

Examiners' Report
January 2012

GCSE English Language 5EN2H 01

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Introduction

This is the second examination of the new GCSE English Language specification, with quite a new form of language-based questioning on extracts from long texts. Since the June 2011 series, there have been changes to the layout of the answer booklet to counteract candidates' failing to answer in the right section. In addition, the examiner's report had drawn attention to the importance of answering in the correct section. These factors undoubtedly reduced considerably the number of problems of this kind. However, it was still the case that some candidates wrote the answer to the Writing Question in Section B immediately after their Section A response.

Section A

In the Reading section (Section A) the overwhelming majority of candidates chose to respond to Question 5, 'Of Mice and Men'.

This no doubt reflects both the popularity of 'Of Mice and Men' and its familiarity to teachers.

In general, examiners felt that the reading tasks were tackled quite well overall, with many of the candidates thoroughly prepared. Most knew the requirements and there was convincing language analysis from some.

One commented that texts had been well prepared, with candidates mostly understanding the need to select a suitable extract for part (b). It was clear that many centres had discussed a number of possible extracts which might be suitable and which the candidates then used successfully. This could result in comments that tended not fully to reflect the voice and views of the candidate.

Candidates often commented on how different parts of speech were used by authors to communicate their ideas. However, too often they did not understand the grammatical terms, using the terms adverb, adjective and even noun incorrectly. Where answers were less successful, often they did not focus sufficiently closely on the question, sometimes showing that they had not read it carefully enough. On the other hand, there were many answers in which a wide variety of techniques used by the author were correctly identified, supported with evidence and explained (the 'PEE' approach), and the effect on the reader was clearly shown.

The best answers showed a perceptive understanding of the text and the techniques used by the author. In such answers, candidates knew how to deal precisely with the language of the extract they were faced with and concentrated on the author's purpose and methods of presentation. The majority of responses showed at least a sound understanding of the text and were able to refer to the language of the extract, making relevant comment.

Weaker candidates, however, often struggled to engage in a sustained manner with the writer's use of language and sometimes used excessively long quotations.

Part b) was sometimes answered less well than part a), not least because it threw the initiative on to the candidates to make an apt selection from their text. Some candidates therefore had difficulty in relating their answers to only one other section of the novel. The skill of selecting suitably is one to which centres should devote substantial time in preparation, since a poor or ill-focused selection can make the sensitive exploration of language in relation to central ideas or characterisation far more difficult. The choice of an extract which is not too long enables candidates to write in greater detail rather than in a general way.

Section B (Writing)

Overall, candidates had responded well and appropriately to the tasks, with some excellent writing. Many candidates showed a strong sense of purpose, and it is clear that centres have devoted time to developing the skill of writing in particular registers and for specific audiences. The best responses were hence clearly differentiated from those where the candidate offered a personal opinion or viewpoint, but did not address the audience clearly, as required by the two questions. The best answers came from candidates who had planned effectively to give a structured, focused answer, with a wide range of language and accurately-used punctuation marks.

One examiner noted that the highest band answers achieved precision and clarity in presenting compelling and fully developed ideas. Answers used sentences that were convincingly structured, with sophisticated control of expression and meaning.

Question 1

Touching the Void

Few candidates chose this text. Those who did showed good familiarity with it on both parts of the question and showed a degree of objectivity in their comments.

a) From the small number of responses, there were some effective answers, concentrating well on the characters' emotions and picking out points on how language is used.

b) The choice of an appropriate second section of the book was made by most candidates, with the 'rope' episode a popular choice. Candidates could usually draw on either the speakers' words or description to show a grasp of the climbers' complex emotions. However, there were examples where the candidate used the same extract for b) as for a): candidates must remember that an extract from another part of the text is needed.

Question 2

Anita and Me

This was also very much a minority text, but it was one where those who chose it related well to the characters and situations.

a) Candidates for the most part understood Meena's relationship with her parents.

There were some effective responses, but some candidates seemed to find this question quite challenging.

b) Candidates tended to limit themselves to very few chosen extracts, often focusing on the incident when Meena's mother appeared to show less understanding of her than her father.

One candidate, who failed to give a specific textual reference at the outset, did not fully elaborate the answer, although the fact that relevant connections were established meant that the answer just met Level 3 criteria.

