



Pearson  
Edexcel

Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

November 2024

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE

In English Language (4EA1)

Unit 01: Non-fiction Texts and Transactional  
Writing

## **Edexcel and BTEC Qualifications**

Edexcel and BTEC qualifications are awarded by Pearson, the UK's largest awarding body. We provide a wide range of qualifications including academic, vocational, occupational and specific programmes for employers. For further information visit our qualifications websites at [www.edexcel.com](http://www.edexcel.com) or [www.btec.co.uk](http://www.btec.co.uk). Alternatively, you can get in touch with us using the details on our contact us page at [www.edexcel.com/contactus](http://www.edexcel.com/contactus).

## **Pearson: helping people progress, everywhere**

Pearson aspires to be the world's leading learning company. Our aim is to help everyone progress in their lives through education. We believe in every kind of learning, for all kinds of people, wherever they are in the world. We've been involved in education for over 150 years, and by working across 70 countries, in 100 languages, we have built an international reputation for our commitment to high standards and raising achievement through innovation in education. Find out more about how we can help you and your students at: [www.pearson.com/uk](http://www.pearson.com/uk)

November 2024

Publications Code 4EA1\_01\_2411\_ER

All the material in this publication is copyright

© Pearson Education Ltd 2024

**Principal Examiner's Report for 4EA1 01 November 2024**

## Introduction

The examination paper covered in this report is Unit 1: Non-fiction and Transactional Writing which is sat by all candidates entered for the series.

The paper is organised into two parts.

Section A, worth a total of 45 marks, tests reading skills and is based on an unseen passage and a text from the International GCSE English Anthology with a total word count across the two extracts of approximately 2000 words. In this series, the unseen extract was adapted from *Stereotyping in Sport*, in which the writer, Natalie Morris, looks at the experiences of Amazin LeThi. The Anthology text was the extract from the speech *The Danger of a Single Story* in which Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie speaks about the power of storytelling. Candidates are advised to spend about 1 hour and 30 minutes on this section.

Section B, also worth a total of 45 marks, offers candidates a choice of two transactional writing tasks. A particular form will always be specified and for this series the two tasks were to write a letter to a newspaper editor giving views about how young people are perceived or a magazine article on the benefits of taking part in sport.

The paper was well received with examiners commenting on how the unseen text worked successfully with the Anthology text, was accessible to students of all abilities and provided ample material for the comparison question. It was clear that many candidates engaged fully with both texts and responded with interest and enthusiasm.

There was evidence that, on the whole, candidates had been well-taught for the examination, with most of them attempting every question, but they should be reminded to read all the printed instructions on the examination paper very carefully and follow them precisely. They should also be aware of the Assessment Objectives that relate to each question. It is also important that attention is paid to timing so that sufficient time is given to the high tariff questions.

## Section A

Questions 1-3 are based on the unseen extract and are all assessed for **AO1**: Read and understand a variety of texts, selecting and interpreting information, ideas and perspectives.

### Question 1

This question, which tests the skills of selection and retrieval, is intended to serve as a straightforward way into the paper and the vast majority of candidates were able to select two apt words or phrases that describe Amazin LeThi. There were a number of possible points on the mark scheme; all were chosen but points one and two ('Vietnamese' and 'bodybuilder') were those mostly commonly chosen.

The given line references for the question were 1-4 and hardly any candidates selected words or phrases from outside of these lines.

A very few candidates simply copied out the whole of the given lines and could not be awarded any marks as no selection of relevant material had been made. It is important to remember that single words or short phrases are all that is required to gain the marks. There is no need for any comment on, or explanation of, the quotations chosen. Where candidates lost a mark it tended to be because they selected words that, on their own, did not answer the question such as 'mercilessly'.

## Question 2

This is a 4-mark question that requires candidates to interpret information, ideas and perspectives. For this examination they were asked to look at lines 13-24 and explain what we learn about Amazin LeThi's life as a child. Examiners reported that most candidates did understand what was required, selected relevant information and were awarded full marks. There was a wide range of possible points that could be made and, although the obvious point that Amazin was raised in Australia was often missed, most candidates picked up on the prejudice shown to racial minorities, the poor treatment of Amazin by various groups of people, the humiliating ridicule by the teacher in the classroom, her escape into sport and the unfriendly atmosphere she encountered.

Candidates need to follow the instruction '**In your own words**' and, as in previous series, examiners did feel that this was an issue with some candidates making only minor adaptations to the text; this was where marks were most often lost. It is not sufficient just to alter a verb ending or a pronoun and listing four quotations that relate to LeThi's experiences as a child is not going to gain marks. Some candidates did not achieve full marks because, rather than making four different points, they attempted to explain the language used, diverted into giving their own views about the discrimination described in the extract or gave an overview of the entire passage instead of focusing on the given lines.

