



General Certificate of Secondary Education

English/English Language

Specification 4700/4705

**ENG1F: Understanding and producing non-fiction
texts**

Report on the Examination

2012 Examination – November series

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GCSE English/English Language

Principal Examiner's Unit 1 (*ENG1F*) Report

This was clearly an unusual series with a far smaller entry than the summer of 17,953 candidates all of whom had experience of a previous examination series. Despite this there was still a good range of ability to be seen on the paper.

In **Question 1a** 61% of candidates achieved the full four marks by clearly identifying four things we might learn about Tinie Tempah from the article and writing them out in a way that was clear and made sense. There were many simple things that could have been listed, but weaker candidates forgot the focus of the question and told us about Nigerian food, that the Carlton Hotel was in New York and that Tinie had written a cookbook. Clearly, good advice to candidates would be to stick to simple facts from the article. There is no need for quotations or inferences in 1a, in fact, they are unhelpful.

Question 1b is again a four mark question requiring basic comprehension skills. By looking at the mark scheme it is clear that to achieve full marks students need to make some statements supported by relevant quotations with a little bit of inference accompanying each. However, 50% of candidates only scored half marks here by omitting to do one or the other of those things. Some candidates wrote a statement about Tinie's feelings with a quotation. Others wrote out a quotation and made an inference about it. This level of weakness in basic comprehension skills was very surprising in a re-sit series.

Nevertheless, stronger candidates did make interesting points about Tinie's love of food, his passion for trying new things and his willingness to explore and be adventurous when it came to trying new foods. Some candidates pointed out that his feelings were not just about liking food but also disliking food e.g. the kangaroo, yet this didn't put him off experimenting and trying the food of other cultures, which was an excellent observation.

Similarly, in **Question 2** the same problem occurred. The average mark here was 4 out of 8, though there were more candidates applying the statement, quotation, inference method to some degree. The passage aimed to steer candidates away from simply copying or paraphrasing, which is a problem we had seen in the past. Though we did read on many occasions that Plumpy'Sup was 'a peanut butter-based ready-to-eat paste packed with vitamins, minerals and other nutrients specifically designed to treat children under five who may be suffering from being malnourished', it was heartening to see many candidates extracting meaningful ideas about the problems of feeding children, linking their ideas to the size of the families, poverty, the dangers of disease and the threats posed by the rainy season.

One problem that has been identified here is candidates who are using quotations to make their initial point, rather than in support of a point in their own words. In this respect, they automatically miss one 'rung' of our mark scheme 'ladder' - which should be read from bottom to top and thought of as a ladder of skills that candidates may climb.

Question 3 seemed to work very well this time. The question has been amended slightly from previous series allowing candidates to write about any features of language they find, not ones linked to a specific purpose. As a result, we saw a much wider spread of marks and more candidates able to identify and exemplify those language features. Indeed, the source material made it very difficult *not* to identify them, packed as it was with delicious adjectives, similes, listing and repetition. Stronger candidates picked up on anecdote and humour. Less able candidates muddled metaphor and simile. Some candidates wrote about selected words and phrases, which was fine. Still, only 10% of candidates scored 7 or more. Perhaps this is to be

expected, as candidates who are more confident and able in discussing language may well be working towards higher tier. It seems the discussion of the 'effects' of features of language is the main problem for Foundation candidates. This is a difficult skill but one which may be worth some extra focus to lift candidates beyond the 6 mark plateau.

A worrying number of candidates still think that language equals content. A further worrying few become trapped in AFOREST, desperately trying to find facts and opinions, instead of focusing on what is actually in the text.

In both question 3 and 4 many candidates offer statements on genre, purpose and audience – which doesn't link at all to the required skills in the mark scheme unless, perhaps, these ideas were cleverly linked to the comments on effect (which it generally isn't). This seems to be rather a leftover from legacy specification Paper 1 and it is worrying that so many are still citing these as being key ideas about language or presentation.

Responses to **Question 4** were rather lacklustre, on the whole. The average mark here was still 4 as it was in the summer. Some candidates however, compared the pictures and headlines effectively in this series. These candidates tended to do well in that they wrote in detail about the pictures rather than just saying, 'Source 1 has a picture whereas Source 2 has two.' Again in comparing headings and titles, we had some candidates who commented on the content of those headings rather than just the fact they were in a bold font. This was very refreshing to read.

We saw some nice work on colour with some candidates commenting on how cheerful and optimistic Fatia and Halima looked in the photographs and saw their colourful pink clothing as being reflective of that. Others commented on the urgency suggested by the red donate button and others the regal nature of Tinie Tempah's gold and green 'throne'.

In terms of photographs, we had comparisons of the smiling faces of Fatia and Halima compared to the serious look on Tinie's face. Some candidates pointed out the contrast between his regal and luxurious setting and his position in his fine chair, with the second source where the mothers and children are sitting on the floor outside the clinic.

By and large however, we see brief linkage of basic elements of presentation and endless repetition of 'it stands out' – often over three pages.

As we've said before, the advice to 'write a lot about a little' would serve candidates better in Question 4.

Question 5 proved to be equally as effective as previous series in that the average mark achieved was 7 out of 10 and 4 out of 6 again. However, this question, though perhaps much more predictable than the summer, tended to be a real discriminator in terms of candidates slipping into 'describe' writing rather than maintaining a focus on 'explain'. Whilst some description here was inevitable and welcome – in presenting the food to the reader – it sometimes swamped the answer so that no reasons for the choice were included.

Most candidates wrote about food and identified a favourite – less able candidates tended to write about a whole list of favourites with an attempt at a 'because' statement linked to each, which was fine and got them off the ground. Stronger candidates focused on one dish or choice and gave three or four clear reasons for their love of it, appropriately paragraphed. These often included childhood memories, links to their family or culture, the taste of it or its health benefits.

In terms of **AO3iii**, there were marks to be had for the interesting variety of sentences many candidates used. At times, basic spelling, demarcation and control of punctuation can be patchy and given the number of extra marks available for this on both Q5 and Q6 combined, it may be worth some revision sessions on these basics.

Question 6 interestingly this time, became the livelier one of the two writing questions, whereas the opposite was true in the summer. Candidates seemed to enjoy the challenge of writing the debate speech and many introduced their work with gusto. Using vocabulary and features for an argument did not pose a problem for the vast majority of candidates and bold statements of opinion, inventive statistics and rhetorical questions were in abundance. Many candidates were able to show skills at the top of band 2 and into band 3, which is to be celebrated.

Less able candidate still provided ideas for purpose, though may have deviated into issues connected with health and fitness. Additionally we saw many lively rants, which had lots of 'outraged' features, but no real content or focus on the topic. Only one or two candidates regurgitated a 'Don't Get Me Started On ...'

Stronger candidates tended to either group 'government, doctors and the media' as being either a force for good advice, or a collection not to be trusted at all and developed some clear arguments as to why. Alternatively, they separated out the three and presented a clear paragraph on each institution, again citing clear points about their roles in society and whether they were in a position to tell us about our diet or not.

Overall, these responses showed some strong writing skills and ability.

As in previous series, there is an imbalance in the marks candidates achieve in Section A and Section B, suggesting they are more practised and confident in their writing skills and less so in their reading skills. At times, some candidates are scoring less than half of the marks they achieve on Writing in their Section A responses. This may be an area to tackle where centres wish to raise attainment on the paper as a whole.