Question 3

Balzac and the Little Chinese Seamstress

This was another text that was not chosen by many candidates. However, examiners commented that they found the quality very good.

Students clearly understood the narrator's feelings for the Little Seamstress.

Some candidates suggested that the narrator wanted the reader to focus on the word 'lovely' before 'unsophisticated' in the description of the Little Seamstress; this was not an insult but something quite 'charming'. One particular answer was seen to have summed this up well: 'The little seamstress seems as though she was unspoilt, untainted and that Luo's attempt to educate her has ruined the naive, endearing characteristics the [narrator] has grown to love.' Another examiner commented that the few scripts seen were of a very high quality: 'All showed the ability to analyse language in detail and discuss authorial technique with authority. A joy to read. Detailed, perceptive, sophisticated, and completely involved in the text.'

a) Those candidates who attempted this question generally focused well on the appearance of the seamstress and its effect on the narrator, showing empathy for his character.

b) Candidates were able to choose a relevant extract and quoted appositely in support of their choice.

Many chose the passage detailing the Little Seamstress's introduction. Many candidates dealt appropriately with the initial thoughts and comparisons of the Little Seamstress. Others selected a later section where the Seamstress's attitudes had changed considerably.

Question 4

An examiner noted that answers covered the whole ability range, with marks awarded in all Bands. Many candidates responded confidently to this question, demonstrating a clear and strong understanding of Francis Cassavant's desire and need for revenge and justice.

Responses were mostly at least sound. They could often have been improved by more thorough exploration of the language. An examiner noted that the weaker answers focused on Francis' ambiguous attitude and the change in Larry; higher tariff answers analysed Cormier's use of simile and metaphor effectively, making much, for example, of the tumour image, although some failed to grasp fully the significance of the comparison. However, not all recognised the figure of speech or could fully explain its effect. Most students picked up the dramatic use of short sentences.

b) The choice of extract for the second part proved challenging for some candidates. Many chose the table tennis episode, which worked well in most cases. Some students, however, adopted a narrative approach and did not select the techniques that created the irony and the drama of that particular episode. A number wrote about the rape scene with sensitivity and insight.

The metaphor of Francis's heart breaking was frequently commented on. There were also some interesting answers based on the scene when Francis is on a church steeple.

This is the opening paragraph of a candidate's response to Question 4 (a), on Francis's feelings about Larry.

Write your answers to Section A Questions (a) and (b) here:

Throughout the extract, we see many different language examples ~~that~~ ^{that} influence the reader about how Francis feels of Larry LaSalle. ~~Cornier~~ Cornier starts this chapter with a simile 'The gun like a ~~tumour~~ tumour on my thigh' This simile is explaining that Cassavant is present with the gun and it is ~~there~~ ^{here} ~~and~~ constantly ~~reminds~~ ^{reminds} Cassavant is reminded of his ~~mission~~ 'Mission'. As an audience we recognise that Cassavant is aware of his past with Larry, we see that this is also reference to how the actions Larry has done in the past ~~and how~~ ~~it~~ has affected Francis, ~~is~~ ^{and} always there ~~with~~, as is the reminder of the gun hidden in Cassavant's pocket of Francis' future actions.



ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

The candidate goes straight into discussion of language features and their effect, by focusing on a key simile. The approach is thorough, with a detailed explanation of the significance of the simile. Overall, the answer merited a mark in the bottom of Band 4 (10/16).



ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

Make sure that the opening to your answer has a strong impact, by showing that you have grasped the importance of the writer's use of language to present ideas.

This is a central section consisting of three paragraphs of a candidate's response to Question 4 (b), focusing on Larry's return to Frenchtown.

However Francis had always ~~viewed~~ viewed him as a hero 'Yes, but he had been a hero to us long before he went to war' This shows that Cormier has ensured the reader that Francis will always view Larry as being a hero, from a long time before the war that Francis had viewed ~~him~~ him that way.

Cormier emphasises how Francis feels special with Larry through 'once again, he made us feel special' This also is influential on the reader explaining that Larry is a special man that makes the kids from the wreck centre feel special, and including Francis himself.

