

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

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International GCSE
English Language A (4EA0) Paper 01

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Section A: Reading

Questions 1-4

The passage studied in Section A was a powerful piece of writing entitled *Don't Do It!* which attempted to persuade teenagers not to smoke. It was adapted from a website which can be found at www.perkel.com/politics/issues/smoke.htm. The passage proved to be accessible to almost all candidates, with very few experiencing any difficulties in reading comprehension. Question 1 was a single mark question and was done well by almost all candidates. Question 2 asked candidates to give three reasons that the writer gives for not starting to smoke. They were able to select from a number of possible correct answers. Those who scored less than full marks often did so because they repeated the same point, albeit in different words, such as "It is addictive", and, "It is a compulsion." Question 3 asked what we learn about the tobacco industry and the way it regards teenagers. Responses were generally good. The stronger answers showed a good understanding of the question and its focus upon the tobacco industry whilst weaker responses, some with strong views, wrote more of an opinion piece about smoking that lacked the focus the question was looking for. The key discriminator in Section A is the higher mark tariff question 4 and its focus on the writer's technique. In this instance candidates were asked to focus upon how the writer tries to persuade teenagers not to take up smoking. Bullet points offered further support for structuring an answer around focus, layout and language. Examiners commented that the topic was of obvious interest to most candidates and almost all were able to recognise some features of persuasive writing. Able students were able to analyse a range of techniques effectively and recognising the many ways in that the writer sought to manipulate the reader. There were many quite competent middle band answers that again commented on a range of features, though sometimes listing techniques rather than explaining their effect on the reader. As has happened in the past, some candidates were able to find the relevant text but were less able to use the text to craft an explanation. Linked text and paraphrase does not constitute an explanation. Weaker answers tended to comment on a narrow range of "aspects of smoking" and make rather obvious comments sometimes with little or nothing on the writer's techniques. On layout and presentation, surprisingly the picture received very little attention from some candidates.

Section B: Reading and Writing

Question 5

Section B was based upon the pre-prepared text from the Edexcel Anthology, *Explorers, or Boys Messing About* and focused upon the writer and how he conveys his feelings as he reports on the rescue of the two men. It was clear that many were well prepared and had plenty to say. Many had

clearly enjoyed reading about the various predicaments the two explorers had experienced and showed involvement with the passage. Better quality answers found a range of feelings to comment on together with the devices used to communicate them. Weaker answers tended to be narrow in their identification of feelings, some simply repeating that the author “hated” the two explorers and applying that to any evidence they quoted. Some candidates felt that the writer admired the men and their previous adventures, missing the point that the earlier experience of the two men is introduced only to be undermined with the phrase, “Despite their experience ...” Able students could offer their own interpretation of the pointless foolhardiness of walking barefoot in the Himalayas whilst others often listed the adventures with little or no comment.

Question 6

The writing task in Section B was linked to the reading task in section B and asked candidates to write and explain their views on a proposal that the government is intending to introduce a new law, making it illegal to take part in dangerous sports and other dangerous activities. As no format was specified, the open ended question led to a variety of approaches: most gave a statement-type answer, though many addressed the reader more directly in a speech or letter style. Better answers were sometimes quite succinct with tight arguments and structure and with a strong grip on relevance. Many used engaging phrases and devices such as rhetorical questions to good effect. There was some sensible and perfectly appropriate recycling of material from the previous question. For some candidates, perhaps because the question talked about a future law, there was some difficulty with verb tenses.

Weaker responses were sometimes very short and undeveloped. Some used tenses inconsistently, making their answers less coherent and also struggled with verb/noun agreement.

Section C: Writing

Question 7

The activity asked candidates to write about their early life in such a way that the reader could appreciate why those early experiences were important to the writer. This question gave many an opportunity to write engagingly about personal experiences, which they developed at length in various interesting ways. Some candidates chose to invent an older self, imagining themselves to be successful middle-aged business men, some invented personal traumas and most looked to develop sincere and compelling autobiographical writing. The question allowed the most able free reign to express their ideas, while offering enough structure and common ground for weaker candidates to frame a response. Many were inspired to write about immensely personal experiences in a way that was deliberately shaped and crafted for effect with some candidates creating impressive effects through the use of imagery and a variety of structures. Better answers demonstrated

a clear sense of direction where candidates were well aware of their effect on the reader whilst weaker responses were often brief and tended towards relaying stories from their childhood without any real sense of a reader or without a clear purpose. The best answers were those which were fresh and compellingly engaging rather than too self-consciously stylish. A key discriminator between Band 2 and Band 3 writing is that of structure and once again weaker responses were often lacking in paragraphing and a sense of structural cohesion.

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