



**General Certificate of Secondary Education
January 2011**

English/English Language

**ENG1F
ENG1H**

(Specification 4700 & 4705)

Unit 1: Understanding and producing non-fiction texts (Foundation & Higher Tiers)

Report on the Examination

Further copies of this Report on **the Examination** are available from: aqa.org.uk

Copyright © 2011 AQA and its licensors. All rights reserved.

Copyright

AQA retains the copyright on all its publications. However, registered centres for AQA are permitted to copy material from this booklet for their own internal use, with the following important exception: AQA cannot give permission to centres to photocopy any material that is acknowledged to a third party even for internal use within the centre.

Set and published by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance.

The Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) is a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales (company number 3644723) and a registered charity (registered charity number 1073334).
Registered address: AQA, Devas Street, Manchester M15 6EX.

English Language Unit 1

ENG1F Introduction

It was pleasing that so many candidates were able to cope with the format of the examination paper. Thank you to centres who were mindful of the fact that scripts were to be scanned for the first series of online marking in English. It would be advisable for examinations officers to remind candidates to adhere to instructions with regard to writing within the parameters of the box and to avoid writing additional parts to an answer in separate places in the answer booklet as each question is marked as a whole item by different examiners.

It was also pleasing that so many Foundation candidates were able to cope with the length of the paper and the transition to two writing tasks in the time.

Questions 1 – 3 specifically address English AO2i and English Language AO3i
'Read and understand texts, selecting material appropriate to purpose'

Question 1

On the whole this simple select/retrieval task did not pose problems for many candidates. The Jamie Oliver source seemed to allow candidates to access the required information with ease and achieving 3 or 4 marks here was the norm. Some candidates however, wrote down *any* four things from the article without paying close regard to the question, which asked specifically for things connected to healthier school meals. It would also be useful in practice work to encourage students to list with clarity – perhaps using a format such as:

We learn:

-
-
-
-

and enabling students to finish off the sentences so their responses are clear for the examiners.

Question 2

Most candidates were able to locate the key reaction that Jamie Oliver felt the results were 'fantastic'. However, centres might note that on the mark scheme, a grid is utilised to mark this question on the basis of skills. Here, the 'Read and understand' part of the AO becomes important. Candidates achieving full marks here were those who were able to cite two or more of Oliver's reactions, offer quotation and make inferences about them.

Question 3

Question 3 was much more problematic and really showed a lack of experience and preparedness for many candidates, which was surprising given that this was, in effect, a straightforward comprehension question. For some, seeing the charity advertisement led them to conclude that they should answer the question from the specimen paper and they addressed language issues rather than reasons. Question 3 is an 8 mark question which again consolidates skills in AO2i/AO3i and the mark scheme represents each aspect of the AOs, asking for evidence of understanding and inference to achieve full marks in Band 2 and beyond. Many candidates, despite locating the key reasons, tended to copy them out verbatim rather than using them as supporting quotations, which made it impossible to reward them for 'inference'.

Questions 4 and 5 deal specifically with English AO2iii and English Language AO3iii
'Explain and evaluate how writer's use linguistic, grammatical, structural and presentational features to achieve effects and engage and influence the reader.' Question 5 additionally tests on, 'making comparisons and cross references as appropriate.'

Question 4

Question 4 will always ask candidates to comment on features of language. However, this was problematic for the majority of candidates, many of whom did not seem to have a 'toolkit' to enable them to comment on language features and their effect. Some candidates attempted to describe the language of the text as a whole, 'the leaflet informs us by using informative language' but the majority simply regurgitated the content of the text. Many others were unsure of the distinction between language features and presentational features. This was saddening because in the Section B, candidates had clearly been prepared with numerous techniques to use – imperative verbs, rhetorical questions, emotive language, opinions and statistics and yet, could not transfer their skills to be able to comment on specific language features for question 4. Centres would be advised to look closely at the indicative content of the mark scheme for question 4 to help prepare candidates for future series. This was clearly the weakest area of the paper with few candidates making it out of Band 1.

