



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

November 2022

Pearson Edexcel GCSE

In English Language (1EN2)

Paper 1: Non-Fiction Texts

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November 2022

Publications Code 1EN2_01_ER_2211

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Introduction

The majority of the entry was re-sit candidates and examiners commented that they did not see many higher level responses, especially to Section A (Reading).

There was evidence that candidates had been prepared for this examination.

Examiners commented that the texts about ragged schools were accessible across the range of abilities and candidates were able to engage with the tasks and respond appropriately. The writing topics were ones that all candidates had experience of, although some examiners thought the format for Question 7 might have been unfamiliar and some candidates did not understand the correct audience and purpose for the Question 8 task.

More successful candidates were able to engage with both texts and respond thoughtfully. Their writing responses were engaging and effective and were mostly well controlled and accurate. Less successful candidates sometimes struggled to understand the passages and the questions. Their writing was often pedestrian or lacked coherence and had weak language controls.

Some candidates were not clear about the focus of the reading questions eg they responded to the evaluation questions as language analysis and the language analysis question as evaluation.

Examiners did comment on the number of blank responses especially to the reading questions, in particular Question 6 but also Question 3. These are high tariff questions. There were some indications that candidates may have attempted the writing question (Section B) first and run out of time to complete the paper.

The responses of candidates had some positive features. Examiners were impressed by:

- evidence that the majority of candidates had understood the ideas in the texts
- the ability to make at least some comments on language and its effects for Question 3 and use some relevant subject terminology
- the inclusion of judgements at different levels for Questions 2, 5 and 6
- writing that showed a range of ideas and suitable tone, style and register for audience and purpose
- writing that used some ambitious vocabulary and accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Less successful responses:

- confused the texts, answering questions on Text One using Text Two and vice versa
- showed an insecure grasp of language and its effects and did not use relevant subject terminology in response to Question 3

- failed to support points using appropriate textual evidence, or used textual evidence that did not support the point being made
- did not attempt to make judgements in response to Questions 2, 5 and 6
- did not organise and develop ideas in their writing
- did not write with a secure awareness of audience and purpose
- did not use a range of vocabulary and lacked accurate spelling and secure control of punctuation.

Section A (Reading)

Question 1

This is a straightforward question on Text One which does not require candidates to use their own words.

Many candidates were able to identify correctly four points about the school. All the bullet points in the mark scheme were seen by examiners but the most popular were: 'it is an awful sight', 'there are three most wretched rooms', 'it is in a rotten house' and 'it is miserably poor. The most common cause of failure to be awarded a mark was using the word 'ragged' on its own or 'poor children' and some commented on the pupils' dress, which missed the focus of the question which was about the school.

Question 2

This question requires the candidate to evaluate how successfully the writer describes how horrible the Ragged School is.

Examiners commented that there were some clear responses to this question with evidence of preparation however the majority of examiners commented that while it was clear that candidates understood the text, they had difficulty in developing evaluative comments.

Most candidates tried to find three reasons as the question requested but examiners commented that a significant number only gave two reasons which limited their achievement. Examiners commented that many candidates explained their chosen references rather than making a judgement about how effective these were in describing the Ragged School as horrible. Most responses focused on the condition of the school with the plaster shaking and the building's precariousness and the poor clothing of the pupils. Most candidates were able to identify the descriptive language but many found it difficult to do more than state that this made the school sound horrible. A common problem was just to rework the quotation: "'The first floor of a rotten house" shows it's rotting away.'

The most successful responses looked at different aspects of the school: the buildings, the children and the author's comparison to other dreadful things in London. The latter was not explored by many candidates. A number of

candidates successfully used the segregation of girl and boy students as being evidence of a poor education, which was often well-evaluated and explained.

A common misconception was that the teachers' quietness was a lack of skill or effort and that this contributed to the school being horrible.

A number of responses focused on language rather than evaluation and some examiners commented that it seemed that some candidates responded as if this was an AO2 question.

Some candidates listed three examples from the text with no comment.

The majority of candidates used examples from lines 2-10 but there were some who referred to the whole text or even Text Two.

