



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)
June 2011**

Polish

PLSH2

(Specification 2685)

Unit 2: Reading and Writing

Report on the Examination

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Set and published by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance.

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General Comments

As for AS Polish, entries for A2 Polish have risen this year from 653 students last year to 892 this year.

Section 1: Comprehension

As in Unit 1, students found the comprehension the most accessible part of the paper. The questions were based on an article about cats which was interesting and enjoyable to read. Marks were lost mainly because of carelessness and poor exam technique rather than level of challenge presented by the questions.

Question 1(a) (i)

Jakie cechy przypisujemy kotom?

This question was worth two marks and there were four acceptable answers. Most, if not all, students answered this question correctly.

Question 1(a) (ii)

Co stwierdzili naukowcy?

Again, this question was answered correctly by most students and only some failed to provide two pieces of information, thus losing one mark.

Question 1 (a) (iii)

Czym charakteryzują się zwierzęta domowe?

Marks were lost by students who believed the question to be about domestic animals in general and not just about cats. The answer from question 1(a)(i) was then repeated or new ideas formed: *“leżą na kanapie i mają podane jedzenie.”*

Questions 1 (a) (iv), 1(a) (v) and 1(a) (vi)

These questions did not present any particular challenges and most students supplied the required number of pieces of information.

Section 2: Translation

The translations this year produced very pleasing results and much better than in previous years. The average mark was about fifteen. This may have been because the students' English has improved and they were able to render most sentences correctly. Some students had had no practice in translation and they were, therefore, not aware of the most important rule which is to convey the meaning of the text in grammatically correct and logical sentences.

There were some parts of the passage which caused particular problems, namely 'billion', which was often translated as *bilionów* when this should have been *miliardów*.

'Walked on the sea bed' proved a challenge for some. *“chodzili po łóżku morza, po podłodze morza, po ziemi podwodnej, po podwodnym łóżku, po powierzchni morza, po plażach, po brzegu morza”* and even *“po morskich łózkach i platformach oceanowych.”*

'In many ways' proved a challenging phrase for some which produced "*w wielu drogach*" or "*w wielu rzeczach*" as the most common mistakes.

In the students' translation of "no other animal builds cathedrals, plays football, tells jokes, or writes symphonies" it was something of a surprise to find that some did not know the Polish equivalent of 'cathedral' or 'symphony'. These words are the same in both languages, but spelled differently. Among the translations given were "*katedrale, melodie, piosenki, muzyki, synonimy i symfony.*"

Another challenge was observed with "(w)e can record what we say and think in writing." A large number of students changed the semantic of the original and gave: "*możemy nagrać co mówimy.*"

Students performed well on the translation and used their knowledge innovatively. For example: "Dogs can smell and hear better" became "*czują nosem lepiej.*"

Section 3

Literary and non-literary topics

It was clear from the scripts received that once again, a number of students, though fewer than last year, had not read the specification and did not know what the requirements of the exam were.

Some students chose a question from Section 3 and applied it to Section 4 which is, of course, not acceptable. There were a few students who wrote essays based on 'Lord of the Rings', 'Macbeth' and even on *Czerwony Kapturek*.

There were many beautifully written essays which were well sourced with good analysis, evaluation and personal opinion. There were also, however, many students whose performance was disappointing. They produced essays with no references to a source text, as they had clearly not read one. There were many very descriptive essays just giving the plot without any evaluation or personal opinion. Some presented quite naïve interpretations which were not based on a thorough study of the topic. This was not acceptable for an 'A' level exam and students cannot be rewarded for insubstantial content.

Literary Topics

Topic 1: The fight for independence as a theme in Polish literature.

Question 3

Students were able to choose one from two questions and had a preference for 3(b). Among the literary texts suggested for study in the AQA specification, *Kamienie na szaniec* continues to be the most widely studied in preparation for the questions on this topic. Most of the essays were good or very good.