Question 5

As mentioned above, Question 5 is comparative and on Foundation Tier will always ask candidates to comment on and compare the presentational features of two out of the three texts. Candidates were more confident with dealing with presentation, though some again, blurred the distinction between language features and presentational features. However, it was pleasing to see candidates across the ability range attempting to make meaningful comments on the images and structure of the texts and especially pleasing to see some candidates commenting on the connotations of colours and images, linking their ideas to the content of the text. This was done especially well on the *Sponsor A Girl* text. Simple comparisons and cross references were made by most candidates, though some developed ideas were pleasing, particularly those who commented on the realism and seriousness of the photographs in Source 2 compared to the humour of the cartoons in Source 3.

Question 6

The letter-writing task was generally well handled and candidates responded with enthusiasm. Some had clearly practised writing to inform and were determined to inform, though the task itself asked for explanation. Those who did engage with the required purpose were able to choose two or three key areas for improvement and explain in detail their reasons why. These letters were much more successful and engaging and able to move into Band 3. Less successful were the list like responses which were then very limited with regard to purpose. Most candidates were able to structure the letters in a conventional format, though a surprising number wrote in a rather inappropriate register for their head teacher, with cheery salutations such as 'Hello' and 'Hiya'. Nevertheless, this task was well handled by the majority. One area of concern was that some of the letters were lengthy and bearing in mind the weighting of the writing questions, this may have disadvantaged some candidates from performing as well on the more developed response required for Question 7.

Question 7

The charity leaflet task clearly engaged candidates who were well prepared and practised. They wrote engaging and at times emotive texts, employing a whole range of persuasive language features. These were a pleasure to read. Their success was also due to the fact that they chose a specific event such as a Fun Run or a Cycle Ride. Less successful were those who wrote informative, promotional responses for Fetes and Funfairs, which did not closely match the task or the purpose or indeed the audience. Other students relied heavily on the source material and did not respond to the word 'event' in the question. Their requests for monthly donations for a specific charity meant that the purpose was addressed but not the task and that the links to audience were tenuous.

On a general note, however, it was clear that there was a certain degree of immaturity in many of the responses. Though this is to be expected with a new modular examination, it did seem that most candidates would have benefitted from more teaching of the actual new specification and more experience and expertise in both the comprehension of non fiction texts and their creative production before being required to sit their public examination in the subject.

ENG1H Introduction

The senior examiners have reported that candidates did not encounter difficulties in accessing the question paper, including the reading source materials. There were no reported problems with the level of reading required, the source materials were presented in a clear manner. The format of the paper followed that of the specimen paper very closely. The word count was some 50 words shorter than that in the specimen paper.

The attention of teachers and students is drawn to the benefit of carefully reading the entire question paper including the source materials at least once before commencing the paper. There is a time allowance of 15 minutes built in to the examination for this purpose. Centres are advised that careful training in examination technique is important. Attention is also drawn to the mark weightings attached to the individual questions and sections. Candidates should ensure they allocate their time as appropriate.

Section A: Reading

Question 1 was generally well answered. Most candidates were able to provide a summary of what they had learned from the text source to secure a mark in Band 3. There was often a clear attempt to go beyond simple retrieval and make interpretations of the text, for example deducing, in the candidate's own words, some of the writer's feelings, or making connections between events, such as noting the benefits of being with different kinds of people. Such aspects as these (which are noted in the mark scheme) are as much part of what is learned from the text as are the various events and experiences reported by the writer.

Inferences, comments and connections are features that candidates should be aware of whilst demonstrating a detailed understanding of, and engagement with, the text. The question did not require an analysis of the language techniques employed by the writer and candidates who offered this would have benefited from understanding the specific skills being tested by the question.

Question 2 was also, generally, successfully answered. Many candidates examined each of the elements asked for in the question and most related these to the body of the text. Some candidates made rather general or generic points about the function of headlines and sub-headlines and other presentational devices and missed the opportunity to make specific, scoring points about some interesting words and ideas. The effects noted were sometimes mundane but also produced some more original and telling comments such as 'The picture gave me the chills' by a candidate who also explained why. The best responses focused on the contradiction, paradox and irony of the message of the text as exemplified by the apparent fearsomeness of the picture and the words in the headlines.

Candidates would benefit from focusing on the individual words, their meaning and effect, as well as the detail within the picture when responding to this type of question. Some candidates, for example, drew inferences about size from the juxtaposition of the huge fossil and the relatively small people looking at it, relating that observation to the size of a pigeon and then linked those interpretations to material in the text. Comments on both presentational and linguistic features in the headlines are expected for this question, as well as detailed, original ideas about the picture.

