

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2010

IGCSE

IGCSE English Language (4355) Paper 04

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The standard of coursework folders was again impressive; in most instances they were thorough and fulfilled the specification requirements comprehensively. Centre assessment also remained sound, if inclined to the generous. Administration was similarly competent. In most instances the folders were presented in an exemplary way and centre standardisation had been conducted very efficiently.

Some centres did not include authentication forms with the sample; these are mandatory for all candidates. Some centres also failed to include, in addition to the sample requested, the folders of the candidates scoring the lowest and highest marks for coursework in their centre. Though most top sheets were completed clearly and fully, some were not. Occasionally there was no teacher annotation to show how the folder's mark had been arrived at, though, at the other extreme, some folders were exemplary in annotation, even to the extent of showing strong evidence of internal moderation.

Unit 1 Response to Section B of the Anthology

Apart from one instance where a centre had set a past examination Paper 3 question - an approach which was very limiting - most task setting was sound and fully addressed the specified assessment objectives. Indeed, most units focused strongly on writer's techniques, particularly the use of language; for instance the question 'How do the authors of 'The Necklace' and 'A Hero' guide the reader's reactions to their main protagonists?' directly encouraged the candidate to consider how the stories were structured and written. Much less successful were generic titles which simply required candidates to analyse a text (for example "'Dulce et Decorum Est'; an analytical essay.") This approach tended to encourage students to rely on taught notes or secondary sources. In general, the more students are stimulated to engage a text (or texts) on an individual level, the more they are likely to be able to access the higher grade bands in the mark scheme (e.g. Band 7 "perceptive personal response').

The most favoured text was (perhaps inevitably) 'Dulce et Decorum Est' and the most commonly considered issue was the degree to which Owen conveyed the horror of war. There is certainly enough in this text to allow for detailed analysis and individual engagement, but in some instances the candidate was limited by excessive 'scaffolding' and generic commentary. In some instances too, responses were burdened with irrelevant historical and biographical information which had little to do with the assessment objectives or marking grid.

Many centres linked texts, often in inventive ways, and some allowed candidates to choose their own texts to compare and contrast. There were some idiosyncratic pairings of seemingly disparate texts (for instance 'Pathways and chance in 'Country at My Shoulder' and 'The Road Not Taken') but the responses were unmistakably individual and fresh. Other comparative tasks - for example the linking of 'The Last Night' and 'Dulce et Decorum Est' in terms of the afflictive nature of war or ideas of heroism, of 'The Last Night' and 'Refugee Blues' in relation to the theme of helplessness, and comparisons of the female protagonists in 'King Schahriar and His Brother' and 'The Necklace' - were perhaps more predictable, but no less successful in providing a wide field for candidates to engage personally and analytically with texts and develop individual interpretations and commentaries.

Unit 2 Personal and Imaginative writing

The Personal and Imaginative units again produced some excellent writing. This unit was often effectively tailored to the interests and capabilities of the individual student. The *explore, imagine, entertain* triplet was the one most frequently addressed and there were many inventive and powerful stories presented, sometimes with intriguing titles (for example 'The letters in the Attic'). Some narrative approaches were less original and often derivative, with a focus on violence and action, rather than motivation and consequences. There was much intensely personal writing on strong themes (for instance 'a letter from a dying mother to her child'.) Some autobiographical pieces explored thoughts and feelings, including reflections on "a moment which changed my life" and, more wittily, on 'The art of procrastination'; 'Loved and Loathed Places' was another successful title. The *argue, persuade, advise* triplet provided a less popular focus but there were good discursive essays, for instance on the topics of reality TV and of global warming. Such tasks were sometimes framed in a way which allowed candidates to show they could write for different audiences and purposes - some responses took the form of letters or magazine articles. It was pleasing to see candidates experimenting with form and expression as they tried to address the descriptors for higher band performance. Sometimes the results were powerfully effective, but occasionally the writing became artificial and over-florid.

IGCSE English Language: 4355 Grade Boundaries

Option 1 - 03, 1F

C	D	E	F
59	49	39	29

Option 2 - 04, 05, 1F

C	D	E	F
60	47	34	22

Option 3 - 03, 2H

*	A	B	C	D	E
76	68	60	53	45	41

Option 4 - 04, 05, 2H

*	A	B	C	D	E
80	71	62	54	43	37

Option 5 - 04T, 05T, 1F

C	D	E	F
60	47	34	22

Option 6 - 04T, 05T, 2H

*	A	B	C	D	E
80	71	62	54	43	37

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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