Examiners reported that the most successful approach employed by candidates was to make four clear and distinct points, ideally set out on separate lines. However, it is important to remember that the question asks candidates to 'explain' and therefore, although it is not necessary to write at length, it is not acceptable to simply list very brief points. The response should be written in full and complete sentences that clearly show understanding and secure interpretation.

## Question 3

This is the final AO1 question; it is worth 5 marks and, like Question 2, requires candidates to show their understanding of the text by selecting and interpreting ideas, information and perspectives. For this examination, they were asked to look again at lines 31-42 and describe Amazin LeThi's experiences within the world of sport.

In Question 3, candidates are told that they 'may support' their points 'with **brief** quotations' and many did so to good effect. Examiners reported that most candidates achieved at least 3 marks, with many achieving the full 5 marks. Successful candidates often worked methodically through the set section of the text identifying key points. There were a number of possible points in the mark scheme; the points most frequently picked up were that LeThi was the victim of assumptions made about her sporting prowess based on race, that many other people had preconceived notions of Asian people as academic, that her trainer judged her harshly, that LeThi felt excluded from the athletics that she loved and was driven back to the individual sport of weight training. While most candidates showed understanding of the unseen passage, there were a few who thought that LeThi believed herself not to be very good at sport. A few candidates made reference to the whole text rather than the specified lines or went beyond the given lines to look at LeThi's later success.

Many candidates adopted the very successful approach of making five clear points, sometimes set out separately on the page, written in full and complete sentences and supported by relevant brief quotations. Examiners noted that some candidates relied too heavily on words from the passage to make their points and did not offer the necessary explanation or interpretation; points should be written in own words to demonstrate understanding with brief quotations used to support these.

There is no need for comments on the language used in the quotations, but examiners noted that a small number of candidates spent time on analysis of language and structure, an AO2 requirement, for which they could not here be credited and which may have led to a disproportionate amount of time being spent on the question.

The best answers gave brief statements, sometimes supported by appropriate quotations, paid attention to how many marks the question is worth and made five clear and discrete points.

#### **Question 4**

This question is on Text Two, the Anthology text, and is assessed for **AO2**: Understand and analyse how writers use linguistic and structural devices to achieve their effects. It is therefore a more challenging and discriminatory question and is worth 12 marks divided over five levels.

In this examination, candidates were asked how the writer, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, uses language and structure to create interest in her ideas.

This piece contains a very wide range of features of language and structure as exemplified in the mark scheme, but examiners were advised that these are just examples of possible points that could be made and instructed that they must reward any valid points that candidates make that are securely rooted in the text. There does not need to be an equal number of points on language and structure, but both should be addressed as, indeed, they were by nearly all candidates. It was evident to examiners that most candidates had a secure knowledge of this text and could approach the question with reasonable confidence, but there were certainly a few who did not seem very familiar with it and so found the question particularly challenging.

Examiners commented that the majority of responses offered at the least some understanding of the text and that many candidates attempted to answer the question thoroughly. At the lower levels, candidates either identified features of language (and sometimes structure) but offered little explanation of their effect or described and made general comments on the text. At times, there was limited focus on the question with some only writing a general summary of events. At this level, candidates offered a straightforward account of the text with vague observations such as 'the writer uses short sentences for impact'. It is important that comments refer specifically to the impact of these features within the given text.

Mid-level candidates tended to work through the text (although they did not always get to the end), made a sound range of points and selected apt textual references for support. Many dealt quite successfully with the effect of the use of first person and the inclusive aspect of the plural pronoun 'we'. Most discussed the use and significance of the anecdotes; although this became a little narrative/descriptive at times, it was clear that the majority of candidates had a reasonable appreciation of their value in the piece. Humour was picked up by fewer candidates but was generally dealt with well. There were still some candidates who tended to spend too long on unnecessary introductions that offered no credit-worthy points and/or conclusions that simply repeated those points already made.

One examiner noted that at the higher levels, there were 'some really excellent responses that engaged on a highly perceptive and conceptual level with the nuanced ideas Adichie is dealing with'. Candidates talked confidently about the repetition of 'the single story' and explored the use of this

phrase as a metaphor for wider issues such as stereotyping. They examined how Adichie uses episodes from her life to create interest and establish a trust with the audience and noted how the self-deprecation added a humbling tone. Candidates were discriminating in their use of quotations, linking different parts of the text, but it is still crucial at this level to analyse closely the language choices and structural features and demonstrate how they are utilised to good effect within the speech.

