Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

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Introduction

This report will provide exemplification of candidates' work, together with tips and comments, for Questions 1-8 from 1EN2/02. This was the second examination of the specification in English Language 2.0, offering another opportunity for candidates to sit this revised approach to a GCSE English Language paper.

The English Language 2.0 qualification consists of the following three components:

- Unit 1: 19th century non-fiction and Transactional Writing – 50%
- Unit 2: Contemporary Texts and Imaginative Writing – 50% (this examination)
- Unit 3: Spoken Language Endorsement (non-examination assessment)

This report will focus on Unit 2: Contemporary Texts and Imaginative Writing

The paper is assessed through a 1 hour 55 minute examination. The total number of marks available is 80. The reading and writing sections of this paper are linked by theme.

The focus of this component is:

Section A – Reading

Study and analyse selections from a range of contemporary texts.

This paper features two unseen contemporary extracts, from 20th and 21st century sources. One text will be fiction, one text will be non-fiction. The word count across the two extracts is approximately 900 words with every effort made to provide balance across the two extracts. The texts will have a thematic link and will attempt to provide engaging and accessible content for candidates to work with during the examination.

The questions are on:

- Text 1 (Questions 1 and 2) and Text 2 (Questions 3 and 4)
- There are a mixture of short and extended response questions for both extracts
- Candidates' ability to synthesise across the two texts will be assessed in Question 5, which will focus on similarities in the texts. The final question of this section, Question 6, requires candidates to compare the writers' ideas and perspectives and how they are presented in the two texts.

Section B – Writing

This section allows candidates to explore and develop their imaginative writing skills.
Candidates may choose the offer a complete narrative with beginning, middle and end or a part of a larger story.

There are two writing tasks, with a thematic link to the reading extracts. Candidates pick one question to respond to. For this new specification, candidates are offered an opening line for one of the question options, and pictures are provided to support with the second question, as will be familiar from GCSE English Language 9-1.

The Assessment Objectives for this paper are:

Section A: Reading

AO1:

- identify and interpret explicit and implicit information and ideas (Q1, Q3) select and
- synthesise evidence from different texts (Q5)

AO2: Explain, comment and analyse how writers use language and structure to achieve effects and influence readers, using relevant subject terminology to support thier views (Q2, Q4)

AO3: Compare writers' ideas and perspectives, as well as how these are conveyed, across two or more texts (Q6)

Section B: Writing

AO5:

- communicate clearly, effectively and imaginatively, selecting and adopting tone, style and register for different forms, purposes and audiences (Q7 or Q8)
- organise information and ideas, using structural and grammatical features to support coherence and cohesion of texts (Q7 or Q8)

AO6: Candidates must use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures for clarity, purpose and effect, with accurate spelling and punctuation (Q7 or Q8)

General Overview

It was clear that candidates were, on the whole, able to respond well to the two unseen contemporary texts. They were able to read substantial extracts that made significant demands in terms of content, structure and quality of language. The texts selected would appear to have engaged and interested the majority of candidates as they were able to offer thoughtful comment and explanation of the writers' craft, alongside comparisons between the two texts. With this new specification, it was pleasing to see that candidates had been well prepared and had, at different levels, been able to demonstrate the key skills of understanding, interpretation and analysis.

It was also clear that candidates had learned different ways to write imaginatively to attempt to engage a reader. A variety of approaches were seen through this series in the writing section, from straightforward narratives to complex story arcs and imaginative use of tone and voice. It was clear from the responses that many candidates had been given opportunity to prepare well for the writing section, with varying levels of expertise in terms of using rhetorical and structural devices to create meaning and impact.

Examiners were impressed by:

- evidence that most candidates had understood both texts
- candidates' confidence in places to explore the impact of language in both texts
- writing that showed some real creativity and flair
- writing that worked hard to sustain tone and style, considering audience and purpose

Less successful responses:

- showed an insecure grasp of language and structure, with a reliance in places on feature spotting
- were unable to use subject specific terminology effectively
- lacked focus on the question, especially with Questions 5 – 6
- didn't always develop and craft their written responses with audience and purpose in mind
- lacked accuracy around spelling and punctuation

Question 1

Candidates, in the main, achieved one mark for this question.

