

Examiners' Report

January 2012

International GCSE in English
Language (4EB0/01)
Paper 1

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Candidates found the two texts equally accessible and on the whole responded positively to both texts. Inevitably there were some candidates who did not engage with the texts but the majority responded with some engagement although there were some misunderstandings of the content.

Section A (Questions 1-10)

Questions 1-9, which are short answer questions, required candidates to locate and retrieve appropriate information. Question 10 required candidates to make a personal response to the texts and to support their comments with references to the texts.

Questions 1-9

Many examiners commented that candidates responded quite well to these questions and were able to identify relevant points. However there was some evidence that candidates had confused the mother and son in Text 1 in their response to Question 5 and Hans Tammemaji and Brian Gunn in Text 2 in their response to Question 8. Similarly some responses to Question 1 showed that candidates had confused canoeing and rafting. The responses to Question 4 sometimes confused Aidan with Alex. Centres must work with candidates to ensure that these simple errors do not happen, for example, by encouraging candidates to highlight or colour code relevant names. There were some candidates who misunderstood the word 'grinning' in their response to Question 4 and took it to mean nasty. Unfortunately these confusions inevitably meant candidates' responses could not be rewarded as this section is assessed for reading. Questions 5, 7 and 9 required candidates to use their own words and examiners commented that it was pleasing to see candidates trying to use their own words as well as re-working the original texts. There is still evidence however of candidates not attempting to use their own words and this inevitably limited their achievement.

Question 10

There were responses that showed that candidates have been extremely well prepared for this question and had a good grasp of what is required. The better responses referred to the writers' techniques and supported the choice they made with good evidence in the form of quotations and developed explanations. However there were some rather spurious reasons given to support the choice made e.g. 'it has too many commas'; 'I don't like the activities'; 'The sentences are too long'. Centres must work with candidates to ensure that they have a clear understanding of valid ways to respond to a written text. There were some candidates who confused Text 1 and 2 and, while examiners marked these responses positively, it would be helpful if candidates could check carefully to ensure there is no confusion. There were some candidates who wrote at great length in response to this question. There were some responses which were over 2 pages in length. This is a 6 mark question and although it is understandable that candidates might wish to write a full response, these lengthy responses were

sometimes longer than responses to Question 11 which is worth 35 marks. Centres and candidates need to refer to the mark scheme in order to understand how the marks are allocated and that the marks tend to reflect the amount of time which should be spent on the response.

Section B (Question 11)

There was some evidence of planning which is to be encouraged. This helped candidates to focus and organise their ideas effectively. Writing a rough draft was less helpful as it limited the time candidates spent on refining their final draft. In a few cases the final draft was more flawed than the rough draft. There was some evidence of good teaching and learning in the responses to this section. There were some lively, humorous responses and some individual responses.

There were some responses which lifted from the texts, often in large quantities. Some candidates simply copied out parts of the passage with no evidence of their own input. Candidates must understand that copying the texts does not show understanding.

The majority of the candidates were able to cover all three bullet points but the most commonly missed was the last. Some examiners commented on responses that lacked detail thus limiting their response. Some candidates had problems with the focus on activity holidays and instead wrote about a real or imaginary holiday. There was sufficient material in the two texts and some candidates were able to use this effectively. Other candidates combined the ideas from the texts with their own experiences producing effective responses. The bullet points provided guidance for content and structure which was helpful for some candidates. Centres need to ensure that candidates understand that they should attempt all three bullet points and ensure they are able to select appropriate material and ideas from the texts.

Most candidates understood the requirement of the task however not all were able to use the appropriate register for an article. Some candidates wrote an essay or a narrative. A few were too formal. Better responses used informal language and adopted a chatty tone. Successful responses were focused on the texts and wrote a convincing article for their school or college magazine. Centres need to ensure that candidates have a clear idea of how to demonstrate a strong sense of audience and purpose. Some examiners commented that there was an over-use of 'adrenaline'; 'adrenaline rush' and 'awesome'.

Many examiners commented that language controls were not always secure, especially grammar and sentence structure, and some responses lacked paragraphing. Centres are reminded that lack of accurate paragraphing limits candidates' achievement.

Section C (Question 12)

Question 12b was the most popular. Examiners commented on how much they enjoyed reading the responses in this section.

There was some evidence of planning which is to be encouraged. A short plan will help candidates focus on the task but lengthy plans and draft responses are not a good use of time. In some cases the final draft appeared to have been rushed.

There was evidence of some good preparation and teaching in this section. Pleasingly there seemed to be less evidence of prepared responses, although there were still a few. There were also some examples of prepared paragraphs inserted into candidates' own work and some over-use of clichés and hackneyed phrases. Candidates should be reminded that examiners want a personal response and prepared responses will never be successful. There were some excellent, well worded and interesting essays with a clear structure and imaginative expression.

Question 12a produced some strongly argued responses but also some quite weak ones. Better responses produced well developed arguments and an individual voice with a good control of spelling, punctuation and grammar. The weaker responses were based too closely on the texts and some copied parts of the texts, especially the things Myrna Boulding said. These responses tended to have few arguments and weak language controls. Centres need to ensure that if candidates are to choose this type of essay, they are fully prepared in argumentative, discursive and rhetorical techniques and are able to develop their ideas effectively.

Question 12b produced a range of interesting stories both real and imaginary. Better responses were able to create tension with effective description and dialogue with a full control of the narrative and good technical accuracy. Apart from the imaginative responses there were some interesting accounts of holidays and adventure trips. There were some responses that did not address the title. Candidates must be reminded that if they do not focus on the task they will not be able to access the full range of marks. In some cases the only clear link to the task was a sentence at the end saying, 'that was a great adventure'. Similarly responses where candidates die or kill themselves, when told in the first person, are never very successful. Some responses were rather unbelievable. Weaker responses had undeveloped and limited ideas with poor language controls. Quite a number of responses used the majority of their essay to build up to the adventure but then did not continue or develop their ideas further. This suggests either a lack of planning or lack of time. Candidates must practice what is possible in an hour.

Question 12c produced some impressive and well written responses. These responses dealt sensitively with personal motivation and thoughts and feelings. Some candidates gave a clear account of an activity but did not address their thoughts and feelings. There was some evidence of re-working of the activities in the texts with varying degrees of success. Some candidates spent too long on the build up to the activity (e.g. getting to the venue) and then wrote relatively little about the activity itself. Weaker responses made no attempt to engage the reader and had undeveloped ideas and weak language controls. Examiners commented on the lack of

organisation affecting the quality of the responses. Planning would help candidates to organise their ideas more clearly.

Some examiners commented that it was not always clear whether candidates were answering 12b or 12c. Centres need to ensure that candidates have a clear idea of how to respond to the different types of tasks and the skills they need to demonstrate in a successful response.

There were several unfinished Question 12s. This suggests problems with timing. Centres need to give candidates opportunities to practice timed essays and exams.

Examiners commented on the lack of paragraphing, often in weaker responses but also in responses which were well-written. Candidates must understand the need for effective paragraphing. The lack of it will limit the success of the response.

Quality of Written Communication (QWC)

This is assessed in Questions 11 and 12.

There was evidence of good spelling and reasonably accurate punctuation but most examiners commented on candidates who had problems with grammar. Some of this was unidiomatic English but there were also problems with tenses and sentence structure. These problems hindered the clarity of communication.

Centres need to focus on developing accurate and effective grammatical structuring and idiomatic English to enable candidates to express themselves clearly and access the higher mark bands.

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