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# GCSE

# ENGLISH LITERATURE

8702/1P Poetry Anthology  
Report on the Examination

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8702  
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## General Introduction to the November Series

This has been another unusual exam series in many ways. Entry patterns have been very different from those normally seen in the summer, and students had a very different experience in preparation for these exams. It is therefore more difficult to make meaningful comparisons between the range of student responses seen in this series and those seen in a normal summer series. The smaller entry also means that there is less evidence available for examiners to comment on.

In this report, senior examiners will summarise the performance of students in this series in a way that is as helpful as possible to teachers preparing future cohorts while taking into account the unusual circumstances and limited evidence available.

## Overview of Entry

This series enabled students to select two out of three papers and this paper proved to be the least popular choice. A range of performance was evident although there was a proportion of students who had clearly struggled with the paper and some who wrote nothing at all. There were also some very interesting and imaginative responses which sat comfortably in the top level. It must be remembered that such a small entry means that overall conclusions drawn from assessment of the papers were less easy to extrapolate but may nonetheless prove helpful to teachers preparing their students for the next series.

There was a choice between responding to Cluster 1: Love and relationships and Cluster 2: Power and conflict. Cluster 2 was far more widely chosen and, by and large, a wider range of responses were seen in this particular cohort.

## Comments on Individual Questions

Students were able to write with varying degrees of understanding about each named poem although some students relied on the named poem for the majority of their response.

Love and relationships was, in this series, undertaken largely by students who achieved marks in the middle/lower range but they nonetheless generally coped well with *The Farmer's Bride*, showing a good understanding of the farmer's attitude as revealed in the first person narration. Most comments were in response to the first thirty lines of the poem, however better answers were able to recognise and comment on the mounting tension and frustration of the last verse. Most students were able to address AO2 in some way, especially the similes in the poem and their effect on the reader, ['like a mouse', 'shy as a leveret']. Although, the opportunity to address gender issues as a way to access AO3 was sadly often missed.

Power and conflict was the more popular choice and consequently a wider range of responses at all levels was seen. The given poem, *London*, elicited some sharp responses addressing AO3 by exploring ideas about power and abuse of power by church and state. Many students wrote about 'mind-forged manacles', often in a considered or analytical way – some offering different interpretations of what Blake might have been saying. Students were also able to select several different ways to address AO2.

The problem in this exam frequently came from the second poem for two reasons. Firstly, some poems selected simply did not work. Question 1 asked about 'romantic relationships' so *Mother any distance* and *Walking Away* were not really appropriate choices and comparison was difficult to address. In Question 2, some students struggled with choices again, for example, *Storm on the Island* and *Poppies*. The second reason was the fact that a proportion of students did not know another poem very well, so detail, and sometimes understanding, were limited.

The previous points inevitably affected comparisons made but there was nonetheless some excellent and imaginative comparisons made by many students. Increasingly, there is a confidence about tackling comparison and the various ways in which it can be approached but that, of course, tends to depend on the appropriate choice of a second poem. For Question 1, effective choices [amongst others] were *Porphyria's Lover* [students engaged with this, especially well alongside *The Farmer's Bride*], *Sonnet 29 – I think of thee* and *When We Two Parted*. For Question 2, *Ozymandias* proved an excellent choice and was largely known well by the students; *Checking Out Me History* worked very well and there was some real engagement here with the speaker's thoughts about power and control; *My Last Duchess* also worked very well with some students able to compare insightfully power and control at a state and an individual level.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Assessment objectives are firmly embedded in students' responses now and examiners rarely came across a response where all three AOs were not addressed at some level.

This was a paper done in unusual and challenging times, yet there was evidence of some lively, insightful and original responses and of students clearly engaging with and enjoying the texts that they had studied.

## **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.