OCR
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GCSE (9-1)

Examiners' report

ENGLISH LITERATURE

J352
For first teaching in 2015

J352/21 Summer 2022 series

Contents

Introduction

Our examiners' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on candidates' performance in the examinations. They provide useful guidance for future candidates.

The reports will include a general commentary on candidates' performance, identify technical aspects examined in the questions and highlight good performance and where performance could be improved. A selection of candidate answers is also provided. The reports will also explain aspects which caused difficulty and why the difficulties arose, whether through a lack of knowledge, poor examination technique, or any other identifiable and explainable reason.

Where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

A full copy of the question paper and the mark scheme can be downloaded from OCR.

Advance Information for Summer 2022 assessments

To support student revision, advance information was published about the focus of exams for Summer 2022 assessments. Advance information was available for most GCSE, AS and A Level subjects, Core Maths, FSMQ, and Cambridge Nationals Information Technologies. You can find more information on our [website](#).

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Paper 21 series overview

In this post pandemic session, where centres have been able to select poetry as one of the options, examiners reported seeing work of a high standard. Most candidates understood the rubric of this paper and the expectations of each part of the question. The Conflict anthology proved the most popular. Youth and Age attracted the least number of candidates, however these responses were generally of a high standard. Many candidates wrote at length and demonstrated secure knowledge of the anthology texts they had studied, using carefully selected quotations to support the points made and as the basis for close analysis of language and structure. Candidates approached the unseen texts with confidence, grasping the main ideas and making some key links with the anthology text. They balanced their discussion of both texts and some candidates wrote in a more focused way about a poem they were encountering for the first time, bringing a fresh perspective rather than repeating learned ideas and analysis. Very few candidates this year ignored the unseen poem entirely or only mentioned it in passing.

Candidates appeared familiar with the rubric for this paper, with fewer using a poem from a different cluster to answer part b), or using the anthology poem set for part a) in b) than in previous sessions. Very occasionally a candidate would select their own poem for part b), but continue to compare it with one of the texts from part a). It was pleasing to see that centres had taken note of the previous reminders that context is not assessed in poetry.

As was evident in the last full examination series, June 2019, most candidates appreciate that AO2 is the dominant assessment objective in exploring poetry. They consciously address language, form and structure and make a good attempt to use terminology appropriate to the subject. It is important to remember that they are rewarded for exploring how that specific technique has been used. There was some highly successful commentary on the effects of a particular lexical cluster, but there is little reward for stating that a poem about war has a lexical field of war. The first word of the task in part a) is 'compare' so a strong response will be based on AO3, identifying key links and planning a sustained comparative argument. AO2 and AO1 are equally weighted in part b), rewarding clear understanding of the studied text, supported by relevant textual detail. Good answers integrate the two AOs by following quotation with analysis of language and its effect on the reader. There is an important difference between 'explanation' (a Level 3 skill) and 'analysis' (Level 4 and above). Many candidates use the PEE structure and are recommended to see the final E as referring to 'effect' or 'evaluation' rather than 'explanation' so they explore the impact of the writers' methods on the reader rather than paraphrasing the text and/or repeating their main idea.

Most candidates were familiar with appropriate subject terminology for GCSE English Literature and used it accurately in their responses. A few made little or no use of subject terminology, simply referring to the poets' choice of specific words, however the majority were able to accurately identify techniques such as metaphor, simile, personification and pathetic fallacy. Juxtaposition was sometimes used when the candidate was attempting a comparison, suggesting that the writer's use of a technique or an idea in the anthology text was juxtaposed with the unseen. Candidates were keen to refer to the rhyme scheme, citing ABAB for example, however often tended to make generalisations about the effect of this and other structural techniques such as enjambment. They were able to identify sonnet form, assumed to be used for poems about love, or how a poem was divided into quatrains, but only a few could say anything meaningful about this. There are still a few candidates who believe poems are organised in paragraphs rather than stanzas/verses and refer to the texts as plays and novels.