Cormier uses long sentences to explain how Larry is a great man and a great hero. 'He smiled, the old-movie star smile, skin tanned and glowing, small wrinkles around his eyes as he squinted down on us' This shows that Cormier used a ~~short~~ ^{long} sentence to emphasise Larry's heroism, his hero-like attributes, that need to be in great detail. This allows the



ResultsPlus
Examiner Comments

This is a top Band 3 response, scoring 14/24. The extract featuring Larry's return to Frenchtown was an appropriate one to choose, and the candidate's response is a thorough one, showing sustained understanding.



ResultsPlus
Examiner Tip

Make sure that quotations are commented on in a way that adds useful explanation, rather than just repeating the words, as in the comment on 'feel special'.

Question 5

Of Mice and Men

This was by far the most popular question; it received many positive responses to language aspects of the text, often full of insight.

However, there was a high degree of discrimination, with examiners noting that the full range of marks was used, as some answers were poorly focused. One examiner noted that, although specific language was referred to, very few students were able to identify parts of speech correctly and often referred to them incorrectly in their responses.

Sometimes, there were lengthy explanations of the social/ historical context, without any focus on language.

a) Many candidates were confident in identifying language features, though they often struggled to explore their resonance. As usual the good candidates knew how to look at how the language was used effectively, and there was much use of PEE to ensure that points made were substantiated.

Most candidates identified Lennie's eagerness to hear the story of the dream, his fixation on rabbits, and the metaphor of George's voice growing 'warmer'.

The most able candidates were able to distinguish between George's and Lennie's differing attitudes towards the dream as well; George's realism 'they ain't givin it away' versus Lennie's story-like 'Tell me about the rabbits.' It was clear, too, that students enjoyed the text: they responded particularly well to Lennie's use of language, e.g. repetition, imperatives and limited vocabulary. There were interesting comments on the use of short sentences for Lennie, and longer ones for George, illustrating the difference in their attitudes, planning and seriousness.

Some remarked on the quasi-father/son relationship between George and Lennie and Lennie's childlike character.

Not so many made mention of the effect on Candy, however, and this section of the extract was often omitted completely. The best responses skilfully related the extract to the themes of friendship and the American Dream.

Most candidates clearly knew the extract well.

The best candidates came up with some original ideas such as the personification of salmon running adding to the fantasy or the imagery of nature struggling "upstream", suggestive of the ultimate failure of the dream.

There were many effective comments from candidates of all abilities about the use of the adverbs 'softly' and 'eagerly.' In the more articulate responses, this went further, "Lennie speaks 'softly.' The adverb shows their dream is fragile, perhaps foreshadowing the terrible fate their dream will suffer." There was much focus on the verb 'begged' as well, to build up the characters' sense of desperation for their dream.

Higher band responses demarcated themselves in the judicious use of linguistic terminology.

b) Examiners tended to feel that this was often less well answered than part a), not least because responses (despite the higher mark allocation) were often not as fully developed or focused. By far the most commonly chosen extract was the scene where Curley's wife explains her lost dream to Lennie, which elicited many perceptive and engaged responses.

They often recognised that in spite of the flaws in her personality, she deserved readers' sympathy in her own broken dreams. One candidate described her 'inherent laziness, the necessary dependence on others' to realise her dreams as opposed to George's and Lennie's desire to do it themselves, to work together towards their goal.

Most made valid points on the loss of her dream, her need for attention, the change to "you listenin'" and some had effective close analysis of how the outside noise signalled the end of the dream, as did the references to nature.

Higher ability candidates were able to recognise her vulnerability and inferred exploitation by the 'Hollywood' men, and used actual textual references to support their opinions.

However, there was also a variety of different extracts, including the discussions with Candy and Crooks, on both of which there were some successful responses.

On Crooks, candidates often showed a sensitive empathy with the character, as well as good understanding of motivation, although the episode chosen is rich in telling detail not always utilised, as an examiner noted. In some cases students ran scenes from different parts of the book together: even good candidates showed a desire to write about the novel as a whole rather than focusing on an extract. There was much that they wanted to say, unfortunately not all of it relevant to the question.