## Question 5

This question provides the only assessment in the specification of **AO3**: Explore links and connections between writers' ideas and perspectives, as well as how these are conveyed.

This question is the most demanding of those in Section A and, with 22 marks distributed between five levels, carries almost half of the total marks available for reading so it is extremely important that candidates allow sufficient time for a developed response. Perhaps because of time constraints, there were a few candidates who did not attempt the question or who wrote very brief responses and thereby missed the opportunity to gain a significant number of marks. Careful time-management is crucial for success in this examination and candidates should factor in time to plan with care the points that they wish to make in order to ensure that they have a wide and balanced range.

Examiners recognise the challenge of the question but felt that the texts worked well together and nearly all candidates were able to draw out some valid links between them.

At the lower end, candidates often identified some superficial/obvious similarities and or differences (such as that they were both about women, one was written in the third person and one was a first-person narrative) and presented them in a list-like manner. Even if they made quite a number of such points, if no real comment or explanation was provided they were unlikely to move beyond a mark in level 2.

Mid-level responses were sometimes more descriptive than analytical but did consider a range of comparisons and most explained how both texts consider the ways in which discrimination exists in society with LeThi suffering a more painful experience and Adichie confessing that she too has been guilty of only seeing 'a single story'.

The more successful responses focused almost immediately on comparing specific details of the extracts and looked at the writers' perspectives as well as their ideas and balanced points, confidently interweaving thoughts on both texts with exemplification and exploration of ideas. These candidates teased out the nuances of language and tone employed by the writers to create sympathy and outrage in the reader; the semantic choices of 'hostility' and 'humiliation' in the first text and 'danger' and 'guilt' were often thoughtfully explored and analysed.

At the top level, responses included astute analysis of settings, language, structure, purpose and tone. The range of comparisons, depth of comment on both ideas and perspectives and the use of appropriate references were all discriminators. One examiner noted that there 'were some excellent responses that carefully considered the effect of the personal story versus the reported story and how this impacted the reader's experience'.

There are different ways to approach this question, but examiners noted that the most successful responses made each point a valid and appropriate comparison with supporting references from

both extracts; this led to the balance required for marks within Levels 4 and 5. Feedback from examiners suggested that use of references can still be variable. Some candidates use references within an almost entirely narrative response and offer no real comment, others select relevant quotations but then do little more than paraphrase them rather than offering any further explanation or expansion. More successful responses are able to select pertinent words within the lines being discussed, embed them effectively within their own sentences and, if looking at language features, offer some astute analysis. It is important to remember though that language and structure are only two of the possible elements that can be considered. Some candidates became side-tracked into exploring these features of each text separately at the expense of drawing out comparisons and some simply identified techniques used by both writers with no consideration of context or effect. Where candidates focused on the writers' use of language and structure, the most successful responses effectively linked these elements to the ideas and perspectives.

## **Section B**

Candidates are required to answer just one writing task but it carries half of the total marks available for the paper and so they must ensure that they allow sufficient time to plan and organise their response.

There are two assessment objectives for writing.

**A04:** Communicate effectively and imaginatively, adapting form, tone and register of writing for specific purposes and audiences. (27 marks spread over five levels)

**A05:** Write clearly, using a range of vocabulary and sentence structures, with appropriate paragraphing and accurate spelling, grammar and punctuation. (18 marks spread over five levels)

## **Question 6**

This question asked candidates to write a letter to a newspaper editor in response to a report stating that some older people have a negative view of young people today and think that they are selfish, lazy and rude.

Examiners noted that there were many successful responses with a strong personal and individual voice. One examiner reported that this question 'resulted in some passionate, honest and interesting writing which shed light on candidates' individual life experiences'.

Candidates approached the task in different ways but generally used the bullet points to help structure their response. Most responses tended to defend teenagers, citing the demands of school and the influence and impact of peer pressure, social media and COVID for any perceived faults; others described convincingly the very positive qualities that they and their peers possess. Some candidates successfully adopted a clear persona, sometimes of an elderly person, to enliven their writing and give a clear focus.

Responses that achieved marks in the lower levels tended to be brief complaints about the report that often exhorted the editor to consider the letter writer's views with little explanation as to why. In mid-level responses, whilst the task was completed quite competently, it was felt that more thought could have been given to the development of ideas and information and the use of strategies to engage and persuade the reader.

Higher-level responses often took a nuanced and balanced approach; sometime the basic premise of the article was accepted but complaints were made about the perceived tone of the imagined report. The idea that stereotyping a whole generation based on the behaviour of a minority could be a dangerous thing was also explored perceptively at times.