Question 3 was often successfully answered by candidates, particularly those who read the question properly and had read through all of the questions to begin with. These candidates chose, as the question required, the *parts* of the text which they found tense and exciting and the best gave some original and contextualised reasons. For example, a good explanation for choosing the part where the climbers thought they were going the wrong way would be because it made the reader realize the vastness of the mountain and the possibility of confusion and panic in their desperate situation; a less good explanation would be that it made the reader want to read on to find out what happened.

Some candidates responded to this question as if it were a language question. Where the comments fitted specific parts of the text, this was rewarded on a best-fit basis.

Candidates would benefit from practising being able to explain why writing is effective for the reader by making telling, original and perceptive comments related, perhaps, to their own experience or related to other events within the context and content of the text itself.

Question 4 was the question with which most candidates had difficulty. There were 16 marks available for this question compared with 8 marks for questions 1, 2 and 3. The reason being that this question tested the candidates ability to *compare* two texts by analysing the *effects of the writers' use of language*. This was the 'language' question. Examiners reported a number of problems. Sometimes candidates made general remarks about genre, purpose, audience and voice (often confused) without producing effective and succinct examples from the Everest text in support and without finding valid comparative aspects from the chosen text. Where devices were spotted, the comparisons tended to be forced or weak. General comments, for example, about 'being in the first person', 'being an article', 'happening in the present tense' or 'they both use rhetorical questions' might have developed into a valid response but often did not. In the best responses, (and those sought by the examiners) candidates selected interesting, vivid, colourful or exciting phrases from the Everest text and unwrapped their meaning and effect. They then found similar (or very different) examples from the chosen text explaining that the difference in language use resided, perhaps, in purpose and audience.

Question 4 is designated the 'language' question on this tier for this exam. There is a similar question currently on all of the legacy exam papers.

Candidates would benefit from some specific and sustained coaching in the two skills tested here: the analysis of a writer's use of language and how to compare the effects of that usage in different texts.

Section B: Writing

Question 5, examiners reported, was clearly enjoyed by candidates and was an enjoyable section of the paper to mark. Many candidates produced interesting and engaging responses that were well structured and demonstrated a capacity to employ a variety of writing devices. However, some issue arose. Some candidates wrote at a length inappropriate for the time and marks available. Some candidates clearly wrote fiction, which did not necessarily preclude a respectable mark, whereas wholly narrative responses which were not focused on aspects of the unusual or memorable, or did not address an interesting journey/experience, did not attain success. There was some very successful and compelling writing from obviously very able candidates.

The task required candidates to inform/describe and explain. The challenge for candidates was to achieve those purposes with a piece that was engaging and original, but to achieve it succinctly.

Question 6 was a challenge for some candidates but many produced a cogent and clearly thought-through argument. Many successful candidates demonstrated confidence in their views and produced structured, developed and rounded ideas ably expressed. There was no shortage of the moral dimension inherent in the topic: freedom of choice, free-will, independence, the nanny state (or school) often featured as the enemy of those who wished to bungee jump from a cliff top or sky-dive over the arctic. However, there was much which was incomplete, not well constructed, not considered and quite often focused on 'sport' or 'sport in schools' rather than what the task actually required. Some candidates did hedge their bets, asserting that every sport or pastime was 'dangerous' (including ballet), thus widening their canvas with some validity. Many candidates would have benefited from reading the wording of the task carefully and making time for some preliminary thought. Points made by examiners about accuracy were no different from those made at present for current writing tasks in current exams. Other comments included the over-use of the rhetorical question and spurious quasi-statistics which detract from, rather than add to, the effectiveness of the writing.

With two writing tasks differently weighted, candidates need advice and practice in timing their different responses to the tasks. There is clear evidence that they are not short of ideas and opinions but these need to be advantageously managed.

In Conclusion

In general many candidates managed the new challenge very well. However, two key points emerged from examiners concerning the exam which would point to future good practice – given that the structure of the paper will be replicated in future series.

The first is that candidates need to have a strategy for successfully managing the paper, mainly in terms of the allocation of time, particularly for the Writing section but also by using the ‘reading time’ to full advantage. Secondly, because each of the questions is related to specific skills, candidates need to know what each of the skills is and be taught them. In this January series, the first of these points would have helped candidates generally, but particularly those who had something to say for Question 6 but had no time to say it. The second point was particularly pertinent for Question 4 which many candidates were unable to undertake with much success.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.