

2000 HSC Notes from the Examination Centre Contemporary English

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Contemporary English

Paper 1 – Reading and Writing

Questions 1 & 2

The stimulus items for these opening questions were interesting and involving. Most candidates made a reasonable attempt at a close analysis of each.

Question 1, parts (a), (b) and (c) were confidently and competently answered by a majority of candidates. Parts (d) and (e) provided clear discrimination, with candidates attempting to define an “attitude” in the former and to write sustained and original personal profiles in the latter. Higher order responses managed to present well-constructed text and entertaining subject matter.

In question 2, parts (a) and (e), candidates sometimes produced purely narrative or derivative responses rather than focussing on the key words “why” and “explain”. Part (c) discriminated well, as candidates attempted a clear paraphrase.

Question 3

The stimulus material for question 3 was accessible, interesting and relevant to the lives of the candidates.

Question 3 (g) enabled all candidates to demonstrate their ability to write well and demonstrate their literacy. While the Olympics was a popular choice, other candidates managed to make a memorable event of some quite personal circumstances.

Overall, this question did allow markers to ‘sort’ candidates quite well. Student literacy seems to be improving, with only a small number not able to mark a reasonable attempt at most questions.

The uplifting quality of the majority of responses to question 3 (g), was remarked upon by most markers.

Question 4

The texts covered were accessible, user-friendly and covered a variety of text types. Questions were clear, specific, well directed and unambiguous. The letter to the editor was an appropriate task for all ability levels and was a reasonable discriminator.

Question 5

This question gave candidates very clear directions on what the task required. The text was well chosen and it contained a variety of stimuli to which candidates could respond. The task seemed fair because the targeted film was generally unfamiliar to candidates. This question was a good discriminator for those who could analyse the advertisement rather than describe the listed dot points.

Paper 2 – Contemporary Issues

Section I

Question 1

The majority of candidates this year were able to show a clear understanding of the question and its focus on “relevance” for the candidates’ “generation”. These terms were addressed directly throughout the essays in the stronger responses and even the weaker responses tended to infer relevance or link ideas to their generation.

Essay structure and register were evident in the majority of responses – even those in the “E” range of the criteria did in the main attempt to write an essay. This year it was notable that candidates were writing longer and more sustained responses in all range groups. There has been a distinct improvement in the candidates’ writing in the D/E range.

The main discriminations for marking proved to be:

- (a) The depth and detail of the discussion of the prescribed text
- (b) The number and variety of related materials
- (c) The complexity of the understanding and discussion of the issue itself

Section II

The vast majority of candidates demonstrated in their responses the ability to write in the specified form on the Issue, text(s) and materials studied. Better candidates wrote fluently and articulately, were able to refer to a range of materials in detail, could meaningfully integrate the Issue, text/material and the set question, and present clearly opposing points of view with insight. Weaker candidates generally showed an understanding of the requirements of the question and a basic grasp of the Issue, text(s) and materials. However the coherence and expression, capacity to sustain register and competence in presenting balanced and opposing views among these candidates were not strong features.

In summary strong Contemporary English candidates can address all aspects of the question satisfactorily, while weaker candidates struggle to do so. The most popular issues in this section were, Sport (The Club, Strictly Ballroom) and Growing Up (Looking for Alibrandi).

Listening Paper

General Comments

The exam paper was well set out with clear instructions to candidates. Most candidates completed all sections of the paper.

The two separate extracts enabled candidates to discriminate between the speakers on the tape. This was evidenced by the fact that in questions relating to a specific extract, candidates were generally able to locate the relevant information. There were variations in volume and clarity, especially in Extract 1; however, the questions were focused on the sections of the tape, which were accessible to all candidates.

Question 7 was the language analysis question. The specific listing of possible language techniques was a clear reference point from which candidates could structure their responses. Almost all candidates made use of these as their technique headings. However, many candidates still had difficulty relating their general knowledge about these techniques to the specifics of the task. There were a number of 'definition' answers, which were not contextualised. It also needs to be said that candidates in general had difficulty explaining how these techniques were effective in creating humour e.g. 'it was funny' without any further information.

Overall, the paper elicited a diversity of responses, although it was evident that some candidates had difficulty articulating their understanding of the language of humour.