Question 3

This question asks the candidate how the writer uses language to interest and inform the reader across the whole text.

Examiners saw some reasonable responses to this question but they commented that a number of candidates did not focus on language and referred to structure (which could not be rewarded). In many of the responses there was little evidence of the accurate use of relevant subject terminology. Examiners commented that although most candidates were able to demonstrate some understanding of the text, many candidates had difficulty in explaining the effect of their chosen words or phrases.

Some candidates did not seem to understand the focus of the question and responded as if it was an evaluation rather than a language question and some examiners commented that some of these responses seemed to be repeats of the responses to Question 2.

Many candidates were able to identify adjectives and picked out 'rotten' and 'wretched' (although these were sometimes called adverbs) but very often there was no specific subject terminology and loose references to 'negative words'. However one examiner commented that there was some convincing analysis of the use of adjectives such as 'awful', 'wretched' and 'dreadful'.

Comments on chosen quotations were not always focused on the writer's use of language, eg 'It is really shocking when the writer says "Hardly any of the boys can read yet."'

All examiners commented that the majority of candidates did not use relevant subject terminology and did not correctly identify similes, adverbs, nouns, and other language devices. Many responses used 'word' as the subject terminology for terms such as nouns, adjectives and adverbs or simply used the words

'descriptive language' or 'negative language'. There was some confusion about similes with a number of candidates identifying that 'as you walk' and 'as the dire neglect' were similes. A number of responses focused on structural features such as lists and short sentences. In some of these responses there was little comment on language devices.

Some responses only identified one or two points and some had quite limited coverage of the whole text.

Occasionally candidates wrote a response to Text Two. These were rewarded but were penalised for using the wrong text (not reading the instructions carefully).

Question 4a

This is a straightforward question on Text Two which does not require candidates to use their own words.

The majority of candidates achieved 2 marks on this question. The most common points identified were 'it was a large school', 'the schoolroom was large/lofty/high-ceilinged', 'the schoolroom was well-lighted' and 'the schoolroom was ventilated', although they were all used. The most common reason for not achieving both marks was giving 'George-yard Ragged School' or referring to the items hung on the walls, which is out of the line references and into the second paragraph. Occasionally candidates used the wrong text.

Question 4b

This question asks candidates to interpret implicit information and ideas from a given extract. Many candidates used quotations to answer this question and some of these were appropriate responses (although not all), but candidates should try to use their own words to show they have understood the implied information and ideas.

The most common correct responses were 'they had no footwear' and 'they did not have many clothes' mostly stated as 'no shoes' and 'no stockings'. Some candidates had some difficulty with this question. A significant number of candidates said that they were 'in a state' or simply 'naked' which is not what is said or implied. Some wrote 'shreds and patches' without relating them to the clothing.

Some candidates appeared not to have read the question properly and quoted from the first part about the walls or sitting on forms and at desks.

Question 5

This question required candidates to evaluate how successfully the writer shows that the superintendent is a caring teacher.

As with Question 2, examiners commented that many struggled to be evaluative and did not move much beyond explaining or paraphrasing the text although some examiners thought that some candidates responded better to this text. Similarly to Question 2, a significant number of candidates did not give 3 reasons.

The most successful responses considered the writer's attitude to the superintendent, that the reader is inclined to admire the superintendent on account of the warmth of the writer's admiration, the superintendent's attitude towards the pupils and the pupils' response to him.

Some candidates identified the repetition of the word 'love' and the use of other positive words eg 'warm' and 'affectionate', to show how well the writer views the superintendent. However, the length of quotation was often far greater than the explanation of it, and many responses seemed unable to move beyond repeating that 'this proves he's a caring teacher' or 'this proves he loves them'.

The idea that the superintendent has love for his pupils and that the pupils returned the affection was the mainstay of responses. Candidates also discussed the passage about his love being his strength but some found this less easy to explain.

A number of candidates argued that the superintendent was kind, rather than that the author presents him as kind. There were some candidates who wrote about how successful the superintendent is as a teacher rather than how successfully the writer presented him as a caring teacher.