This is the opening paragraph of a candidate's response to part (a) of Question 5, on the dreams of George and Lennie.

a) In this extract, we ~~clear~~^{see} George and Lennie's dream to "live off the fatta the lan" ~~told~~ in more detail. Before, George has told this dream for Lennie but not so much for him; we can see this where Lennie "~~tell~~^{begged}" again, George." ~~George~~^{The verb "begged" shows} Lennie is desperate to hear the dream - although George told it "jus' las' night," suggesting ~~that~~ Lennie relies on the dream as much as he relies on George, + shown when he repeats "George" several times, often in the same sentence talking about the dream. For Lennie, George and the dream are a package - ~~both~~ both of them give him ~~extra~~ hope. This links to the key themes of dreams and friendship in the novel. However, ~~we can see~~ Steinbeck also emphasises the simplistic nature of the dream for Lennie, with the repetition of "rabbits" ~~and~~ which he talks about "eagerly," this adverb showing how crucial the dream is to his morale.



ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

This is the opening to an assured response to Question 5 (a), in which the candidate has responded in a detailed and effective way to the language used to show the different ways George and Lennie speak and think about their dream. The idea of Lennie's reliance on both George and the dream is well explored. This is a top Band 4 response, awarded 13/16.



ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

Look closely at how this answer makes strong points and supports them confidently with very clear expression. Note the embedded single-word quotations, which are commented on effectively.

These are the final two paragraphs of the response by another candidate to Question 5 (a).

Near the end of the extract, George says "we'd jus' live there. We'd belong there." Isolation and loneliness is another key theme of the novel and another thing common amongst American migrant workers. ~~However~~ George and Lennie don't have to ~~really~~ really deal with that emotion, because they have each other, ^{however,} ~~but~~ they may struggle with feeling that they 'belong' or fit in anywhere. Having a house, or home, somewhere where they "belonged" could help that, and that is ultimately their dream for the future. Candy, ^{it becomes clear,} ~~is~~ is also interested in George and Lennie's ideal fabrication. "He watched George carefully" - the adverb here showing his intrigue and curiosity. This could also influence the reader's view of George and Lennie's dream by showing that it is just one version of a common desire shared by all migrant workers - ~~for~~ to have somewhere where they "belong."

In the novel, the only times George sounds excited are when he is talking about his and Lennie's dream. Steinbeck writes that his voice grows "warmer" when he talks about it, which not only indicates excitement and familiarity, but also love. As a migrant worker, ~~George~~ and with Lennie to look after, George cannot have a family, and this dream is the closest he can get. It may not be completely ideal, but it is clear to the reader that the dream makes both Lennie and George happy. ~~which makes the reader maybe~~



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Examiner Comments

The candidate was awarded 11/16 overall for this Band 4 response. In the concluding paragraphs, the analysis is very clear and confident in its handling of the way this extract develops our understanding of the theme of isolation/loneliness.



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Examiner Tip

When relating a given extract to the novel's themes, ensure that you remain focused on what is learnt from the language used in this passage, rather than writing more generally about the theme.

This is the whole of a candidate's response to part (b) of Question 5, looking at an earlier conversation (in the first chapter) between George and Lennie on the same subject.

b) In Chapter 1 page 15-16 it shows more examples of George's and Lennie's hopes and dreams for the future. George has told the story of their dream a number of times including Chapter 3. I know this as Steinbeck quotes "He repeated his words... said them many times before". This simply tells you George has told the story of their dream more than once.

George has heard the story more than once, enough times to know the story. George repeatedly interrupts George from telling the story. This indicates George knows the story.

However George wants George to continue to tell the story. And George ain't really happy in telling the story which Lennie already knows. Steinbeck quotes "You got it by heart. You can do it yourself". This shows that George is trying to resist in telling the story again. However George just simply says "I forget some a' the things". And then George continues to tell the story.

Lennie Constantley is interrupting George from telling the story. This shows Lennie knows the dream way to well. However he tells George that he forget some of the bits of the story. But he constantly interrupts George meaning he is being childish and wants someone to tell the story even though the person knows it.



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Examiner Comments

This is not a very full response to the question, being shorter than the answer to Question 5 (a), despite the higher mark allocation. There are some relevant quotations that indicate a generally sound grasp, but there is some repetition and points are not closely developed with reference to the text. The mark awarded overall was 3/24, which is in the middle of Band 1.