The questions are designed with ramping in mind and to encourage achievement for all candidates. This question generally showed the confidence of candidates in reading the given section of the extract and finding the relevant information.

This question requires understanding of AO1: 'identify and interpret.' This question has a focus on the ability to identify. The important advice for any candidate is to check the question carefully, make sure they understand what they are being asked to identify, and then check if their chosen reference from the text is answering the question asked.

The few candidates who did not achieve a mark for this question either chose from the wrong lines, paraphrased the question, or selected only a word from the text that did not suggest they had identified enough to answer the question. Very few candidates scored zero for this question.

Question 2

This question offers a supportive way into the more challenging reading questions, by asking candidates to focus only on language at this point. Candidates are also supported with the extract from the text they will write about being placed directly above the answer box. This is a change to the approach to AO2 that will feel different to other specifications and was made to provide a chance for all learners to feel they can access the question, hopefully building confidence at the start of the paper. A more familiar approach to AO2 will appear in Question 4 of this paper, but it was pleasing to see so many candidates have a go at this accessible question. The vast majority of candidates attempted the question, with many working at Level 2.

The mark scheme for this question now asks for use of subject specific terminology. This is a change that some candidates struggled with but this will likely improve in future exam series. Many responses at the lower end would refer to the writer 'using language' without making use of specific terminology. There was also some evidence of incorrectly identified features – examiners are asked to mark as positively as possible but clearly wrongly identified features in the text can be detrimental to scores awarded.

Responses that were working at Level 1 or the lower end of Level 2 often indicated that language was used to 'show feelings' in the text. This generic phrase did not allow candidates to reach the higher levels by looking at **how** language was creating impact and developing meaning. Lower level responses often recognised the feelings in the text without unpacking the ideas in any detail.

Stronger responses offered more detail, often being able to weave together a clear understanding of the feelings in the extract, specific terminology and confident explanation or analysis of how meaning was being created by the writer. Some of the best responses were able to consider the purpose of the text and how the writer has created the extract with the reader in mind.

Question 3

This question, on the second extract in the examination, again tests AO1: 'identify and interpret'. However, this question has a greater focus on the second part of the AO, asking candidates to make the connection between the question being asked and how the text infers this. The wording of the question is designed to encourage candidates to make that extra step in their minds: 'I understand the event seems special, but how is that indicated in the text?'

Many learners were able to answer this question successfully. As with Question
1, this was written with ramping in mind, to give as many candidates as possible the opportunity to achieve. Candidates who didn't get the mark for this question either misunderstood the question, or selected parts of the extract that did not clearly indicate they had understood how the writer is suggesting the event is special.

Question 4

This question returns to AO2, this time asking candidates to focus on both language and structure at this point. This question asks candidates to select from the whole text but it is important to note that the mark scheme has 10 marks covering the 5 Levels. This is a change to the 15 marks available in 1EN0 for language and structure questions about the whole text. As with previous specifications, candidates who do not cover both language and structure will find themselves unable to progress beyond Level 2 of the mark scheme.

On the whole, candidates fared well on this question as it echoes question styles they may be familiar with from alternative specifications. For some candidates, lack of structure was an issue and would suggest they may need reminding of the difference between this question and Question 2.

The candidates' ability to write confidently about structure was a good discriminator within the responses. While able candidates were able to explore obvious structural features such as sentence lengths and lists, it was apparent in more nuanced responses that candidates could also explore the overall structure and development of the text as the extract unfolded. Indeed, being able to discuss contrast of emotions across the text, or the development of the narrative, often led to more confident structural exploration compared to attempting to explain the impact of lists or short sentences.

The mark scheme for this question now asks for use of subject specific terminology. This is a change that some candidates struggled with but this will likely improve in future exam series. As with Question 2, many responses at the lower end would refer to the writer 'using language' or 'using structure' without making use of specific terminology. There was also some evidence of incorrectly identified features – examiners are asked to mark as positively as possible but clearly incorrectly identified features in the text can be detrimental to scores awarded.