Many references to enjambment and caesura across all levels seemed shoe-horned in and were unrelated to the following comment (e.g. "the enjambment and caesura used by Hardy to describe the boy as he 'had a ticket stuck; and a string | Around his neck bore the key of his box' could imply that he may be an evacuee travelling to a safe place"). Caesura was referenced by many candidates, often only

with the identified effect of giving the reader 'time to pause and think' and demonstrating no further understanding or insight. At higher levels enjambment was related to pace, the outpouring of grief or the duration of a feeling (primarily in 1(a)), while at mid- and lower levels this was again used without relation to any effects (e.g. "The enjambment enhances the man's thoughts"). In many cases, candidates seem to understand only one effect of a punctuation mark (informed by memorable usage in other poems) and to transfer this onto instances of it in other texts however appropriate or accurate, for example dashes always mean confusion or hesitation because that is the case in *The Man He Killed*, therefore Emily Dickinson is confused, John Keats is indecisive, and Browning is befuddled from too much sex. Candidates could be encouraged to review punctuation less prescriptively and consider alternative effects. At lower levels, consideration of structure often took the form of describing the number of lines or stanzas or rhyme scheme with no further relation to effects or meanings. As with punctuation, in all levels clearly identifiable poetic metres from one poem, such as anapestic tetrameter from Sennacherib, often were incorrectly identified elsewhere in other poems.

Most scripts were legible, but examiners continue to report a significant number of scripts which are difficult to decipher, even when the scanned script is magnified. Where candidates are allowed to type their answer, typed scripts need careful labelling and use of double-spacing and margins for ease of marking.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally did the following:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally did the following:
• showed clear understanding of the anthology poems • engaged confidently with unseen texts, making relevant comparisons in a structured response • made analytical comments on language and form • wrote detailed personal responses, focussing on the wording of the task.	• reproduced imperfectly understood interpretations of the anthology poems • made limited or no links with the unseen texts, assuming the poets' ideas were the same • explained the meaning of selected references or made generalised comments about techniques • either repeated the wording of the task so that it became intrusive or ignored it entirely.

Assessment for learning

Approaching unseen texts:

1. Practise swiftly getting an overview of the key ideas, perspective and writer's methods by treating anthology texts as unseen when they are first introduced to the class. Encourage students to be independent readers of texts, with a supporting framework for their ideas.

2. Use unseen texts as a starter activity, challenging students in 5 minutes to identify the key ideas and then, in another 5 minutes, to choose a poem from the anthology for comparison and justify their selection.

Misconception

Some candidates used poems from part a) to compare with their choice of anthology poem in part b). There is no comparative element to part b) and candidates must focus on one text.

Question 1 (a)

1   Love and Relationships

Read the two poems below and then answer **both part a) and part b).**

You are advised to spend about 45 minutes on part a) and 30 minutes on part b).

   a)   Compare how these poems present the loss of a loved one.

   You should consider:

   •   ideas and attitudes in each poem
   •   tone and atmosphere in each poem
   •   the effects of the language and structure used.

   [20]

This proved a good pairing of texts, with most candidates able to comment on the intriguing complexities of each poet's attitude to grief. A significant number of candidates chose to structure their response on the theory of the 5 (or 7) stages of grief, which proved to be an interesting way of looking at the texts. It gave candidates, for example, relevant concepts such as denial, anger, and acceptance - all relevant to both poems. In response to the unseen, many candidates wrote sensitively on the ambiguity of the loss and the progress of the persona's feelings. An example of a candidate writing simply but effectively on the subject is: *"In contrast, in 'Silence' Thwaite ends the poem by repeating an idea from the beginning of the poem. Thwaite repeats the phrase 'cold and grey'/'grey, cold.' This means he has wrapped up the poem neatly by these adjectives. This gives the poem a sense of wholeness and stability that is lacking in 'Long Distance II'.*

Most candidates identified that the poems contrasted denial (*Long Distance II*) with acceptance (*Silence*). They compared semantic fields of temperature in the poems (heat in *Long Distance II*, cold in *Silence*) and, on occasions, related the "*Long Distance*" of the title to the emotional connections between parents and son. Some responses commented on how the speaker refers to the physically present and accessible "Dad" at the start of the poem in contrast to the more detached term of "mother" for his deceased parent. Most candidates recognised how the change in tone in the poem, from exasperation or irritation in the first 3 stanzas to understanding, reflected the speaker's experience of losing both parents, although some saw the change from 'I believe life ends with death' to 'the disconnected number I still call' as referring still to the mother. Attempts at discussing the structure and form were very mixed – many simply pointing out the rhyme scheme with no further comment while several others discussed how the change from ABAB to ABBA in the final stanza coincides with the change in attitude. Some referred to the change in tense. One response suggested that having the first and last lines enclose the other two in the final stanza visually depicted the poet feeling trapped/surrounded by his grief.