ResultsPlus
Examiner Tip

Look at how this answer could have achieved a higher band by analysing the points made more effectively and drawing on a fuller range of material from the selected extract.

This is from the middle part of a candidate's response to part (b) of Question 5, looking at the conversation that Lennie had with Crooks about dreams.

Lennie however doesn't agree with this and to him the dream is achievable and ~~not~~ real, 'we're gonna have rabbits on a berry patch', the word 'we're' shows us that for Lennie's dream to be achievable, he needs George in it, showing a ~~great~~ key theme of friendship, unusual in 1930's America migrant workers, as men do not seek friendship, but 'a little piece of land'.

We also learn in ~~the extra~~ this part of the novel of Crooks dream, that as a ~~black~~ 'nigger' in 1930's America he is stereotyped and hated upon for the colour of his skin, but he just wants to be equal once again, 'Had two brothers, they was always near me, always there', the word 'had' shows us that he is thinking about past times and that he wants to go back once again to a time when he was accepted.



ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

Overall, this answer merited a solid Band 3, with 11/24. It was thorough in its approach and drew upon the detail of the selected extract appropriately, looking at how Lennie drew strength from George and at the rejection of Crooks, which had ended his dream.



ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

To reach the highest Bands, ensure that, when a quotation is used, the analysis gives the reader a strong understanding of why you have selected it and how the language is effective.

Question 6

Rani and Sukh

There were relatively few answers on this text. However, candidates who selected this question showed a clear understanding of the requirements of the question and identified what the family feud meant to the characters. One examiner commented that the focus on the feud did make them look at language and the inevitable blood on the driveway.

Some candidates veered to a narrative approach, especially for the second part of the question.

a) The answers on the extract provided were generally sound or better, with few at the top end of the range. Some candidates tended to re-tell the extract or sidestep the question. However, the most effective responses dealt well with the extract.

b) Most chose the telling of the story of the original deaths that started the feud as their second extract and this worked very well.

Even the better responses sometimes struggled to engage with the use of language, although they often showed sensitive cultural awareness.

Question 7

Riding the Black Cockatoo

a) Few responses to this text were seen by examiners. Those that were seen showed an appreciation of the extract and commented reasonably on the language.

b) A variety of extracts was chosen, with some opting for the contrasting scene in the park with the journalist. Sometimes there was more comment on racism than there was on the language that was used to express this theme.

Question 8

To Kill a Mockingbird

This was the second most popular choice, after 'Of Mice and Men'. A variety of responses was seen, including some high quality answers.

a) Many candidates correctly identified how Jem's relationship was shown in the given text, picking out relevant language on which to comment. For example, Jem's violence was noted, as were his respect and love for his father. One examiner commented that answers were particularly well developed and expressed, with students working through the extract and tracing the changes in Jem's use of language. Another noted that there was some close reading, with details such as the 'winter wind' image explored thoroughly, and all candidates responding positively to the text, extract and questions. More able candidates also commented fully on Calpurnia's 'mothering role' with the children, her protectiveness coupled with her sternness and no-nonsense attitude.

Close contextual study enables candidates to show how the language is effective. One wrote, for example: "'Snatched' implies to the reader that Jem's actions are sudden and vigorous, which prove his great intent in attempting to defend Atticus. His startling actions are emphasised further by the verb and adverb 'flailing wildly', which give the reader a good idea of Jem's anger and madness."

One examiner indicated that the better candidates were able to select from the whole extract - commenting on several language points, including the exaggeration of "every hair in my head" and the short sentence "Daylight faded", as well as the more obvious points; and handling the complex character of Jem well, linking this to his relationship with the others.

b) A range of extracts was chosen, including the lynch mob, the meeting with Boo, the visit of Aunt Alexandra and the scene at the very end of the book, after Bob Ewell's attack.

One examiner noted that answers for b) were not so well developed, which suggests that some candidates may have found it hard to find their way round the whole novel and were more comfortable with the given extract. An examiner noted that those who chose the street scene outside the jail at night and the shooting of the mad dog by Atticus responded well, such as the candidate who wrote: "The writer uses Atticus' protest 'I haven't shot a gun in thirty years' to illustrate his reluctance to fire a gun in front of his children. It is doubtful that he lacks confidence in his abilities; it seems to the reader that his excuses are only in the interest of his vow not to take part in violence, especially in front of his children."

