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Geography B 40352F

(Specification 4035)

Unit 2: Hostile world (Foundation)

Report on the Examination

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General Comments

The paper proved to be an effective discriminator of geographical ability. It allowed candidates of all abilities at this tier to demonstrate positive achievement. The majority of candidates gave good responses to the range of data provided. Geographical skills such as interpreting bar graphs, climate graphs and data, maps of various scales, articles and diagrams were good. Opportunities for extended writing were given in one or more parts of each question, and even the least able candidates were able to offer a response, which demonstrated some geographical understanding. The more able of the candidates were able to offer more developed responses, demonstrating good understanding of geographical issues, backed up with some correct use of geographical vocabulary and some use of case study examples. They were able to apply their knowledge and understanding in unfamiliar contexts.

As with all previous series, there was an imbalance between the numbers of candidates completing Sections A and B of the examination paper. A vast majority of candidates opted for Section A - Living with Natural Hazards, whilst few chose Section B - The Challenge of Extreme Environments.

The vast majority of candidates completed the paper and there were relatively few parts of the questions that were not attempted.

Section A - Living with Natural Hazards

Question 1 was the best answered, the subject matter appearing to be the most familiar to the majority of candidates.

Question 1

Part (a) did not prove problematic for the majority of the candidates with 88% of candidates being able to interpret the map and gain both marks. Some candidates ignored the instruction to tick two boxes and ticked more than two. Part (b) elicited a range of responses. Many candidates seldom gave more than a simple idea of convergent movement and/or named the tectonic plates with poor knowledge of physical process and use of geographical terminology. The better candidates at this tier did link together the destructive plate boundary with convergence and were also able to show some knowledge of the processes that lead to earthquakes at this type of plate boundary and 19% of candidates therefore, gained a Level 2 mark. A significant number of candidates described the processes which occur at destructive, constructive and conservative plate boundaries, which limited the marks available to them as their knowledge and understanding of the processes taking place in the area shown in Figure 1 was not clear. Part (c) (i) was not always well done with some candidates appearing not to understand the term ‘location’ and giving any fact about Mount Sinabung from the text e.g. “It erupted for the first time in 400 years”. Part (c) (ii) was well done by the majority of the candidates, although there were some who did confuse ‘responses’ with ‘effects’. Some candidates did not follow the command to use Figure 2 and gave general effects or responses to volcanic eruptions, but most were able to use the resource well. Part (c) (iii) did not prove problematic for the majority of the candidates. Part (d) (i) was correctly answered by a large majority of the candidates, but where mistakes arose, they tended to be with the term ‘shock absorber’. Part (d) (ii) was also well answered by many candidates. Knowledge of earthquake preparedness through education and drills was good. Some candidates lost marks as they discussed Method A, when Method B was clearly asked for in the question.

Question 2

Part (a) (i) was not attempted by some candidates, although the number was less than for similar completion questions from previous series. Of those candidates who did attempt the question, most were able to accurately complete the graph. Part (a) (ii) did not prove problematic for the majority of the candidates. In part (b) (i) most candidates were able to use direction and latitude, but many incorrectly gave the Equator as the final answer. Part (b) (ii) was not well answered by many candidates. The majority were only able to state the surface temperature of the sea required for the formation of a tropical storm and/or that hot air rises to form clouds. There was little use of geographical terminology and where terms did appear, they were often not fully understood and were

often used out of sequence. There was also a tendency for some candidates to concentrate on the changes in a tropical storm after it had reached land, and of the damaging effects to the local population. Only the better candidates at this tier were able to explain the formation of a tropical storm in a logical and clear fashion and these were often centre-specific. For many candidates, their knowledge and understanding of reasons for the formation of a tropical storm was very limited and this is an area for future development. Part (c) (i) did not prove problematic for the majority of the candidates with most being able to interpret the map and gain both marks. Part (c) (ii) elicited a range of responses, with many candidates able to suggest that the number of tropical storms may increase, but relative few were able to elaborate upon this further. The term 'distribution' was not always understood by many candidates and a significant number failed to score on the second section of the question.

Question 3

In part (a) (i) the majority of candidates were able to understand the climate data and give the month with the highest temperature, but calculating the range of temperatures was more challenging for many candidates. However, the term was understood by more candidates than in previous series of examination in which it has appeared. Part (a) (ii) was well answered with the vast majority of candidates able to interpret the resource and identify the correct area in which wildfires were likely to occur. A large percentage of candidates did well on question (a) (iii). The climate data given in Figure 7 was generally well used and candidates own knowledge of factors such as spontaneous heating was evident. The resource was also well used in suggesting human factors that cause wildfires. The better responses at this tier gave well developed points referring to the sunlight being magnified by glass bottles, unattended campfires and arson whilst linking these to population pressure and/or accessibility. Case study examples helped some candidates give clarity to their response, but these were rare at this tier. Part (b) was well answered with 36% of candidates being able to develop responses and gain a Level 2 mark. Case study examples enabled the development of points and it was pleasing to see them being used on this question. Part (c) elicited a wide range of responses. Many candidates were able to offer simple reasons for their chosen viewpoint; these were often basic points with some simple elaboration of the methods given in the resource. These were valid statements and many candidates were able to gain a top Level 1 and score 4 marks. Almost 15% of the candidates did develop these ideas further to gain a Level 2 mark through good use of the resource along with the application of their own knowledge and understanding in constructing an argument for or against the issue. Those candidates who answered by ticking the 'yes ' box often achieved a Level 2 mark by giving case study examples of similar schemes such as 'Smokey the Bear' and why these were successful and this enabled the development of points. Those candidates who answered by ticking the 'No' box often achieved a Level 2 mark by giving case study examples of other methods they felt to be better than warnings to campers. Many candidates were able to gain marks through the mention of the fact that natural causes of wildfire could not be dealt with through the advice given on the poster and then gave examples of alternative methods of prevention. Some candidates were self-limiting as they repeated the causes of wildfires, or they tended to concentrate on the appeal of the poster, and how it could be improved by making it more eye-catching, this having no geographical content.

