

Moderators' Report/
Principal Moderator Feedback

Summer 2012

GCSE English and English Language
(5EH01)
English Today

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General Overview

Centres and candidates have a choice of two themes on which to answer. For 2011-2012 these were 'School Meals' and 'Talent Television'.

In **reading**, candidates must complete one reading task individually and, following their preparation, they have up to two hours to complete the task. The response must be a written response of up to 1000 words. For the chosen theme candidates select two texts from the six Edexcel texts provided and prepare by making notes and planning their response to the task. Three texts are paper-based and three are digital, i.e. intended to be read on screen.

The reading response must show that candidates can:

- make comparisons between two texts;
- select appropriate details from two texts to support their ideas;
- explore how writers use presentation and language to communicate their ideas and perspectives in two texts.

In **writing** candidates must complete one writing task from a choice of two on their chosen theme. Following their preparation they have up to two hours to complete the task and their response must be an individual written response of up to 1000 words. The writing response must show that candidates can:

- make choices in writing that are appropriate to audience and purpose
- spell, punctuate and use grammatical structures that are accurate and appropriate for purpose and effect.

Most candidates performed very well and coped well with the demands of this module. Candidates had been well prepared by centres for this component and engaged well with the given School Meals and Talent Television tasks and texts. Both topics were well received by candidates, being accessible and within their experience and these provided candidates with opinions, experience and knowledge which helped in the writing tasks. Most candidates completed both tasks accordingly. The incomplete folders submitted tended to be at the lower end of the mark range. Centres should be reminded that candidates should only be awarded zero if there is no rewardable material.

While both topics were popular, the Talent Television topic continued to have a slight edge in terms of popularity, as in the January series. It was pleasing to see that some centres had chosen themes relating to their candidates and had varied theme more than in previous series. There was evidence of more differentiation in choice of reading texts and writing tasks which allowed for support and stretch and challenge of candidates. For the reading response most candidates responding to Talent Television used the 'Heat' magazine cover, the

article from the Scotsman and the 'Britain's Got Talent' homepage, although all texts were represented in the range of candidate responses from centres.

All of the School Meals texts were also seen across the responses, with 'Nora's Notes' being most popular and mostly compared with the School Food Trust webpage and the article from the Times.

Particularly successful responses were found when comparing the 'Britain's Got Talent' homepage and the Scotsman article, although this proved a popular choice for the lower ability range too. The article from the Scotsman produced some very strong responses, but weaker responses struggled to find points of comparison with the 'Heat' magazine cover.

All of the School Meals texts were also seen across the responses, with the webpage from the School Food Trust being most popular and compared mostly with 'Nora's Notes' and the article from the Times. Many candidates also compared the Times Article with the blog from the Guardian. Although the video, along with the menu, had the fewest responses on it there was some interesting comments on perspective such as 'This adds to the video's overall positive vibe that convinces you that a change can be made and encourages you to be part of it' and 'the food is presented as if it was in a high class restaurant to persuade parents to give their children school meals'.

In this series again there was more balance in the choice of writing tasks. In Talent Television the article on the new Talent Television show was most popular, mostly reviewing the television show 'The Voice' or 'Britain's Got Talent'. The articles and podcasts for Talent Television showed excellent knowledge of the genre of Talent Television, with the judges clearly identified, the prizes, the viewing time and day and the hosts. The ideas were wide ranging, including those reflecting current shows on singing, dancing and talents, and new ideas such as comedy, sporting talent, fashion design, art, cookery and talented pets. Some had innovative ideas and titles such as 'Britain's Favourite Farmer', 'Destroy the Dance floor' and 'The Real McCoy' (a show for songwriters). Language was well used in many, such as 'Has X Factor become predictable? Has Britain got no more talent to offer?' Some tongue-in-cheek descriptions of new Talent shows were also very well received, with good sense of audience and purpose. Moderators felt that there may be a wealth of genuinely interesting talent TV shows to be made, should an executive ever decide to catch a glimpse of a sample. It was clear the candidates enjoyed writing about their ideas, which ranged from 'Britain's Got Builders' to 'Shop 'till You Drop – The Search for Britain's Best Shopper'.

Podcast reviews were generally slightly more successful where there was one voice, as occasionally the 'chat' between the different voices distracted the writer from the purpose. Reviews did show good sense of audience and purpose, for example, 'Dramatic lights, videos and a very excited Dermot introduced the

show and the usual 'thousands have applied, only one can win' blurted from speakers, although some did venture into trying to 'script the unscriptable' through live chat and phone-ins.