However, those who chose the arrival of Aunt Alexandra sometimes did less well, finding it difficult to define how this affected the Finch family relationships.

These are the final three paragraphs of a candidate's response to part (a) of Question 8.

At the start of the extract it appears Jem is angry with his family and is disrespecting them. As the extract unfolds we figure his family is why he is doing it, to protect them and won't let anybody say a bad word about Atticus. "She said you talked for niggers and trash".

"Scowling, waiting" Jem was reflecting on his actions, waiting to see what Atticus' reaction was going to be. This shows he has the up most respect for Atticus and what Atticus says.

I knew Jem's relationship with his family was strong but the language in the extract has helped me understand it more.



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Examiner Comments

In this response, the candidate shows a generally sound understanding of Jem's relationship with his family. The quotations are relevant and there are some comments on them. The overall mark for this response was 3/16, at the top end of Band 1, as further depth and development were required.



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Examiner Tip

When quoting from the text, be sure that you look closely at the nature and effect of the language examples you use, developing your points clearly and fully.

This is the opening section of a candidate's response to part (b) of Question 8, focusing on Aunt Alexandra's arrival.

~~the~~ Atticus is a single dad. He brings Scout and Jem up very well. Aunt Alexandra does not think this. "Aunt Alexandra's appearance on the scene was not so much Atticus's doing as hers". Atticus does not like Aunt Alexandra coming and interfering with his family. The relationship between Atticus and Aunt Alexandra is very strange, Alexandra seems very domineering and whatever she says goes. The language suggests that Scout does not have a very good relationship with Aunt Alexandra. "Aunt Alexandra was positively irritable" Jem and Scout don't see much of their Aunt and what they do see of her she just gets on their nerves.



ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

The candidate begins by a short explanation of the family situation and offers some comment on the relationship that Atticus, Jem and Scout have with the Aunt, with reasonable understanding of the situation. The overall mark for the response was 4/24, which is a mark within Band 1.



ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

Here, the candidate has demonstrated some grasp of how the family reacts to Aunt Alexandra's arrival, and picks out relevant quotations. Think how the points that are made could be developed more strongly in order to take the answer into a higher band.

Question 9

Traffic safety

A04(i)+(ii) (Content and ideas):

This question was answered more often than Question 10.

It was very competently handled on the whole, most candidates suggesting such remedies as traffic lights, crossings, lollipop men/women, speed cameras and bumps. One innovative suggestion was the building of a racetrack for boy racers to use, instead of local roads.

Some students achieved precision and clarity in presenting compelling and fully developed ideas. A strong, consistent fulfilment of the writing task focused sharply on the writer's purpose and audience. An extensive vocabulary and mature control in the construction of varied sentence forms was used. Organisation was convincing, with sophisticated control of text structure, skilfully sustained paragraphing and the effective application of cohesive devices.

There were, therefore, some convincing letters, which specified particular places and provided examples of accidents and problems on the roads.

Stronger candidates clearly offered a wide range of solutions, addressed in detail and respectfully and sympathetically put, acknowledging the council's current financial difficulties, because of government cuts to funding. Some weaker candidates, however, adopted a 'tabloid rant' tone that was at times inappropriate.

Examiners noted few very short answers: in general, candidates had made a real effort to set out the letter correctly, write in paragraphs and adapt their use of language to the form, audience and purpose, adopting an appropriately formal tone.

The weaker candidates struggled, however, with a more formal register, either developing only one or two ideas very basically or structuring their responses inadequately.

Candidates were often aware of the importance of putting forward a sustained line of argument and using persuasive devices. The better responses crafted their writing for the appropriate audience and purpose and often had a clear personal voice. Humour, including some irony, was used to good effect.

The comment was made that a surprisingly large number of candidates assumed that their local council would know the name of the busy road being referred to.

A number of students did not use paragraphs or link their ideas coherently.

Punctuation was sometimes not used to full effect.

Many of the views expressed were strongly expressed and enjoyable to read, with candidates using a number of intentional techniques to engage with the subject and the audience. However, after investing much energy into the start, they often found it hard to sustain the response at a high level after the first couple of paragraphs. There were good signs of clear planning, to produce well-structured responses which considered form, purpose and audience.

