

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2010

GCSE

GCSE English B (1204)
Paper 3F (foundation)

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GCSE English 1204 3F

Section A (Reading)

Question 1:

The passage was accessible to Foundation Tier candidates both in terms of content and in level of language. Candidates throughout the range engaged with the passage and showed understanding of it; some even commented on how they felt they could empathise with the characters in it. Less successful candidates tended either to describe the events or to paraphrase the passage or to list the sights, sounds and settings. Stronger responses focused on the key features of the content - the narrator's excitement, the sound of the train, the contrast between London and the countryside - and commented on the linguistic features used to convey them. The level of comment on the latter was a key discriminator. At the lower end of attainment candidates made no comment about language at all, or a very generalised, descriptive one. Weaker responses also tended to rely on lengthy copying out of passages or quotations without any real attempt to comment or explain their impact on the reader. Some candidates showed an ability to identify a key feature, for instance simile or onomatopoeia, but often failed to offer a textual reference or comment to support it. More successful candidates integrated comments on language into an answer which focused on how the writer helped the reader to share her excitement. The strongest responses typically included comment on the simple language and the child-centred imagery of the text ("It stood there hissing and panting...I felt like a princess...The cows and sheep looked like toys") and showed how these features reflected the viewpoint both of a child and an outsider. Often the comments on the description of the commuters ("...marching like ants...such drab colours...") in the final paragraph was a defining feature of good answers.

Section B (Writing)

Question 2:

This was the more popular question in this section and candidates throughout the range wrote appropriately, knowledgeably and often frankly about their areas. Most candidates also showed an ability to structure a letter, to adopt an appropriate register and to give clear advice. Answers were often developed and supported with detail. Whilst most candidates showed a strong awareness of a peer audience, a feature of weaker responses was a limitation in range of expression, some resorting to street language. Candidates used the bullet points with varying degrees of success; in some instances they were used to inform rather than structure answers and this approach produced purposeful and engaging letters, but where the bullet points were followed slavishly and in a list, answers became very prosaic. The most successful grasped the idea of an outsider coming into the area for the first time and gave practical advice in a friendly and informed way. Some wrote a kind of guide or handbook to the area, which worked well when it gave targeted advice, but failed when too much time was wasted on unassessable graphical and typographical features.

Question 3:

This less frequently chosen question produced some well engaged responses, which were generally focused on the question and drew heavily on individual experience. Weaker candidates found it difficult to structure an argument and tended to respond

emotionally to the statement, almost as though they were being personally attacked, an approach which resulted in rant rather than reasoning. More successful candidates argued logically, though drawing on personal experience, and used evidence in the form of experts or statistics (occasionally somewhat unconvincingly) to support their ideas. In general candidates favoured the form of education they were accustomed to.

Section C (Writing)

Question 4:

There were some quite lively and extended responses to this question and most had plenty to say about various modes of transport. Stronger responses showed more awareness of the magazine context and adopted an appropriate form and style to engage readers. Weaker answers did not really develop a commentary focused on preferred forms of transport, but often resorted to formulaic lists of modes of transport, albeit followed by reasons for choosing them.

Question 5:

This was marginally the more popular question in the section. The key discriminator was the extent to which candidates wrote commentaries rather than descriptions. Weaker candidates tended to list and describe their choices, rather than comment on them. Most wrote about mundane, but essential items, for instance mobile phones and money, but often the most successful pieces related to sentimental items - special gifts, childhood toys and so on. Some wrote narratives, triggered by the use of the word 'imagine' in the question; this produced satisfactory answers, provided that the candidate commented on the reasons for the choices, and many did. The most successful candidates wrote thoughtful commentaries giving detailed reasons for their choices.

GCSE English: 1204 Grade Boundaries

Option 1 - 1A, 1B, 2F, 3F

C	D	E	F
58	46	34	23

Option 2 - 1A, 1B, 4H, 5H

*	A	B	C	D	E
86	75	64	53	42	36

Option 3 - 1AT, 1B, 2F, 3F

C	D	E	F
58	46	34	23

Option 4 - 1A, 1BT, 2F, 3F

C	D	E	F
58	46	34	23

Option 5 - 1AT, 1BT, 2F, 3F

C	D	E	F
58	46	34	23

Option 6 - No Candidates

Option 7 - 1A, 1BT, 4H, 5H

*	A	B	C	D	E
86	75	64	53	42	36

Option 8 - 1AT, 1BT, 4H, 5H

*	A	B	C	D	E
86	75	64	53	42	36

Note: Grade boundaries may vary from year to year and from subject to subject, depending on the demands of the question paper.

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