Very few candidates interpreted the poem Silence as a comparison between enjoying silence as rare opportunities for peace and quiet with the enforced silence that comes with the loss of bereavement. However, bearing in mind that this is an unseen, many candidates demonstrated some excellent and original interpretations.

There was some feature spotting in the less successful responses, but most provided some exploration of language, for example discussing the contrast between warm and cold and the personification of silence. Less successful responses identified enjambment and/or end-stopped lines followed by comments such as it "making the poem flow" and "helping the reader to understand better" or showing that grief is final, without further evaluation of how.

Exemplar 1

1	a)	Both of these poems present the loss of a loved one as difficult. In 'Long Distance II', the father is presented as in denial which reveals his struggle to cope. On the other hand, in 'silence', the speaker appears to accept the loss of their loved one, making it all the more tragic.
		In 'Long Distance II' the writer establishes a conversational tone, opening the poem with 'though'. This suggests that the experience is very personal to them, introducing the reader to their difficulties losing a loved one. Moreover, the speaker uses images of warmth, such as 'hot water bottles' and 'slippers warming by the gas' to hint at the father's denial. This highlights how after taking caring of the mother for so long, the father still gestures to keep her safe and warm, as a coping mechanism to pretend she is still there.
		Contrastingly, in 'silence' the voice establishes a dull atmosphere in the first stanza to evoke how their life feels

meaningless after the loss of their loved one. The use of adjectives such as 'cold' and 'grey' creates a semantic field of darkness, reflecting what the speaker's life is like following the loss of a loved one. This is emphasised with with 'day after day', highlighting the speaker's monotonous life as a result of their grief.

Similarly, in Long Distance II the father's life seems to have lost meaning due to his wife's death. The simple sentence 'You had to phone' creates an abruptness, portraying the father's harshness and unhealthy habits. Furthermore, the use of 'his still raw love' depicts the father's grief as an unhealed wound. This provokes sympathy for the father, as it is evident he feels lost without his wife.

Alternatively, in 'silence', it is clear the voices ambivalent state of mind having lost a loved one. The juxtaposition of 'peace' with 'disturbance' reflects the

speaker's conflicted emotional state as they struggle to move on from their loved one. This is heightened with the personification of silence - 'silence welcomed me.' The verb 'welcomed' suggests that the silence is a comfort to the grieving speaker, hinting at perhaps their unhealthy habits which are similar to those in Long Distance II

This response to 1 a) demonstrates the candidate establishing their understanding of both poems in a succinct opening paragraph. The candidate then develops their analysis in a sustained comparison, moving easily and confidently between the texts.

Exemplar 2

However, in 'Long Distance II', this is not the case: in the final stanza the reader may notice how the previous 'abab' rhyme scheme has been changed to 'abba', and how here the intensity of the poignant and mourning atmosphere has increased dramatically, compared to the beginning of the poem. The voice abruptly explains that 'I believe life ends with death and that is all', using the monosyllabic phrase 'that is all' to try and convince themselves ~~that~~ the reader learns that to cope with his own grief (as at this stage, the father has died). Yet the voice addresses his their own ~~first~~ irrational habits formed by grief as 'in this black new 'in my black, ~~new~~ leather phone book, there's your name / and the disconnected number I still call'. Unlike in 'Silence' where the voice wants to create a distance between 'the dead' and themselves', the speaker in Long Distance II still calls 'the disconnected number'. The phone number is symbolic of the feeling of loss and mourning as the voice ~~for~~ reflects the sadness that death has caused his ~~potential~~ to relationships have become 'disconnected'. In 'Silence', the writer uses a cyclical structure via the repeated adjectives 'grey, cold as a stone' along with the a simile to show how mourning can be life long and painful.