For the School Meals theme, the leaflet proved most popular this series. Candidates drew on their experience and knowledge of School Meals in their texts, commenting mainly on school meals in their own school and school meals 'revamps'. In some cases the leaflets lost their focus on the audience and purpose (persuading parents of the benefits of school meals) and moved into explaining why healthy eating was important. The voice was good in most, e.g. 'let whole grains reign'.

Feedback on Marking

Most centres interpreted and applied the marking criteria accurately and consistently. All tasks achieved the required differentiation; the whole mark range was evident in moderator allocations. The number of inconsistent centres was proportional to other series.

Reading

At the top end there were some candidates who produced excellent pieces of analysis of two texts, but where the marks given did not reflect the key part of the task, which is comparison. Some candidates had sound comparisons (Band 3) while other bullet points were Band 5, and this needed to be reflected in the marks given. In quite a few cases marks at the top end were inflated because all bullets had been marked at band 5 with sound comparisons such as 'Both texts have the same topic which is about school meals', 'Both texts use images cleverly to get across their ideas' or 'both items use different types of text to lure the audience in'. In some cases the assessment indicated by annotations and summative comments was very accurate, but the numerical marks did not reflect these comments and in some cases were fixed just into a grade boundary from a previous series. In some cases the inflated marking of the highest folder led to the whole sample having to be moderated when marks in Band 2 and 3 were generally accurate.

The interpretation of the assessment criteria varied according to whether the centre had entered in the previous series or not. Centres entering for the first time need to understand that comparison is a key skill in this section of the paper. While many candidates integrated their comparisons with their analysis of the two texts, some candidates added a perfunctory comparison after their two separate analyses. Some candidates (although these were a minority) made no attempt to make any comparisons at all.

The best responses, the majority, analysed and compared the two texts, making a number of speculative judgements, always related back to the target audience and purpose of the texts. Some analysis of language use was mature and original. The weaker responses described the features of the two texts and made no attempt to analyse any of the features that they described. Candidates were still sometimes rewarded too highly for comparison across the band boundaries where 'some' had been credited as 'sound', 'sound' as 'detailed' and 'detailed' as 'specific'.

Several centres rewarded 'no comparison' with a band 2 mark and some centres did not match comment to summative mark. At the upper end of the mark range there was evidence of discriminating overview and comparison in a sustained manner. At the lower end of the range candidates tended to spot similarities and differences and then to draw the two sources together in a final paragraph, or assume that starting a statement with 'however' or 'on the other hand' will mean a sound comparison. There does need to be more focus on the difference between 'describe' and 'analyse' - for example, candidates offered detailed descriptions of images and presentational features without explaining what effects had been achieved by them. In some places where candidates did make comparative synthesis of the texts, they very rarely got beyond 'the Scotsman article is for more educated, unlike the Heat magazine cover which is for young people'. In general, candidates rarely attempted exploration of writer's perspectives within a comparative framework.

Candidates need to be aware of time constraints and manage their time to focus on purpose and audience as well as analysing language and presentational features. In many cases there was little understanding that texts can have more than one audience and more than one purpose. Some candidates struggled because they tried to 'pin down' one audience to the text, resulting in superficial comments such as 'children do not wish to read large blocks of text as they have short attention spans'. The key to successful comparison is the selection of two comparable texts and many centres rightly identified that differentiating texts according to candidate ability was the key to success. Some candidates are still including comments on their own preferences - which text they thought was 'best' or 'most successful', which is not necessary.

Writing

Centre application of the marking criteria for the writing task was more accurate and it was clear that centres were more comfortable with the demands of the writing task which were familiar to teachers and candidates. The main problem with writing was where the writing task had not been completed on the coversheet or on the candidate work. The completion of accurate task titles is

essential as it can impact on the candidate's achievement of purpose and audience. Some task titles were incorrect, for example 'Create an original Talent Television programme' is not the task set. There was a tendency in the leaflets to lose focus on the purpose – persuading parents of the benefits of school meals. Some candidates tended to focus on the benefits of healthy eating and how parents can encourage it. Centres are reminded to indicate the task title clearly on the coversheet and to ensure that candidates are answering the task set as this can impact on the marks for purpose and audience.

Assessment criteria for AO3iii were applied consistently in most cases. These marks were variable across some centres and there was inconsistency between Bands 2-4 where some were harshly marked while some were too generous, particularly in relation to punctuation and sentences. For high achieving candidates in Bands 4 and 5, there was a tendency to award 6/7 marks where there was clearly not enough evidence of using punctuation devices with precision and sophistication, and for deliberate effect, whilst in some centres there was a clear reluctance to award 7 marks if only minor errors had occurred.

Grade Boundaries

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