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FOREWORD

This booklet contains reports written by Examiners on the work of candidates in certain papers. **Its contents are primarily for the information of the subject teachers concerned.**

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

GCE Advanced Subsidiary Level

<p>Paper 8693/01 Passages for Comment</p>

General comments

Candidates produced some thoughtful work and some skilful directed writing which, at times, compensated for the less confident approach in commenting on the language and style of the set extracts. Some answers still tend to rely on feature-spotting particular techniques and methods, without quite engaging with the material itself. Candidates should be encouraged to look at the tone and mood of a passage and to explore whether these change in any way and why as the extract progresses. There were some engaged analyses and these demonstrated that Centres are making progress in this area. Candidates should also be reminded that when asked to compare their piece of directed writing with the original extract they need to consider both texts. In general, candidates managed their time well but a few only answered one question.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) This was a popular choice and there was some very focused analysis of the passage with many sensing the change of mood and personal response very well. There was some effective comment on the use of sound and visual imagery. Some of the best answers also explored the possible cultural differences between the author and his travelling companions. Some answers dwelled on aspects such as punctuation and paragraphing to little effect.
- (b) Most answers made a good attempt at responding to this question and seemed to understand the nature of the task. Weak answers tended to rely on paraphrase of the original passage without really persuading readers that the book would be worth reading. Answers at the higher end of the range made the book seem dramatic – through reference to extremes of weather and to the polarised moods the author felt – and invented fitting quotations from fictional reviews of the book. Here, too, some focused on the cultural differences of the travellers as a way of persuading potential interested customers to purchase the title.

Question 2

- (a) This question prompted quite diverse topics ranging from female rights to issues of national interest. A few answers, it seemed, stuck too closely to the content of the original material and lifted words and phrases whilst offering a few substitute ones as well. Good answers noticed how the passage moved into first person voice towards the close and picked up on techniques such as repetition, the use of the inclusive 'we' and the employment of parallel structures effectively.
- (b) There were some competent and solid answers here but candidates did not always make full use of the original passage to explore some of the techniques they had clearly identified before composing their own speeches; some did not refer to their own writing and some did without comparing it to the original extract.

Question 3

- (a) The directed writing here was quite effective and most candidates managed to sell the place with enthusiasm and in an appropriate format. They focused on the peace and quiet, the natural surroundings and the attractions such as the cable car and restaurant. Some pitched at a family audience and some aimed their material on individuals who wished to get away from it all. Weaker answers tended to rely on paraphrase of the original or simply lifted words and phrases from it. It is helpful if candidates can practise a range of persuasive skills drawing on initial sources such as leaflets or advertisements so they can also practise comparative analysis.

- (b) Some candidates did not quite sense the rather cynical tone of the original and its repeated mantra of negativity about the place. They tended to see the piece as one full of praise and this tended to limit some of their comments and comparisons. However, answers which did sense the ironic and mocking tone produced some insightful and sensitive ideas.

<p>Paper 8693/02</p> <p>Composition</p>

General comments

Candidates produced some very imaginative and thoughtful work. They showed that they have the capacity to deal with distinctive types of writing. Some creative writing in the lower part of the mark range would benefit from greater planning; at times, some answers did not seem to know where to go at the close. Some candidates would also help themselves if they checked their work more closely. Quite a lot of technical errors could be avoided. For example, a number of candidates confuse tenses, sometimes starting in the present tense, then drifting into the past tense and back to the present. Responses in the higher mark range often displayed a maturity of thought and expression which really impressed Examiners. Candidates should also be reminded that there are word limits (600 to 900 words) and that they are not guidelines but part of the rubric. By extension, answers that fall short of these limits are self-penalising and some potentially fine work does not achieve the band it could achieve.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

There were some effective and imaginative answers here, especially where candidates avoided the possible limitation of simply making the second portrait a negative version of the first one; for example, someone who had once been beautiful was now ugly. Refined answers did not simply go for such polar opposites but focused on differences which were less obvious and more subtle.

Question 2

This was quite a challenging question because candidates needed to shape their ideas from a certain point of view and mirror the required expression. There were some solid answers here but this was a title where clear planning would benefit the writer. Less successful answers tended to plunge into a detailed narrative without quite thinking things through. Some candidates need to be reminded that they should spend a certain amount of time planning.

Question 3

This was a popular choice and elicited some rounded and enjoyable answers, especially where forethought led to a clear and logical, if sometimes surprising, outcome. Some candidates drew on particular genres effectively; less secure answers tended to simply drift into narrative without really considering where events would lead and why.

Question 4

There were some highly-skilled and creative compositions here. The science fiction genre proved especially popular and many drew on its conventions very well; often they were set on a planet some time in the future and employed scientific jargon and terminology most impressively. A sense of alienation and destruction came through strongly. Some candidates focused on the phrase 'imaginary world' as a world of fantasy or of childhood. There were planets made of chocolates and sweets in some of these parallel worlds.

Section B

Question 5

This was a popular choice of title. Interestingly, many focused on relatives – usually mother or father – rather than famous people. Answers at the top of the range wrote affectionately about a relative, illustrating points with personal anecdotes, yet also acknowledged flaws in the person they admired. Such answers were also able to stand back and offer some kind of overview. Less effective answers tended to focus on a national figure and write a brief biography of the figure without really assessing the person's worth on a personal level.

Question 6

This was also a popular choice. There were many effective and engaging articles, especially when the writer kept a clear sense of audience in mind. The writers of the articles ranged from other teenagers to employers offering free advice based on their experience of interviewing other people. There was sound advice about appearance, body language, conducting pre-interview research and about ways of expressing ideas. Less secure answers tended to misread the question and offered advertisements on behalf of specialist companies which would offer courses for those seeking interview experience.

Question 7

This produced some very focused and proficient answers where most aspects of the arguments were weighed up sensibly. Some of the most stimulating answers used contemporary events as a template for teasing out different aspects of the topic. Weaker answers tended to drift into first person assertion without really drawing on an effective selection of relevant examples.

Question 8

This also seemed to inspire a number of candidates to write highly engaging and effective answers. Those at the top end of the range remembered that this was meant to be a speech and used an effective range of rhetorical devices and kept a clear awareness of the target audience. Challenges ranged from local to international issues and most argued their cases with appropriate examples.