

CONTENTS

ENGLISH LANGUAGE	1
Paper 0396/01 Composition	1

FOREWORD

This booklet contains reports written by Examiners on the work of candidates in certain papers. **Its contents are primarily for the information of the subject teachers concerned.**



ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 0396/01

Composition

General comments

Most Centres are now preparing candidates with a very clear and close focus on the demands of this paper. However, some Centres may wish to consider whether there are more strategies they could put in place, for example, a focus on particular genres might help some candidates and a stress on the use of appropriate formats (such as the layout of a drama script) might help others avoid some of the rubric infringement which occurred on **Question 2** in this session. It may also help some candidates to plan their work before they begin writing: on some occasions, answers at the lower end of the range showed little forethought or preparation. In general, though, candidates continue to produce some thoughtful and perceptive work which is enjoyable to read.

It would also be useful if some Centres could ensure certain basic procedures are followed by candidates: that questions are clearly numbered; that each sheet carries the candidate's name and that all sheets are securely fastened together. Quite a number of such basic procedures were not followed this session. A further issue to stress to candidates is the length of composition required by the rubric: 600 to 900 words. A small minority of candidates are not doing themselves full justice by writing less than the required amount, a self-penalising process.

Candidates should also be reminded for the need for technical accuracy: the most recurrent errors seem to include confusion of past and present tenses and agreement between singular and plurals.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

The general concept of this type of question – contrasted description – is fairly standard and candidates, in general, approach it skilfully and thoughtfully. There were some excellent responses. Less secure answers tended to either offer a rather factual approach or, at the other extreme, rather over-poetic material bordering on the excessive use of language for effect. There was some effective use of contrasting settings and ways of life. Candidates need to ensure that each section of their composition reaches the required rubric length.

Question 2

There was some serious misreading of the question here by some candidates. The question clearly asks for a drama script, a format which is fairly well established for this paper. Instead, some preferred to offer short stories and completely missed the focus of the title. Some attempted a drama script but did not seem familiar with the conventions of the format: for example, the placing of stage directions in brackets and the use of the present tense in such stage directions. Successful answers did present some effective material with some evidence of a twist or unexpected denouement.

Question 3

Effective answers showed a strong sense of structure and grasped the purpose of the task well. There was a pleasing blend of description combined with a sense of personal reflection and honesty. Some answers began with one particular smell or taste and widened the focus: others concentrated on one particular experience and based their response on a narrative around it.

Question 4

Less secure answers here tended to centre on boy meets girl to the point that ideas of the 'unusual' or 'eccentric' became lost. This approach also meant a slight reliance on caricature rather than on detailed characterisation. Effective answers, however, relied on the development of characterisation and context in thoughtful and perceptive ways and engineered the final meeting of the characters in unusual and entertaining formats.

Section B

Question 5

There was evidence of informed and up-to-date preparation about contemporary media and technology, as well as some of the underlying problems and complexities concerning their rapid development – issues such as economic considerations and social implications. Where this awareness was turned to the issue of privacy, there were some highly perceptive and thoughtful responses characterised by a subtle blend of argument and examples. This was also a popular choice and demonstrated that prepared strategies can give candidates confidence and a clear sense of purpose and audience.

Question 6

Here, too, there were some sensible and proficient responses reinforced by a clear sense of format, purpose and audience. Candidates selected relevant material and argued their cases well on the whole. There was an appropriate sense of address and register; the occasional response relied on a hectoring approach but this was an answer, on the whole, that candidates seemed well prepared for.

Question 7

Most responses here were thoughtful and reflective, managing to combine a clear line of argument with personal anecdotes, personal experiences and observations on current global and social events. Candidates sometimes approached the question from a religious and philosophical angle, weighing up approaches with insight and depth. Less secure answers tended to rely on a biographical approach, holding up role models as evidence of proof of either side of the argument. This tended to create a slightly impersonal tone to the material.

Question 8

This was generally well chosen by candidates who displayed a solid and informed grasp of audiences and apt rhetorical devices. Some of these techniques were applied very persuasively; in fact, some were so successful they persuaded the reader of both sides of the argument. There was a pleasing ability to draw out and highlight contrasts between the defence and the prosecution.