This section of a different candidate's response to 1 a) shows relevant and effective evaluation of the rhyme scheme, monosyllabic language and structure, noting the shift in the final stanza of *Long Distance II,* before starting to consider the cyclical structure of *Silence.*

Question 1 (b)

b) Explore in detail **one** other poem from your anthology which presents a memorable relationship.

[20]

Most candidates recognised that the wording of the questions in part b) is different from part a), generally being broader and therefore enabling them to choose from a wide range within their chosen cluster. In this cluster it can be argued that all the relationships must be memorable to have been chosen for the anthology. Popular choices are as follows:

Morning Song: Interpretations by many candidates who chose this poem seemed to be informed by the first word "Love" or by Plath's later suicide, in contending that the speaker loves their baby from the first or is enjoying every moment in order to make memories before death. Only higher level interpretations understood the speaker's initial disconnection from the baby and gradual acceptance into positivity.

Warming Her Pearls: Candidates were greatly informed by the forbidden nature of this relationship between a maid and her mistress, however at lower levels candidates saw the mistress as reciprocating the maid's feelings rather than the love being unrequited. Most understood the pearls as a metaphor and commented on the intensity of the maid's feelings based on the semantic field of heat. All candidates recognised the illicit nature of the maid's desires. Most responses stated that homosexual relationships were illegal and several stated that you might go to prison. None seemed to be aware that lesbianism was not recognised as existing at the time since women were not expected to have sexual desires.

Bright Star: Candidates understood that the speaker initially wishes immortality. Most candidates referenced but some struggled to explain "nature's patient, sleepless Eremite" and higher level responses recognised the speaker's ultimate preference to remain with their lover rather than live forever. Many candidates identified the dilemma between wishing to live forever and staying with their love. Some became a little too taken up with matters of context which were interesting but are not marked in this section. There were one or two lessons in astrophysics regarding what stars really are, with one candidate pointing out the irony that Keats may have been looking at the light of a star that is already dead. Much was said about the Shakespearean sonnet form with the best going beyond "Sonnets are usually love poems" as their reason.

In Paris With You: Most candidates understood the speaker as being in love by the end of the poem, rather than simply being in the moment, and took 'In Paris With You' as meaning 'in love with you.' They grasped the way the speaker rejects the appeal of conventional, glamourous places in this city of love. At lower levels, responses referenced "marooned" and "bamboozled" but thought these were entirely nonsensical or fabricated words, whereas higher level responses recognised the speaker's sense of humour and playfulness. Candidates often seemed coy about referring to sexual aspects of the poem, using further euphemisms for the euphemism "all points south", but most recognised the elements of lust rather than love in this stanza. The best recognised the irony that the narrator is trying to forget a memorable relationship and in doing so is unwittingly engaging in what may well become another.

Question 2 (a)

2   Conflict

Read the two poems below and then answer **both part a) and part b).**

You are advised to spend about 45 minutes on part a) and 30 minutes on part b).

   a)   Compare how these poems present emotions leading to conflict.

         You should consider:

         •   ideas and attitudes in each poem
         •   tone and atmosphere in each poem
         •   the effects of the language and structure used.

                                                                                                                         [20]

This cluster continues to be the most popular choice and this poem appeared to be well-known. The title of the unseen gave a clear steer to the emotion in both poems and candidates used their taught knowledge to construct an argument. Most candidates were able to comment on the central shared concepts of the danger of anger; the physical results of conflict; the Biblical language; the natural imagery; the rhyme schemes; the sense of warning. More successful responses commented on the relative simplicity of Blake's language, set against the relative formality of the Lambs' language and the significance of the Lambs' suggestion that anger can "assume a kind of grace".

Most candidates were able to compare efficiently and recognised that both poems were extended metaphors. While many explicitly stated that the metaphors were both based in natural imagery, only higher level responses understood this as showing that experiencing anger must therefore be natural. Most candidates were able to compare to some extent Blake's deliberate cultivation of his Tree to the Lambs' snake "nursing" his wrath, but few responses examined the Lambs' reference to "grace". At lower levels, candidates were confused by Anger's "time and place". Mid- to high-level responses identified that both poems expressed an alternative to allowing anger to grow, however some misunderstood Blake to have murdered his "friend" and avoided discussing the role of the bee in *Anger*, commenting only on the serpent. Where the bee was mentioned, some candidates saw it as being as bad as the serpent. Occasionally, the opening of *A Poison Tree* was misinterpreted as showing what happened when a friend didn't make things up and therefore became a foe rather than seeing it as a different approach towards two different people.