Section B - The Challenge of Extreme Environments

Question 6 was the best answered, the subject matter appearing to be the most familiar to the majority of candidates.

Question 4

Part (a) (i) was well answered with most candidates being able to interpret the map. Part (b) (ii) was not well answered by many candidates with many vague statements and incorrect statements. For many candidates, their knowledge and understanding of climatic reasons for the formation of extreme environments is very limited and this remains an area for future development. The majority were only able to state that tropical rain forest was found in the area shown as X as the climate was 'hot and wet', but were unable to elaborate on this further. Many candidates failed to score as they simply stated that the area was on or near the Equator, but did not explain the significance of this. Part (b) was well answered with 39% of candidates being able to develop responses and gain a Level 2 mark.

Case study examples enabled the development of points and it was pleasing to see them being used on this question. Part (c) elicited a wide range of responses. Many candidates were able to offer simple reasons for their chosen viewpoint; these were often basic points with some simple elaboration of the methods given in the resource. These were valid statements and many candidates were able to gain a top Level 1 and score 4 marks. 29% of the candidates did develop these ideas further to gain a Level 2 mark through good use of the resource along with the application of their own their own knowledge and understanding in constructing an argument for or against the issue. Those candidates who answered by ticking the 'yes ' box often achieved a Level 2 mark by giving case study examples of similar schemes such as the Heart of Borneo project and why this was successful and this enabled the development of points. Those candidates who answered by ticking the 'No' box often achieved a Level 2 mark by giving case study examples of other methods they felt to be better than those shown in the resource.

Question 5

Part (a) (i) was not attempted by some candidates, although the number was less than for similar completion questions from previous series. Of those candidates who did attempt the question, most were able to accurately complete the graph. Part (a) (ii) was well done by the majority of the candidates with most able to describe the main change and fluctuations within it, along with some citation of data. Part (b) was also well done by the majority of the candidates, with almost 59% of candidates being able to interpret the map and gain maximum marks. Part (c) elicited a range of responses. Most candidates were able to give simple explanations of ice melting and/or sea-level rise to gain a Level 1 mark, with over 33% of candidates being able to give clear explanations and gain a Level 2 mark. This was often a development of the effects of ice melting, such as the effects on ecosystems. Some candidates could not reach the maximum mark as their responses did not evoke a clear sense of place. An example of this would be when candidates attempted to explain the effects of sea-level rise on polar bears in Antarctica. Some candidates lost marks as they did not restrict their answer to cold climates, and mentioned the effect of global warming on world sea levels as a whole, leading to flooding in Bangladesh. In part (d) (i), a significant number of candidates were unable to interpret the pie chart. The commonest answer was 8 and candidates did not study the resource closely enough. Part (d) (ii) was well done by the majority of the candidates, although there were some who did confuse 'responses' with 'threats'. Some candidates did not follow the command to use Figure 13 and gave general threats, or responses to threats in Antarctica, but most were able to use the resource well. Part (d) (iii) was well done, with most candidates being able to use the resource to suggest at least one cause of conflict.

Question 6

In part (a) (i) the majority of candidates were able to understand the climate data and give the month with the highest temperature, but calculating the range of temperatures was more challenging for many candidates. However, the term was understood by more candidates than in previous series of examination in which it has appeared. Part (a) (ii) was well answered with the vast majority of candidates able to interpret the resource and identify the correct area in which a hot desert was likely to be found. A large percentage of candidates did well on question (a) (iii). The climate data given in Figure 14 was generally well used and candidates own knowledge of factors such as the effects of high temperatures on vegetation and soil was evident. The resource was also well used in suggesting the effects of relief and continentality. The better responses at this tier gave well developed points referring to rain shadow areas and the process of orographic rainfall. Case study examples such as the Great Dividing Range helped some candidates give clarity to their response, but these were rare at this tier.
Part (b) (i) was well answered with most candidates being able to complete the flow diagram correctly. Performance on part (b) (ii) was variable with some candidates demonstrating a good understanding of the effects of climate change on desertification with clear references as to how lack of vegetation cover and/or soil erosion increased the risk of land becoming desertified. However, many candidates simply stated that "it will get hotter". Part (c) (i) was not always well answered with many candidates recognising 'reforestation', but far fewer recognising a 'windbreak' Part (c) (ii) was well answered, with many candidates being able to state that "water could sink into the ground", or that there would be "less water running over the ground". These were acceptable, but the use of terminology such as 'infiltration' and 'surface run-off' would have been preferable. Unfortunately, the use of geographical terminology was rare.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the Results statistics page of the AQA Website.

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