Some responses were clearly by candidates not writing in their first language and this sometimes resulted in slips in syntax, word order and subject-verb agreement. However, many of those responses were well punctuated with a range or a wide range of vocabulary and with accurate spelling. Paragraphing was generally used well by candidates at all levels to order their ideas.

### **Question 7**

This task, inviting candidates to write an article on 'The benefits of taking part in sport', was the more popular of the two writing questions and many candidates seemed to really enjoy writing about the joys of sport.

Although some candidates seemed a little uncertain about the given form, most displayed a sound awareness of the requirements of an article and many used sub-headings, sometimes posing rhetorical questions, to help structure their response and lead readers through their ideas. Bullet points, used sparingly, also worked effectively.

Less successful responses often simply listed sports and gave reasons why they might be beneficial or gave a narrow focus on one sport such as football and became purely anecdotal. Some candidates drew on their knowledge of scientific facts or their studies for GCSE PE; such responses were sometimes full of detailed scientific or biological facts or sometimes looked at the positives of a specific sport which the candidate obviously had an encyclopaedic knowledge about. Most candidates addressed the physical benefits of taking part in sport with many also thoughtfully exploring the mental benefits and examining how participation in sporting activities can boost self-confidence, build self-esteem and often lead to a fulfilling social life. One examiner noted that the extracts perhaps offered the inspiration to discuss sports as an arena for unity for people from different backgrounds or abilities, but not many candidates took the opportunity to examine these less obvious benefits.

Responses that remembered their audience at all times and which found an approach which included entertainment for the reader usually performed well. Some candidates included light touches of humour to create a lively tone and a number included self-deprecating anecdotes to illustrate various points about the 'never give up' mentality or the need to not take things too seriously.

One examiner stated that at the higher levels, 'some candidates wrote with exceptional flair and imagination, producing piece of writing that were mature, engaging and an absolute joy to read.'

**Final feedback on the writing questions:**

To achieve the highest level in AO4, writing needs to be 'perceptive', 'subtle' and 'sophisticated' and there should be a clear focus on the appropriate form. For AO5, candidates should consider the ordering of their ideas, write in clear paragraphs and aim to link them effectively. There needs to be accuracy but also a 'strategic' use of an 'extensive vocabulary' and an assured and controlled use of a range of sentence structures 'to achieve particular effects'. Candidates should not avoid using an ambitious vocabulary because they fear making spelling errors. Those who did achieve higher-level marks frequently opened their piece with an intriguing question, a powerful statement or a short sentence and proceeded to explore and develop their ideas with fluency, clarity and enthusiasm. Candidates are advised that colloquialisms such as 'gonna' and 'wanna' should only be employed in direct speech.

Candidates must ensure that they do not rush the writing task, allowing time both to plan and to proof-read as unforced errors in grammar and spelling can lead to lower marks. Examiners commented that where there was evidence of planning, this often led to a clear and effective structure and greater textual cohesion and accuracy. Where responses were brief and undeveloped, it seemed clear that candidates had not allowed sufficient time for the task.

Handwriting was raised as a cause for concern in some instances by examiners; it is essential that candidates try their best to ensure legibility and are supported by their centres to do so.

### **Concluding advice**

Candidates should:

- be provided with plenty of opportunities to practise reading and responding to unseen passages under timed conditions
- be aware of the different assessment objectives to ensure that they focus their answers specifically on the different question requirements
- highlight the relevant lines for Questions 1-3 in the Extracts Booklet
- use the number of marks available for Questions 2 and 3 to suggest how many clear and discrete points they should make
- not spend time analysing language in answers to Questions 1, 2 or 3
- answer Question 2, as far as possible, in their own words and aim to offer some interpretation
- demonstrate understanding of the text in Question 3 by offering some explanation in own words and not simply relying on quotations to make the points
- underline or highlight the key words of Question 4 so that answers are appropriately focused
- consider the effects of language and structure features within the context of the given extract in Question 4 rather than offering generic explanations
- select appropriate references from the whole extract that fully support points made in answer to Question 4

- make a range of comparative points in Question 5 and link elements such as content, theme, tone, purpose, narrative voice, language; points should be balanced across both texts
- points in Question 5 should be supported with relevant quotations or close textual references; these should be selected carefully and some exploration of them should be attempted
- take time to make a brief plan for the higher tariff questions (5 and 6 or 7)
- give careful consideration to the given form and audience for the writing task and use these to inform register and tone
- try to use a wide vocabulary and varied sentence structures
- think carefully about how to engage the reader right at the start of a written response and consider how to end effectively
- aim for a structured, cohesive and complete piece of writing
- allow time to proof-read their writing response in order to achieve the highest possible degree of accuracy
- read all instructions carefully
- attempt every question
- take great care with handwriting