Examiners commented that some candidates did not support their comments with quotations from the text and sometimes when quotations were used they not fully explained.

There were a number of blank responses and also ones that appeared to be unfinished.

Question 6

This question requires candidates to evaluate how successfully the text shows that the Ragged School benefits all poor children.

Examiners saw a few developed responses where candidates showed analysis of writer's ideas and critically evaluated how successfully the text shows that the Ragged School benefits all poor children. However most examiners commented that candidates did not always evaluate the text and responses often did not move beyond explanation.

All examiners commented on the significant number of blanks and very short/undeveloped responses which may have been a time management issue.

Most candidates, who attempted this question, engaged reasonably well with the task and were able to give some opinions and support their comments with examples from the texts. There were many references to the care of the superintendent – obviously the previous question prepared candidates for this. The anecdote at the end, of the particularly successful student, was used frequently. However most examiners commented that many candidates did not evaluate the text and only offered explanations of their chosen references. The more successful responses balanced the obvious poverty of the children against the attempts by the school to provide a stimulating environment. They referred to the materials hung on the walls and 'proficiency' of the children across a range of subjects. They were able to explain ideas and offer some informed evaluative opinion with appropriate references.

A few less successful responses did not address the question fully, either leaving out the idea of 'poor' children and writing in general terms about the benefits of the school, or writing just about how poor the children were and listing examples to prove it. A few made references to rich children attending the school showing that they had not fully understood what the Ragged School was.

A small number of candidates compared or combined the two texts misunderstanding the focus of this question.

Occasionally candidates wrote a response to Text One. These were rewarded but were penalised for using the wrong text (not reading the instructions carefully).

Section B (Writing)

Question 7

This was the popular choice.

Examiners commented positively about some of the candidates' responses to this topic.

There were a small number of responses to Section B that did not seem to address either of the tasks where the candidate simply wrote about something they knew about.

There were some blank responses.

A05

Most candidates were able to present clear ideas, commonly about how school did not prepare them for life. They drew on their experiences and to some extent ideas they had already discussed or felt strongly about. Overall the school

curriculum fared badly and algebra, trigonometry and Shakespeare seemed to be in the forefront of the attack. Maths was referred to as 'the Marmite of subjects'. Another candidate wrote: 'School does not prepare you for life, it prepares you for tests.' The general view seemed to be that school should teach more about taxes, mortgages, cooking, healthcare and general life skills. One candidate commented: 'If school teaches you how to cook and look after yourself it doesn't matter so much if you fail exams.' Although another candidate said that if those kinds of subjects *had* been taught 'how many would've actually paid any attention?'

There were some very lively responses to this question, with candidates expressing personal and strongly held views. More successful responses had a good structure, examining both sides of the argument and coming to a conclusion. Some responses looked at details of possible improvement, such as incorporating more personal healthcare into PE lessons or exploring cooking on a budget. They often showed some appreciation of what school had taught them and how helpful it was. These responses were clear and secure blogs which used sarcasm, irony, anecdote and examples to persuade.

Examiners commented that there were a quite a lot of rants against the system about what was wrong and what should take its place. Some of these were well-controlled, others less so.

Many candidates copied the introduction which was not necessary and 'Here's what I think!' would have been sufficient. This did not help candidates who were running out of time.

Some examiners commented that some candidates did not seem familiar with writing a blog. A few candidates ignored the correct form and purpose and wrote speeches, etc.

Less successful responses just focused on the bad things about their particular experience of school but without offering suggestions for how to improve matters. These responses often lacked any clear structure and organisation despite the note-box inviting the candidates to plan their blog.

Question 8

Examiners did not see many responses to this question.

Examiners commented that this task seemed less well done than Question 7.

There were some blanks or undeveloped responses.

A05

Most candidates were able to write in the appropriate format but examiners commented that some candidates did not understand the focus of the task entirely and wrote advertisements for specific training establishments or colleges. Some examiners commented that the subject matter was less familiar to candidates than Question 7.

