



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

**Polish**

**PLSH2**

**(Specification 2685)**

**Unit 2: Reading and Writing**

***Report on the Examination***

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## General Comments

### Section 1: Comprehension

The questions were based on an interview that Norman Davies gave on the subject of national identity and attitudes to history.

Students did not appear to find the questions too challenging. Questions (iii) & (iv), carried more marks and some students lost marks because they did not supply enough information.

#### Question 1(a) (vi) *Co sądzisz o tym artykule i myślach w nim zawartych?*

This question, which gave students the opportunity to voice their opinion about the article, was worth four marks.

Some students wrote very little, just saying that it was good and interesting. Students should be encouraged to explain why they think something was good or interesting.

### Section 2: Translation into Polish

This year's translation into Polish, an extract from *Three Cups of Tea* by Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin, was quite challenging, in particular the opening sentence describing the scenery. Some less able students did not know how to tackle it. Some examples of their attempts were:

- *“Białe lodowe odłamy rozkładające się w wioskę, widok był czarujący z białym lodem w filiżance nad Karakorum Górach, Ten widok był wyczerpujący z tymi białymi kapsułami lodu na górach Karakorum idące przez miasteczko Korphe przeciwko niebieskiego nieba, z białymi kostkami lodu pochodzących z gór pędzących przez wioskę”.*

While some versions, like the ones above, were difficult to comprehend, many were fair and even good, with students sometimes opting to convey the meaning in two sentences:

- *“Widok był ekscytujący z białymi, lodowymi szczytami gór Karakoram piętrzącymi się ponad wioską Korphe, na tle niebieskiego nieba”.*
- *“Widok był wyśmienity, z białymi lodowymi szczytami gór Karakoram wysoko nad wioską Korphe, na tle niebieskiego nieba”.*

Students had no problems with the rest of the narrative as it was not as difficult as the first sentence. In particular, the passage beginning from ‘they shared a teacher’ and ending with ‘to practice the lesson he left for them’ proved much easier to translate and in nearly all cases students coped very well.

There were problems with particular items of vocabulary. The words *exquisite*, *admiring*, *courage*, *appalled* and *fierceness* were sometimes not known. Some students left blanks, some tried to rely on guesswork or imagination:

- *Admiring* – *admirował, nie lubiał, nie potwierdzał, nie był zachwycony,*
- *Appalled* – *apelował, chciał zobaczyć, klaskał, był obrzydzony, zawiedziony, zaciekawiony.*
- *Government* – *sejm, prezydent, sąd, gubernator.*

There were some passages in the translations which had clearly not been re-read and checked.

*“Widok był pokryty białymi kostkami lodu, widok zabierający wydech, Ali chroniąc oczy Mortensona, and the best of all Mortenson oglądał jego serce w przetyku, serce na języku, miał serce w szyji, widział swe serce w gardle”.*

Towards the end of the translation, the sentence ‘most scratched in the dirt with sticks they had brought for the purpose’ was commonly misunderstood with many students confusing *sticks* with *stickers*.

- *Zgnieceni w brudzie, który przyklejał im się do głów, dzieci podrapane w brudzie z drzazgami.*

Some more examples of creative translations were:

- ‘Multiplication tables’ – *stoły multiplikacyjne, wielofunkcyjne stoły, różnorodne tabele.*
- ‘Kneeling’ – *stojących na kolanach, ślizgających się.*
- ‘In the open’ – *na początek, na otwarcie.*
- *Były takie zmysły (desire) w pragnieniu uczenia się, tak jak pożar na pustyni (fierceness), zaczęły ścigać stoły mnożenia.*
- *Morteson nie był admirałem tej sceny.*

Despite these mistakes, most students managed to get 13 – 18 marks out of 20

### Section 3: Writing

Students had to write two essays of **at least 200** words each. The questions were grouped according to four topics, two literary and two non-literary, and any combination was acceptable provided that no two questions from the same topic were attempted.

There were not many high scoring essays this year. It was clear from the scripts that some candidates sitting PLSH2 were not aware of the requirements of the examination. Some pages were left blank and at times it was evident that the students did not know what they were supposed to write about.

One student stated: note to the examiner ‘I was not aware of the fact that we had to read and watch anything to do with this exam. I thought the test was testing language skills only’.

Some were upset, angry, and critical of the exam because it required reading and preparation. This clearly indicated how ill prepared too many students are for the A2 examination.

There were some beautifully written, well sourced essays with good analysis, evaluation and personal opinion. However, there were many disappointing essays with no references to the text where it was evident that the student had not read the text, and essays that described the plot without any evaluation or personal opinion. Some essays presented interpretations not based on thorough study of the topics and which were not acceptable for an A level examination. These essays scored very low marks.

Some students stated that they had not watched any of Wajda’s films even though the specification clearly lists two of Wajda’s films, ‘Ashes and Diamonds’ and ‘Man of Marble’. The questions relate to these films.

There were many strange attempts with *Ogniem i mieczem* and *Cztery pancerni i pies* used for the fight for independence. The 'Pianist' was used for topics about drama.

Topic 2 - Moral and social issues as presented in Polish drama and Wajda's film were the favourite choice with most of the students.

