

Examiners' Report

Summer 2016

Pearson Edexcel GCE in English
Language (6EN02)

Paper 1 Exploring the Writing Process

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Introduction

The entry this year was much smaller than it has been in the past as most centres are focusing on the new specification. Nevertheless, it is gratifying to report that the majority of centres were marking the work entered for Exploring the Writing Process accurately and fairly. Candidates understood the assessment objectives and knew what they were trying to achieve in their writing. In most cases students had been encouraged to study a wide range of text types and genres and to draw on this study when writing their own pieces. Teachers had gone to great trouble to annotate candidates' work in a way which made it clear how and why marks had been allocated and where the assessment objectives had been met. This made the process of moderation much easier.

Task One: Texts for a Reading Audience: The Journalism Interview

This has remained a popular task throughout the lifetime of the specification and has always been tackled enthusiastically by candidates. It has been evident that, through doing this task, candidates have learnt much about how to structure and organise an effective piece of journalism and how to engage a target audience in order to inform and entertain them. It has also been evident that one of the by-products of doing this task is that candidates have learned a great deal about other people, often members of their own family, sometimes friends or members of staff in the school or college that they attend. Those who did best were the ones who had studied journalistic techniques in interviews from a range of newspapers and journals so that in writing their own interviews they were able to call on a variety strategies in order to forge their own distinctive style.

As in previous years, one of the key skills that distinguished the most able candidates was the ability to identify an angle from which to present their interviewee. In general this meant sorting through the detail of the information they had gathered together and deciding on what the essential story was going to be about the person they were interviewing. As they marshalled the material they had gathered in the interview they were able to answer the key question: what is it about this person's unique experience that is going to interest my intended audience?

Examiner's Comment

Successful candidates almost always set the interviewee in a convincing context and identified a distinctive angle to frame the interview. They also presented the subject in a particular light and included their own authorial view. Weaker candidates kept very close to the original interview and struggled to separate significant and insignificant parts of the interview. They tended to rely heavily on the language of the interviewee and failed to put their words into a specific context for the reader.

Texts for a Reading Audience: Narrative Writing

Quite a large proportion of the entry chose this option and there was some original and skilful writing for this task. The majority of candidates based their narrative on an original oral anecdote. In order to attain the higher bands for AO4 on this task candidates needed to 'use a variety of narrative techniques to

transform their original material'. They also need to show 'thoughtful choices of style and structure to achieve ambitious purposes and audiences'.

The most successful candidates, then, were the ones who were familiar with a number of different ways of telling a story. Through their own reading they had learnt how to take the basic elements of their narratives and turn them into something gripping, or moving or even just amusing, through the choice of words and the way the story was told. Weaker candidates tended to produce narratives that were quite flat in that they simply recounted a sequence of events without trying to engage the reader. When they were based on an original oral narrative they tended to stick closely to the word choice in the original account.

Task Two: Texts for a listening Audience: Scripted Presentations

There were very few examples of this task in this year's submission. Those candidates who tackled it successfully were able to take ambitious topics, research the topic thoroughly and select and organise the subject matter to engage the intended audience using a variety of techniques for spoken presentation. They were able to create rapport with the audience and present complex ideas in a way which enabled the listeners to follow and understand the topic being explained.

Successful scripted talks were able to engage their target audience by using strategies such as direct address, informal language and humour. However, they were also able to use formal and indeed specialised language where necessary and to achieve authority through the use of scholarly reference. In addition they were able to structure and organise their talks effectively using such devices as topic sentences at the start of paragraphs, visual aids and rhetorical questions. Highly successful candidates were able to establish an informal, friendly relationship with their audience while still maintaining the authority of academic discourse. The best candidates had researched their subject thoroughly and were confident with the material. They had also often had the opportunity to actually give their talk to a group.

Weaker candidates tended to produce scripted presentations which didn't attempt to engage a listening audience and simply reproduced their own research in a form which would have been more appropriate in a written form such as an essay.

Texts for a listening Audience: The Dramatic Monologue

The Dramatic Monologue was still popular this year and there was a wide range of ways of approaching form. Strong candidates showed awareness of the monologue as a dramatic form and recognised that they were writing a script to be performed, rather than passages of stream of consciousness prose. In order to achieve a mark in the higher bands for this task candidate needed to show that they could use 'a variety of techniques to create character and situation'. In addition they needed to show thoughtful choice of style and structure.

Most candidates were successful in creating a reasonably convincing spoken voice. Good candidates were aware of dramatic irony and how it might be used

in this genre. Weaker candidates simply presented stretches of idiomatic speech, without effectively shaping them into effective pieces of drama.

Commentaries

Last year, moderators reported that the commentaries had been done well, and this remained true this year. Centres had clearly guided candidates effectively in how to comment on their own work. Most candidates were able to use a range of appropriate linguistic terminology to discuss their own language use. Strong candidates were able to explain and evaluate linguistic choices both in their own writing and in stimulus texts. Fewer candidates than in the past were unable to achieve band 2 for AO3 because they had failed to discuss language choices in stimulus texts. The best commentaries were able to explain the writing process in detail and evaluate the various strategies that they had employed using appropriate vocabulary.

The most successful candidates were able to explain and evaluate their own linguistic choices by selecting relevant features from their own work and commenting on them linguistically. Weaker candidates, in some cases, struggled with the terminology. Others were able to use appropriate linguistic vocabulary effectively but found it difficult to select relevant features to comment on. Instead of choosing the specific features which were relevant to their own work they worked instead through a predetermined set of headings leading to commentaries which were unfocused.

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