Most candidates were able to relate both the "apple bright" and "poison-swelled snake" to the Bible, sometimes referencing Adam and Eve's Fall; at higher levels candidates were able to recognise and expound upon both images to conclude that wrath is a Deadly Sin, while at lower levels the links (occasionally just one or the other) were identified but not explained. Many candidates commented on the "childish" or "childlike" rhyme schemes; at lower levels this was often remarked upon as making the poems easier to understand and/or remember, while mid- to upper-level responses contrasted this with the sinister nature of the poems or remarked that this aided the writers' didactic intentions.

Question 2 (b)

> **b)**   Explore in detail **one** other poem from your anthology which presents strong feelings about the causes of conflict.

[20]

It was very encouraging this year to see that this question elicited answers on texts not selected in previous years such as *Lament, Punishment and Honour Killing*. Most candidates were not misled by the reference to "causes" ideas into providing lengthy biographical or socio-historical detail. Instead, there was thoughtful evaluative commentary, for example contrasting the use of military jargon and dialect expressions in *The Man He Killed* to consider the uncomfortable dynamic between the life of a soldier and a common man.

Anthem for Doomed Youth: Candidates commented on mass slaughter and dehumanisation through the simile of "cattle", and most recognised the poem as a sonnet. This usually elicited comments on the sonnet's traditional role as a love poem used here to instead express irony or anger, or to contrast the destruction of war instead of considering Owen's love for the soldiers. Many commented upon the "rifles' rapid rattle"; at lower levels this contributed to the atmosphere of a battlefield, while at higher levels candidates related this to fast-paced gunfire aided by alliteration. A small number of responses also considered the "stuttering" that preceded this quote, how it effects perceptions of speed or how it reflects the physical and mental impact of battle on the soldiers (i.e. stuttering as a symptom of war neurosis).

The Man He Killed: At all levels, candidates commented upon the use of punctuation and hesitation in "because-because" and the speaker's struggle to justify killing. Some higher level responses also commented upon the distancing of the speaker from his actions in the "He" of the poem's title, with a few also reflecting that the title could be referring to the death of something within the speaker due to the killing of the other soldier. All candidates understood that the speaker bore no personal ill-will towards his "foe" and many were able to draw parallels between the two soldiers, at higher levels occasionally accompanied by refences to parallelism or antimetabole within the text. Most candidates worked their way through methodically and the more successful responses made it clear that the cause of conflict in this poem is those in authority. Candidates were able to recognise the absurdity of killing someone who might as easily have been a friend and most commented on the use of dashes and repetition to highlight the speaker's uncertainty.

Honour Killing: Most candidates understood that the speaker is stripping and/or dehumanising herself due to oppression and were able to explain some of the reasons why she does this. Many referred to the relief expressed through "At last" as an indication of the depth or duration of the speaker's suffering. Some candidates wasted time and effort giving long explanations of the story behind the poem, however most worked through the stripping of layers methodically with some real success. The most successful responses paid as much attention to the more positive ending as they did the taking off.

There's A Certain Slant of Light: All candidates who chose Dickinson understood that the poem referred to an internal conflict surrounding the speaker's religion and depression. At lower levels, candidates struggled to explain the "Heft | Of Cathedral Tunes", and many felt the speaker is somehow confused due to the use of dashes (as informed by *The Man He Killed*).

Flag: Candidates remembered this poem well, and many were able to comment upon the progression of power the cloth presents ("fluttering", "unfurling", "rising" etc.). Mid- and lower-level responses presented only one explanation per stanza rather than recognising the ambiguity of much of the poem, however most were able to recognise Agard's general distaste for the "cloth" and frustration at its power.

Question 3 (a)

3   Youth and Age

Read the two poems below and then answer **both part a) and part b).**

You are advised to spend about 45 minutes on part a) and 30 minutes on part b).

    a)   Compare how these poems present an adult's thoughts about a young person.