## Literary topics

### Topic 1 - The fight for independence as a theme in Polish literature

#### Question 3

*Kamienie na szaniec* were the most popular choice this year and the essays were generally good to very good. This is in line with the trend in recent years and confirms that this book is ideal material for the study of this topic, especially so with less able students. The overall simplicity of the language and clarity of the book's theme makes this an obvious choice for the subject matter. There were some essays where a lack of knowledge of the source was evident – no names were mentioned and no details from the book were used to support students' opinions - these essays scored very few marks.

*Wierna rzeka* and *Nad Niemnem* seemed to be more popular this year with some reasonably good essays.

There were a few essays on *Reduta Ordoña* and *Śmierć pułkownika*. It should be noted that a very detailed and accurate analysis of their content is expected, with close references to the text, if a high mark is to be awarded.

### Literary Topic 2 - Moral and social issues as presented in Polish drama.

#### Question 4

*Moralność pani Dulskiej* remains the most popular play studied. Question 4(b) was chosen most often, but with mixed success. It was only in the better essays that Zapolska's message was discussed fully and clear conclusions were drawn.

There were some misconceived ideas concerning the play. In some essays, students thought that the play was about incest. Some praised her morality and found her attitude and behaviour commendable, or did not see anything wrong with it. It is possible that these ideas come from a television production of the play made in the late 1990s.

To really appreciate and understand what the author had in mind, the original text must be studied in detail. Whilst it is possible to do this on one's own, it is best done in the classroom where ideas can be discussed and questions asked.

Essays on *Niemcy* and *Zemsta* did not generally score high marks. Many were shallow and, especially in the case of *Niemcy*, not well understood. It is a pity because both plays deal with interesting and universal issues.

*Balladyna* produced good essays, – Students understood the message that Słowacki delivers through his central character and illustrated this well with examples of her evil.

There follow some quotations to conclude the review of this topic:

*Dulską nie obchodziło, że się chciała zabić na własną rękę. Głównym wątkiem sztuki jest moralność, która towarzyszy nam i bohaterom sztuki, Dulka była sceptyczna, młodzież się wtedy bardziej bulwersowała, Hanka wykorzystwała ciężę by zdobyć korzyści finansowe, Dulskiej niemoralność walczyła z moralnością społeczeństwa.*

## **Non-literary Topic 1**

### **Poland and the Poles during World War II**

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. What is required in essays on this topic are: facts, dates, places and names. Students need to provide factual information to support their views.

Fewer students attempted Question 5(a) than 5(b) and responses were rather disappointing. Most scored low marks for knowledge. More preparation and studying would have given them higher marks.

Question 5(b) required students to focus on the activities of Poles outside Poland during World War II, but instead essays described everything about Poles during the war, regardless of location. There were some good essays with students citing how the Polish government in exile came to settle in London, and with factual information about the Battle of Britain, the battle of Monte Cassino and Narvik, Tobruk and Arnhem.

Here is a small selection of quotations from some of the history essays:

*“Według mnie o polskiej historii pojawiło się mnóstwo książek i na pewno nie jedno się jeszcze pojawi”.*

*“Ci młodzi ludzie, o których już wspomniałam zasłużyli na odznaczenie, które zresztą otrzymali 1943 roku, gdy byli ugrupowani w SS, gdzie pełnili funkcji żołnierzy polskic”.*

*Gdy już trafili do celu mieli pracować dzień i noc na przykład zcinanie drzew lub robienie własno ręcznie deski surfingowe”.*

*“Losy Polaków poza granicami teraz, moim zdaniem, są lepsze niż podczas wojny światowej. Ponieważ teraz Polacy są lepiej traktowani. Nie umierają z głodu i nikt ich nie zabija codziennie po kilkanaście razy”.*

## **Non-literary Topic 2**

### **The films of Wajda – ‘Ashes and Diamonds’ and ‘Man of Marble’**

**Question 6 (a)** *Losy którego bohatera, obejrzanych przez Ciebie filmów Wajdy, uważasz za najtragiczniejsze?* was very popular with students and taps into the very essence of what cinema is supposed to do, which is to draw us as spectators into the lives of others, so that we can experience the world through their eyes.

In writing about Maciek and Mateusz, students were often good at identifying themselves and in some cases empathising with them. They understood their loss in human terms: the fall from grace, the missed opportunity for love and fulfillment, and finally death. Yet, all too often they did not understand the historical context that these films are set in or the politics of the times. This lack of knowledge limited their appreciation of the films and resulted in lower marks.

There were many very poor attempts at this essay where students thought that watching the films would suffice. They did not appear to have studied or read any material regarding the films. Here are some examples.

*“Maciek jest zaplątany tragicznie i jak na złość zakochuje się z kobietą w hotelu Monopol”.*

*“Maciek to zrobił, żeby wszyscy byli zadowoleni oprócz Szczuki”.*

*“Trudno było zrozumieć, że pracownik może tak bardzo pracować w taką pogodę i jak tyle ludzi ich ogląda”.*

*“Mateusz chciał wykorzystać tę sławę i przemówić do ludzi i powiedzieć o tym jak płacą budowlańcom - trzy ryby dziennie”.*

*“To jest tragiczny koniec, ale czy on naprawdę był bohaterem. Moim zdaniem on zasłużył na to. Tragiczne jest to, że Agnieszka nie wie gdzie on jest bo zniknął dwa dekady temu”.*

It is disappointing that those students missed the opportunity to learn a great deal about Polish history, life and the turbulence that Poland went through in the twentieth century.

### **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](http://www.aqa.org.uk/umsconversion)