



General Certificate of Secondary Education

English/English Language

Specification 4700/4705

**ENG1H: Understanding and producing non-fiction
texts**

Report on the Examination

2012 Examination – June series

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GCSE English/English Language

Principal Examiner's Unit 1 (*ENG1H*) Report

Examiners reported that students found the reading sources engaging and accessible whilst offering sufficient challenge to discriminate ability. The writing questions were also well received. The shorter writing task allowed students to describe and explain, employing a contemporary writing medium, whilst the longer task presented students with an opportunity to reflect on an aspect of modern life and present persuasive views on the topic.

Question 1

The source text was accessible to students, 90% of whom were able to show at least some understanding of the Beach to City programme. Most students showed what they had learned in terms of the role of the RNLI, the fact that the programme targeted children who lived away from the coast, and various aspects of the content of the programme. The basic messages of the programme were also well represented and the place of role play and fun in its delivery. The most successful responses also included an understanding that the use of public rescue equipment was an important aspect of the programme, particularly for some children in some specified places.

The most successful students were able to embed quotations in a fluent, seamless way, showing examiners confidence in their understanding and appreciation of information and ideas. They were also able to use their own words to make comments and connections arising from their understanding of the text. The majority of students achieved marks in Band 3 by showing a clear understanding of the text, offering relevant quotations to support that understanding and commenting, for example, on the usefulness of the programme. For relatively weak students sharks and inflatables caused some confusion - inflatables being bad things because they frighten the sharks, or attract sharks, or are mistaken for sharks.

Less successful students relied too much on long quotations, copied ideas and information directly or missed key elements of the source text. There were also a number of students who misunderstood the nature of the question. These students, few in number, presented, for example, an analysis of the language used in the source text or undertook a critique of the article in respect of its potential readership – neither of which was required.

As has been the case in previous series, the mark scheme required students to retrieve or summarise what was learned from the source text. Interpreting some of the subtleties of a text and presenting what is learned by students using their own words, rather than copying or simply paraphrasing, is an indication of a clear or potentially detailed and perceptive reading.

Question 2

The focus of this question was the headline and the picture. Both presented students with engaging, indeed arresting features on which to base their answers. Over 84% of students were able to score half marks or better on this question. Most students dealt with key words in the title such as 'Trapped', 'rescue', 'refuge' and the phrase 'at last'. There was also some thoughtful recognition of the use of the colon for effect in the title, for example that it balanced the negative and positive elements in the headline. The most successful students drew links, for example, between the reporter and the 'media onslaught' to come, with a few linking the idea of a media circus to the reporter and the clown. The nature of the terrain and the markings on the flag, together with some reasoned speculation about the minor characters in the picture, were indications of a detailed response to the picture. Many students recognised the link between the words, 'at last' in the title and the text which elaborated the length of time the

miners were trapped. Comments about the clown symbolising celebration and happiness were also regularly made.

Less successful responses made generalised comments about effects, such as, 'it catches your eye' or 'it makes you read on', or merely identified language techniques in the headline, such as the alliteration, without any attempt to consider the effects at all. Other less successful attempts made non-specific links with the text, for example simply suggesting that the headline summed up what was in the text. Furthermore, there was a tendency with some students to link the headline to the picture, which was not what the question asked for. Weaker students confused 'refuge' with 'refugee' or rested comments on a misunderstanding that the miners had been rescued. Some relatively weak students misread 'Chilean' for 'children' or 'miners' for 'minors' or possibly both – thus demonstrating the need for careful, close reading.

Question 3

The source text offered students a wealth of thoughts and feelings to select and explain. The pivotal change in the boys' thoughts and feelings as they viewed 'paradise' was almost universally recognised as was the 'panic' which jointly entered their hearts. However, a large number of students ended at 'paradise' or limited their explanations, some failing to recognise the available material beyond that point. More able students explored the religious dimension of the thoughts attributed to the boys. Less discriminating students failed to distinguish the disparate feelings of the two boys, clearly described at the beginning of the passage. The most successful students selected a range of material, supported each with quotations and offered an explanation, interpretation or comment which showed a confident engagement with the text. The question was specific in the requirement to explain the thoughts and feelings of the boys, not to simply enumerate them or describe the situation they were in. Furthermore, the question did not ask for an account or explanation of the reader's or the candidate's thoughts and feelings as the plight of the boys unfolded. Also, some students failed to grasp that comments about the writer's use of language was only valid in so much as it informed interpretation of the characters' thoughts and feelings. The question was focused and specific, and quite distinctive in its requirements. Students usually, but not always, recognised this.

Question 4

This question was focused specifically on 'Language'. It required students to select some examples of the language choices made by the writer of Source 3 and one other, and compare how those choices were effective. Responses varied tremendously, from those who did not focus on language at all and seemed unable to analyse at word/phrase level, to those who were able to select appropriately and look at the effects of specific words and phrases, in context, in two texts. Overall, students performed least well on this question with only some 20.5% gaining 10 marks out of 16 or better.

The main problem for many students was in attempting to construct an answer with no focused or relevant direction. Too often students discussed purpose, audience, genre, tone -often at length, rather than making reference to the language itself, and often restricted any comparisons made simply to the content of the texts. Many students successfully identified language devices - triplets, onomatopoeia, alliteration - but offered no specific examples or offered no comment on any linguistic effects these devices might have had on the reader. If effects were considered, they were again too often generic, for example, 'it paints a picture in your mind' or, 'it increases the worry'. Issues for weaker responses also included the consideration of pictures and other presentational devices, and the blurring of an analysis of language with purely descriptive comments about sentence structure, paragraph lengths and punctuation.

However, those students who approached this question successfully made relevant or appropriate selections of language use, drawn from, for example: vivid description, dialogue, imagery, humour, and commented on and compared their different effects within the different contexts.

Question 5

This question was accessible to all abilities and students offered a range of enjoyable, sometimes entertaining, sometimes moving and affecting, pieces of writing. Many students utilised the chance to write in a free and personal way afforded by a blog, whilst employing standard English. Over 85% of students communicated in a way which earned them at least a mark for communication and organisation in Band 3, whilst demonstrating general accuracy. The purposes to describe and explain were achieved by most students and responses were usually grounded in real experience, even if that experience was vicarious. Less successful responses omitted to deal with both purposes or wrote at length with no advantage to the mark. The most successful writing was succinct and became convincing and compelling with sometimes delightful irony, creativity and a range of linguistic and structural features. Technically, writing was, overall, generally secure, however, some examiners noted a weakness in paragraphing.

Question 6

The topic produced a range of responses. The best offered, for example, a searing indictment of modern society's obsession with celebrity culture, and were able to integrate complex details and moral or philosophical arguments effortlessly. Some students offered a safer and perhaps more predictable response which stayed close to the ideas contained in the topic title whereas others employed examples from history and wrote with persuasive authority on the moral superiority of, for example, Martin Luther King. A good number, interestingly, rejected the concept of the role model and argued in favour of individualism and nearly all were united in criticism of vacuous celebrities and overpaid footballers. There were no reports of a decline in accuracy with this question, indeed, some 70.7% of students were awarded a mark of 5 or better out of 8 for AO3/4 iii.

Conclusion

The issues which arose in the first three series of this examination have re-appeared in this one. The most successful students were evidently those who read and understood the specific requirements of each question and then addressed them accordingly. The fifteen minutes reading time is designed for students to facilitate this by reading the entire question paper and all the sources prior to attempting any response. Furthermore, as in previous series, students performed least well on Question 4, for which many appeared to be least well prepared.
