliefs enable people to flee their country's to the Western World, as their advancements in society are as a result of the exploited resources gained from unfair trade with African leaders. She highlights how this Disapora and effects of this trade have created a dependency on Western ideals and locations which could be avoided if there was a Nigeria or Africa that could maintain traditionalist beliefs while co-existing with colonialist ideas. Similarly, the gender roles inflicted on Mama present a similar struggle to Auntie Ifeoma. Mama finds herself trapped in situation where her life and the life of her children are at risk mainly because she is indoctrinated to believe her life cannot exist without Papa. This belief is exemplified in her conversation with Auntie Ifeoma when she relays "A husband crowns a woman's life" she portrays the idea that women's ultimate goal in life is a husband who "crowns" her life. Through this Adichie criticises this belief as the contrast between post-colonial and pre-colonial Nigeria is made prominent. The women in pre-colonial Nigeria hold significant contrast to Mama's passive role in the novel as their active involvement in trade and religion as well as their political influence through their major titles as being the first wife highlight the freedom provided to women during pre-colonial times. Adichie's use of Mama serves as a critique to colonialist ideals as their oppressive methods resulted in the declining influence of women and enabled patriarchal oppression that resulted in domestic violence and the belief that women should be beaten by their husbands.

Comment: Here we see a candidate in sophisticated fashion developing their discussion of escape in *Purple Hibiscus* in relation to contextual factors and drawing out a set of interesting ideas in relation to the shaping of meaning in the novel.

General Observations on Section B

1. Marks at all levels were awarded in this section. Responses ranged from very brief answers providing surface readings of texts or a narrative overview through to extended critical and evaluative essays.
2. It has been pleasing to see that centres continue generally to respond to the need to prepare candidates for AO3. Examples were still seen of responses that made little use of contextual factors – especially in relation to *Life of Pi* – but practice is clearly improving. Centres are

reminded that contexts, whether of production or of reception should be used consistently and formatively in answers and should not appear simply as adjunct information.

3. AO2 – the ways in which meanings are shaped in literary texts – continues to be an area for development in this section of the paper. This tends consistently to be a weaker element of candidate's responses. Word level analysis – especially when used on lengthy works of prose fiction – is not sufficient. Candidates need to be prepared to discuss a variety of the methods their selected writers are employing and the ways in which these are used in relation to the focuses of the questions set.

Grade Boundaries

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

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Principal Examiner

(IAL English Literature WET0 01)

January 2025

