



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)
June 2012**

English Language B

ENGB2

(Specification 2705)

Unit 2: Creating Texts

Report on the Examination

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General

The moderation process for ENGB2 has now been completed for the eighth time and the senior moderating team is agreed that the overwhelming majority of schools and colleges have adopted approaches both to the teaching of the necessary skills and the construction of appropriate folders which allow their students to work towards their full potential as writers and as critical reflectors on the texts that they have created.

The major focus of this report, therefore, will be to underline examples of good practice that came to moderators' attention in the latest series, in the hope that it will provide help and guidance for those new to the specification as well as those who are familiar with the requirements but might wish to bring something new or different to their teaching. It should be emphasised at this stage that the intention is not to provide a list of topics or tasks that will guarantee success, but rather to draw attention to factors that enable students of all abilities to maximise their chances of fulfilling their potential.

Internal Standardisation and the Annotation of Folders

Good practice was observed in schools and colleges where annotation was often by more than one member of staff, exemplified reference to relevant AOs and consisted of more than just a verbatim repetition of the AOs.

Coursework folders were generally carefully organised and easy to follow.

Task setting

The road to success at ENGB2 starts with the first step of the selection of appropriate tasks. The specification makes it very clear that students *should choose their own writing focus to suit their individual skills and interests in consultation with their teacher(s)*. Schools and colleges who adhered to the spirit of this directive and encouraged their students to explore and experiment with a variety of genres, topics and approaches so that they could make an informed decision about where their strengths lay, in general produced outcomes where students were able to approach their full potential. Schools and colleges who pushed students to undertake more limited 'group' tasks made it very difficult to differentiate or establish any worthwhile range. In addition, in these cases folders often failed to shine as students lacked the full opportunity to pursue their own ideas or interests.

Many schools and colleges continue to submit opening **chapters or extracts from novels** which, when they are successfully realised, enable students to produce impressive description or practise a particular kind of writing based on a style model of good quality and in a recognisable genre. However, too often students seemed to regard the construction of an isolated section purportedly from a larger work as a means of overlooking character development, future plot components and indeed many other aspects of fiction writing. Despite advice in previous reports, very few plot synopses were included [even though these could be entered as appendices and not affect word counts], and in many cases, it was difficult to see how these students could justifiably be awarded high marks.

Speeches of various types and on a variety of topics were popular, and worked well when it was clear that students had given due attention firstly to the fact that these were texts which were intended primarily to be listened to rather than read and were produced with a credible occasion and audience in mind. Less successful examples were often produced without a realistic context, or produced in an inappropriate style for topic and audience.

Perhaps the single most popular text type across the entry this series was **opinion-based journalism**, exemplified in many cases by columns produced by the likes of Charlie Brooker

and Jeremy Clarkson. Frequently, and not very helpfully, these were entitled “rants”, which some students seemed to take as *carte blanche* to let their prejudices loose without restraint or the need to justify their claims. Those students who realised that what they were attempting to emulate was a form of comic writing in which the real butt of the humour is the persona created by the writer, were more likely to produce the most successful examples.

Travel writing, more-or-less based on an idea by Bill Bryson, was also frequently undertaken, and continued to work well for those students who, like those mentioned above, realised that they needed to create a persona to reflect wryly on carefully selected aspects of the chosen area.

Dramatic Monologues remained popular and were justifiably well rewarded when skilled writers created convincing characters with an interesting story to tell; a story which often was gradually revealed by the use of subtle and gradual revelation via the use of an unreliable narrator. On the other hand, uninspired first-person narratives which showed little knowledge or understanding of the structures and conventions of the genre failed to impress.

Reviews of various types, especially of films, computer games and gigs, were extremely prevalent, but evidence from the moderating team suggests that they should be undertaken with caution. Schools and colleges should be aware that the specification seeks to reward “*expertise and creativity*” in the assessment of AO4, and many of the pieces submitted as reviews seemed either highly derivative, or merely went over ground that had been covered before without adding anything to it.