Most candidates used the bullet points in the question to form the basis of the organisation of the response. It was therefore clear in terms of communication and structure but sometimes there was limited development of ideas. A number of candidates seemed to find it difficult to see beyond their own experiences. They wrote with some passion about areas of further education they had chosen eg child care, mechanics or hairdressing, without pointing out alternatives.

There were some successful responses to this question with candidates attempting to help their readers negotiate the available choices using the bullet points as a guide. Some used sub-headings (some with engaging questions or catchy alliterations). Responses sometimes adopted the inspiring voice of self-help. The more secure responses explained about different educational choices and gave advice, sometimes using anecdotes based on experiences of friends or family members.

The biggest issue that examiners commented on was the number of candidates who misunderstood the purpose of the task and wrote advertisements for local training services or sixth-forms or colleges. These responses often did not address the bullet points given and showed little awareness of purpose and format. It appeared that these candidates had not read the task sufficiently clearly.

A number of candidates simply identified the options available (covering the first bullet point) but did not give any advice to help people choose.

AO6 (Question 7 and 8)

Most candidates were able to make some attempt to select words, sentence structures and punctuation to suit the task. They were able to express and order information and ideas with some correctly spelt vocabulary, some control of punctuation and some accurate paragraphing. Word choices showed some adaptation to the topic being written about.

Examiners commented that vocabulary was often varied although there were spelling errors. Complex words were sometimes correct but there were frequent careless errors which suggested a lack of proof reading. Examiners commented that even in more successful responses where complex sentence structures were used for deliberate effect and vocabulary was sometimes extensive, with complex words spelt correctly, there were numerous basic errors. This suggested a lack of final checking.

There also seemed to be a lot of informal vocabulary: 'gonna', 'kinda' and especially 'stuff'.

All examiners commented on weak punctuation with some responses using very few full stops or capital letters.

Common errors commented on by examiners were: missing basic sentence punctuation; comma splicing; missing or misused apostrophes; problems with homophones; misspelling of basic vocabulary; not capitalising 'I' for the personal pronoun; missing capital letters at the beginning of sentences; grammatical errors such as problems with sentence structures, subject-verb agreement and verb tenses.

Summary

Based on their performance on the paper, candidates are offered the following advice:

- For short-answer Questions 1 and 4a ensure that you are responding briefly and selecting information, not just writing out a section. Highlight the relevant lines in your extract booklet and read the question carefully. Ensure you answer on the correct text as well as using the correct lines. For Question 4b try to find ideas that are implied in the given text rather than just selecting phrases from the text.
- For Question 3, make sure you only focus on language features such as: alliteration, personification, simile, metaphor, and not on structure (lists, repetition, short sentences, questions). Try to use appropriate subject terminology. Remember also to comment on the effects of your chosen examples.
- In Questions 3 and 6, where reference to the whole extract is needed, it is important to consider what references you will use and consider what examples are most significant for comment. Discriminating references are seen where you pick out specific examples across the extract that link to your points, not just where you comment on every feature seen. Remember to refer to examples from the whole of the extract.
- For your responses to Questions 2, 5 and 6, remember that you evaluate every day, and more so than ever with online feedback and posting of opinions and ideas online. Read the question carefully – what is it you are giving your opinion on? You do not need to comment on language and structure here unless this supports your evaluation.
- Remember to find three reasons for your opinion and support them with examples for your responses to Questions 2 and 5.
- When you are writing, always think about your reader, what ideas you want them to understand and how you want them to react at different

parts of your writing; then choose the most useful words, phrases or techniques available to you to achieve those effects.

- Make sure that you write in the correct format and have a clear sense of the purpose and audience for your writing.
- Plan your writing, even just briefly. You have been given a planning box to do this. Think carefully about how you will begin to write so that it is engaging for your reader from the very start. As you begin to write, know where you will end. This will help you to write in a cohesive and coherent way. If you start presenting an idea, make sure you are developing it.
- Take care throughout with accuracy: spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- Focus on timing during the examination and use the number of marks available for each question as an indication of how long you should spend answering each question. Make sure you try to answer every question.