

Examiners' Report/  
Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2015

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE  
in English Language A (4EA0)  
Paper 02

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## **Overview**

IGCSE 4EA0 Paper 2 is a paper lasting one hour and thirty minutes. Question 1 is a reading question based on the Edexcel Anthology and in January 2015 candidates had to respond to the extract from *The Arabian Nights* "King Schahriar and his Brother". Question 2 is a writing question and candidates have to complete one written piece from a choice of three. The choices for January 2015 were a letter about persuading a company to donate money to a charity, a website contribution about school uniforms and a creative piece entitled "If only I had done things differently"

This was thought to be a very fair paper which any candidate who had covered the syllabus should have been able to handle with confidence. Candidates of a range of abilities were able to gain access to the reading passage and the questions on it. A range of abilities was also represented by the responses to the writing questions.

## **Reading**

### **Question 1**

Although some candidates tended to narrate, Question 1 gave the candidates plenty of scope to gain higher marks for their responses. Most seemed engaged with the story and were able to answer this accurately. Most candidates showed an understanding of the story and were able to comment upon aspects of character, which was largely the focus of the question. The character and actions of the Sultan and Scheherazade were quite successfully written about and many candidates were able to use evidence from the text., more successful candidates developing their ideas about character analytically. The Grand Vizir was not as successfully written about by all; many candidates identified his loyalty to the King but not much else. The fourth bullet point was rather mixed. Some candidates seemed to struggle with the writer's craft and were not able to write about technique and effects created. Better candidates, however, were able to identify aspects of the writer's craft very successfully and to comment perceptively upon technique. On the whole, this was a very accessible question and responses were produced across the mark range, from Level 1 and 2 responses which were entirely narrative to good, astute analysis at Level 4 and 5. The question was very fairly phrased and bullet-pointed to guide students into a less narrative response and it was apparent that many need more instruction and practice in thinking about the effects of what is written rather than simply the content.

The text itself was felt to be engaging and presented no real challenges in terms of understanding. Across the mark range there was a tendency to retell or paraphrase the story itself rather than address the question and engage fully with the text. Most candidates were able to pick up the writer's characterisation of the three main players and produced responses which had been anticipated in the mark scheme, which was itself very thorough and useful. Weaker answers were able to grasp more obvious points and characteristics, whilst more successful responses were more perceptive with

regard to the writer's craft. Students were very enthusiastic about their ability to identify superlatives or to share their knowledge about their effects. Some other language techniques, such as the use of dialogue or emotive language, were also identified. Some candidates did mention archaic language, but few either identified or gave an explanation. Other areas of language were not as frequently identified, or referred to. By and large, responses were interesting to read.

## **Writing**

All three questions seemed to be answered well with not a lot of confusion about what the question was asking. Most candidates were able to engage successfully with the various titles. Grammatical structures were often at level 2 only in some responses. Spelling and the use of vocabulary was good. There was little evidence of poor spelling among many responses. The vocabulary used was usually appropriate. Punctuation was generally good to excellent, but there are candidates who show a good control of punctuation, but do not punctuate consistently.

## **Question 2a**

Most candidates showed understanding of what the question was asking them to do. Answers produced were generally able to name a charity and provide a series of reasons why the money should be donated to them, with varying degrees of persuasive success. Most answers were in the form of a letter with an address at the top and a signature at the bottom. Some answers tended to be rather formulaic, but still managed to produce a reasonable request. However, most responses were able to communicate on some level why the money should be donated to their choice of charity. Most candidates were able to write a letter of persuasion which included details about charities and fund raising. Some candidates wrote persuasively but not all had a convincing sense of argument. At lower levels, some responses were penalised due to a lack of grammatical control. This was done well by many candidates who achieved the right tone for a letter and understood the purpose of and audience for it. Many letters were engaging and heartfelt, and showed evidence of good teaching. Paragraphing and structure were more successful than some years. The student response showed that this was an accessible question for the candidates. Writing a letter, combined with the subject of charity, gives the students an excellent chance to show their ability, showing that they can structure a letter. Very few misunderstood this question.

## **Question 2b**

Question 2(b) was quite a popular choice, with many candidates having strong feelings about the positives and negatives of school uniform. Opinions were generally quite well expressed and developed, but some candidates seemed to run out of ideas, so a few responses were quite brief. The candidates who chose this response evidently felt strongly - either for or against - which made for some interesting reading. Those against were often very appealing, showing real engagement; those for sometimes

seemed to be writing what they thought markers wanted to read. Many had a strong sense of purpose and audience; others wrote a more essay style argument and lost that feel. It is a topic which prompted candidates to generate ideas. The question gave the students the chance to show their ability to structure a discussion. Many responses were written in quite a formal style with some adopting a more chatty tone; both were suitable for a website discussion. Most responses were able to argue successfully for or against, presenting ideas that supported their viewpoint. It was clear that many candidates were well prepared for this type of question and had given the pros and cons a great deal of thought. One likened having to wear school uniform, quite successfully, to being in prison or living in communist Russia. It was refreshing to read the work of candidates expressing strong views, again with varying degrees of clarity and success.

### **Question 2c**

For 2c, some candidates misunderstood that they were supposed to be writing a story and instead wrote about why they regretted something; such responses were in the minority, however. It was noticeable that many candidates were EAL as they often used very complex and ambitious vocabulary, but sentences had issues with syntax and grammar. For some markers, 2C was the most popular response and was answered quite successfully; the opening sentence seemed to inspire the vast majority of candidates into writing a well-crafted piece. There were a small number of candidates who had limited success at story writing, although most of the unsuccessful responses were candidates who struggled with aspects of the English language. Despite this, there were some entertaining and thoughtful responses on the whole about the topic of regret. Overall, it was pleasing to see some successful and entertaining pieces of writing with real efforts to use the full range of punctuation, descriptive imagery and persuasive language. The title of the story obviously inspired many candidates and who, as they wrote in the first person, seemed genuinely engaged. The opening line provided positive responses by the students. There were a few candidates who did not start with the opening line, but did refer back, when concluding. Very few did not engage the reader. Some markers noted that this was an excellent choice for a question 2c. Some responses were engaging and imaginative with candidates able to develop character and plot. These were generally more successful as writers were able to demonstrate skill. Others tended to lack imagination and focused on something they would go back and change at primary school. These tended to be less engaging and generally lacked any storytelling finesse. Most were able to write in the first person and expression varied through the mark scheme's level descriptors.