Those who struggled could not control the register required for the specified audience and purpose. Many tended to be too emotive or tried too hard to be persuasive.

AO4(iii) (Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar)

Most candidates reached a generally sound level of technical accuracy, although even some very articulate responses were marred by significant errors. One examiner noted that the use of apostrophe for any word ending in 's' was prevalent in the responses, as were weak spelling skills. However, others commented favourably on the general standard of candidates' writing.

These are the opening three paragraphs from a candidate's response to Q9, on traffic accidents involving children.

Dear Somerset County Council,

As I'm sure you are very aware, there have been a number of serious traffic accidents involving children on busy roads in our area. I ask, why is nothing being done to ensure our environment is a safe one? Surely, as council it is your duty to have a strategic plan to make sure the children in our area are as safe from traffic accidents as possible? I have a number of suggestions that should greatly improve the number of accidents on busy roads.

Firstly, the obvious thing to do would be to reduce the speed of the cars. Whilst the current speed limit on many of our busy roads is 40mph, I feel the area would greatly benefit ~~fr~~ from an abatement of the limit. Perhaps from 40mph, to 30mph? This would work because if a child were to be ~~bit~~ involved in an accident, the impact would be reduced. This could potentially save the lives of young children.

Secondly, There needs to be more zebra

crossings and/or traffic lights. This ensures a safe crossing environment for all. Think, what would happen if a young child needed to cross a busy road and simply ran out? Due to lack of zebra safe crossing zones, on average three statistics show that three children a month are involved in traffic accidents both serious and minor. That works out at 36 children a year getting injured. This could be prevented by introducing zebra crossings and/or traffic lights.



ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

The candidate writes a convincing opening paragraph to what was a full and convincing response to the question. From the outset, key questions are addressed to the Council, and the use of 'Firstly' and 'Secondly' shows that the candidate has planned the response with an orderly structure. Language is fully appropriate (for example the reference to the need for a 'strategic plan'), and overall this merits a secure Band 5 mark for content and ideas, being awarded 15/16, and 7/8, a Band 3 mark for the quality of the writing.



ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

Note the way in which the candidate adopts a tone and style that draws the reader in to consider the points that are made, showing very strong awareness of the audience.

This is the second part of another candidate's answer to Q9 on road safety.

Something must be done about this. An idea for reducing the amount of traffic on the road ~~before and after~~ at the time of drop-off and pick-up for school is a special area allocated where parents can drive through. This means they can drop their child off in a safe place, meaning they would not have to cross the road.

Another idea for children who walk to school is to install a pedestrian crossing near the school to ensure there is a safe place for students to cross where traffic will stop.

I hope you will consider these ideas because I believe together we can improve everyone's safety and drastically reduce the number of accidents on Bristol Road. Thank you for your time, I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours Sincerely



ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

This response also has a secure grasp of purpose and audience. It is a sustained and appropriate response, but there is less development of the argument into a fully convincing appeal to the Council. The response merits a secure Band 3 for its content and ideas, 8/15, and a Band 2, 5/6, for the quality of the writing.



ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

When writing a letter to persuade someone to take your ideas seriously, aim for a strong and convincing conclusion.

Question 10

Making changes to one's life

AO4(i)+(ii) (Ideas and content):

Some candidates produced very strong, effective responses. Examiners commented that many wrote in a lively and interesting way, although one felt that too many candidates restricted themselves to the obvious changes of a healthy diet, exercise, getting out more and working harder at school. Many candidates were able to adopt a style appropriate for a teenage magazine. Some also created some eye-catching headlines for their articles.

Where students wrote consciously for a teenage audience, answers often had a racy tempo and convincing array of phrases and jargon. Particularly effective was the use of varied sentence structure at all levels of ability: short snappy sentences, rhetorical questions, varied use of other punctuation, and experimenting with word order for effect.

One examiner noted that this question gave the students an opportunity to explore their informal voice and gave them a position of responsibility to advise their peers. Another wrote: 'Lovely! They really did engage well with this. This was the question for those with flair.'

The best were thought to have an empathetic tone, followed by clear, sensible suggestions for change.