Again, as with Question 2, responses that were working at Level 1 or the lower end of Level 2 often indicated that language was used to 'interest and engage the reader' in the text. This phrase is taken directly from the question and therefore did not allow candidates to reach the higher levels by looking at **how** language and structure were creating impact and developing meaning. Lower level responses often recognised the excitement in the text without exploring the ideas in any detail. A common approach to this question from candidates was a reliance on the word 'shows'. This indicates some attempt to understand what the text is trying to achieve, but repetitive responses that used a similar stock sentence approach in this manner were evident at the lower end.

Stronger responses offered more detail, often being able to weave together a clear understanding of the feelings in the extract, specific terminology and confident explanation or analysis of how meaning was being created by the writer. Some of the best responses were able to consider the purpose of the text and how the writer has created the extract with the reader in mind. Stronger responses often demonstrated an ability to select from across the text, linking points together, rather than just comments on any features spotted in the text.

Question 5

This question will, on the surface, look familiar to centres as it approaches the 2nd bullet point of AO1, select and synthesise, in a similar way to a question in 1EN0/02. However, there are some changes to the mark scheme that it is important candidates are made aware of.

In this specification, candidates are now asked to provide a specific number of similarities to achieve all the bullet points at Level 2 or 3. If we look at the mark scheme, we can see reference to 'insufficient (less than 3)' similarities at Level 1, and 'sufficient (three)' similarities at Level 2 and 3. Another key determinator in this question has been the quality of synthesis being offered – at Level 3, 'precise synthesis' would usually have been evident in terms of a candidate's ability to make precise links to the question asked and the similarities being provided. As with 1EN0/02, there is an expectation that every similarity is supported by evidence from the text.

While it is hoped that candidates will become more familiar with the changes to the expectations in this AO1 question, examiners will always attempt to award the 'best fit' for a response. In this series, we have seen responses achieve at the bottom end of Level 2 or Level 3 as the selection and synthesis has been clear or precise, even if the number of similarities may not have been considered 'sufficient'.

Some candidates approached the question from a broader point of similarities between the texts. The best responses focused on the question asked, providing clear similarities that focused on the experiences of the people in the extracts.

Question 6

This question covers AO3 in the specification, with candidates being asked to compare the writers' ideas and perspectives. This is a very similar to Question 7b in 1EN0/02, although there is a change to the mark scheme – total marks available are 16 (compared to 14 in the alternative specification), with Level 3 now having a spread of 4 marks.

This question, when attempted, showed candidates were able to compare both texts, even at a basic level. However, we did see a number of blank responses here. Given that nearly all candidates offered responses in section B (the writing section of the paper), we might surmise that some candidates are being advised to complete their imaginative writing first, before attempting the reading section. Given the weighting of marks this is generally sound advice, especially for candidates who may traditionally struggle with the reading section. However, as there is a degree of time pressure in the paper, candidates will need to consider how they can attempt this question too, in future series. With this being the question carrying the second highest weighting of marks in the paper, not attempting it will have some impact on overall scores.

At the lower level, responses considered one or more obvious comparisons between the texts, with some comment on writers' ideas. At this level, references were often limited. In this series we saw a limited number of responses at Level 4 or above.

Mid-level responses were able to focus more on perspectives, and to explore how the people in the texts felt about their competitive experiences. As with some other questions in this paper, some candidates struggled to focus on the question, instead making general comparisons about ideas and perspectives, rather than the experience of competitive combat sport.

Section B

The writing question is the final section of the paper. Candidates are advised to spend around 45 minutes on their writing and there are 40 marks available across both papers. When considering the overall weighting of this section in the paper, this is a significant number of marks available. It was really pleasing to see that nearly all candidates attempted this section, with some very imaginative and creative responses offered. While the focus on this section for many candidates has had some impact on their ability to finish the reading section, it is understandable that candidates choose to focus on this section to such a degree.

Question 7

Question 7 was a popular choice for candidates. The new addition in this specification, of a starter sentence for candidates to make use of, was obviously appealing and allowed all candidates to have a go at this section of the paper. While the starter sentence did lead to some generic responses (football matches, as ever, were popular), many candidates showed real creativity and a sense of style with their writing in this section. Examiners are always impressed by what candidates can create in the time available, praising the level of thought and creativity.