          You should consider:

- ideas and attitudes in each poem
- tone and atmosphere in each poem
- the effects of the language and structure used.

[20]

Although this was the least popular cluster to be answered on, there were still many excellent responses, showing that candidates had responded to the anthology and engaged appropriately with the unseen *Childhood*. Candidates grasped the central idea of both texts that a young person's future will be adversely affected because of an innocence that stands in contrast to the dangers of the world. Many felt that, despite fears, the Jacques poem ends more confidently than the Hardy, with "the simple wisdom of a child" being seen as a mighty force indeed.

Most candidates were able to identify key links and many sustained a comparative approach. At lower levels, candidates felt that the girl in Childhood was as unfortunate as the "journeying boy" due to references to "poverty", "bleak and bare" but many contrasted the innocent happiness of the girl with the loneliness of the boy. Many were also able to compare the adults (detached observer versus loving protector), although some suggested the boy being loved at some point in his life due to the careful placement of ticket and key on his person.

Some candidates interpreted the poverty surrounding the child in *Childhood* as being a sign that she lived in poverty while others interpreted it as being a lack of awareness of the existence of poverty in the world. Either interpretation could be justified, and both were equally rewarded. Much was also made of the third class ticket in Hardy's poem as indicating the boy's poverty.

Question 3 (b)

b) Explore in detail **one** other poem from your anthology which presents concerns about young people.

[20]

Candidates were more conservative in their choice of texts to answer this question, particularly in comparison with the broader choices for the other two clusters. Despite the possibility of using Blake, Hopkins, Frost, Bronte, Clarke, Komunyakaa, the vast majority chose to write about "Red Roses", which was a very suitable choice. Many candidates were helped in their exploration of language, form and structure, by the very vivid and grim imagery used to describe the treatment of Tommy - "broken scarecrow…like a diamond had bitten it…he squashes like fruit".

Red Roses: All candidates recognised the abuse suffered by Tommy and expressed sympathy. None chose to examine "Blue Lady", but most were able to comment upon the loving, romantic connotations of "red roses" which most identified as a euphemism for bruises or injuries. Several candidates felt concern that Tommy might be becoming physically violent himself against his mother ("red roses he gives her") while one higher level response recognised the red roses of the final line as Tommy's 'gift' to his mother to prove his love. None of the candidates linked the title and the reference to the mother as the Blue Lady to the famous song from 1948. While all candidates understood the concern for the child's welfare, many were also able to understand the complicated feelings that might lead a child not to reveal abuse because they still love their abusive parent.

Out Out – Candidates showed a secure grasp of this poem and the way it describes the terrible injury sustained by the boy. Some spent too long expressing their feelings about what they perceived to be forced childhood labour. Candidates tended to see the people turning to their own lives as a sign of not caring or neglecting the boy with a few, higher level responses considering it as a more subtle comment on the nature of life and death

Exemplar 3

3	b	In "Out-Out," a detached speaker describes the events that lead to a young boy severing his hand and losing his life. They express their concern at the constant presence of danger, the frustration at needless loss of life, and the meaninglessness of their life.

Out Out presents how the child is in a constant state of danger. The poem begins with "the buzz saw snarled and rattled in the yard," personifying the saw aggressively and making it seem menacing. This dark tone then shifts to a peaceful atmosphere when the speaker describes the imagery of "stove-length sticks... sweet-scented stuff". The sibilance emphasises the pleasant atmosphere and creates a feeling of calm. This continues, as the speaker describes "the sunset far into Vermont", lulling the reader into a sense of security. This peaceful atmosphere is then interrupted by "the buzz saw snarled and rattled, snarled and rattled", where the aggressive personification and onomatopoeia and repeat repetition of the menacing verbs emphasise the threat of the saw, ruining the peaceful atmosphere. This shows how the boy is never completely safe, as there is always the threat of the saw despite the temporary peace of the scenery.

This section of the candidate's response to their chosen anthology text, *Out, Out,* for 3 b) demonstrates a sustained focus on 'concerns about young people' and the separation of poet and speaker. It considers the impact on the reader's feelings.

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