The best answers had a degree of understatement or exuberant irreverent wit. Candidates sometimes confessed that they wished they could spend less time living virtual lives on Facebook and on their mobiles and actually go out and participate in something. A change in attitude towards authority figures was also a common theme.

AO4(iii)

Examiners made similar points as for Question 9.

This is the opening section of a candidate's answer on changes that could be made to teenagers' lives (Q10).

Get Fit! keep Active!

~~Teenage~~ obesity

The first sign of obesity is found in teenagers teenage obesity is on the rise. Over 250,000 teenagers in Britain are obese or overweight.

The reason behind obesity in teenagers is commonly lack of exercise, overconsumption of food, (especially fast fatty food).

So, what should be done to beat obesity?

* Instead of sitting inside playing video games, or watching TV, you should be getting outside, playing sport and burning energy; Also instead of eating fried foods everynight switch to healthy foods UNLESS you want to end up obese?

I was once obese; until i started up yoga after school, and started to eat healthily, now i've lost 6stone'

Don't spend your time on technology! Make the most of the opportunities around you!

Last year in the U.K. 70,000 children and teenagers were diagnosed with being overweight or obese. Do you want to be one of these people being diagnosed? No? So get active!

This was an all time record for obese and overweight children and teenagers.



ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

The candidate makes clear from the outset the reasons for focusing on fitness and activity as a means of combating teenage obesity. There is a suitable range of ideas presented in a sustained response. The register is effective and the readership engaged. This is a Band 3 response for content and ideas (8/16) and Band 2 for quality of writing (4/8).



ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

Think about how to start your answer with a strong statement that draws your reader into wanting to hear what you have to say.

These are the concluding two paragraphs of another candidate's response to Q10, on changes teenagers could make to their lives.

Change 4:
Do we want to send out to the world the message that we don't care what we look like? Teenagers today seem to think it's OK to wear extremely short skirts and very low cut tops. Is the kind of look you're going for that you are "up for anything"? No one saying "dress like a Nin" but let's have a little self respect?

Change 5:
Finally, let's stop idolising celebrities. Why should we care who's stuck thin, who won Big Brother, The X Factor, I'm a celeb. Take interest in things which really matter: politics, war, animal cruelty, child cruelty, the environment because it's these things which could be our down fall - and who would want that?



ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

This candidate engages the reader strongly in the proposals for change, and sets these out in a clear, well-organised structure, with five recommendations, of which these are the last two. The writing has a strong register, making effective use of rhetorical questions (one of these ends the answer). There is mature control of language and the candidate shows the ability to vary sentences. This answer was awarded 16/16 (top of Band 5) for the content and ideas, and 8/8 (Band 3) for the quality of ideas.



ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

Note the clarity of the structure adopted, which means that the argument is easy to follow and the points have impact.

Section A

Some candidates failed to put a cross in the box to indicate which question they were attempting. If this was the case, the answer was marked in the 'rubric' section for Section A. They are encouraged to identify the different parts of their answers clearly and to cross the correct number box.

Section B

Some candidates failed to put a cross in the box to indicate which question they were attempting. If this was the case, the answer was marked in the 'rubric' section for Section B. They are encouraged to identify the question and to cross the correct number box.

Paper Summary

Centres should have regard to the following points raised by examiners:

The examination overall elicited a full range of quality in candidates' responses, including some who were below the expected standard for this Tier and who, examiners suggested, might have been entered for the Foundation Tier, where they could have benefitted from the additional structure given in the question.

Examiners also noted that often candidates wrote at length but failed to gain the higher marks because, while demonstrating good knowledge of the texts, they did not concentrate on how the writers had used language effectively to convey an idea.

Another occasional tendency was for candidates to run out of time after Section A, and hence to address Section B only briefly or not at all. There were clearly some issues of time management and also of not noting the marks apportioned to each question.

Some students did not fully address the precise, specific requirements of the questions, often writing generalised comments about the text rather than focusing on the key words within the question.

It was again the case that a small number of students wrote about more than one extract in Section A, part b), which meant that they were not writing detailed comments about one particular episode.

In Section A, there remains the need for candidates to time their answers so that the part b) answers are longer and more detailed than those in part a), as 24 marks are allocated.

Grade Boundaries

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