The first bullet point of the mark scheme is every examiner's starting point when judging a response in this section. How successfully has the candidate shown an ability to communicate clearly, effectively and imaginatively? Candidates should be asking themselves: what do I want to achieve here? Do I want to shock and surprise my reader? Am I attempting a certain style or genre of writing? How much will I cover in my narrative? All of these questions will hopefully guide the candidate towards a clear purpose so they can focus on a sustained response. Indeed, the last question, how much to cover, is an important one in this section – candidates can feel they have to cover a whole 'story' which, given the time constraints, can lead to somewhat pedestrian responses that feel rushed as the candidate gets to the 'finish'. Some of the most creative responses in this section had a clear start, middle and end, without necessarily providing a traditional conclusion, or ending, to the narrative. While examiners are always somewhat wary of cliffhanger endings (or the 'it was all a dream' responses), there is no requirement to achieve a 'once upon a time' through to a 'they all lived happily ever after' style of narrative. In fact, leaving some questions for the reader can be an indicator of confidence and control on the part of the writer.

The main discriminators in the writing responses were:

the ability to communicate clearly and effectively – lower level responses tended to show some limitations in this area, offering more basic narratives that often simply relayed an event or occasion. Higher level responses often offered sophisticated responses that worked hard to engage the reader (AO5)
the effectiveness of tone, style and register (AO5)
spelling of basic vocabulary, especially double consonants (AO6)

general quality of punctuation (AO6) – missing commas and random capital letters the range of sentences used (AO6)

vocabulary choices (AO6) – at the higher level, it was clear that candidates were making explicit choices about choice of words in terms of impact on the reader

It was noted that candidates were confident employing a range of sentences (one word sentences and single sentence paragraphs) that examiners will recognise as crafting on the part of the candidate. Clearly this is something centres have been supporting candidates with to good effect. Vocabulary usage is an interesting conundrum for many candidates – some attempt to offer a range of sophisticated vocabulary, while others seem to shy away from using unfamiliar words perhaps for fear of making spelling mistakes. It is worth noting that attempting to craft a specific style of response will be awarded where possible.

Question 8

Question 8 was a less popular choice in this series, perhaps as the starter sentence offered with Question 7 was an accessible way in for many candidates. However, those that did attempt this question offered responses with a similar range – some somewhat simple responses, alongside a handful of sophisticated responses.

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Paper Summary

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates are offered the following advice when approaching paper 2 of 1EN2:

- when approaching the reading questions, make sure you check carefully which text you are being asked to talk about – different questions are about different texts!
- for the short answer questions (Questions 1 and 3), ensure your answer is brief and you avoid writing out a large section of the text.
- make sure that for Question 3, the question is understood and that the evidence provided (either a direct quote or in a candidate's own words) directly answers the question asked – the focus for this question is on 'interpret', rather than simply 'identify'.
- for Question 2, with a focus on language, remember that using subject specific terminology is important but the focus is also on explaining how the feature(s) help to create meaning for the reader
- similarly, for Question 4, use subject specific terminology while also trying to explain how the language and structure is helping to create meaning.
- to repeat – don't just feature spot!
- when discussing structure, don't be afraid of discussing the changing feelings across the whole extract, or how the narrative is developed from start to end – these are all good areas to write about for structure.
- for Question 5, aim to offer three similarities. It is also important that your similarities focus on the question asked, not just generally similar things about the texts.
- for the comparison question (Question 6), make sure you focus on the question asked and find several comparisons to discuss – it will really help you shape your answer.
- for the imaginative writing questions, think about your reader, what you want them to understand and what impact you want to create.
- when you start writing, think about the words you will use, features you can make use of and how your punctuation can add meaning.
- it is always worth thinking about how you may be able to make your writing stand out – lots of candidates write about very similar topics (we get lots of football responses!), so trey to do something engaging and interesting with the topic you want to write about.
- plan your writing. We know it can feel like the last thing you want to spend time on during a pressurised exam but planning can really help – your response will probably engage the reader better and show that you have thought about how you want to start and end your writing.

- take care throughout the writing section in terms of your accuracy: spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- watch the time! Focus on giving a response for every question – every mark will help, so missing out questions will never be a good idea if you can avoid it.