Moderators also reported that significant numbers of **leaflets** are still being presented. Perhaps this is because the specification mentions leaflets as a possible example of an informative text that might be undertaken. While they are clearly a viable proposition, evidence from this and other moderation rounds suggests that they offer only limited opportunities for students to demonstrate higher level writing skills and perhaps should be largely regarded as a good way for students to achieve something and enjoy developing presentation skills, but intrinsically limiting for those who aspire to higher bands.

An increasing number of folders featured as one of the pieces use of **BLOGS** and other internet-related pieces, often described merely as “webpages” or “websites” where there is no imperative, in the real world, for writing to be crafted specifically for audience and purpose and so both style models and the subsequent pieces that they influenced, tended to lack the polish and style that allow teachers to allocate marks in the higher ranges. If there is no clear ‘steer’ in terms of genre features or other structures and conventions provided by the style model, it is always difficult for the writers to demonstrate that they are tailoring their language choices to suit purpose and audience.

The lesson to be drawn from all these examples would seem to be that the most successful submissions under AO4 are based on a clear understanding by both students and their supervising teachers that the choice of production pieces should reflect range and variety in terms of genre, purpose and audience; both pieces should demonstrate clear evidence of the writer’s ability to craft language appropriately and both pieces should be convincingly realised to the extent that it is possible to envisage them appearing in the “real world”.

Commentaries

Moderators were virtually unanimous in their judgement that commentaries from most students continued to improve, with a pleasing and increasing realisation that the best commentaries were driven by the recognition of the specific qualities of the piece rather than using a formula or check-list approach. Almost all commentaries now refer usefully and relevantly to style models, and consequently AO3 marks were on average higher than in previous series.

Many schools and colleges have also clearly recognised that, in order for their students to achieve the higher levels under each of the Assessment Objectives related to commentary writing, they should attempt to be as specific as possible when identifying appropriate Linguistic Methods [AO1], Genre Features [AO2] and Contextual Factors - especially Purpose and Audience [AO3] to comment on. In particular an appreciation that audience can be defined more subtly than just by age or gender – for instance by identifying levels of expertise in a particular area – can allow more sophisticated and insightful comments related to reasons for particular language choices; the same approach can also be applied to looking at the combinations of purposes for which texts are constructed, and the particular sub-genres that demand particular linguistic features to be incorporated if they are to be successfully realised.

Style Models

Absolutely key to success in ENGB2 is the utilisation of carefully considered style-models; many moderators reported that across their allocations, many students had made effective use of these with clear evidence of close analysis that had provided useful insights so that convincing texts could be produced. Some submissions, however, did demonstrate areas that were of concern and had clearly adversely affected outcomes; For example, as models for fiction pieces, some students used short stories drawn from so called “vanity” websites where there is no guarantee of literary merit or technical expertise with the result that it was difficult to identify any positive influences. At this stage, it’s probably worthwhile reiterating that a style model should be a *published* piece by a *professional* writer. Even when style models were potentially very good, they were sometimes not analysed very deeply, so opportunities were lost.

The type and level of student annotation on style models was varied, with the best examples coming from those students who chose a text that would contain linguistic elements that could be adapted and incorporated into the new text and those elements could later be incorporated into their commentary. Once again, it is worth reiterating that it is not advisable for style models to share subject matter with the student’s production pieces: when this occurred, this often meant that the pieces were very derivative.

Evidence of Early Planning (EEP)

Some schools and colleges continued to submit earlier drafts of one or both pieces as Evidence of Early Planning. The requirement to include Evidence of Early Planning as a component of a complete ENGB2 folder is designed to illustrate the early stages of the process of writing and to help establish the provenance of the piece. There are several acceptable ways of providing this evidence, including teacher-produced prompt sheets that students filled in, spider diagram and mind maps.

Acknowledgement of sources and bibliographies

Possibly the most frequently mentioned area of concern mentioned by moderators was the absence or incomplete nature of bibliographies and or lists of sources in many submissions. It must be emphasised that the inclusion of a bibliography is a specification requirement and that it serves two important purposes: to instil in students good habits for their academic future and also to act as a defence against plagiarism or the over-dependence on the writing of others.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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