Students mostly chose question 3(b) as this gave them an opportunity to write about their own attitude to the book's three main protagonists. Many felt a strong sense of empathy for and affinity with Rudy, Zośka and Alek, being themselves at the same stage in life.

The following sentences illustrate this point: "*Bohaterowie poświęcają każdą chwilę swojego czasu na kształcenie się, konspirację i walkę podjętą przeciw Niemcom. Poświęcenie to jest godne podziwu i inspirujące, ukazuje bowiem patriotyzm i siłę ducha*"

młodych ludzi. Są oni gotowi poświęcić nawet swoje życie by uzyskać swój cel, którym jest walka o niepodległość i podnoszenie na duchu Polski, sprawiając, że zmizerniała Polska zmienia się w Polskę ‘walczącą’” and then many examples of heroic acts follow.

There were, however, some weak essays with no references to the text at all, students simply writing around the subject.

There were other texts for study in this topic area and some students based their essays on more than one recommended text. Not many of these were good as they were just not detailed enough in terms of references made to source material and evaluation given.

Topic 2: Moral and social issues as presented in Polish drama.

Question 4

The essays written in response to questions 4(a) and 4(b) were not outstanding this year but still quite good. *Moralność Pani Dulskiej* remains the most popular play studied. Question 4(b) was more often chosen but with mixed success. It was only in the better essays that Zapolska’s message was discussed fully and clear conclusions drawn. There were many students who simply gave a summary of the play and then, towards the end of their essay, analysed and evaluated their chosen topic in two or three sentences.

Question 4(a): some students conveyed the tragic well but they discussed the comic less well. The latter probably required better preparation and knowledge of the different types of humour present in the play.

Zemsta was not as popular this year as it has been in the past. *Balladyna* had gained popularity and there were some very good essays indeed, but there were some suggesting that students believed Żeromski to be the author, or which described Alina killing Balladyna. Another student had the girls picking blueberries. It suggested that the formal study of the text may have occurred some time in the past rather than recently.

Non- literary Topics

Topic 1: Poland and the Poles during World War II

Question 5

The two history questions were attempted by quite a number of students this year. A few of them had prepared for the exam, but most had not. Essays on this topic require facts, ie dates, places and names. In literary essays it is necessary to refer to sources and in non-literary essays facts and information in support of points of view are required. Many essays were written without any factual information and without any detail.

With reference to question 5(a), some students were not able to make up their mind as to which event had been the most tragic. Was it the September Campaign? Or Katyń? Or the concentration camps? Or the Warsaw Uprising? They were not sure and nor did they know enough to write about one event only and so they wrote what little they knew about them all. Some essays gave very good description of the harsh and savage conditions endured by those affected by these events with very moving, and sometimes personal reaction.

Essays on 5(b) were written less well as many of them had very little historical information.

Topic 2: The films of Andrzej Wajda – *Ashes and Diamonds* and *Man of Marble*

Question 6

Wajda's films have remained popular with the students. The essays this year were not as good as the ones seen in previous years. There were many descriptive essays and students clearly thought that simply narrating the plot would suffice. The analysis and evaluation was frequently flawed often due to an insufficient grasp of the historical context in which these films are rooted. Questions on Wajda's films can be attempted properly only by students who have proper tuition.

This response from a less able student: *“Maciek to bohater romantyczny i weneryczny, system komunistyczny polegał na tym, żeby zostawić ciemny lud by łatwiej nim manipulować, a inteligentnych ludzi wywożono do Katynia, Maciek z twardziela zmienia się w kochającego mężczyznę”* was in contrast to this more inspiring quotation from a stronger student: *“jedną z głównych cech nurtu twórczości Wajdy jest poszukiwanie istoty polskości, sięganie do tradycji historycznej i kulturalnej, aby w niej znaleźć odpowiedź jak żyć, a zarazem ukazywanie zderzenia człowieka z historią.”*

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the **Results statistics** page of the AQA Website.

Convert raw or scaled marks into marks on the Uniform Mark Scale (UMS) by using the link below

UMS conversion calculator www.aqa.org.uk/umsconversion.