

**Pearson Edexcel**  
International Advanced Level

# English Literature

International Advanced Level

**Unit 3: Poetry and Prose**

Thursday 7 June 2018 – Afternoon

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Paper Reference

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## SECTION A: Post-1900 Unseen Poetry

### Question 1

#### Sea Reading

Thick skinned in wetsuits, sitting on surf boards,  
we are learning to read again,  
tracing, in the distance, the phrases of the waves.

Under the sun we watch each swell,  
familiarise ourselves with their false promises,  
the words that fail to make the page.

We wait, between the speech marks of distant gulls,  
between the blank paper of the beach  
and the last line of the horizon.

We wait for the sentence of water,  
kamikazing\* itself towards the shore, that will allow us  
our fluency,  
our moment of balance on the tightrope of the wave,

before it cuts us short, rubs us out  
in a diaspora\* of white water,  
leaving us to struggle back through our new language,

back to where, resting in a caesura,  
showing only their heads, an ellipsis of seals  
tells us it will continue,

but that for now the water is preparing its speech,  
drawing upon its vocabulary of waves,  
which are still just ideas, growing in the mind of the sea.

#### Owen Sheers

#### Glossary:

\* *kamikazing* – suicidally crashing

\* *diaspora* – a dispersal

#### Source taken/adapted from:

Owen Sheers, *The Blue Book*, Seren, Poetry Wales Press Ltd (2000)

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